IN THEIR OWN WORDS:

COLLEGE STUDENTS WHO ABSTAIN FROM DRINKING

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to seek understanding of the contours of the lives of undergraduate college students who abstain from drinking alcohol. Specifically, I explored the motivations, behaviors, and outcomes related to their choice not to drink. For purposes of this study, I defined motivations as the reasons for students' abstention. In this study, I defined behaviors as: (a) techniques used to abstain, (b) social experiences, and (c) recreational experiences. Outcomes were defined as the positive and negative effects of the choice not to drink. I defined abstainers as students who have not consumed alcohol for at least one full year prior to the study, with exceptions for moderate consumption on rare religious or cultural celebrations.

I explored the following research questions in this study:

1. What are abstainers' motivations for abstaining?

2. What behaviors do abstainers exhibit to keep them from drinking?

3. What social behaviors do abstainers exhibit?

4. What are the outcomes of abstaining?

I had one sample consisting of 53 undergraduates who had not consumed any alcohol for a period of at least one year prior to the study. After conducting the focus groups, I searched the

participant responses for emergent themes. Then, I used the emergent themes to guide the formation of a narrative. In this narrative, I combined the participants' own voices and my analysis of their themes to tell the story of being a college student who abstains from drinking alcohol.

As the motivations for abstention, the participants indicated spiritual, religious influences as important. Additionally, the friends and organizations with which they associated and previous negative experiences (both personal and external) made an impact. In the category of behavior related to abstaining, the participants indicated that their ability to abstain closely hinged upon their interaction with and perception of their social environment; their choices of association with friends and groups also influenced their perceptions of their ability to abstain. Participants who had a strong sense of personal conviction about abstaining felt they were better able not to drink. Additionally, many felt they could take direct personal action to help them abstain. In terms of their social environments, abstainers spoke of having created deep, rich friendships and social environments as part of their very busy lives. While they generally preferred to spend time with other abstainers, they often were friends with and spent time with both abstainers and drinkers. The participants also indicated the importance of making friends and associating with groups in feeling comfortable and being confident in their lifestyle choice. The participants spoke with mixed voices about the outcomes of abstention; many felt left out and out of place in the general college drinking environment, while at the same time recognizing the many positive benefits from not drinking.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

American colleges and universities exist to provide educational and growth experiences for their students. Alcohol consumption continues to be a problem on American college and university campuses that threatens the achievement of these goals (Gonzalez, 1991; Hanson & Engs, 1995; Jones & Kern, 1999; Wechsler, Lee, Gledhill-Hoyt, & Nelson, 2001; Wechsler, Lee, Kuo, & Lee, 2000). While there is some evidence and discussion about exactly what behaviors and outcomes are increasing or decreasing (Clark & Thompson, 2001; Harford & Muthen, 2001), the fact remains that alcohol consumption does cause problems for many college students (Wechsler, Dowdall, Maenner, Gledhill-Hoyt, Lee, 1998; Wechsler, Lee, et al., 2000).

Students drink an average of 5.0 drinks per week, with men reporting 7.5 and women reporting 3.2 drinks consumed per week (Meilman, Presley, & Cashin, 1997; Presley, Meilman, & Lyerla, 1994) According to Wechsler, Lee, et al. (2000), approximately two out of five students' drinking behaviors met the definition of high-risk drinking (4-5 drinks in a sitting in the two weeks prior to the survey). The Core Alcohol and Drug Survey produced similar results: 42% of students surveyed reported binge drinking in the two weeks prior to the survey (Presley et al., 1994).

Not only is high-risk drinking an issue of concern, but the riskiest kinds of high-risk drinking are also on the rise. Approximately 28% of high-risk drinkers report binge drinking two or more times in the two weeks prior to data collection and 6% of high-risk drinkers report binge drinking five or more times in that time period (Presley et al., 1994). Between 1993 and 1999, the numbers of frequent binge drinkers, students who usually binged when they drank, and students who drank to get drunk increased. During the same time period, students who were

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drunk three or more times or who drank on 10 or more occasions in the two weeks prior to the survey also increased (Wechsler, Lee, et al., 2000). However, the number of binge drinkers, especially those who live on campus, may be lowering, as some recent studies are beginning to show (Clarke & Thompson, 2001; Wechsler, Lee, et al., 2000).

As high-risk drinking increased, negative consequences related to drinking also increased on college campuses. Both occasional and frequent high-risk drinkers experience alcohol-related problems at higher rates than drinkers who did not binge (Wechsler, Lee, et al., 2000). Specifically, binge drinkers have a higher likelihood of experiencing such alcohol-related problems as doing something they regret, missing class, drinking and driving, getting into trouble with the police, personal injury, property destruction, memory lapses, and unplanned sexual activity (Wechsler et al., 1998).

The drinking habits of college students appear to be somewhat polarized. While a large proportion of students engage in high-risk drinking behaviors, there are also a substantial number of students who either consume zero drinks per week (38% at four year colleges and 48% at two year colleges) or consume one drink per week (17% at four-year colleges and 11.5% at two-year colleges, Meilman et al., 1997). There have been few studies conducted specifically examining abstainers in the college environment, however. Of the studies that were conducted, most reached quite divergent conclusions.

Most of the information about abstainers is buried in studies and reports about college drinking in general, spanning the student behavioral spectrum from alcohol abuse to total abstinence. Presley et al. (1994) developed the Core Alcohol and Drug Survey, which examined college student drinking patterns and related behaviors and has been administered to thousands of students at hundreds of higher education institutions in its long form since 1994 and in its

shorter form since 1989 (Meilman et al., 1997). Specifically, about 38% of students at 4-year institutions and about 48% of those at 2-year institutions reported consuming zero drinks per week. Additionally, through the Core Survey, Presley et al. (1994) found that 33% of students preferred not to have alcohol present on their campuses. Knowing that a sizeable number of college students report they are abstainers and that 1 of 3 college students prefer to not have alcohol on their campuses may serve as guideposts for future studies.

The Harvard School of Public Health College Alcohol Study is another national study that has been administered at hundreds of college to thousands of students over a number of years and focuses on a wide range of student drinking behavior (again, including a span from alcohol abusers to total abstainers) and its related effects. The results of the survey revealed that abstaining rates may be a little lower than those reported in the Core Survey, with 19% of students reporting they are abstainers. Even though the figure in the Harvard study is lower, the Harvard study did find a significant increase in abstainers between 1993 and 1997 and between 1997 and 1999 in this study. In fact, the number of students who chose to abstain has increased from 15.4% of students in 1993 to 19.2% in 1999. Specifically, there were significant increases in abstention for men, women, Hispanics, African Americans, Asians, freshmen, on-campus residents, and among residents of fraternity and sorority houses. The overall rates in the rise of abstention occurred in 77% of the schools surveyed (statistically significant for 16%, Wechsler, Lee, et al., 2000).

Another national, longitudinal research effort (the College Alcohol Survey) began in 1979 and focused more on colleges' policies and prevention efforts, rather than on all the facets of student drinking. This survey is conducted every three years, starting in 1979, and sent out to about 330 colleges and universities. Over the course of the survey, institutions slowly changed

their policies, became slowly more restrictive. This increase in restriction also coincided with an increase of alcohol programming and dedicated staff for this purpose (Gadaleto & Anderson, 1984).

Numerous approaches were developed in response to alcohol consumption and related problems by a wide variety of commercial, educational, and governmental authorities. This may have been in response to reports calling for increased alcohol programming simply due to the need. For example, there have been a number of alcohol education programs around the world sponsored by the alcoholic beverage industry. The majority of these programs involved partnerships with local authorities and focused on youth consumption, drinking and driving, and drinking responsibly (Houghton, 1998).

While industry sponsored programs have often not been evaluated in terms of effectiveness (Houghton, 1998), those programs outside the industry were often evaluated. The evaluations of many non-industry sponsored programs found them largely ineffective in changing alcohol usage. Specifically, many college alcohol programs have not significantly affected student drinking (Gonzalez, 1991; Haines & Spear, 1996; Hanson & Engs, 1995; Houghton, 1998; Scott & Ambrosan, 1994; Wechsler, Lee, et al., 2000).

Despite the ineffectiveness of many programming measures, colleges and universities instituted a wide variety of alcohol education and prevention programs as a result of student alcohol consumption and the problems related to it (Wechsler, Kelley, Weitzman, San Giovanni, & Seibring, 2000). One of the oldest methods of reducing alcohol consumption was simply to prohibit alcohol consumption on campuses. One university that instituted this practice on its campus recently found that prohibition did not have a significant impact on binge drinking rates (Odo, McQuiller, & Stretesky, 1999). Another approach tried was voluntary abstinence for

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college students who normally would drink. This approach seemed to have the opposite of the desired effect, as college students who temporarily abstained from drinking consumed more alcohol when they returned to drinking than before they abstained (Burish, Maisto, Cooper, & Sobell, 1981).

In 1985, many states increased the legal drinking age from 18 to 21 as a result of federal mandates. This change in law combined with a sustained alcohol education effort at a major university did little to change student drinking at that university. The educational efforts consisted of providing a dedicated alcohol information center on campus designed to increase awareness of the problems related to alcohol consumption. While there were some significant changes (e.g., a reduction in the number of students who drank, increased awareness in some specific but limited areas of alcohol knowledge, and decreased driving while intoxicated convictions), there were no significant changes in overall alcohol consumption, alcohol knowledge, and alcohol-related problems (Gonzalez, 1991).

Another approach for many campuses has been to require students who were identified as problem drinkers through the judicial system to attend mandatory alcohol education classes. This approach had a significant impact on the levels of knowledge about alcohol. However, in one study there were no significant changes in behavior brought on by these traditional alcohol education classes (Flynn & Brown, 1991). When another campus implemented a policy to increase enforcement, sanctions, and penalties for alcohol policy violations substantially, they found that the number of cases of alcohol violations increased, that complex violations (those that include alcohol and other judicial violations as a result of the same incident) decreased, and the recidivism rates for alcohol violations also decreased. So these judicial policy changes seemed to have positively affected the campus climate. However, at the same institution, the

staff members enforcing the policies felt that the policy did not decrease the number of actual policy violations and that policy violations were not being addressed more frequently. These staff perceptions show the discrepancy between what is demonstrated on paper and the subjective observations of those involved in the policy enforcement. So even though this policy change showed some effect, discovering if the policy truly had an effect on student drinking and behavior or if the policy merely impacted the number of students who were caught was outside the scope of the study (Cohen & Rogers, 1997). Some of the alcohol education and programming attempts by universities have been ineffective (or at least not easily measured in terms of effectiveness) at reducing drinking rates and the related problems.

The failure of these programs left higher education administrators continuing to search for new ways to reduce problematic alcohol consumption and the negative consequences related to that consumption. One possible explanation for the failure of these efforts is the fact that they were not grounded in theory and research (Scott & Ambrosan, 1994). This led to the emergence of several new theories to address the problem of student alcohol consumption.

For any new programming strategies to work, students must be willing to participate in them. When asked in which types of alcohol programming they were willing to participate, students at one school chose low contact approaches (including mailings, pamphlets, audio-visual materials, computer programs, non-alcoholic beverages, and self-help groups, Werch, 1991). One new approach that utilized this type of low contact method, which has become known as Social Norming, was initially developed by Perkins and Berkowitz (1986).

Perkins and Berkowitz (1986) postulated ways of changing students' attitudes and perceptions of student drinking norms. To change perceptions, they focused on the relationship between attitudes and perceptions as a way to change behavior. This type of approach has since

become known as Social Norming. In general, students significantly overestimate the amount of high-risk drinking done by their peers. Then, students drink toward a falsely perceived high drinking norm. After implementing an intervention designed around Perkins and Berkowitz's (1986) work to change the perception of the drinking norms, researchers at Northern Illinois University found that both the number of students who reported their own high-risk drinking and students reporting high-risk drinking as the norm decreased significantly (Haines & Spear, 1996).

One programming solution used by many colleges and universities, creating substance-free living environments, combined the idea that students would have to be willing participants for the program to be successful, with elements of Social Norming. Students would either willingly apply for membership into the program, or they would not. In either case, student willingness to participate creates conditions that make success possible on the most basic level. Establishing such housing helped establish a more accurately reflected drinking norm for students both in and out of the substance-free housing, as they could easily observe that not all students at the university drank alcohol. This type of environment also allowed students who did not use alcohol to find a place to belong, to live in a quiet community not focused on partying, and to stay away from temptation and peer pressure if they did not want to drink (Finn, 1996).

Other ideas related to abstinence came from the alcohol treatment professionals who served the general population. One approach related to self-efficacy, or the ability continually to produce within oneself the result of abstention from drinking alcohol. Situations that produce a negative effect (such as losing one's job) are likely to drive individuals back to drink. Temptation was also found to affect negatively one's ability to keep from drinking. So people with alcohol problems who are attempting to stop drinking have their ability to remain abstinent

affected by the situations they encounter (DiClemente, Carbonari, Montgomery, & Hughes, 1994). Perhaps the situations that college students encounter can be manipulated to offer greater chances of abstinence to the abusive college drinker, to be sure, but also perhaps even the average or temperate drinker.

To implement successfully a strategy to change student behavioral norms, understanding different elements of student behavior and culture is important. One subset of the student culture on college campuses is the student drinking culture. Many studies have been conducted examining various aspects of the student drinking culture. Programmers have used student drinking norms to target Social Norming campaigns for the college environment. Some campaigns reported success in changing norms and behavior (Haines & Spear, 1996; Perkins, Meilman, Leichliter, Cashin, & Presley, 1999), while others reported inconclusive success (Gomberg, Schneider, & DeJong, 2001; Werch, et al., 2000).

Another aspect of student culture that is related to the drinking culture is the culture of abstainers. Information about the culture of abstainers could also be used in Social Norming campaigns to represent more accurately student culture and to reach out to a broader range of students (Haines & Spear, 1996). Specifically, alcohol programmers could use this information to focus their Social Norming campaigns on the positive benefits and characteristics of abstaining in an attempt to draw problematic drinkers in that direction. Since there is little known about abstainers, targeting Social Norming programs in this manner is most likely not being done. With this in mind, I explored various aspects about college students who abstain from drinking alcohol in this study.

My current study explored why students abstain from drinking alcohol. Additionally, I examined how abstainers behave. Finally, I examined the outcomes related to abstaining. By

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examining these elements, I hoped to discover and illustrate a rich picture of college students who abstain from drinking alcohol.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to seek comprehension of the contours of the lives of college students who abstain from drinking alcohol. Specifically, I explored the motivations, behaviors, and outcomes related to their choice not to drink. For purposes of this study, motivations were defined as the reasons for students' abstention. In this study, behaviors were defined as: (a) techniques used to abstain, (b) social experiences, and (c) recreational experiences. Outcomes in this study were defined as the positive and negative effects of the choice not to drink. Abstainers were defined as students who had not consumed alcohol for at least one full year prior to the study, with exceptions for moderate consumption on rare religious or cultural celebrations.

## Research Questions

This study examined the following research questions:

1. What are abstainers' motivations for abstaining?

2. What behaviors do abstainers exhibit to keep them from drinking?

3. What social behaviors do abstainers exhibit?

4. What are the outcomes of abstaining?

## Significance of the Study

This study is significant for a variety of groups. First, this study is significant to campus alcohol programming coordinators since they often try to get students to emulate the behavior of abstainers. Their problem has been that they know little about the very population that they were asking others to emulate. These results provide alcohol programmers information they do not

currently have about abstainers. Programmers might use these results to redirect programming efforts with information more focused on the reasons that students abstain from drinking.

This study was also significant for residence life professionals. Residence life professionals often have to deal with the problems related to alcohol consumption. The findings provide them with data on why and how students abstain from drinking. If residence life staff members know why and how students abstain, they can focus their programming efforts to enhance the experiences and numbers of abstainers.

Members of campus organizations that focus on alcohol-free activities may also benefit from the knowledge of abstainers' social experiences provided by this study. Organizations could develop social activities and experiences that appeal to abstainers based on the results of this study. They could potentially use this to draw more abstainers, or even drinkers wishing to abstain, to their activities.

I also examined some of the motivations, behaviors, and outcomes prevalent in the social community of college students who abstain from drinking alcohol. Other universities may want to build on these results and examine techniques they can use that may result in increasing the numbers of abstainers. The further implications of the outcomes of these studies may suggest some new methods of college alcohol programming.

The study also has relevance for future research. Since this study explored why students choose to abstain, a future study might explore if there are differences in the reasons students choose to abstain by certain demographic characteristics, such as sex, class standing, or socio-economic status. Such a study might further illuminate the reasons that students elect not do drink.

I attempted to discover motivations, behaviors, and outcomes for college students who abstained from drinking. This new information could be used as a basis for a future study similar to what has been done with Social Norming. One such study might focus university alcohol education advertising on the positive motivations for abstaining, the positive aspects of abstainers' social environments, and the positive outcomes of abstaining. The results of this type of normative-based advertising on student drinking behavior could then be compared to the effects of a traditional Social Norming campaign that focuses on actual drinking behaviors.

I explored some of the activities in which abstainers are involved. Perhaps a future study could examine the impact of involvement in specific social activities on abstinence. Such a study would expand the knowledge available on what abstainers do and the effect those activities have on their abstinence.

Finally, this study is significant in terms of future policy. This study examined why some students choose not to drink. Campus administrators might use this information to shape policies that focus on increasing the community of abstainers. Such policies would constitute a change in policy focus for many universities that currently focus on the problems related to alcohol consumption.

I examined the social activities in which abstainers participated. Perhaps campus policymakers could mold their campus policies so they give stronger support to activities that enhance and support abstainers. Changing policies to do this might help support and include abstainers in the college environment.

Finally, I examined what it is like to be an abstainer and a college student. Perhaps university policy makers could change recruitment policies to focus on students who self-identify

as abstainers. The results of such a policy could impact the types of students that universities enroll.

Through this study, I examined the motivations, behaviors, and outcomes related to college abstainers. With this in mind, the current study has significance for practice, future research, and policy. The significance of this study in these three areas demonstrated how its results could impact college students and their environment. The results of the study cannot, however, be universally applicable due to some delimitations.

## Delimitations and Limitations

This study was delimited by scope and sample. Initially, I focused on undergraduate abstainers only. This delimited the study by eliminating any graduate students from participation. If the experiences of undergraduates were substantially different from those of graduate students, the present study may be limited and not representative of the full culture of college students who abstain from drinking alcohol. Results should be interpreted with this in mind.

Next, the study was delimited by only including students who had not consumed alcohol for at least one full year prior to the study, with exceptions for moderate consumption on rare religious or cultural celebrations. This delimited the study by eliminating students who considered themselves abstainers at the time of the study, but who may have been regular alcohol consumers at some point in the year prior to the study. If there were a substantial number of students who were abstaining at the time the data were collected but had not done so for at least one year immediately prior to the study (students with experiences different from the current study's participants), then the study may be limited and the results may not apply to all student abstainers.

After obtaining initial respondents for this research, I selected the subsequent members of the sample through snowball sampling. Because I used this technique, many of the participants knew other participants in the study. This could have limited the study and restricted its applicability if the experiences of those sampled were similar due to their common group experiences.

Additionally, the sample for this study was delimited since it came from one university. It is possible that abstainers at this institution differed in some important ways from abstainers at other campuses, again limiting the applicability of this study to other settings.

This study had additional limitations not related to scope, including method and possible alternative interpretations of the findings. Since I explored the participants experiences through focus groups, some of their experiences may not have been uncovered entirely. Time may have limited the participants' full expression, as one hour focus group sessions may not have provided enough time for all participants to express themselves as deeply as they could on all questions. Aside from the limitation of time, a combination of factors particular to each focus group may have further restricted the participants' ability to respond fully. Depending on the personalities of individuals, the depth of their personal experiences, and the group dynamics of the focus group sessions, some individuals may not have been able to illuminate the breadth and depth of their own stories. Although the complexity of these limiting factors is nearly impossible to detect accurately, their potential existence could impact the interpretation of the resulting qualitative narrative.

The dialogue resulting from the focus group sessions may be open to multiple interpretations. Whereas I may focus on certain nuances and experiences in my interpretation of the sessions, another researcher may discern other particularities and patterns resulting in an

alternative interpretation. This potential weakness, which is inherent in qualitative study, may limit the study.

My study was delimited and limited in several ways. Any results reported should be interpreted with these in mind.

<p align="center">Organization of the Study</p>

My study is organized in five chapters. The introduction examined the background, purpose, and reasons for conducting this study. In Chapter 2, I examine the current literature on alcohol and abstention. I reviewed the methods for selecting the sample and gathering data for this study in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 brings together the study's results. Finally, in Chapter 5, I discuss the results and their implications for future practice, research, and policy.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The present study examined college students who abstain from drinking alcohol. To learn about abstainers, the literature on college student drinking was explored first. Four groups of studies emerged in this literature review: (a) motivations for drinking, (b) behaviors of drinkers, (c) the social environment of drinkers, and (d) outcomes of drinking.

To gain a full understanding of abstainers, the literature about abstainers was examined next. Here, too, four groups of studies emerged: (a) motivation for abstaining, (b) behaviors of abstainers, (c) the social environment of abstainers, and (d) outcomes of abstaining. This literature review is organized around these two main categories and their related subtopics.

Literature on College Student Drinking

Many researchers have focused their attention on college student drinking due to the many problems drinking causes. Since the majority of literature about college students and alcohol focused on drinkers, it was necessary to examine this literature first. This approach was used to create a background of the problems and solutions associated with alcohol consumption while serving as a precursor to examining students who abstain from drinking.

*Motivations for Drinking*

Before university administrators could address the problem of student drinking, they had to understand first why the problem existed. To understand some of the reasons behind the problem of student drinking, many researchers focused their attention on why students drink alcohol. However, due to the inherent difficult of determining exactly why people do the things they do, it was also difficult to determine exactly why students drink alcohol. So, some indications about why students drink were inferred from correlates of drinking. These correlates

may be some of the best indirect indicators of actual motivations. In the sections below, the literature about motivations and the correlates of drinking that may relate to motivations are examined.

*The Environment*

One of the factors most directly related to why students drink may be the environment. Some environments are more conducive to drinking than others (Jones & Kern, 1999). For example, administrators at large, public, highly-competitive schools are more likely to report that student drinking is a major problem (Wechsler, Kelley, et al., 2000). Also, on campuses that banned alcohol use, the rates of heavy, episodic drinking were lower for almost all types of students at almost all types of colleges. At the same time, the general quantity and frequency of alcohol consumption did not vary much between campuses where alcohol was banned and those where it was allowed (Wechsler et al., 2001). Additionally, fraternity membership is the single largest predictor of binge drinking (Wechsler, Davenport, Dowdall, Moeykens, & Castillo, 1994), as fraternity and sorority members binge drink considerably more than non-Greek men and women, respectively. Those fraternity and sorority members who live in their Greek houses binge at higher rates than Greek members who do not live in their houses (Wechsler, Kuh, & Davenport, 1996). Additionally, students who change their living environment from home to residence hall or from residence hall to off-campus are significantly more likely to have an increase in alcohol usage than students who reside at home with their parents while attending college (Harford & Muthen, 2001). However, there is some other evidence that suggests living arrangements do not have an effect on alcohol consumption (Schall, Weede, & Maltzman, 1991). The environment plays a role in how much students drink and their reasons for doing so.

Perkins and Berkowitz (1986) found that changing the environment through targeted interventions can change drinking behaviors. Even with such evidence, environmental factors may still be indirect indicators of why students drink. Aside from environmental factors, social fears and motivations may be correlates of drinking as indicators of motivations.

*Social Fears and Motivations*

Some students report that they drink to help alleviate social fears and to help them fit in socially; in other words, alcohol works as a social lubricant. Some reasons for drinking discovered by Emery, Ritter-Randolph, Strozier, and McDermott (1993) included "satisfy[ing] an intense need to conform," lessening "stress and fear," and reducing "fears of [social] inadequacy" (p. 196). Similarly, Schall, et al., (1991) found that students drink to help them cope and to lower their inhibitions. In addition to these general social correlates of drinking, some researchers discovered differences in reasons for drinking between men and women.

When studying women, Gleason (1994) found they are likely to use alcohol as a mechanism to make friends. When they are unable to maintain relationships through their alcohol use, they become more fearful and depressed, which leads to more drinking. Other specific reasons for women's drinking include: (a) self-medication to relieve negative emotions, (b) to reduce stress, (c) to bolster coping skills, (d) to keep painful feelings in denial, (e) to deal with the loss of a relationship, (f) to deal with shame, (g) to combat depression, (h) to help with the expression of anger, and (i) to reduce sexual inhibitions (Gleason, 1994). Additional research on women found that the desire to cope with personal problems, thrill seeking, and boredom are all factors that predict their drinking. On the other hand, men may drink due to a desire for disinhibition and in order to cope with personal problems (Schall et al., 1991). There are

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complex arrays of emotional and social needs that seem to be possible indicators of the motivations for student drinking.

*Attitudes and Perceptions.*

Students may also drink for reasons related to their attitudes and perceptions (Perkins & Berkowitz, 1986; Scott & Ambrosan, 1994). For example, from the biopsychosocial perspective, attitudes are good determinants of behavior (Scott & Abmrosan, 1994). Perkins and Berkowitz (1986) found a strong association between attitudes and drinking behavior (e.g., a more liberal attitude was associated with greater use of alcohol). Scott and Ambrosan (1994) suggested that through the Elaboration Likelihood Model, students' attitudes could be changed, which might persuade them to change their drinking behavior. In terms of perceptions, students often had "grossly exaggerated misconceptions of alcohol use across campuses" (Perkins et al., 1999, p. 257). However, Wechsler, Lee, et al. (2000) found some contradictory evidence, in that 47% of students underestimate alcohol consumption, while only 29% overestimate consumption. In regards to examining perceptions only, Perkins and Berkowitz (1986) found that perceptions of campus norms alone had almost no predictive ability. By combining the "effect of perceptions in conjunction with personal attitudes" there was a significant relationship with prediction of alcohol use (Perkins & Berkowitz, 1986, p. 968). Since changing perceptions may be easier than changing attitudes, it might be possible to change students' behavior and perceptions together by considering also the relationship between attitudes and perceptions. Students' attitudes and their misperceptions of drinking norms may explain some of the reasons why college students drink alcohol.

*Religious Influence*

Students' religious beliefs and practices also impact their drinking rates. Students who

report religious activity as "not at all important" have significantly higher chances of high-risk drinking than students who report religion as "moderately important" in their lives (Wechsler et. al., 1994). Additionally, stronger religious values are correlated with lower alcohol use rates among college students (Donahue & Benson, 1995). More specifically, Poulson, Eppler, Satterwhite, Wuensch, and Bass (1998) found that strength of religious beliefs was unrelated to alcohol consumption for men and negatively correlated for women. Religious beliefs may help explain students' motivations for abstinence.

There are many different factors that influence students' motivations for drinking, as illustrated in this section. The next section examines what students do when they drink, or their drinking behaviors.

*Behaviors of Drinkers*

College students' drinking behavior has been studied extensively. Much of this research illustrates the exact nature and scope of the problems related to student alcohol consumption. Even though college students generally perceive that their peers drink often and heavily, the reality is that college students' drinking behaviors span a fairly wide spectrum. For example, men and women drink differently, with men drinking an average of 7.5 drinks per week and women drinking an average of 3.2 drinks per week (Presley et al., 1994). Additionally, Caucasian males aged 23 years or younger are the most likely to be high-risk drinkers (Wechsler et al., 1998). On the high-risk end of the spectrum, approximately 2 in 5 students self-report high-risk drinking (known as binge drinking and defined by Wechsler as five or more drinks in a row for men and four or more drinks in a row for women, Wechsler et al., 1998; Wechsler, Lee, et al., 2000). These numbers have held generally consistent between 1993 and 1999 (Wechsler,

Lee et al., 2000). However, the frequency of the highest-risk kinds of drinking behavior rose between 1993 and 1997, with drinking 10 or more times in the past 30 days up approximately 16% and drinking to get drunk up approximately 33% (Wechsler et al., 1998).

While high-risk drinking rates have been cited as mostly consistent (Wechsler, Lee et al., 2000). Wechsler et al. (1998) also reported decreases in high-risk drinking rates at a slight majority of schools surveyed. Additionally, high-risk drinking in the residence halls decreased between 1993 and 1999 from 47% to 45% (Wechsler, Lee et al., 2000). One comparison to the national studies may found be in a locally conducted study, which showed that while the highest risk kinds of drinking are rising, the overall high-risk drinking rates are declining (Clarke & Thompson, 2001). On the two extremes of the spectrum nationally, 19% of students report they are abstainers and 23% of students report frequent high-risk drinking episodes (Wechsler, Lee et al., 2000).

Examining the literature on college students' drinking behaviors provides some background for this study. However, drinking patterns simply show how students are drinking. Another important part of the drinkers' experience that is sometimes related to their collective behavior is the social environment of drinkers.

*Social Environment of Drinkers*

People who have similar behavior patterns and associate together will have a shared environment. The Environmental Assessment Instrument (EAI) is a national survey that was conducted at 50 colleges and universities every year between 1989-1996; the EAI was designed to describe the psychological environment that frequent drinkers and non-drinkers share as groups, respectively. While it was specifically designed not to study behavior, some of these

environmental characteristics may be related to how each group collectively behaves (Goree & Szalay, 1996).

Students also have certain social experiences that are part of their environment and perhaps related to drinking. First, frequent drinkers are generally more social than non-drinkers and relate fun to social activities. They enjoy parties and sex, associating both of these with alcohol (Goree & Szalay, 1996).

Aside from their social nature and ideas of fun, college students who drink frequently share certain characteristics in regard to their friends. For these drinkers, alcohol is often associated with their friendships. Additionally, when frequent users think of their friends, they associate them with parties, fraternities, and excitement. Frequent drinkers also report higher levels of having problems with their friendships than other students (Goree & Szalay, 1996).

As with behavior directly related to alcohol consumption, the shared environment only describes the characteristics they share as a group of similar people. So these shared environments for drinkers may be partial, yet indirect indicators of how these students interact socially. In addition to the shared environment, the outcomes that are direct results of drinking behavior are also important.

*Outcomes of Drinking*

Researchers have studied extensively the outcomes associated with college student drinking. Through examining these outcomes in conjunction with the motivations and behaviors of drinkers, researchers have been able to develop fully a picture of college drinking and its associated problems. The outcomes related to college drinking are examined below.

Substantial numbers of students experience the negative effects of drinking (Presley et al., 1994). Between 1993 and 1999 the frequency of 12 specific alcohol-related problems rose

significantly for college students (Wechsler, Lee et al., 2000). When asked if they have experienced any negative consequences as a result of drinking, 1 in 5 students reported experiencing five or more negative consequences, which is up 22% from 1993 (Wechsler et al., 1998). High-risk drinkers are five times more likely to experience alcohol-related problems than non-high-risk drinkers. Additionally, frequent binge drinkers are about 21 times more likely to experience alcohol-related problems than non-high-risk drinkers (Wechsler et al., 1998; Wechsler, Lee et al., 2000). However, while high-risk drinking is often associated with experiencing alcohol-related problems, students who drink lower quantities and frequencies levels also experience similar problems (Werch, Gorman, & Marty, 1987).

Studies have found negative consequences of drinking at the following rates: drinking and driving, 33% - 41%; destruction of property, 6% - 7%; academic problems, 17% - 23%; problems with authorities, 3% - 15%; and student judiciary problems, 20% - 60% (Globetti, Stem, Morasco, Haworth-Hoeppner, 1988; Prendergrast, 1994). In addition, the more students drink, the lower their reported grades (Presley et al., 1994). Negative consequences also include criminal behavior, as between 29% and 55% of college students report drinking and driving (Hanson & Engs, 1986; Kinnick, Genova, Ogden, & Rodriquez, 1985).  According to one study, as many as 50% of sexual assault and breaking and entering cases involve alcohol consumption (Gonzalez & Wiles 1981; Prendergast, 1994).

The research presented in this section examined the outcomes associated with college student drinking. The majority of literature about alcohol and college students focuses on motivations for drinking, drinking behaviors, and the outcomes associated with drinking. However, since the present study explored the motivations for abstaining, the behaviors of

abstainers, and the outcomes of abstaining, it was also necessary to examine the literature about these topics.

<div align="center">Literature on Abstainers</div>

The previous examination of the extensive literature on college student drinking clearly demonstrated that drinking continues to be a problem on American college campuses (Presley et al., 1994; Wechsler, Lee et al., 2000). Although this body of research helped illuminate the nature of college drinking and its related problems, the present research studied college students who abstain from drinking alcohol, so the literature about college abstainers was examined next.

<div align="center">*Motivation for Abstaining*</div>

Little is known about why students choose to abstain from drinking. This is evidenced by the general lack of literature on the subject. However, information is available through some larger national surveys that studied college drinking. Examining the limited information about abstainers gleaned through these studies helped illuminate the need for the present study.

One reason for abstention may be related to religious practices. Students who reported religious activity was "not at all important" had significantly higher chances of high-risk drinking than students who reported religion was "moderately important" in their lives (Wechsler et. al., 1994).

Students have various motivations for abstaining from drinking. Attitude and attitude changes are primary predictors of behavior and may strongly influence whether students abstain from drinking (Scott & Ambrosan, 1994). Additionally, students who view the drinking norm as less permissive often drink less or even abstain altogether (Perkins & Berkowitz, 1986; Perkins et al., 1999). Only a few factors related to why students abstain have been identified.

In addition to more direct influences, indirect correlates of campus alcohol programming may have an effect on why students abstain. As background, there were increases in levels of abstinence from 15.6% in 1993 to 19.0% in 1999 (Wechsler, Lee et al., 2000). One possible explanation for the recent increase in the number of abstainers might be that students who are "less involved in a binge drinking lifestyle and for whom alcohol is not important [may] respond to alcohol education efforts and policies by giving up drinking entirely" (Wechsler et al., 1998, p. 65).

The effect of the environment on abstinence can also be discerned by looking at larger studies about student drinking. A possible predictor of student abstinence may be living on a campus where the drinking norms are accurately portrayed (Schall et al., 1991). Since the environment can play a large part in why students do or do not drink, managing the college environment can decrease drinking (Jones & Kern, 1999; Perkins & Berkowitz, 1986). For example, in environments where students become involved in extra-curricular activities, alcohol is marketed less, and alcohol is less available, students generally drink less (Jones & Kern, 1999).

Although there is some previous research about motivations for abstinence, most is either focused on drinkers or on populations other than college students. In addition to motivations, this study also sought to discover abstainers' behavior related to not drinking and abstainers' social behavior, so literature about the behaviors of abstainers was examined next.

*Behaviors of Abstainers*

Almost nothing has been published about the behavior of college student abstainers and the techniques they use to abstain. In fact, I was unable to identify any studies that directly explored these issues within the college abstainer population. However, some studies indirectly

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addressed the social behavior of abstainers by looking at all students. For example, 33% of college students report that they do not want alcohol available at social events (Presley et al., 1994). However, results such as these can only be used cautiously in relation to abstainers, since they apply to drinkers also.

<center>*Social Environment of Abstainers*</center>

Similar to the social environment of drinkers, the social environment of abstainers may help explain how people with similar behavior patterns who also associate together may create a type of shared psychological environment. While it was specifically designed not to study behavior, the EAI helps illustrate how some of these environmental characteristics may be related to how the group collectively behaves (Goree & Szalay, 1996)

The Environmental Assessment Instrument may give some indications about the social environment of abstainers. For example, some results have emerged related to how abstainers think about their environment, including their social and recreational environments. When compared to frequent drinkers, non-drinkers are less social. They like quiet, traditional, and family-oriented activities such as watching movies, playing games, watching television, talking, and going shopping. Non-drinkers go to parties, but they prefer to go to parties with a purpose related to their friends or family. Often, nondrinkers do not like to attend parties where drinking is the focus. Additionally, non-drinkers enjoy spending time with their friends and family; and their friends often become close, almost like family (Goree & Szalay, 1996).

Even though the EAI provides some indications about the created social environment of abstainers, its information is limited. Additionally, the EAI was designed to examine both abstainers and drinkers. The next section examines the outcomes that college students experience as a result of abstinence.

*Outcomes of Abstinence*

Just as with abstainers' motivations, behaviors, and environment, little research exists about the outcomes related to abstention. However, there is some evidence about the kinds of positive and negative effects abstainers experience on college campuses. Similarly to other areas of research on abstainers, these same consequences or outcomes are also experienced by drinkers.

Students who do not drink often experience secondhand effects from the behavior of the high-risk drinkers on campus. For example, students who abstain and live in Greek houses experience frequent secondhand problems such as being interrupted while studying, having sleep interrupted, having to take care of drunken students, and being assaulted (Wechsler, Lee et al., 2000). In the general student population, abstainers report having their study or sleep interrupted, taking care of drunken students, or being insulted or humiliated. Additionally, some statistically significant increases in secondhand effects occurred for all women, who reported having arguments, taking care of drunken students, and experiencing unwanted sexual advances (Wechsler et al., 1998). Aside from information about the effects of drinking on abstainers, there is little literature and research about the outcomes related to abstinence.

Conclusion

As evidenced through the extensive body of research on the topic, college student drinking is a problem. The body of literature on drinkers helps fill some of the gaps in information about abstainers. Even with the potential for gaining information about abstainers in this way, many surveys focused so directly on drinking that any information about abstainers had to be culled from the margins of the research. In many cases the information that could apply to abstainers also applied to drinkers. This means that college researchers and university

administrators do not have specific information about 19% of the student population. For administrators to do their jobs in an informed way, research about this understudied part of their population needs to be undertaken. Since little is known about why college students abstain, the techniques abstainers employ, the social experiences of abstainers, the recreational experiences of abstainers, and the outcomes abstainers experience as a result of not drinking, research into these specific topics related to abstainers will help fill the gaps in knowledge.

There is also little diversity in terms of method. Most of the information about abstainers was gleaned from large, quantitative surveys. This means there is little information about college abstainers that was obtained through qualitative techniques.  The current study used qualitative measures to move past the limited understanding gained from surveys in order to delve more deeply into abstainers' lives and gain a richer understanding of their experiences.

Despite large and frequent national studies of alcohol use, there are gaps in the knowledge base about college alcohol consumption. The present study was designed to address these by focusing on the on-fifth of college students who choose to not to drink. The qualitative measures used in this study will help fill these gaps with rich knowledge gained through a deep understanding of the participants.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to seek comprehension of the contours of the lives of college students who abstain from drinking alcohol. Specifically, I explored the motivations, behaviors, and outcomes related to their choice not to drink. To address the purpose of the current study, I chose the following methods.

Since little is known about college abstainers and their related motivations, behaviors, and outcomes, I conducted focus groups in an effort to discover broadly the full range of possible participant responses. In addition, I used focus groups so the participants could build upon each other's answers and encourage each other to remember things they might have forgotten if answering the questions in individual interviews. To elicit responses that would illustrate the maximum breadth and depth of information from the focus groups, I asked the participants questions related to the following research questions:

1. What are abstainers' motivations for abstaining?

2. What behaviors do abstainers exhibit to keep them from drinking?

3. What social behaviors do abstainers exhibit?

4. What are the outcomes of abstaining?

Sample Selection

The population used for this study consisted of undergraduate students who abstained from using alcohol at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech), a large, land-grant institution enrolling approximately 25,600 students, with 21,760 being undergraduates. Of the undergraduates, approximately 59% were male and 41% were female, with the undergraduate population consisting of 23% freshmen, 25% sophomores 23% juniors,

and 29% seniors (Virginia Tech, 2000). Through previous surveys conducted on the undergraduate student population, it was known that approximately 17% of the students self-reported abstaining from drinking alcohol during the 30 days prior to the survey (Clarke & Thompson, 2001).

Due to the nature of this study, I selected only one sample. The sample consisted of students who met the criteria of having abstained from drinking alcohol for a period of at least one year prior to the study, save one exception. Students who drank alcohol in minimal quantities (one to two drinks per occasion or less) for special religious or cultural celebrations on infrequent occasions (less than six times per year) were defined as abstainers and were included in this study.

I recruited 48 undergraduate students who identified themselves as abstainers to participate in the present study. Initially, 20 students who participated in the Wellness Environment for Living and Learning (W.E.L.L.), an on-campus learning community located in a residence hall, were selected as possible participants for this study. I recruited the W.E.L.L. residents first because they signed a pledge at the beginning of the year stating that they would not possess or use alcohol, tobacco, or illegal drugs within the W.E.L.L. community. They also applied for admission into the program, meaning they fully understood the environment in which they were volunteering to live. Due to the design of the W.E.L.L., its residents were likely to have met the criteria for participation.

I first contacted an administrator in the Department of Residential and Dining Programs (RDP) who was responsible for the W.E.L.L. From this administrator, I obtained a list of the W.E.L.L. resident advisors (paraprofessional student staff who work for RDP in the W.E.L.L.). The W.E.L.L. resident advisors keep an e-mail list of all the residents on their halls. Second, I

contacted the W.E.L.L. resident advisors via e-mail, explaining the nature of the study and asking them to forward a subsequent e-mail from me about the study to their residents (see Appendix B). Third, I sent an e-mail message to the W.E.L.L. resident advisors, which they in turn forwarded to their residents to solicit them for the study. The e-mail described the requirements of participation in the study, the time slots for the focus groups, cash compensation for participation in the study ($15.00), the definition of abstention, and contact information (see Appendix C).

Through the e-mail to the W.E.L.L. residents, I asked them to contact me via telephone to sign up for the study. Potential participants began contacting me by phone and by e-mail on the same day my e-mail went out. As outlined in my procedures, I wanted to speak with each potential participant on the phone to conduct a brief screening interview and record his or her answers (see Appendix D). If they qualified, I immediately signed them up for a focus group session and asked them to refer any other students who might qualify. When potential participants called, I initially screened them for the study over the telephone. I used telephone screening for the following reasons: (a) to facilitate the quick collection of demographic information about the participants, (b) to re-iterate the definition of abstention, (c) to ascertain through alternate questions if the possible participants met my definition of abstention, and (d) to solicit additional referrals for the study from participants (Appendix D). From the individuals who contacted me, I accepted for participation the first 20 who met the abstainer definition. The W.E.L.L. participation was capped at 20 to keep the study from being biased by the experiences reported by W.E.L.L. residents who may not be representative of the overall experiences of abstainers attending Virginia Tech. W.E.L.L. residents who responded after I chose the 20

participants were informed that the study was closed for W.E.L.L. participants, but that the study was still open for other abstainers.

During the initial screening telephone conversation, I signed up the participants for a focus group session. As a follow-up, I sent each chosen participant an e-mail message confirming the agreement to participate, reminding about the $15.00 incentive for finishing the study; and reminding them about the date, time, and location of their focus group session (see Appendix E).

In an effort not to bias the study unnecessarily by only selecting abstainers who lived in the W.E.L.L., I also contacted abstainers who lived outside the W.E.L.L. Initially, I used referrals gained from the W.E.L.L. residents during the telephone screening interviews. The e-mail message had the same basic content as the initial e-mail to the W.E.L.L. residents (see Appendix C for a similar example). Once referred participants called me, I pre-screened them over the telephone with the same procedure used for the W.E.L.L. residents (see Appendix D). I accepted referred participants who met the definition of abstainer at the conclusion of their telephone interview. Those not accepted into the study were also informed at the conclusion of their interview.

I also solicited other on-campus and off-campus participants outside of the W.E.L.L. residents and their referrals. Just as I did with the W.E.L.L. residents, I repeated this process by sending out e-mail announcements to the Newman Community (Catholic campus ministry) list-serv and to the Virginia Tech international student list-serv (see Appendix C for a similar example). For similar reasons related to not biasing my study, I capped international student participation at a target of six participants. To gain additional participants from off campus, I posted fliers (see Appendix G) in the public posting areas of most academic buildings around

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campus and in the public posting areas of the apartment buildings in three off-campus apartment complexes predominantly occupied by students.

The focus groups were capped at a maximum of 8 participants each. Since I was not trying to create focus groups that were representative of any demographic group from Virginia Tech, I let the participants choose which group they wanted to participate. However, I did have some criteria I applied in an attempt to not overweight any one group too heavily with individuals from one similar demographic group. I tried to keep groups composed of 50% or less W.E.L.L. residents. I also tried to only allow two or three individuals who knew each other or who were referred by each other to sign up for the same focus group. With those loose demographic criteria in place for focus group formation, I started cutting off focus groups at six individuals. This allowed me to spread participants out so that I could fill some of the less popular dates and times to get minimum numbers for all focus groups. I also tried to get people to fill up focus groups that occurred on earlier dates first, again, so they would be filled in time. After most groups were filled with at least six individuals, I removed the cap and let people again sign up for the focus group of their choice.

I continued soliciting referrals using the same contact and screening procedures until all available time slots were filled. With this basic format for recruiting my focus group participants, I eventually signed up 58 potential participants. Finally, I contacted all the focus group participants via e-mail one final time 24 hours prior to the focus groups. The e-mail contained a reminder about their participation, a reminder about their financial compensation, and the time and location of their focus group session (see Appendix H).

Instrumentation

I developed a focus group protocol for the purposes of this study using direct

consultation with student affairs professionals at the institution where the study was conducted. These professionals were familiar with focus group techniques and had primary job responsibilities related to research and assessment.

To elicit responses that answered the research questions posed in this study, the protocol consisted of a list of questions and related follow-up questions. I divided the protocol into the following four sections related to the students' abstention: (a) motivations, (b) behaviors exhibited to keep from drinking alcohol, (c) social behaviors, and (d) outcomes. The protocol sections corresponded to the research questions. See Appendix A for an example of the full set of interview questions used with the interview protocol.

Through Section One of the protocol, I sought to discover the motivations that students had for abstaining. I asked the participants to talk about why they decided not to drink and any specific experiences that contributed to their decision not to drink.

In Section Two of the protocol, I addressed the behaviors abstainers exhibited to keep from drinking alcohol. I asked the participants to talk about what they did to keep from drinking alcohol, what techniques they used when around alcohol to keep from drinking, and what they did to relieve stress.

I addressed the social behaviors of abstainers in Section Three. Specifically, I asked participants about their group of friends, their social activities, and the nature of any peer pressure they felt to drink.

Through Section Four of the protocol, I addressed the positive and negative outcomes related to abstention. I asked the participants to talk about what areas of their life were positively or negatively affected by not drinking and how these areas were affected.

I conducted a pilot focus group session to ascertain whether the protocol elicited that addressed the research questions posed in the current study. I tape-recorded the session and transcribed that recording. After the initial pilot group session, I collaborated with one of the professional consultants who initially helped me develop the protocol; together, we analyzed the transcripts to see if the protocol was appropriate for my research questions. We made adjustments in the focus group protocol based upon our analysis.

The final focus group question protocol consisted of four sections: (a) motivations, (b) behaviors exhibited to keep from drinking alcohol, (c) social behaviors, and (d) outcomes (see Appendix A). There were a total of 32 questions in the protocol with 13 questions in the motivation section, 4 questions in the behaviors exhibited to keep from drinking section, and 11 questions in the social behaviors section, and 4 questions in the outcomes section. I designed the focus group sessions to last for 90 minutes.

Data Collection Procedures

Before collecting any data, I sought approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Research Involving Human Subjects at the campus where the study was conducted. Once I obtained IRB approval for the present study, I commenced the data collection phase.

First, to obtain the best possible room and furniture layout for data collection for the current project, I sought out a normally quiet room with a large conference table and moveable chairs. I placed the chairs around the perimeter of the table in a horseshoe shape. This design allowed the members see and interact with each other, while being easily audiotaped during their focus group sessions.

Second, I obtained high quality tape recording equipment. I placed the tape recorder in the center of the table to allow for maximum voice pickup. Before any of the sessions

commenced, I tested the tape recording equipment in the room in which they would be used. This ensured that the equipment worked and that it would adequately capture the desired information given the room set-up.

In the focus group sessions, I solicited participant responses using my focus group protocol. The protocol included the following sections: introduction, setting the tone, participant consent, questions and related follow-up questions, brief summary of focus group answers and preliminary themes, participant response to brief summary, closing, money distribution, and researcher notes and wrap-up. For an example of the full focus group protocol, see Appendix A.

Before the participants arrived at the focus group session, I made folding tabletop nametags for each of the participants (with only the first name written). As the participants entered the room, I greeted them, asked them to pick up their nametags, and had them pick a chair at the table. Once all of the participants entered the room and were seated, I started the introductions.

I briefly introduced myself to the focus group, stating my qualifications and affiliations. Next, I briefly described the focus group process. Then, I asked participants to identify themselves by first name. I also gave them the opportunity to reveal any other personal information about themselves they felt comfortable telling the group.

For the focus groups to have an open and honest exchange, it was necessary for me to set the appropriate tone. First, I reviewed the purpose and goals of the focus group session. Second, I reviewed the general format of the focus group. By doing this, I illustrated to the participants that the questions would be asked to the group, giving each participant a chance to respond. Additionally, I reviewed the ground rules for participation, such as not putting each other down,

not dominating, being respectful, and one person talking at a time. While reviewing the format, I attempted to set the mood through a positive, sincere, and upbeat attitude.

The next step in the protocol was reviewing recording procedures and securing consent. First, I informed the participants that they would be tape recorded. After the sessions, I would review the recordings later, transcribe them, and analyze them to help me answer the questions posed in the present study. I also told them I would not share the recordings or transcripts with any individuals beyond the project's consultants. Additionally, I would not connect a participant's name and personal information with the recordings. Once the sessions were recorded, I would only refer to the individuals by pseudonyms in any subsequent reports. At this point in the proceedings, I also informed the participants that their participation at all points was completely voluntary; they were all free to leave at any time if they felt uncomfortable. To obtain written consent, I passed around consent forms for all of the participants to sign (see Appendix I). After obtaining consent, I turned on the recording equipment and commenced with the focus group questions.

I asked the questions as scripted in the focus group question protocol (see Appendix A). I asked the questions to the group as a whole, giving each person a chance to respond. If an individual did not respond during a particular question, I encouraged him or her to offer comments. If some questions elicited little response, I asked the participants to respond in the order in which they were seated around the table. When necessary, I asked clarifying and follow-up questions. For example, if a respondent stated that he "did not drink because of some previous bad experiences," I asked a follow-up question, such as "What sort of bad experiences did you have?" I only asked these questions when necessary to clarify vague participant responses.

Next, for each question, I reviewed the general range of answers and preliminary themes that emerged during the focus group with the participants. I gave the participants the opportunity to add to their answers or to correct any incorrect interpretations.

After reviewing the themes, I started the focus group closing procedures. Once again, I gave the participants the opportunity to add responses to any of the questions posed. Then I informed the participants of the procedures I would use after the conclusion of the focus group. Next, I asked the participants to keep the information shared in the focus group confidential. As the final part of the closing procedures, I invited the participants to contact me in the future if they should have any questions about the results of the study or the final report. Since this concluded the information that needed to be gathered for the focus group, I turned off the recording equipment.

Next, I passed around a payment receipt sheet for all the participants to sign (see Appendix J). Once all of the participants signed their receipts, I distributed $15.00 cash to each participant.

After the participants left the focus group room, I wrote down initial observations and notes about the session. Notes included the initial themes that emerged, group interactions, and any reminder notes about the session to be used during data analysis. Finally, I carefully labeled all of the paperwork and audio tapes with the session number and date to avoid any possible confusion with other focus group materials.

The methods of data collection were chosen to answer the questions posed in the present study in a qualitative fashion. For qualitative research to be sound, it must have both authenticity and trustworthiness established through its techniques. The ways in which I established authenticity and trustworthiness are examined in the next section.

Authenticity and Trustworthiness

Authenticity is defined as collecting data in a uniform way and ensuring that the data collected answers and relates to the research questions in a particular study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In this study, I enhanced authenticity in three ways. The first method of enhancing authenticity was tape recording all of the interview sessions for uniform data collection. After I recorded the sessions, I transcribed the information verbatim, minus unnecessary verbal pauses.

Second, I developed the focus group protocol in collaboration with student affairs professionals who were familiar with research and assessment, focus groups, and alcohol research. (see Appendix A). This process is known as expert review and is another way of building authenticity (Creswell, 1994).

Next, I used the focus group protocol with a pilot group to ascertain whether the questions answered all of the elements of the research questions for my study. Both an expert and I examined the transcripts of the pilot focus group. After their examination and subsequent analysis, I adjusted the focus group protocol to answer better the research questions posed in the current study. This is another method of enhancing authenticity.

Trustworthiness is defined as guaranteeing the truthfulness of the data collected for a given study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). For the current study, I attained trustworthiness through several means. To begin, I had one member of my consultation team review one focus group transcript to be sure I was transcribing correctly. Then, I asked the same member of my professional consultation team to review my list of codes and then examine my coding scheme for three focus group transcripts. After reviewing my coding technique, my consultant and I discussed my technique and suggestions for improvement. My coding technique was then

adjusted for these items to match the suggestions of my consultant. This is one method of enhancing trustworthiness.

Second, I briefly reviewed the preliminary assessment of themes and answers to focus group questions with the participants at the end of their focus group sessions. Then I gave the participants a chance to respond to my observations by correcting or adding to them. This process is known as member checking and is an established method of enhancing trustworthiness (Creswell, 1994).

Third, I used the process of triangulating data collection for my study. Triangulation uses multiple data points (usually three or more) to obtain information. To obtain multiple data points, I looked for the same comment to be made three different times in response to a particular research question. When I found a comment to be made three times, it became a triangulated theme and was coded as such. Triangulation is another method of enhancing trustworthiness (Merriam, 1988).

Data Analysis Procedures

I conducted data analysis in an effort to answer the research questions of the present study by analyzing two types of data. First, I transcribed and analyzed the audio taped focus group responses. Second, I calculated the demographics obtained from the pre-screening interviews. The data analysis procedures I used to analyze both types of data for the current study are explained below.

The primary data type analyzed for the present study was the audio taped focus group responses. After the focus group sessions ended, I transcribed the audiotapes verbatim, minus any unnecessary verbal pauses. The unit of analysis was the comment. For the purpose of this study, a comment was defined as a complete thought, idea, or statement made by a participant in

response to a question posed during a focus group session. In this study, a comment was attributed the individual who made it, so I labeled each complete new thought, idea, or statement in response to a question (no matter which person offered the information) as a new comment in the transcription. The resulting transcription was a list of all comments made in response to each protocol question.

I analyzed the comments and assigned themes through emergent theme coding. Since the focus group question protocol was divided into sections that mirrored the research questions, the same process was used to interpret the responses to answer each research question.

The first step in analyzing the focus group transcripts was to look for possible content theme categories in the participant responses. I then made an initial list of all possible content themes for each question. For the motivations section for example, if students answered the question about why they did not drink alcohol with words such as Christianity or religion, then I grouped them into a Religion theme. In the section on behavior to keep from drinking alcohol, if students described the techniques they used to abstain as simply not attending parties where alcohol is served and not going to bars, then I grouped those answers into an Avoidance of Drinking Situations theme. For the social behaviors section, if students stated they only went to parties where they had friends, I grouped those responses into a Parties with Friends theme. For the outcomes section, if students reported negative outcomes of abstention such as not being able to associate with drinking friends or not fitting in at parties, then I grouped those answers into a Feeling Left Out theme.

After writing down the possible themes, I assigned each theme a multi-letter code. The codes were easy to write and later to locate visually next to participant responses on the transcripts. Multiple letter codes were necessary to increase the number of possible themes that

could be assigned and to make the themes easily identifiable when reviewed later. Next, I reviewed each focus group transcript again and marked the theme code next to each comment related to the theme.

When progressing through the transcripts for coding the first time, I discovered additional themes, so I added these themes to my list as I progressed. Once I coded the transcripts a first time, I reviewed them a second time with the revised theme and code list. During this second review, I made any changes that were necessary to enhance consistency.

After initially coding my transcripts with content level themes, I looked for overarching themes that suggested larger patterns. I developed a list of second level codes and themes to describe these patterns and coded the transcripts in the same manner I did with the content level themes. Since this was my third coding review of the transcripts, I did not find it necessary to re-code the transcripts a second time with the second level of themes.

Once all of the focus group transcripts were coded at the second level, I compiled a simple tally sheet for each focus group (see Appendix K). I made columns that included the theme codes for each protocol question. Next to each theme code, I tallied the total number of times the theme appeared. I used the intersections of the rows and columns on the tally sheet as a basis for the frequencies I used to help analyze my data.

Next, I summed the total numbers of comments made for each of the following: all focus groups combined, in response to each research question, in response to each question in the protocol, and each theme for each research question. Then, I reviewed the tally sheets for all focus groups to find themes that occurred three times or more in response to a particular research question. If a theme appeared three or more times in response to a question, then I used the theme for further analysis. If a theme appeared less than three times, then I did not use that theme

for further analysis. Next, I broke down the comment totals for focus groups, research questions, protocol questions, and themes into frequency distributions and percentages. I used the resulting data to guide my responses to my research questions posed in the current study.

The second type of data analyzed was the participant demographic information obtained during their initial pre-screening interview. To begin, I calculated the totals for the following categories: gender; ethnicity; age; on or off campus residence; W.E.L.L. residence; class standing (freshman, sophomore, junior, or senior); and major. Then, I translated the totals of each possible response for each category into frequency distributions and their percentage of the total for each category. I used these frequency distributions simply to describe the participants in my study.

In writing the narrative for the results and discussion, I used several techniques to stay true to the qualitative nature of this study and to represent the broadest possible range of responses that answered my research questions. I combined direct quotations, themes, frequencies, demographics, and visual observations to serve as a basis for the narrative. Whenever possible, I used the participants' own voices to tell the story of their abstention. In addition, I used the frequencies and percentages for participant responses and themes to support any trends that emerged. I used these emergent patterns of groups of themes to respond to the research questions. Together, the combination of individual comments plus the frequency of codes for various questions was used for "explanation building." In addition, I used the demographic information from the pre-screening interviews to describe the nature of the sample. This combination of different data types was used to explore the answers to the present study's research questions.

Conclusion

Gathering data through the use of focus groups for this study helped obtain a range of participant responses. The methods of data collection and data analysis used for these focus groups enabled me to answer the questions posed in the present study.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The Story of My Experience with the Focus Groups

In this section, I describe my experiences with running these focus groups. I have included a description of the focus group location, my preparation for the focus groups, and the actual experience of running the focus groups. I included this descriptive information to give some context for the study. I also wanted my readers to feel as though they were a part of the focus groups when picturing my experience, or better yet, when reading the participant responses. I wanted my readers to feel as much a part of the experience and to get as close to my participants as possible. At the very least, I hope my readers will at least have an understanding of the process and experience of these focus groups.

*Focus Group Location: Cranwell International Center*

The location I picked for conducting my focus groups was the Cranwell International Center, on the edge of Virginia Tech's campus. I picked the center due to its location, convenience of scheduling, easy student access to its facilities, its quiet and private conference rooms, and the general atmosphere. Since Cranwell is located on the edge of Virginia Tech's campus, students who lived on campus had an easy time walking to the location for their focus groups. Additionally, those students who lived off campus and needed to drive or ride the bus could easily do so by parking their car in the Cranwell parking lot or by taking a bus to a nearby bus stop. I worked at the facility as a Graduate Assistant while conducting the focus groups, so scheduling and organizing the rooms was convenient. Additionally, since I had easy, 24-hour access to the facility, I was able to schedule the groups for any day or time I wished. This ease of

scheduling allowed me to organize the focus group schedules at times that I felt students were most likely to show up (at unpopular class times during the week, during weekday evenings, or on weekends). The ease of access allowed me to scout the rooms, test different chair and table layouts, and test recording equipment before the focus groups began. I used two different rooms for the focus groups. The first room I used was a large formal dining room, with elegant furniture and a large mahogany dining table. The second room I used was a carpeted classroom located upstairs in the center. While the dining room is a little noisier due to its location, both rooms could be completely isolated by shutting the access doors, which helped ensure privacy for the focus groups. Finally, I chose Cranwell for its warm, friendly, and non-clinical atmosphere. Cranwell is actually a large renovated home that is mostly used for student services and programming. When I walked into Cranwell, I felt as though I was walking into a warm, comfortable home with a lively and friendly atmosphere. I hoped that all these factors would not only contribute to high numbers of students actually showing up for their sessions, but also to a feeling that would make them more likely to contribute openly during their group discussions.

*My Preparation for the Focus Groups*

The day before each focus group session, I sent each participant a reminder e-mail (see Appendix G). The first thing I did before each focus group arrived was arrange the tables and chairs in the room I was using. The basic layout I wanted for each focus group was a large conference type table with chairs evenly spaced around the outside. Also, I made photocopies of the consent form (see Appendix H) and set a copy out, along with a pen and paper for each participant. To help with the atmosphere, I made sure to have cold water and cups available on the conference table during each session. I also checked the audio equipment to make sure it was

optimally placed and that everything was working correctly. Once the focus group rooms was

arranged, I usually left the room to direct the focus group participants as they entered the center.

*Getting Started in the Focus Groups*

As the participants came in, I asked them to read and sign the consent form. There were

very few questions, and as most groups assembled, they were fairly quiet. They mostly sat

around not talking and waiting for the focus group to start. A few of the participants in some of

the groups knew each other, and in these circumstances they usually chatted a little before we

began. One of the groups included three men who knew each other fairly well. They talked,

laughed, and joked loudly before the group began. Some people arrived 15 or 20 minutes early

and took the time to get settled or just wait quietly. Before one group began, three of the

participants who arrived early began asking me questions about the study related to its purpose.

They also asked me what I thought about college drinking and related solutions. We engaged in a

short discussion on the topic. However, I did not wish to bias the group responses, so I kept this

discussion to a minimum.

I started each group by shutting the doors and taking a roll call. To help the participants

retain their confidentiality, I walked around to members and had them quietly tell me their name

or point it out on a list. Once I called roll, I collected the consent forms and asked if they had any

problems or questions. They usually had a few short questions related to the purpose of the

study, which I answered briefly by explaining that it was for my thesis.

After collecting the forms, I explained the basic ground rules of the groups and protocol.

First, I explained that they could use a pseudonym when speaking and asked them to make a

nametag with the name of their choice. If they chose a pseudonym for their nametag, I wrote it

down next to their name on my group roster to help me during transcription. Next, I introduced

myself and gave a brief overview of the study, making sure to explain how I would operate the focus group by asking them questions and giving them time for open-ended responses. Then, I carefully set the ground rules by setting an atmosphere designed for respectful listening and open sharing. Participants were encouraged to talk as much or as little as they desired on each question, not to  interrupt, to be respectful of others' opinions, and to leave the session at any time if they should feel uncomfortable. I also made sure they understood that they did not have to talk for each and every question, especially if they felt they would be saying the same thing they said earlier in the session.

Even though they signed the consent form acknowledging they were being tape-recorded, I reiterated that fact during the introductions. To help put their minds at ease about confidentiality issues, I told them that I and perhaps someone from my committee would be the only individuals who would listen to the tapes. Additionally, I informed them that I would be the only one transcribing the tapes and that only I and individuals on my committee would read the actual transcripts. Furthermore, while the transcripts and tapes would have some individuals' real first names on them, depending on their choice to use a pseudonym, I made sure they understood that I would use pseudonyms for any reporting of the results. The pseudonyms used for final reporting would only be a first name pseudonym, one they self-selected if they chose to do so or one I assigned if they did not choose their own. After setting up the confidentiality protocol for the group, I next discussed with them that they did not have to answer any questions they were uncomfortable answering. Finally, I had to inform them that while they could leave at any time during the focus group if they became uncomfortable, they would only be paid if they stayed

until the end of the group. With the basic environment and parameters of the focus group established, I pressed on to the questions.

*The Questions and Discussion*

I followed the same basic procedures for each of the eight focus groups. While each focus group had its unique feel and flow, there was a general pattern that all focus groups seemed to follow as I moved through the focus group protocol (see Appendix A). In the sections below, I explore some of the basic patterns in the focus group discussions that arose from the focus group protocol questions.

*Protocol Section One: Motivations for Abstention*

I felt it would be easier to begin asking the participants some general questions about themselves. I also knew from my experiences running focus groups that some people might be uncomfortable sharing at the beginning of the focus group, so I began each focus group with the first question from the protocol (In a sentence or two, what do you do to keep from drinking?), asking each member of the group to respond, going around the table. The first responses were usually vague and short. Again, for most groups, I asked the second protocol question, having each participant respond around the table, in the opposite order from the first question. At this point in the protocol questioning, all questions were basically follow-up questions, referring to specific aspects related to their motivations, or why they chose to not drink. While the first few responses were a little stilted for most groups, the relatively repetitive questioning from Section One of the protocol seemed to illicit results; most focus groups began to open up with longer answers by question 2.a. in that section (Have any people influenced you? If so, how?). Each group progressed through Section One a little differently, with most groups answering some questions at length and most individuals responding to the majority of the questions. Also, most

groups usually had relatively sparse responses for at least one or two questions in Section One. Question 2.d. (Have any opinions influenced you? If so, how?) routinely had the fewest responses.

Notably, most groups had several group members who began disclosing personal (and at times painful) information as early as the first few questions into the protocol. However, while many individuals disclosed personal information early, few participants were moved to tears or were visibly shaken by their responses early in the groups. Rather, if they disclosed personal information, it was mostly in a matter-of-fact manner. Additionally, while answers in focus group responses were sometimes vague in the first few questions, as soon as one member of the group became more specific about disclosing personal information (e.g. that their religious influences were really Christian influences or about the exact nature of their past negative experiences with friends or family), it seemed that other members of the group followed suit quickly by agreeing or by disclosing their own personal information. While they were already building their responses as they related to other group member's responses in Section One, the building at this point was usually simple and based upon very similar experiences or outright agreement. In many groups, a rapid succession of several individuals would quickly agree or state the exact same information as the individual who had first disclosed.

*Protocol Section Two: Behavior Exhibited to Keep from Drinking*

By Section Two of the protocol (behavior related to abstaining), all groups and most group members were regularly contributing without prompting. However, through all sections, if I found that only one or two individuals were answering questions, I began having every member of the group respond to the question around the table. This technique seemed to help get stagnant groups moving again. Since it was so successful at prompting responses, I decided to use it for

the opening question for each protocol section. The depth of answers for Section Two varied widely among the groups. Some groups had lengthy responses to questions 1. and 1.a. from Section Two (which focused on specific behavior or techniques they used to keep from drinking). However, most individuals made significant contributions when speaking about being around the drinking at Virginia Tech (question 1.b.); much of this centered around the related pressure or lack thereof that they experienced (question 2). For some groups, their responses about the pressure or the difficulty or ease of not drinking (question 1.c.) lacked depth and seemed homogenous. While the type and depth of responses for Section Two varied, in general, most groups had large percentages of participants contributing regularly and disclosing personal information when relating their experiences. In Section Two, I noticed that most groups began to develop a character and progressed at their own cadence. By Section Two, most individuals who might have been quieter in Section One began to open up a little bit more. I also noticed that individuals were building off the answers regularly when they said things such as, "I have to agree with him," or, "I'd like to add to what she said."

*Protocol Section Three: Social Behaviors*

In Section Three, I changed the pace a little bit and provided an opportunity for each participant to contribute. Again, I started with the first question or two by asking each member to contribute around the table. By Section Three, usually all members of the group were regularly contributing. Through the course of all focus groups, only 2 or 3 individuals made infrequent contributions, meaning they usually contributed when directly questioned by me. The first four questions in Section Three of the Protocol (about having fun, socializing, relieving stress, and friends) generally elicited the richest and most detailed responses of all. By this time, each group developed its own character and members were definitely building off each others' responses. In

fact, increasingly, participants began their answers with words like, "I agree," or "I agree also." Group members seemed more comfortable within the group and there were noticeably more disagreements in responses. In two focus groups, individuals within the group actually challenged other group members on answers they felt were lacking or were given with little thought. Also, in two groups, members regularly discussed their answers with short conversations back and forth either before or while they were answering the questions. The only questions that elicited fewer responses than others in Section Three were questions 5 and 6, about the support members felt they received from families. So, through Section Three, most groups were dynamic and displayed signs of complex group interactions.

*Protocol Section Four: Outcomes of Abstention*

The questions in Section Four of the protocol were short and to the point. The responses that I received from questions in Section Four were also short and to the point. By this time in the questioning, most individuals had little to say. When pressed further for answers, group members often stated that they had nothing further to add that they had not already covered. However, despite the responses having less depth comparatively to other sections, most participants were still active and participating in the process at this point.

*General Observations and Wrapping Up the Focus Groups*

After the final section of the protocol, I asked all groups if they wished to add anything to their responses. Some groups had lengthy additions. It seemed that the majority of responses here were individuals clarifying earlier answers they made or addressing issues of concern about drinking or Virginia Tech that they had not previously addressed. After their initial follow-up responses, I reviewed each question I asked and briefly stated the general themes I noted from the groups. Once again, after reviewing my perspective on the themes, I allowed the group

members to make additional comments; only a handful of individuals from all focus groups combined took this opportunity to add to their responses.

I scheduled all the focus groups for 90 minutes. The groups were designed originally for 15 minutes of introduction time, one hour answering focus group questions, and about 15 minutes to wrap up. However, I realized after the pilot group that I wanted to use as much of the time as possible for the actual focus group questioning. Most groups ended right on time, with only one taking less time and two others going over by more than five minutes. One group carried on for about 15 minutes after the time ended, adding lengthy follow-up responses. After the groups concluded, I quickly distributed their cash for participation and any referrals. For one group, I handed out the money first, because one participant person had to leave 5 minutes early. While distributing cash, I made sure to give participants the option of getting the results once I completed them. After the participants left, I took a few minutes to make some additional notes to myself, to gather up my materials, and to clean up.

I had a good feeling when all but one group left. With most groups, usually one or two individuals stayed behind for a few minutes to discuss the study or to express their appreciation for being a part of the study. One group had three male participants who interrupted the group often with their own conversations and joking between themselves. This was the only group that left me with bit of a negative feeling. However, even for this group, I felt they gave me many valuable responses. For all groups, I felt they came together and addressed the questions both individually and as a group, with each group having its own unique character.

In terms of gender, the focus groups consisted of 45.3% (n=24) male and 54.7% (n=29) female participants. The self-reported racial statistics were as follows: 75.5% White (n=40), 3.8% Black (n=2), 9.4% Asian (n=5), and 1.9% Hispanic (n=1). Additionally, 7.5% (n=4) of the participants were international students, with 100% of the international students being Asian. Participants also reported their ages, which were as follows: 3.8% age 17 (n=2), 37.7% age 18 (n=20), 34.0% age 19 (n=18), 13.2% age 20 (n=7), 3.8% age 21 (n=2), 1.9% age 23 (n=1), 3.8% age 24 (n=2), and 1.9% age 26 (n=1). Of all the participants, 8.8% (n=6) were of legal age to drink. In terms of on or off campus residency, 32.1% (n=17) reported living off campus and 67.0% (n=36) lived on campus. Additionally, 34.0% (n=18) of the participants lived in the W.E.L.L., as opposed to 66.0% (n=35) who did not. Of the on campus residents (n=36), 50.0% (n=18) lived in the W.E.L.L.. Participants reported the following for their academic class: 50.9% (n=27) freshman, 26.4% (n=14) sophomore, 15.1% (n=8) junior, and 7.5% (n=4) senior. Finally, information was collected from all participants regarding their academic major; the five most reported majors were: 13.2% (n=7) Biology, 15.1% (n=8) Business, 5.7% (n=3) Computer Science, 26.4% (n=14) Engineering, 5.7% (n=3) Foreign Language, and 11.3% (n=6) Undecided. Additionally, 15.1% (n=8) participants reported having dual majors. While my study was not intended to have a demographically proportional participant group as compared to the larger Virginia Tech student body, my study's demographic information and the comparable Virginia Tech demographic information are outlined in Table 1; the information is listed for comparative purposes as related to context.

Table 1

*Participant Demographics*

| Demographic Variable | Participants (n=53) | | Virginia Tech (n=20345) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Frequency | % | Frequency | % |
| Gender | | | | |
| Male | 24 | 45.3% | 11994 | 59.0% |
| Female | 29 | 54.7% | 8349 | 41.0% |
| Race | | | | |
| White | 40 | 75.5% | 16510 | 81.2% |
| Black | 2 | 3.8% | 1038 | 5.1% |
| Asian | 5 | 9.4% | 1389 | 6.8% |
| Hispanic | 1 | 1.9% | 360 | 1.8% |
| Multi-Racial | 1 | 1.9% | NA | NA |
| Other | NA | NA | 544 | 2.7% |
| International | 4 | 7.5% | 504 | 2.5% |

Table 1, continued

*Participant Demographics*

| Demographic | Participants (n=53) | | Virginia Tech (n=20345) | |
| Variable | Frequency | % | Frequency | % |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | Age | | |
| 17 | 2 | 3.8% | NA | |
| 18 | 20 | 37.7% | NA | |
| 19 | 18 | 34.0% | NA | |
| 20 | 7 | 13.2% | NA | |
| 21 | 2 | 3.8% | NA | |
| 23 | 1 | 1.9% | NA | |
| 24 | 2 | 3.8% | NA | |
| 26 | 1 | 1.9% | NA | |
| | | Residence | | |
| Off Campus | 17 | 32.1% | 11840 | 58.2% |
| On Campus | 36 | 67.9% | 8505 | 41.8% |

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Table 1, continued

*Participant Demographics*

| Demographic | Participants (n=53) | | Virginia Tech (n=20345) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variable | Frequency | % | Frequency | % |
| **W.E.L.L. Resident** | | | | |
| Fresh | 27 | 50.9% | 4469 | 22.0% |
| Yes | 18 | 34.0% | 264 | 3.1% |
| **Class** | | | | |
| Fresh | 27 | 50.9% | 4469 | 22.0% |
| Soph | 14 | 26.4% | 4599 | 22.6% |
| Junior | 8 | 15.1% | 4730 | 23.2% |
| Senior | 4 | 7.5% | 6468 | 31.8% |
| Other Undergrad | NA | NA | 79 | 0.4% |
| **Major** | | | | |
| Animal Science | 1 | 1.9% | 392 | 1.9% |

Table 1, continued

*Participant Demographics*

| Demographic | Participants (n=53) | | Virginia Tech (n=20345) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variable | Frequency | % | Frequency | % |
| Architecture | 2 | 3.8% | 566 | 2.8% |
| Art | 1 | 1.9% | 216 | 1.1% |
| Biology | 7 | 13.2% | 999 | 4.9% |
| Business | 8 | 15.1% | NA | 0.0% |
| Communications | 2 | 3.8% | 675 | 3.3% |
| Computer Science | 3 | 5.7% | 1066 | 5.2% |
| Dual Majors | 6 | 15.1% | NA | 0.0% |
| Engineering | 14 | 26.4% | NA | 0.0% |
| Environ. Science | 1 | 1.9% | 98 | 0.5% |
| Foreign Language | 3 | 5.7% | NA | 0.0% |
| Human Services | 1 | 1.9% | NA | 0.0% |
| Interior Design | 1 | 1.9% | NA | 0.0% |

Table 1, continued

*Participant Demographics*

| Demographic | Participants (n=53) | | Virginia Tech (n=20345) | |
| Variable | Frequency | % | Frequency | % |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | Major | | |
| International | | | | |
| Studies | 1 | 1.9% | 138 | 0.7% |
| Math | 1 | 1.9% | 214 | 1.1% |
| Music | 1 | 1.9% | 99 | 0.5% |
| Nutrition | 3 | 3.8% | 489 | 2.4% |
| Political Science | 1 | 1.9% | 384 | 1.9% |
| Psychology | 1 | 1.9% | 705 | 3.5% |
| Undecided | 6 | 11.3% | 1440 | 7.1% |

*Specific Group and Individual Demographics*

While I outlined the demographics for my entire participant group in the previous section, I wanted to include also the specific demographic information for each participant. My main reasoning for doing this was to give some easily referenced context for each individual. I felt this would be most useful as a cross-reference when wanting to know quickly more information about a participant when I quoted something he or she said during a focus group session. I grouped individuals by their focus group and only used their first name pseudonym as individual identification. The pseudonyms in Table 2 below are the same pseudonyms that I used when quoting their responses below.

Participant Responses

In the previous two sections, I described my personal experiences running the focus groups as well as the participants in the study. Before beginning the actual presentation of participant responses, I wanted to complete the general picture of my participants and their interactions with the focus groups. Each focus group developed its own, unique character, so this section examines the character of each group by describing my perceptions of the group dynamics. I also included the groups' strengths, weaknesses, and some general group themes.

*Experiences of Talking to Each Group*

Within the context of all focus groups, the total number of responses, number of responses to each question, and way in which the questions were answered varied somewhat but seemed to hold to similar patterns. However, each group had its individual feel. Describing the general feel of each focus group should help in understanding the context of participant responses.

Before examining focus groups and their responses, I need to define how I identified

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Table 2

*Specific Group and Individual Demographics*

| Group | Pseud. | W.E.L.L. | Gender | Ethnicity | Age | Residence | Class | Major |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| 1 | Ben | y | Male | Caucasian | 18 | On-Campus | Freshman | Engineering |
| 1 | Dennis | y | Male | Asian | 18 | On-Campus | Freshman | Computer Science |
| 1 | Ralph | y | Male | Caucasian | 18 | On-Campus | Freshman | Engineering |
| 1 | Sophie | y | Female | Caucasian | 18 | On-Campus | Freshman | Human Services |
| 1 | Scott | y | Male | Caucasian | 18 | On-Campus | Freshman | Engineering |
| 1 | Rebecca | n | Female | Hispanic | 19 | Off-Campus | Sophomore | Biology |
| 1 | Cybil | n | Female | Caucasian | 21 | Off-Campus | Junior | Communications |
| 2 | Janice | n | Female | Caucasian | 19 | On-Campus | Junior | Psychology |
| 2 | Jim | n | Male | Caucasian | 20 | Off-Campus | Senior | Business and Spanish |
| 2 | Jenny | y | Female | Caucasian | 18 | On-Campus | Freshman | Business and Spanish |
| 2 | George | n | Male | Caucasian | 19 | On-Campus | Sophomore | Biology |
| 2 | Mandy | y | Female | Caucasian | 18 | On-Campus | Freshman | Business and Math |
| 2 | Bo | Y | Male | Caucasian | 19 | On-Campus | Sophomore | Music |
| 3 | June | n | Female | Asian | 24 | Off-Campus | Junior | Nutrition |
| 3 | Jane | n | Female | Caucasian | 18 | On-Campus | Freshman | Engineering |
| 3 | Kip | n | Male | Multi-Racial | 21 | Off-Campus | Senior | Business |
| 3 | Lindsey | y | Female | Caucasian | 18 | On-Campus | Freshman | Communications |

Table 2, continued

*Specific Group and Individual Demographics*

| Group | Pseud | W.E.L.L. | Sex | Ethnicity | Age | Residence | Class | Major |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3 | Missy | n | Female | Caucasian | 19 | On-Campus | Sophomore | Nutrition |
| 3 | Wayne | y | Male | Caucasian | 18 | On-Campus | Freshman | Computer Science |
| 4 | Amit | n | Male | International | 17 | On-Campus | Freshman | Engineering |
| 4 | Robin | n | Female | Caucasian | 18 | On-Campus | Freshman | Undecided |
| 4 | Jackie | y | Female | Caucasian | 19 | On-Campus | Sophomore | Engineering and French |
| 4 | Marty | n | Male | Caucasian | 19 | On-Campus | Freshman | Undecided |
| 4 | Sopal | n | Male | International | 18 | On-Campus | Freshman | Computer Science |
| 4 | Ted | n | Male | Caucasian | 19 | Off-Campus | Sophomore | Environmental Science |
| 4 | Han | n | Male | International | 19 | On-Campus | Freshman | Architecture |
| 5 | Allison | n | Female | Caucasian | 19 | Off-Campus | Sophomore | Undecided |
| 5 | Carlos | n | Male | Caucasian | 19 | On-Campus | Sophomore | Engineering |
| 5 | Joseph | y | Male | Caucasian | 18 | On-Campus | Freshman | Undecided |
| 5 | Katie | n | Female | Caucasian | 18 | On-Campus | Freshman | Undecided |
| 5 | Shannon | y | Female | Caucasian | 18 | On-Campus | Freshman | Nutrition |
| 5 | Cali | y | Female | Caucasian | 18 | On-Campus | Freshman | Interior Design |
| 5 | Herb | n | Male | Caucasian | 20 | Off-Campus | Junior | Business |
| 6 | Julie | n | Female | Caucasian | 19 | On-Campus | Sophomore | Business |

Table 2, continued

*Specific Group and Individual Demographics*

| Group | Pseud | W.E.L.L. | Gender | Ethnicity | Age | Residence | Class | Major |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | Fergusen | y | Male | Caucasian | 19 | On-Campus | Sophomore | Engineering |
| 6 | Jin | n | Male | Asian | 23 | Off-Campus | Senior | Engineering |
| 6 | Bob | y | Male | Caucasian | 18 | On-Campus | Freshman | Engineering |
| 6 | Max | y | Male | Caucasian | 20 | On-Campus | Sophomore | International Studies |
| 6 | Lee | n | Male | International | 17 | On-Campus | Freshman | Engineering |
| 7 | Nancy | n | Female | Caucasian | 18 | On-Campus | Freshman | Biology |
| 7 | Hamal | n | Male | Black | 20 | Off-Campus | Junior | Political Science |
| 7 | Maureen | n | Female | Caucasian | 20 | Off-Campus | Junior | Biology |
| 7 | Muhammed | n | Male | Asian | 24 | Off-Campus | Senior | Engineering |
| 7 | Hunter | n | Male | Caucasian | 19 | Off-Campus | Sophomore | Biology |
| 7 | Samantha | y | Female | Caucasian | 19 | On-Campus | Freshman | Biology and Psychology |
| 8 | Abbar | n | Male | Asian | 20 | Off-Campus | Junior | Business |
| 8 | John | n | Male | Caucasian | 19 | On-Campus | Freshman | Architecture |
| 8 | Corbin | n | Male | Caucasian | 18 | On-Campus | Freshman | Engineering |
| 8 | Keisha | n | Female | Caucasian | 19 | Off-Campus | Junior | Animal Science |
| 8 | Kelly | n | Female | Caucasian | 20 | Off-Campus | Sophomore | Art |

Table 2, continued

*Specific Group and Individual Demographics*

| Group | Pseud. | W.E.L.L. | Gender | Ethnicity | Age | Residence | Class | Major |
|-------|--------|----------|--------|-----------|-----|-----------|-------|-------|
| 8 | Vicki | n | Female | Caucasian | 18 | On-Campus | Freshman | Undecided |
| 8 | Beth | n | Female | Black | 26 | Off-Campus | Freshman | Biology |

what I considered a response. Each time a new individual began speaking, I separated it as a response. Within each response, I identified comments. I did not separate out comments from the general responses. However, I did identify the comments related to their content or various themes used in coding, so each response could consist of a single word comment or several comments running on half a page of single-spaced text. Also, if an individual spoke in response to a question and then later gave another response to the same question, then I counted that individual as having made two responses.

For the 7 participants in focus group one, I documented 116 responses to the 25 questions in the protocol, or an average of 4.6 responses per question. This focus group had a number of individuals who disclosed revealing and personal information. They also seemed to give thoughtful answers to the questions. Additionally, nearly all of the participants made regular contributions to the group. From the group's answers, it was clear that all of the members had some difficulty living in the college environment as abstainers. However, while some members expressed extreme difficulty and pressure in the college environment, others seemed much better able to handle the difficulties.

Focus group two had 6 participants who produced 123 responses to 24 questions (24 questions since I inadvertently skipped question 16 in the protocol), or an average of 5.1 responses per question. This group had a strong religious influence, with many members giving answers strictly structured around their religious beliefs. While they did cite some difficulties in the college environment, they seemed to be one of the more naïve groups, with little experience either drinking or even being around drinking. However, two of the participants had extensive experiences around drinkers, which provided for some variation of opinion. As with group one, most of group two's participants added regularly to the discussion.

The third focus group had 6 participants who produced 122 responses for 25 questions, or an average of 4.9 responses per question. Again, as with the two previous groups, group three's participants all contributed regularly. As with group two, this group also had strong religious influences. However, while some members were somewhat dogmatic in their responses, others, while making their religious feelings clear, tempered them more with responses based upon their own personal reflections. Many of this group shared revealing and personal information in their responses.

The 7 participants in focus group four were some of the most loquacious with 133 responses for 23 questions (23 questions since I inadvertently skipped questions 11 and 14 of the protocol), or 5.8 responses per question. This was one of the more lively focus groups, with all but one of the members sharing often and at length. Even though I missed two questions of the protocol, this group still produced one of the highest numbers of responses, as they shared well past the ending time. This group was one of the most notable with about four individuals with strong personalities who shared revealing information about themselves and illuminated some points rarely touched on by members of any other groups.

For focus group five (7 participants), I counted 98 responses for 25 questions (the fewest of any group), or about 3.9 responses per question. This was another group where most individuals contributed regularly. As with some others, this group had four members with strong personalities who seemed to speak from their hearts, continually revealing their personal feelings and experiences. One individual in this group was clearly one of the most passionate participants of all the groups and was brought to tears several times when talking; he even brought other members of the group close to tears several times. This group had a strong religious influence related to abstention, however, the participant views did not seem dogmatic and the participants

often described their experiences in personal and thoughtful ways. Several members of this group expressed the serious difficulties they experienced being a student who abstained.

In the sixth focus group (6 members), I found 132 responses for 25 questions, or about 5.3 responses per question. This group had some problems with the group dynamics; three males who came knew each other well and often cross-talked and teased each other. Additionally, this was one of the smallest groups, with one of the members rarely contributing. However, two group members seemed to share personal information from their hearts. I often felt frustrated with the three disruptive friends. However, I was not alone, as one group member challenged the three participants on several questions when she felt their replies were hastily made. Finally, this group seemed to be one of the most socially experienced, with all but one member regularly spending time with people who were drinking.

The seventh focus group's 7 participants were some of the most prolific with 143 responses for 25 questions, or 5.7 responses per question.  Most of this group contributed regularly and shared personally revealing information. Also, this group was the most experienced with actual alcohol consumption, as three members all abstained due to negative past experiences they had while drinking. The participants mostly spent their social time with other college students while the other students were drinking. Although they were able to identify some of their own problems, the problems in their environment, and the problems they experienced through other students' drinking, they did not reveal the same depth in their personal accounts as some other groups. This seemed to be a group that operated from an intellectual understanding of their experiences, as opposed to a more emotional understanding.

Focus group eight's 7 members produced 114 responses for 25 questions, or 4.6 responses per question. This was one of the more subtle and quiet groups. While all members

contributed regularly, they often had to be prompted to speak. Compared to other groups, they were not particularly strongly opinionated or revealing in their responses. Additionally, many in the group had very little experience drinking or being around people who did drink. One thing this group emphasized was its relative ease in maneuvering in the college environment as abstainers.

<div align="center">Data and Participant Responses</div>

In this section, I examine the participants' responses as they related to my research questions. The data I collected through these focus groups were richly detailed and extensive in scope. The focus groups produced 288 pages of transcripts, the coding of which resulted in 4,469 data entries. Even though I broke down their responses into codes and themes to illustrate patterns, wherever possible I wanted the participants to tell their stories in their own voices. In combination with the participants' voices, I used codes and related descriptive statistics to aid in illustrating the patterns. Together, I hope this combination illuminates the richness and detail of the responses as they related to my research questions. In the interest of brevity, I was only able to present a small percentage of the actual data from the focus groups transcripts and coding in the body of this report.

<div align="center">*The First Level of Coding*</div>

As described by Miles and Huberman (1994), I reviewed my written transcripts for a first level of coding; these were codes I created that represented the content of the participant responses (see Appendix N for a list and description of the codes). The codes were abbreviated words and phrases that made sense to me, that I could quickly use, and that I could easily identify without constantly using a definition list. I used them to label the content of each participant response. This first level of coding identified and tracked the basic content of the

participant responses. Even though the content was identified with the first level of codes, this first coding was not interpretive of the content's underlying meaning. I started with the first transcript and a blank notepad; as I came to new areas of content not already on the list, I made a new code. I continued adding to my list of codes as I coded through the other seven transcripts. After completing coding three transcripts, I gave my transcripts and codes to an expert in the field for review. He reviewed my coding to check for consistency and to check my technique. After his approval, I moved on and coded the rest. To ensure uniformity in coding, I reviewed each transcript and coded it a second time, adding to or subtracting from to the codes already present on the coded transcript. When I was through with coding the first level the second time, I had 209 codes.

Once I had the codes, I entered all of the information into computer spreadsheets. For each focus group, I recorded the frequency of each code for each question on the focus group protocol (see Appendix M for an example of the data entry spreadsheet for a focus group). After entering the frequencies for each group, I compressed the data by research question. For example, I made a spreadsheet taking all responses of all groups for research question one and combining them together. This spreadsheet gave me the frequencies for first level codes for each research question. Then, each combination spreadsheet for each of the four-research questions was triangulated. For the purposes of this study, triangulation meant that only codes with a frequency of three or higher for a specific research question were used for further data analysis. The three or more total could come from comments made by any of the participants (they did not have to come from the same participants, from the same group, or from different groups). Finally, I calculated percentages by dividing the total number of recorded codes for a particular research question into the frequency of each triangulated code. The result was a table of the

frequencies and related percentages for each code related to each research question (see Table 3 below or Appendix O as examples).

I geared the first level of coding toward the content of the participant responses, as opposed to the interpretation of larger patterns of responses. Examining the content and the words the participants used to describe that content helped in summarizing and understanding how the participants responded to the protocol, or more importantly, to the research questions. Below, I examine the first level coding and participant responses in the context of my research questions. The percentages listed are the number of times a particular code was recorded for research question one divided by the total number of recorded, triangulated first level codes for all of research question one. Table 3 only contains a portion of all the codes recorded for research question one. See Appendix O for a full listing of all the first level codes recorded for research question one.

*Motivation for Abstention (Research Question One): First Level Content Themes*

For research question one, 20 of the top 21 recorded codes, or 58.0% of the total number of triangulated, coded comments were related to religion, family, friends, not wanting to drink, not wanting to be around alcohol, not wanting to suffer negative consequences from drinking, or past negative experiences with peer or family (see Table 3). More specifically, codes related to religion (relginfluen [6.1%], christian [3.5%], relg [1.8%], christianorg [1.7%], churchinfluen [1.7%], and honorgod [1.7%]) comprised 16.5% of the total codes recorded. Practically, this means that in the comments made, about 16.5% of the content was related to religion. Additionally, 9.4% of the content of comments was related to the family (famnfluen [5.5%], pastfamprob [2.3%], famnodrink [2.1%]); 8.3% of the content was related to friends (friendsinfluen [4.0%], hischool [2.2%], friendsdonotdrink [2.1%]); 18.0% of the content was

Table 3

*Top 21 First Level Theme and Code Frequencies for Research Question One*

| Theme Definition (Theme Code) | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Religious influence (relginfluen) | 47 | 6.1% |
| Do not want negative consequences from drinking (donotwantneg) | 44 | 5.7% |
| Family influence (faminfluen) | 42 | 5.5% |
| Past peer negative experiences (pastpeerneg) | 32 | 4.2% |
| Influence from friends (friendinfluen) | 31 | 4.0% |
| Having no desire to drink (nodesire) | 30 | 3.9% |
| Related to the Christian faith (christian) | 27 | 3.5% |
| Community influence (comminfluen) | 18 | 2.3% |
| Past family problems (pastfamprob) | 18 | 2.3% |
| Do not surround themselves drinkers (donotdrinksurround) | 17 | 2.2% |
| High School (hischool) | 17 | 2.2% |
| Family does not drink alcohol (famnodrink) | 16 | 2.1% |
| Friends do not drink alcohol (friendsdonotdrink) | 16 | 2.1% |
| Do not drink or drinking is illegal if under 21 (not21) | 15 | 2.0% |
| Making the conscious choice to abstain. Say no. (no) | 14 | 1.8% |
| Do not like feeling drunk or out of control (nocontrol) | 14 | 1.8% |
| Religion, not specific (relg) | 14 | 1.8% |

Table 3, continued

*Top 21 First Level Theme Code Frequencies for Research Question One*

| Theme Definition (Theme Code) | Frequency | Percentage |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Christian organizations or clubs (christianorg) | 13 | 1.7% |
| Influence from the church (churchinfluen) | 13 | 1.7% |
| Getting drunk dishonors God or astaining is honoring God. (honorgod) | 13 | 1.7% |
| Do not like the way people act when they drink (drinkactnotlike) | 12 | 1.6% |

Note: See Appendix O for a full listing of all first level, triangulated theme codes for research question one.

related to not wanting to drink, not wanting to be around alcohol, or not wanting to suffer negative consequences from drinking (donotwantneg [5.7%], nodesire [3.9%], donotdrinksurround [2.2%], not21 [2.0%], no [1.8%], nocontrol [1.8%], drinkactnotlike [1.6%]); and 6.5% of the content was related to past negative experiences of friends or family (pastpeerneg [4.2%] and pastfamprob [2.3%]).

Over 50% of the content of the comments in research question one was related to these areas. While this gives some indication of the nature of the participant comments, the words of the participants themselves should help illuminate their reasons for not drinking alcohol. I transcribed the focus group tapes verbatim and did not correct grammar mistakes, so the participants' exact words were used for quotations.

*Religion*

I found that religion was a strong influence in students' choice to abstain. While Christianity was cited predominantly, some students had other influencing religious experiences. Some students had strong religious upbringings through their family that they felt was influential. Other students felt they were more influenced through their religious experiences in college. I quote some representation of the variety of participants' religious influences below.

BO: I think it's totally wrong, in a religious kind of way.

HAMAL: Well, the Muslim rules of not drinking obviously influenced me…

BILL: I'm a Christian Scientist and quite frankly, to be part of the choice, you are expected not to be drinking.

RALPH: I was also brought up in a Christian family. So I go to church regularly and most of my friends are from church. So just being around them constantly, they also don't drink, so it's not a problem at all. I never have a desire to drink.

REBECCA: I just, like I said before too, I am a Christian. I just don't think it is very honoring to God or to my parents to be like a drunken fool.

MARTY: The Bible. You know, beer is the brawler and wine is the mocker. Whoever shows favor by them is not wise. It's in Proverbs. It's pretty clear. Christ drank real diluted wine, so the Bible says it is not horrible if you drink, but you must know your limits.

ROBIN: Basically, the main question I ask myself is, "What can I do to bring the most glory to God?" Not, "How far can I go not to get God mad at me?"

HERB: I guess like my friends in an organization. Intervarsity Christian Fellowship here has helped me to be a person, to see who I am in Christ, and like to just see that I don't need like alcohol or any other substance. You know, it makes me who I am. I found who I am. So, I have confidence and freedom in Christ. Although I don't think its wrong to drink, I don't think it's a sin to drink. Um, there are certainly, there's like limits, and being drunk is definitely not cool because you lose who you are, you aren't yourself, you don't have control of your body.

*Family*

Another big influence on abstention I noticed was the family. Some family influence was negative, in that past experiences with alcoholic family members or with alcohol-related family problems helped the participants make their decision to not drink. Other participants came from families who rarely drank or had no alcohol around the home. A few even had more culturally based family experiences that strongly influenced their not drinking. Some representative samples from the participant responses appear below.

VICKI: In my family, my brother became an alcoholic before he was even 18 and just seeing my parents go through that, kind of out of respect for them.

REBECCA: I guess my parents never drank. So there was never any alcohol or anything in the house.

JACKIE: I would say my two sisters and my mom and my dad. They are just fun people and they never needed to drink. They talk to me all the time about, you know, you really don't have to do that [drink alcohol]. It is really fun just to have good friends and talk and you don't have to be tainted with all this stuff.

MUHAMMED: Well my family, none of my family drinks, grandfather, my mom, my dad, my sister, my brother…

HAMAL: I don't know, I grew up in Morocco. My grandfather taught me that drinking's wrong.

BO: My parents definitely have, pretty much. They have never drank and they are the parents. It was taught to our family that that is not something that we would do; it's not something that's right.

*Friends*

I also discovered that friends often had a strong influence on the participants' choice to not drink. As with the family, some influence was negative, through seeing their friends go through negative alcohol-related experiences. Other experiences were more positive, which came through interactions with friends who did not drink or who encouraged them to not drink. Some of the participants' responses in this category appear below.

JANE: I don't have any personal experiences with it, but um, some of my high school friends, that was all they did, among other things. They got such a kick out of it, but

it seems totally stupid to me. I don't see the point in it.

MUHAMMED: …I lived off campus with people I know from the dorm and they drink. So, I mean, I see people, my friends dropped from school because of having fun drinking.

MAUREEN:  I guess the same thing. I saw some really, I guess horror stories freshman year. I had a pretty wild hall….[A]lmost every weekend it was something new. I mean, I could go into the stories, but, you know. One girl was hyperventilating and we had to call the campus rescue squad. I was helpless. I couldn't help her. It just was a horrible experience. But, it also reminds me that alcohol is a real drug and you can't ignore that.

CALI: I kind of hang out with, you know, people who feel the same way that I do. And if they don't, I make it clear that I won't.

ROBIN: For me, when I was in high school, which was just last year, I had older people that I looked up to that were in college that didn't drink and I knew that. These were people that I really admired, which were like my Young Life leaders or people who helped out in my youth group. I really admired their lives and how they could still have fun and go out. They weren't missing out on anything and they didn't drink. That was a really big positive influence on me.

NANCY: I drank pretty heavily for my junior year in high school and I guess I just kind of got out of control there for a while. One of my really good friends kinda like told me to look at myself, see what I was doing to my life.

BILL: There's also one of those friends, who's kind of like people turn around a little bit. I was kind of wavering a little bit earlier this year, but he's like, "If you choose not to drink, that's fine, we're fine with it."….how he kind of supported me in a way, like, just to stick with what I really believed in.

SAMANTHA: I'm living in the W.E.L.L. this year and I think that kinda helps with [not drinking]. I don't really get exposed to [alcohol]. I'm mostly friends with people in the W.E.L.L., so I don't get exposed to people who would be saying, "Let's go out and drink," or really, really giving me peer pressure as far as...

*Not Wanting To Drink, Not Wanting to Be Around Alcohol, or Not Wanting To Suffer Negative Consequences From Drinking*

I discovered that many abstainers never wanted to drink. Others had no desire to be around alcohol or wanted to avoid the negative consequences they saw in others. The comments I gathered for this section are short and to the point, as I explored more about their experiences with not drinking in research questions two and three.

MAX: There's no real reason for me, I just, never really did.

JULIE: Basically because I don't like the idea of losing control of myself and not having full control over my actions and what I'd be doing….I don't think that's a great situation.

DENNIS: I think probably a more important question is, "Why drink when you are not going to be in control?" You are gonna do things that you are going to regret later. That is the meaning of my ideology and beliefs.

RALPH: I also live in the W.E.L.L.. The main reason I do that is so I don't have to be around people who drink.

REBECCA: That is just so unappealing and unattractive to me and I don't even want to come off that way. So, I try to stay away from it.

HERB: I decided not to drink because I just don't see any good from it. Right now, I'm under age, so, it's against the law. But, um, just the consequences I've seen through other people's lives, I just don't want that.

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CALI: Um, I don't like the consequences that I've seen happen from it and I also can have fun without it.

KATIE: I guess, as under 21 to be drunk, that's against the law. So, that's pretty much, you know, your community follows the laws. So, obviously you'll get in trouble if you get caught, if you get caught. But, definitely something that I don't want to face, you know.

*Past Negative Experiences*

Another obvious theme that was related somewhat with the family and friends themes above was that of past negative experiences. Some of the most predominant negative experiences I noticed came from these friends and family. I used the participants' words below to examine these negative experiences.

ABBAR: I chose not to drink because most everybody in my family drinks and I just don't like the way they start acting after they've had a few drinks.

KATIE: My brother was put in an alcohol institution for alcoholism.

He's an alcoholic. I just, you know, don't want to go through that. I don't see the point of why he decided or how he got in the situation, but I can learn from it.

JACKIE: I actually, I knew my grandfather pretty much drank himself to death…I heard a lot of stories from my mom about stuff he would [do], like the way he would act and the, what he would do when he got really drunk, and how he couldn't control himself….how he just stopped living his life anymore. I know that was an extreme case, but it really hit home with me, like images of seeing him like that. Why would I ever want to do anything like that?

SHANNON: A lot of those people I was friends with back at school or something, when I went to high school, I could tell the people that were the smokers and drinkers. They kind of let their grades slip and a lot of them are the kids that aren't even going to college now. So I thought, that might have had some sort of effect on it.

BO: One time, my senior year in high school, it was Spring Break, at the beach, and I went to a party with some of my friends who were pretty much drunk. After seeing that they were totally not in control of themselves, that totally put the nail in the coffin that I was never even going to touch alcohol.

JUNE: Also, one of my friends does drink. Drink, drank, drunk. She, actually, she would drink and drive and the police, they came in four police cars and came around me. I'm so, you know, nervous and she got in some mistake for that. She went to the jail, I don't know, but I am so sorry for her and so shocking for her. I don't want to turn into that type of person.

MARTY: I guess I've seen how people have been drunk and their behavior is dictated, not by their own process, but by the alcohol. And, the idea of having a foreign substance manipulate the way that I am behaving, just does not appeal to me at all. So having seen people who are alcoholics or who are just totally drunk, um, that lifestyle and that kind of behavior really just turns me off and I don't want anything to do with it.

The content related to why students chose to abstain was related mostly to religion, family, friends, not wanting to drink, not wanting to be around alcohol, not wanting to have suffer negative consequences from drinking, or past negative experiences with peer or family. I chose some of the most representative participant responses for these themes above. Next, I will explore specific behaviors abstainers use to not drink.

For research question two, 17 of the top 20 recorded codes, or 56.0% of the total number

of triangulated, coded comments recorded were related to specific behaviors to avoid drinking,

the pressure to drink or difficulty of not drinking, the experience of being around alcohol or

drinkers, and the lack of pressure to drink or ease of not drinking (see Table 4). The top 20

recorded codes related to specific behaviors to avoid drinking (no [5.4%], altbev [3.8%], noparty

[3.5%], avoid [2.2%], and nodesire [1.9]) comprised 16.8% of the total codes recorded for

research question two; this means that of all the comments made in this section, about 16.8% of

the content was related to these behaviors. Also, in the top 20 code categories, 14.3% of the

content was related to the pressure to drink or difficulty of not drinking (drinktofit [5.0%],

pressure [4.8%], hardnodrink [2.5%], nonotok [2.0%]), 12.2% of the content was about the lack

of pressure to drink or the ease of not drinking (nopressure [4.2%], nook [3.2%],

friendsdonotpressure [2.5%], and easyw/friend [2.3%]), and 12.7% of the content was related to

being around alcohol or drinkers (yesparty [6.4%], friendsdrink [2.5%], drink=college [1.9%],

and partyw/friend [1.9]).

Again, more than 50.0% of the content, and almost all of the top 20 types of coded

responses, were related to these areas. This may give some indication of the nature and direction

of the participants' comments. The words of the participants themselves give deeper explanation

and help illuminate the nature of their behavior related to not drinking alcohol.

Table 4

*Top 20 First Level Theme and Code Frequencies for Research Question Two*

| Theme Definition (Theme Code) | Frequency | Percentage |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Go to drinking parties or events (yesparty) | 44 | 6.4% |
| Make the conscious choice to abstain. Say no (no) | 37 | 5.4% |
| Drink to fit in (drinktofit) | 34 | 5.0% |
| Any type of pressure to drink (pressure) | 33 | 4.8% |
| Do not experience pressure to drink (nopressure) | 29 | 4.2% |
| Drink non-alcoholic, alternative beverages (altbev) | 26 | 3.8% |
| Do not go to drinking parties or events (noparty) | 24 | 3.5% |
| People accept, "No," for an answer (nook) | 22 | 3.2% |
| University, on-campus programming (campprog) | 21 | 3.1% |
| Friends do not pressure to drink (friendsdonotpressure) | 17 | 2.5% |
| Friends drink alcohol (friendsdrink) | 17 | 2.5% |
| It is difficult to abstain (hardnodrink) | 17 | 2.5% |
| Easy to abstain when with friends (easyw/friend) | 16 | 2.3% |
| Simply avoiding drinkers or drinking (avoid) | 15 | 2.2% |
| People do not readily accept, "No," as an answer (nonotok) | 14 | 2.0% |
| College is about drinking or everyone drinks in college (drink=college) | 13 | 1.9% |
| Friends do not drink alcohol (friendsdonotdrink) | 13 | 1.9% |

Table 4, continued

*Top 20 First Level Theme and Code Frequencies for Research Question Two*

| Theme Definition (Theme Code) | Frequency | Percentage |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Do not have a desire to drink (nodesire) | 13 | 1.9% |
| Attend parties with friends (partyw/friend) | 13 | 1.9% |
| Friends who respect you (respectfriend) | 11 | 1.6% |

Note: See Appendix P for a full listing of all first level, triangulated theme codes

for research question two.

*Specific Behaviors Related to Not Drinking*

In terms of their specific behaviors related to not drinking, I discovered that the participants either had no desire to drink, took active measures when around alcohol to keep from drinking, or simply avoided alcohol situations altogether. Whatever their behavior, they seemed, for the most part, certain that they did not want to drink and that they could keep from drinking with a few simple techniques.

*No desire.* I found a fair number of participants simply had no desire to drink. This seemed, according to them, to be a matter-of-fact, simplistic reason for why they did not drink. Some of their words below to describe their experiences.

ROBIN: My temptation to drink is like virtually none. So, it's not a problem for me…

BO: I'm never tempted to drink, ever. I never really had a desire.

MARTY: Yeah, I really don't have any desire to drink at all. So that makes it pretty easy…

JACKIE: Well, I agree with these guys. I don't, there's no part of me that really wants to drink, but I really wouldn't want to test that. Like, I would never want to see if I did want to…

JOSEPH: I don't do anything. It's not really an issue for me since I don't really want to.

*Taking active measures to not drink when around alcohol.* I found that some participants went to parties or spent time around people who were drinking alcohol. When in such situations, they had a number of successful techniques to help them not drink. Some techniques included remaining firm in their conviction and saying "no" and drinking alternative beverages in place of alcohol. Their words below describe their behavior.

HUNTER: I just say, "No." I just don't.

KATIE: …if I ever get pressured or really whatever, I just, you know, say, "Oh, I don't need it."

MAUREEN: …and you have to say, "No," a lot, kind of repetitively. And, especially, people kind of forget that you just told them, "No, you don't drink." So, they ask you again like 10 minutes later and you're like, "No, I don't drink."

KATIE: I like it when people ask me, you know, "Why aren't you drinking? Here have a beer." I like that, 'cause I tell them, "You know, hey, I don't need one." You know, "Why don't you not have one with me?"

JULIE: Um, basically, if I am around people that are drinking, I'll say, "Can I have a soda instead?"

JUNE: As far as hanging around and drinking, if they are drinking beer or something like that, I drink just Coke or soda or ice cream.

ROBIN: Kind of along the same lines. I think it's important that when you are out, you have something in your hand, whether it be soda, water, whatever. That way, people aren't going to try to put something in your hand.

JIN: Well one of the techniques that I do, it's kinda cheap, it's kinda a cheesy way to get out of it. Act like you are drinking, but you're not. People think that I'm drunk anyways, normally. What I do is go to the 7-Eleven. I buy a Arizona Ice Tea. It's one of those with Ginseng in it. I mean, it's a blue bottle, you know. But if you pour that into a thing, it looks like hard liquor. So, I do that.

*Just staying away from alcohol or parties.* Through the focus groups, I also discovered that many participants tried to avoid drinking situations and parties altogether out of choice. Their words describe their choice below.

JANICE: Mostly, I go to social functions that don't involve alcohol.

RALPH: I've also never been to a party where there has been alcohol.

JENNY: I didn't really attend parties where there's alcohol, because I mainly hang out with my IV [i.e. Intervarsity Christian Fellowship] people and people in my hall. So, there's not really alcohol.

JACKIE: …So, I try to avoid it too. Just like if I know it was going to be a big scene. But, you can't avoid everything and sometimes when I end up around it, I just like grab a cup of water…

JACKIE: I never make a conscious decision to go somewhere that I know there is going to be alcohol. But, if I end up there, I don't leave immediately.

FERGUSEN: …I avoid like large parties, where that's the goal is just to get drunk and they have jungle juice, or whatever in the heck they serve.

MARTY: …But, at same time, I avoid places where I know there is going to be alcohol. Like I don't go to parties where I know they are going to have alcohol… I mean, bad company corrupts good character, right? Um, I don't want to be associated with people who are drunk at the time. You know, I 'm not going to judge people and say they are bad because they drink, but I don't want to be a around them when they are drunk. I just, I'm not comfortable with that, I'm not. I don't want to be influenced in that way at all.

*Pressure to Drink or Difficulty of Not Drinking*

I asked the participants about the pressure to drink that they felt or did not feel at Virginia Tech. Many students experienced pressure to drink. On one hand, some experienced overt pressure in the form of other students asking them repeatedly to drink, while on the other hand, some students described a more subtle pressure they felt from just being in a college

environment where other students were drinking alcohol. I explore the degree and nature of this pressure through the participants' words below.

*Overt pressure to drink.* Some participants spoke about explicit pressure they experienced from people trying to talk them into drinking, people offering them drinks, or people not accepting "no" for an answer. The following words that were representative of their experiences.

JUNE: If you are going to a party, then they tend to pressure…

JANICE: I agree with George. I've had people offer me alcohol.

KIP: …I did, like way back, when I first came here, but that passed…After the initial, sort of, assault and then you explain to them, that maybe they continue a little bit more, but usually, usually, it sort of ends. Except on your 21st birthday.

MAUREEN: I mean if you're asked four or three times, it can feel like pressure.

KELLY: Its kinda hard at parties, like when you are the only person that doesn't drink. 'Cause you have people coming up to you like all the time. They're like, "Do you want something to drink? Would you? There's something over here, you don't have to wait or whatever."

LINDSEY: I guess, pretty much the same thing that June said, they offer you any drinks, you just say, "No." So, there is pressure, I guess. There is pressure to go to parties all the time. People are telling you, "You're not going to have fun doing that. Why don't you come out with us and drink?"

JIN: I have been pressed like so much, 'cause all my friends drink. And like, you know, "Jin, you gotta drink. You just gotta, have a sip." You know, sometimes I feel really pressured to drink. I really don't like [it]. They make me uncomfortable.

CYBIL: Another thing is, I think guys lot of times pressure girls more, to drink. I really do. You know, like, I'll be standing somewhere and I'll have a water or have something else. And they'll be like, "Why aren't you drinking?" And they'll get really strange with me, and you know, keep offering you, "Like, hey, let me go now, get you something at the keg. Let me go do this."

ROBIN: Definitely, I mean, everyone I know or everybody I go to, everyone is drinking and I get asked to drink all the time. It's kind of like a little game that everyone plays to try to turn the good girl bad. And people will think that they have accomplished something if they actually get me to drink. So its kind of fun and challenging at times, but, then its like, "Ok guys, time to back off."

DENNIS: I guess the pressure is always there. That is a lot of peer pressure, that, you know, you want to give in, but, then again, you don't really want to do that. I'd say, the pressure is really high, for me at least.

SOPHIE: I agree with what Dennis was saying. I was on the club [athletic] team this fall. All the girls, that's all they would do on the weekends, is go drink. And, we would have a social with the guys' team. A huge party with the coach's house. I'm going out of town for the weekend, luckily, but, there's all this pressure from them.

*Subtle pressure to drink.* In addition to the more obvious pressure to drink, I also found abstainers experienced pressure to drink just by being in a college environment and being virtually surrounded by drinking and alcohol. I chose some of their comments below.

FERGUSEN: Well, there's going to be pressure to drink at any college campus. I mean I have pressure on me every time I go out to drink.

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JIN: Yeah, there's pressure. There is pressure. Like I said before, I mean, you go anywhere, there's drinking. So, there is pressure.

MARTY: Yeah, there's definitely pressure to drink. You are always getting invites to the parties. Most of them are going to get kegs, "There's going to be a kegger, you know, it's great."

GEORGE: I felt some pressure before. If you're at a club or something, and that, the big social thing to do is drink.

REBECCA: But, I do feel pressured and a lot of times feel tempted, too. It's just, like, "Why not?" You know, free, free alcohol. But then, I think, you know, "Why am I doing it?" Well, I'm just doing it so I can fit in, so I can just hang out with them.

JACKIE: I would definitely say there is peer pressure to drink here at Tech. I know, just from like living in my residence hall, if I, I sit right by the window, you can hear, starting at 6 PM Thursday night until like 2 in the morning, everyone is screaming, yelling. The residence hall gets like empty. And, all of them, pretty much so many, just a mass of people that just go do that. You think, "Why would all these people do this?"

JIN: It's very difficult. It's extremely difficult. I think, because, I mean, this is Blacksburg and when you go to downtown, there [are] clubs (Sharkey's, Preston's, and downtown). I mean, everywhere you see downtown, that street, it's the drinking area…

CARLOS: I think it's very difficult, because everybody likes to be liked. And a majority of people do drink and it's a very social thing. In that, if I don't drink, I'm not part of the group. In a lot of groups, you take away the alcohol, there is no friendships at all…

HERB: I would agree with my buddy Carlos here, that um, that like, in the fact that it's really, really difficult…. just a lot of people man, they're looking for some way to be

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accepted by love, and alcohol definitely was a way for people to fool with themselves

that they are doing that…. like engaging in alcohol will be liked and be accepted…. So I

would say, I think it's pretty difficult in general for people to refrain from, like, drinking.

ALLISON: …difficult in that, if you are around everybody that does drink, the only

people you are around. So, if your friends, you can't help who your friends are and you

have to, you know, love them and care about them unconditionally. So, I just think it's

difficult in that, that's all they want to do. Plus, we're in college and it kind of sucks, but

it's really, incredibly accepted by everyone. Basically, all the time, that's what everybody

does. I mean, that's all you hear, go to class and people are talking, "Oh I got so wasted

this weekend." I mean, that's all you hear everywhere you go and stuff.

CYBIL: I can't even like begin to tell you how hard I think it is here to not drink. And,

like freshman year, when I first got here, I was amazed. I was like this is a whole new

world. I just didn't understand, everything is just alcohol here. Its all ever anyone talks

about, on my floor, at least. I guess I just ran with it. And, I thought that's all college was,

drinking and trying to get home in time to go to class, even going to your class drunk,

you know. It was just terrible. It was just very hard on this campus because there is so

much pressure and so many people drink.

*Lack of Pressure to Drink or Ease of Not Drinking*

From the other side of the question, participants talked about the lack of pressure to

drink. Some participants found it easy to not drink and felt relatively little pressure to drink.

However, some participants stated this lack of pressure was from their environment or the people

with which they surrounded themselves, while others felt little pressure or had an easy time not

drinking from their own conviction. Some of the responses in this category are below.

*The effect of the environment and peers.* In some environments and around some people the participants felt comfortable with not drinking or did not feel pressure to drink. I found that the friends and peers they were associated with may have influenced them not to feel pressure. However, some participants also felt that they would not be friends with people who might try to pressure them to drink. Here is what the participants had to say:

> HAMAL: …Well, everyone that I've gone out to parties, everyone is cool with the idea of not drinking….So I think it's the atmosphere at parties here at Virginia Tech is that if you choose to drink, cool. If you don't, that's cool, too.

> CARLOS: I think there's little to no pressure at all in that, if you are sitting in your dorm room, there's no pressure. You're the one who has to get out, look for it, and find it.

> JENNY: I personally find it very easy not to drink. Mainly because the people I hang out with.

> BOB: It really is easy. Well, ok, first of all it depends on who you hang out with, like Max said. And I tend to hang out with a lot of people who don't drink at all. There are a lot of groups out there, that have a lot of fun without alcohol. So obviously with them, it would be really easy not to drink.

> NANCY: …It's easy because my roommate also doesn't drink and, another one of our friends doesn't drink. So, we go out together and it's not even an issue.

> TED: …Personally, I don't really have that many friends that drink, so, its, I don't really feel any peer pressure.

> CALI: Um, I think its pretty easy because most of the people I hang out with or people I'm around respect my decision and they're gonna honor that, rather than try to get me [to do] what they want to do…

NANCY: And also a lot of times they know my story and if they accept me as a friend, that's the important thing, if they accept my choice not to drink.

BILL: So, like as long as you can build a group of friends that you are comfortable with, it makes it very easy because then they respect your decision….I just don't feel any pressure to fit in when you are with people that you are always with.

*Personal conviction.* I also found that participants seemed to perceive a lack of pressure based somewhat upon their own conviction in their beliefs or in their ability to say, "no." Their conviction came through when they stated the firmness of their beliefs or the confidence in their ability to not drink, as the following statements illustrate.

BO: I think its really easy not to drink….because if you don't drink, then that's your decision and you are the only one that can really make that or influence that, if you just stay to what you believe and what you are going to do. Then, I don't know, I don't think it's very hard, that you can't say, "No," to anybody.

LINDSEY: I think it's easy if you have self-discipline and if you get yourself plugged into the right friends, so that you have other options to always have fun….I can understand how it may be hard for some people.

BO: I definitely don't feel any pressure. I mean, even if I am talking to somebody that drinks, and you know, they'll ask, "What did you do this weekend?" I say, "I didn't drink, or whatever." And they say, "Oh, that's pretty dumb. Why don't you get trashed?" You know, it doesn't really matter what their opinion is…

JULIE: …also, I'm just open and honest with people. If they ask me, "Do you want a drink?" I'll say, "No, thank, you, I don't drink." And if they say, "well, why?" I'll just be

like, "It's my personal choice." I have never been in a situation where they don't respect that.

BEN: …once you are at the party, there's always, "Oh, there's beer over there at the kegs." I wouldn't call it really pressure; I'd call it temptation. The pressure is when they say, "Come on, Come on," and I don't see that as a big thing here. I don't see people, saying, "Come on, Come on, let's party, you gotta drink, you gotta do this." I would say, there's always an invitation to come to the party and drink, but, if you don't accept the invitation then they don't get on your case really.

*Experience of Being Around Alcohol or Drinkers*

I found that some abstainers spent a fair amount of their social time around alcohol or people who were drinking alcohol. It seemed that they commented on the proliferation of alcohol use in and around the college environment. Other abstainers occasionally went to drinking parties around campus. Some of their experiences are outlined below.

*Alcohol and the college environment.* I discovered that some abstainers noticed and commented on the amount of drinking and drinkers at college. Some associated the college experience or Virginia Tech itself with partying and drinking. Here are some of their experiences:

MAUREEN: …college life is almost centered around it, college party life.

ROBIN: Almost every weekend I've been here, I've been around alcohol, whether it's been [one or] both nights of the weekend, actually.

JENNY: I think if you come here with a mindset, like, "Oh, everyone gets drunk when they come to college, I'm gonna have so much fun," I think it would be very [easy] for them to fall into the trap of drinking, 'cause, there are so many people who do drink.

JENNY: I think that just from talking to some of the people from my classes who do drink, they're like, "Oh, this is Blacksburg. This is the middle of nowhere. There's nothing to do, so all you can do on the weekends is get smashed."

MARTY: Yeah, as far as going to where they have alcohol, it is kind of hard to find parties here where they don't have alcohol.

*Going to parties.* I also discovered that many participants sometimes went to drinking parties. Some went to have fun, some went to be with their friends, and others went out of a sense of obligation. Whatever their reasons, many abstainers took part in the alcohol party world along with their drinking peers. Some of their most representative comments are below.

CARLOS: Absolutely, I attend parties.

CALI: Yes, I go to parties all the time.

HERB: Um, I go to places where alcohol is served, not too much. I do. A lot of times, it's to go dancing, 'cause I like to shake it.

JOHN: Yes, I do go to some parties. I haven't been to many of them on campus, but, if I do go, I go with friends and possibly friends that aren't drinking and just hanging out with them and talk and have a good time.

KIP: I mean, I go out with some friends. I usually talk with a few people and sort of determine how long I'm going to stay before I leave and not offend the person whose party it is, 'cause, those are the parties I usually go to, where people are friends of mine who are actually throwing it… I'm there, not really to have fun, but more because I feel obligated to my friend to be there.

MISSY: Usually like all my friends who go there always want to go dancing. So we are always like on the dance floor and like no one drinks when they are dancing. So usually

that's like what we do like the whole time. So we never really have to like stand around with alcohol or anything.

HERB: If I'm going to a party, I make sure I bring at least one, if not two other guys that I know will like stand there with me and back me up, because, three is a force that cannot be broken. That's like in *Ecclesiastes*. Basically, I need to have other people there to help me out.

*Social Behaviors (Research Question Three): First Level Content Themes*

For research question three, 24 of the top 25 recorded codes, or 43.6% of the total number of triangulated, coded, recorded comments were related to social activities, experiences with friends who drink or do not drink, quality of friendships, participation in athletic or outdoors activities, and different types of friends (see Table 5). More specifically, of the top 25 recorded, those related to social activities (movies [3.8%], talk [3.6%], timefriend [2.7%], funw/friend [2.5%], yesparty [1.8%], christianorg [1.7%], eatout [1.4%], club [1.2%], and compgames [1.1%]) comprised 19.8% of the total codes for research question three. This means that of the comments made in this section, about 19.6% of the content was related to these behaviors. Also, of the top 25 codes, 8.3% of the content for research question three was related to experiences with friends who drink or do not drink (friendsdrink [2.3%], nodrinkfriendgood [1.8%], friendsdonotdrink [1.7%], oknotdrunksocial [1.4%], okdrinksocial [1.1%], and drinknodrink= [1.0%]); 6.5% of the content was related to participation in athletic or outdoors activities (sportspartic [3.2%], gym [2.3%], and outdoor [1.0%]), 5.1% of the content was about the quality of friendships (closefriend [1.9%], suppfriend [1.7%], and respectfriend [1.5%]); and 3.0% of the content was related to different types of friends (clubfriend [1.0%], hallfriend [1.0%], and diversefriend [1.0%]).

Table 5

*Top 25 First Level Theme and Code Frequencies for Research Question Three*

| Theme Definition (Code) | Frequency | Percentage |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Go to a movie (movie) | 56 | 3.8% |
| Talk with friend, peers, or others (talk) | 53 | 3.6% |
| Participate in sports (sportspartic) | 46 | 3.2% |
| Spend time with friends (timefriend) | 40 | 2.7% |
| Have fun w/friends (funw/friend) | 36 | 2.5% |
| Have friends who drink alcohol (friendsdrink) | 34 | 2.3% |
| Workout, exercise, or go to the gym (gym) | 33 | 2.3% |
| Close friend (closefriend) | 27 | 1.9% |
| Friends who do not drink are special, or good to have (nodrinkfriendgood) | 26 | 1.8% |
| Go to parties where there is alcohol (yesparty) | 26 | 1.8% |
| Christian organization or club (christianorg) | 25 | 1.7% |
| Friends do not drink alcohol (friendsdonotdrink) | 25 | 1.7% |
| Supportive or accepting friends (suppfriend) | 25 | 1.7% |
| Family support (famsupp) | 22 | 1.5% |
| Friends who respect you (respectfriend) | 22 | 1.5% |
| Eat at a restaurant (eatout) | 21 | 1.4% |

Table 5, continued

*Top 25 First Level Theme and Code Frequencies for Research Question Three*

| Theme Definition (Theme Code) | Frequency | Percentage |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Socializing with drinkers when they are not drinking (oknotdrunksocial) | 20 | 1.4% |
| Belong to a club or organization (club) | 17 | 1.2% |
| Play computer or video games (compgame) | 16 | 1.1% |
| OK to socializing with drinkers when they are drinking (okdrinksocial) | 16 | 1.1% |
| Friends from clubs or organizations (clubfriend) | 15 | 1.0% |
| Friends from the residence hall (hallfriend) | 15 | 1.0% |
| Spending time doing activities outdoors (outdoor) | 15 | 1.0% |
| Having divers friends (diversefriend) | 14 | 1.0% |
| Not much difference socializing with drinkers or abstainers when they are not drinking (drinknodrink=) | 14 | 1.0% |

Note: See Appendix Q for a full listing of all first level, triangulated theme codes for research question three.

Just less than 50.0% of the content and almost all of the top 25 types of coded responses were related to these areas. This gives some indication of the nature and direction of the participant comments. However, the words of the participants themselves give deeper explanation and help illuminate the nature of their behavior related to not drinking alcohol.

*Social Activities*

When I asked the participants about their social activities, I was in no way prepared for the variety of social and recreational activities they would describe. Canned entertainment activities ranked high, with movies and video games rounding out the list. Participants also found time to socialize with their friends, to participate in organizations, and to go to parties. While these groupings do not encompass all of the social activities of abstainers, they illustrate those activities that abstainers seemed to spend the majority of their time doing. I chose some exemplary comments below.

*Movies and video games*. The most common theme for all of research question three was going to the movies, which was coded differently from staying home and watching movies on the VCR. I also found a significant number who greatly enjoyed playing video games. Some of their words below describe participants' their social and individual experiences with movies and video games.

JACKIE: …I love movies…

VICKI: Just go to the mall and go see lots of movies, lots of movies.

HAN: Just watching movies, interact with people, go on dates, have dates setup, basically stuff like that.

HAMAL: Yeah, video games are always fun. Yeah, violence is a good stress reliever…

DENNIS: I relieve stress by playing computer games.

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WAYNE: …I'm also really into video games. Which probably a lot of people would see as poor that I play those a lot. I'm a digital nut.

HERB: …I like to play video games, I guess. Just get a whole bunch of people over and have tournaments and like get a projector and blast up against the wall, sometimes eating. Like, I know I sound like a high schooler, but I love video games. I get excited about it.

*Socializing with friends.* I found that most abstainers spend a large percentage of their social time with friends. They seemed to prefer closer knit and smaller groups of friends for these social functions, with the favorite social activity revolving around meaningful conversation. Many participants perceived a degree of stress relief and emphasized connection through their conversations with friends. Some of their most representative comments are these:

BILL: …just go out and have some fun with friends…

JILL: We usually just hang out with a group of friends and watch a movie or talk or kind of do whatever. We might go out to a party later. Either that or sometimes the team will go out.

SOPHIE:…just hang out with friends. We'll have just like a girls' night and act retarded and stuff like that. It's fun, you know. There is always something going on with everyone in Intervarsity. So there's always something to do.

REBECCA: Usually there's a whole bunch of people and like, we'll just go out and like meet at a Chinese place and we'll go out and eat Chinese food. After, we'll go back to someone's apartment and rent a movie or just hang out and play, like, games. It sounds really childish and corny, but it's fun and you get to talk to people who you have never really gotten to know that much. It's fun. I mean, it's hanging out and there's no alcohol and your friends, but it's non-alcoholic.

JACKIE: I'm going say this about get-togethers. Most of the time when I'm with my friends, and we've got our own, that's like seven people, we never plan anything in advance usually. It's just we are going to get together and we're going find something fun to do and usually there's some eating and there's a lot of talking. Just, we always end up having a good time. Sometimes you leave and you don't even know exactly what you've been doing. It's just been interacting and it's nice.

REBECCA: Just talking to people too helps out a lot. Talking to the right people.

CYBIL: Always, we have a balcony, we just sit out there and talk. You know, until the problem kind of gets solved. And um, you know, going to AA meetings is just, [it] gets everything off my chest. That always feels good when I come out. I'm like, "Yeah."

AMIT: More than talking, I like listening to people. I listen to a lot of my friends. They just keep on. Some of my friends say, " I just keep on talking. You are listening. Aren't you getting bored?" But, I like that, the tiny details, that's what matters.

GEORGE: Usually, I'll just talk to anybody. If I'm walking down the sidewalk and they are walking beside me, I'll be like, "Hey, how are you doing? How's your day?" It doesn't really matter whether I'm a class or walking to class or if I'm playing a club sport or something. I'm not a really shy person. I'm pretty open about things. I'll just strike up a conversation with just about anybody. If I'm bugging them, I'll tell them to tell me to shut up.

HERB: …I guess I mostly prefer now, just like a place like a, well, where I usually go, it's not really loud. I guess an atmosphere where people can like talk and fellowship with each other, but then, it's like, another two people want to have a more intimate conversation, they go off, and they won't be distracted or stuff like that…

HERB: …And sometimes, I need talk with people, and thank God. He's blessed me with some awesome people in my life, where I can sit down and just, go off, and they'll sit there and listen and care about me…

HAMAL: I have a big mouth, I talk a lot. So the way I socialize usually in my classes, I usually meet everyone around me. Um, most of my classes are debate oriented. So, I mean, I just, with a lot of people, I just speak my mind and get to know other people…

*Participating in organizations.* I found that some participants were involved in campus organizations. One of the largest themes in organizational involvement was in Christian organizations. However, some were involved in other organization types also. Some participant responses on organizational involvement are quoted below:

MISSY: I'm on the crew team.

JULIE: …I'm an officer in the circle K at VT [Virginia Tech]…

KIP: I'm part of VTU, which brings those plays, speakers, and all that stuff.

MUHAMMED: But, I do go to like, they have where, they have potlucks, where everybody brings some food and we all get together and share the food. Wednesday night, VT undergraduates. They call it VT Mug and it's VT undergraduate Muslim student organization. So, we have that.

RALPH: I go to home groups on Thursdays with NLCF and go to meals with people.

LINDSEY: I guess a lot of the stuff I do is with Intervarsity Christian Fellowship. They just plan all kinds of random activities all the time, like watching movies or just going out to eat together, kind of just making your own fun.

ROBIN: I agree with Marty. I do lots of things that aren't alcohol related. I am really involved with Campus Crusade and there's like lots of non-alcoholic parties I go to with them also…

MARTY: …I hang out with guys and girls, friends, Intervarsity Christian Fellowship, some of the upperclassmen have apartments and stuff. During football season, we'd all go to some guy's apartment and watching football games, or watch the playoff games. I mean, it's like, that right there is your Sunday afternoon. You know, we go shoot pool, or something like that. We went bowling the other night.

*Parties.* Many abstainers socialize at the same drinking parties that many other students attend. However, their party experiences varied widely. I found some good representative quotes from participants. However, their descriptions of their experiences around alcohol are not as rich as their comments.

AMIT: I like going to parties. I mean, that's quite fun.

MAX: Most of the parties or social gatherings that I attend, usually smaller groups of people, not small, not huge…

SCOTT: …I do go to parties every once in a while. The main thing I do at parties is just play cards and just sit around doing nothing, talking to people, just catching up on what's going on.

GEORGE: The socials I've gone to, there are a whole lot of kegs. Since I don't drink, I'm just standing there and get recruited for changing the taps or just getting bumped into by drunken people. But there's always three or four people who aren't drinking or whatever. I mean, it's a fun time, just because everybody seems to be having a good time and as long as everyone is safe. You know, that's the biggest concern of mine.

MANDY: I don't even know what a keg looks like.

CARLOS: …night life, definitely, I kind of define myself as a raver. There, that's a very stereotypical word, but, I am definitely a raver. Techno music, loud flashy lights, dancing. It's a blast and a half.

CARLOS: The bass is so loud you shake, it's great. Lights, noises, everything, raves are amazing…the concert music, the DJ's spinning, people everywhere, black lights, you name it. It's like a trip for all your senses of both visual and hearing and even like touch, 'cause you are sweaty as all can be and raver smell is the most interesting you've ever smelled.

JULIE: …I go to German Club parties occasionally. There are also people in the residential community that are a part of FIJI, which is a fraternity organization….So it's where people go. Usually everybody else knows who's there. At apartment parties, just through knowing people…

HAMAL: My neighbor, we usually go out. We usually meet up with them, all the guys from freshman year, and that's usually, usually it starts off with like us just hanging out at someone's apartment. Then, do a party there. Then, we usually, one of us usually drives out to the main party they all want to go to or we all want to go to. Those are pretty cool. A place to have a party, they have a keg or two, music, everyone getting to know each other.

*Experiences with Friends Who Drink or Do Not Drink*

I discovered that the participants went to great lengths to describe their experiences with their friends who drink and who did not drink. Some participants had friends of only one type, while others had a wide range and mix of types of drinking friends. Some of the larger themed

areas included friends who drink, friends who do not drink, friends of both types, and comparisons between friends who drink and do not drink. I chose some participant comments on that I felt best described the range of their responses below.

*Friends who drink.* I found that many participants had friends who were drinkers. Some of this seemed to be by choice, while participants felt that some of it was a product of the environment. The participants' comments varied widely from positive to negative experiences. Hamal and Maureen had a discussion during a focus group about their friends who drank. Here is their discussion:

HAMAL: My friends are drunks, basically. With the exception of Maria. Oh, come on, all our friends drink.

MAUREEN: Ted and Mary?

HAMAL: All right, Ted and Mary, they don't drink, but they're married, so it doesn't count. Like, my roommate Maureen's, all the old friends from freshman year, I think they all drink. Some of them can get kind of bad, but, mostly, it's just that, they drink, and they are cool with us not drinking.

MAUREEN: Its not [hard] to find people, or to find people who don't drink.

HAMAL: Yeah.

MAUREEN: But yeah, most of my friends drink.

HAMAL: One big point is, that it is not a requirement that they don't drink.

Hamal and Maureen's discussion shows how perceptions between two people with roughly the same experiences may vary a little. However, some participants definitely had large numbers of friends who drink. Other participants also had comments about their friends who drank.

BILL: Just about all my friends drink.

ABBAR: …up here, I don't know of anybody that doesn't drink, except for my girlfriend. I think it's just so popular here, people drinking. It's really hard to find 'em.

REBECCA: You know, once I do find out that they drink, it's like, "Oh, that's too bad. I probably won't be hanging out with you on the weekends, when you are going to be drinking."

KEISHA: …They drink, every once in a while on weekends and um, if they do, it's something small. I've only seen the two of them smashed like twice and I've known them forever.

FERGUSEN: If they are going to go drink, then I can find something else to do so it doesn't really bother me.

HERB: All right, well, like one of my best friends, like, he goes to parties and drinks….We hung out a lot. He means so much to me. And for me, I don't think he's any different than like a lot of people I know that don't drink, in that he's a person. He's just like looking for a way to suppress, a way to get rid of that, he turns to that. I want to show him something like that is more self-gratifying and joyous than alcohol…. I used to kind of be judgmental, "Well, he couldn't be my friend, oh, he goes out and drinks," but recently, I found peace. I was just like, I was talking to God, and He was like, "What are you doing, man? Get to love him"….So right now it's just at that thing, just enjoy who he is. It makes no difference if he drinks or not.

JULIE: I have plenty of fun with them up until the point that they are grotesquely drunk. But, once they get there, I don't want to be there anymore.

*Friends who do not drink.* Most participants had friends who did not drink. However, I found that a few had difficulty finding fellow abstainers who they called friends. Most participants had positive, rich comments about their friends who did not drink; many friendships seemed to have an implied closeness and sense of support. Here are their words:

BOB: I have a blast. It's a lot of fun to have fun with a lot of people who don't drink. Simply because we just have great ideas for things to do.

SAMANTHA: I think it's nice to hang out with people who haven't been drinking or aren't drinking, because, you know, that's really their personality and they are not just acting a certain way because of being intoxicated.

LINDSEY: It really is like exciting to find somebody. The bond is immediately and there aren't that many people, but you want to find them.

SOPHIE: I just think it's awesome. I mean, that's just something that's really big in your life and you can relate to people. And so then, there's always something there, like to hang out with on the weekends, which isn't going to go out and wanna party. So, it's really nice to have those kind of friends.

JULIE: Contrary to what Max says, when I find friends that don't drink, it's just kind of a relief. Its like, "Oh, there's somebody else that I can really do a lot of stuff with and know that I won't be pressure in anyway by." So whenever I meet somebody who doesn't drink, it's like, "Oh great, I get to know you too and get to do stuff with them."

GEORGE: …it's like an added bonus if they don't drink….I think, that would just be one more thing you have in common with them and I probably feel more relaxed around them or have a closer connection with them. But it doesn't mean that they aren't my friends if they do drink. It's just kind of like a extra special thing about them.

BEN: I think when you find a good friend that doesn't drink, then you can find tons of friends that doesn't drink, but it's nice to find someone that doesn't drink that you are really, really friendly with that way. They're always there for you. You don't ever have to worry about them being out drunk when you need help or something like that. You know, they're friends.

MISSY: I think it's awesome. I guess its kind of like finding a four leaf clover, especially like in a college. So many people drink, and to find someone who doesn't, it's just like you really have kind of like this special interest or bond or something right away with them. I guess I would definitely try to get to know them better, like maybe more than I would someone else who does drink. I just think it's really neat.

*Friends of both types.* Many participants talked about a relative mix of both drinking and non-friends. Some comments were made as if it were a matter of fact that they had both types of friends. I found that other participants made the comments, making a specific point that they had both types of friends or that whether people drank or not was not a prerequisite to making friends. I chose some of their comments that I felt were representative.

BERNIE: My friends are about half and half. Like, I have a lot of friends who are older and like, they are 21, so they drink. Then other friends of mine and the ones who I live with, they don't drink. So,I guess it's kinda mixed and yeah.

SCOTT: …I know a lot of drinkers; I know a lot of non-drinkers. I know heavy drinkers, I know strict non-drinkers…

JIM: Frankly, I really don't pick my friends based on whether they drink or not. I might do more with them if they don't drink, just because when they go drink, I'm not going to go with them.

BOB: …I don't want to make a huge distinction between drinkers and non-drinkers as new friends.

*Comparison between drinking and non-drinking friends.* I discovered that participants made descriptive distinctions between their friends and associates who were drinkers and those who were non-drinkers. Many times, when they did make a distinction between the two, they placed a negative distinction on the drinkers. However, some observations of differences were just that, observations of differences, rather than negative judgments of drinkers.

VICKI: Here, I don't know that many people yet, but most of the people I've met tend to not drink. If they do, I'm never really with them when they are, so it doesn't really seem to affect, you know, the relationship that we have with each other…

JIM: Hanging out with my friends who don't drink isn't really different than hanging out with my friends who do drink, except for the drinking part. I mean, when I do stuff with my friends that do drink, usually we do a lot of things that I do with my friends that don't drink. So for me, there is no real difference.

AMIT: I guess it's the same, pretty much the same compared to the other friends. The only difference is they're not drunk and they're in control of themselves.

GEORGE: My friends are very, very diverse. I got friends who are just as straight edge as they come. You know, they don't party. They are the perfect citizens of their community. You know, straight A's. They are nice, a Good Samaritan. Then I got friends who I just don't see how they haven't been killed yet…. He ended up dropping out of high school, ended being big into drugs. He got into a lot of trouble with like police and stuff…. I've been pretty open-minded with people and you know, just try not to judge them before you get to know them. That's worked out pretty well for me…

BEN: I just know tons of people here, just a lot of them. I have friends that both drink and don't drink. But, the friends that do drink don't respect that fact that I don't drink.

ALLISON: I'm hanging out with my friends that do drink, but aren't drinking at that moment, it's fine, I mean. I don't even think about it when we are just hanging out when they aren't drinking or anything. I don't even think about it. But, when they are, it kind of, sometimes, I don't care at all and sometimes just frustrates me….But, sometimes, I just, I guess people I really care about, it really just hurts, because, I just don't want to see them hurting themselves at all….It's just the people I'm closest with, I guess, . 'cause, I care about what happens to them.

BEN: I think, if they do drink and they are not drunk or drinking, then they are pretty much the same person as somebody that does not drink. Then once they've got the alcohol in their system, then they are pretty much a totally different person. You never know what is going to come out of their mouth. Whether it is words or other things. Yeah, its I don't know, when you are talking to someone that's drunk its probably just something that is totally whacked out and off the wall.

*Participation in Athletic or Outdoor Activities*

In the focus groups, I found that a vast majority worked out, played sports, or participated in outdoor activities. Their descriptions revolved around both their general activity lists and also their stress reduction strategies. While I feel these descriptions are not among the richest, they do, on the other hand, suggest a wide variety of healthy exercise or outdoor activity in which these students participate.

*Working out, sports, or the outdoors in general.* The participants engaged in a wide variety of sports, athletic activity, and outdoor activity. Some were intercollegiate athletes and

others just participated for their own enjoyment. Whatever the reason, their active lifestyle seemed to be a major theme of their social activity. Below, I extracted some of their words that I felt were representative of their experiences.

SCOTT: …I try to play hockey whenever I can and jogging.

RALPH: I like sports a lot. I kayak. I ski. I climb a bit and also play football with guys in the hall or play soccer with people from NLCF.

BEN: …I'm into the outdoors. I tried to hike earlier this year, but the homework from engineering caught up with me. So it was hard to do that on weekends. But, you know, I rock climb. I do different things like that…

JIM: Assuming the weather's nice, there's always hiking, caving, the River when it gets warmer, rope swing…

GEORGE: I agree with Jim. There's tons of stuff. Blacksburg is just, you got the whole New River Valley here and the Gorge and everything, and there's so much stuff you can do outdoors. As far as being stuck on campus with no car, I just go to like War [the university gym] and use the swimming pool and the diving boards…

JUNE: I do too, you know, exercise. Running, going crazy, listen to the music, and running really fills me.

SOPAL: Normally what we do, is a group of Indian kids all play Cricket, almost once a week in the tennis court or play pool or just do things or bowling.

MAX: I play a lot of hockey. I play on the school team. [I] play hockey every few weekends, travel around, Pittsburgh, and places like that to play…

BOB: There are so many things to do in Blacksburg. You can go bowling. You can go play pool. You can do loads of things that don't involve alcohol…

JULIE: …Going out with groups of people to places like the Cascades. Um, I haven't gone yet, but I definitely want to go to Dragon's tooth. Hiking, any outdoor activities where you can just kind of go out and enjoy, like the campus and the area are great.

HUNTER: Well, I'm on the crew team, so I like to row a lot….Go hiking, just the mountains around here all over the place.

ABBAR: I think we're fortunate that we have a bowling alley and a golf course on campus and I spend a lot of time there playing pool…

ABBAR: The gym is open until midnight here. So it's a good alternative to play basketball or go lift weights or racquetball. It's all-available here, til late at night. Also, if it's still light outside and the weather is nice, then you can always go get a football game out on the drillfield, or ultimate Frisbee or something.

*Working out, sports, or the outdoors to relieve stress.* I discovered that abstainers often turn to physical activity or being close to nature as a way of reducing stress. Many participants made note of specific stressors and were aware of specific activities that helped relieve that stress. Aside from specific stressors, I found that participants also engaged in these activities as general stress relievers that helped with the grind of classes, homework, and being a college student. Here are some of their descriptions:

MANDY: I just, if I'm stressed out, I usually go to the gym and like run or swim, or whatever…

HERB: What do I do to relieve stress? Working out is definitely a good thing. You can lift so much weight that you never thought you could. You're like, "Oh, heck yeah, I must be [angry] or something like [that], 'cause I'm doing like five more pounds than I thought I could.

JENNY: When I get stressed out, I definitely go swimming. I had a really bad fight with my roommate, well, my ex-roommate now, um, last semester. I went to the pool and I swam like over a mile in less than an hour. It just like relieves stress to just like get all your energy out of you. It just feels so much better after you go swimming.

JANE: I just like to go outside. I like to go to the Duck Pond and that is just really calming.

JACKIE: I close my eyes and feel the wind. It's being under a tree, or going outside, cause it's like really wholesome, and school isn't there and some guy who was being annoying isn't there or whatever stressor had been there isn't there anymore. It's just that can really do it for me. It's really awesome.

NANCY: I also like to run, like exercise is a big stress reliever. So you can gather your thoughts and get rid of stuff like that.

LEE: When I feel stressed out, like I just forget about everything, like all the homework and stuff, just go to War Memorial [gym] or something and hang out there and play something, soccer, indoor soccer or basketball.

*Quality of Friendships*

I also found that many of the participants mentioned positive qualities about their friendships. Some areas they addressed in particular were having close friendships, supportive friendships, and friends who respected them. During many of the focus groups, these descriptions were often emotionally charged; several times those speaking or listening were moved to tears. While the depth, closeness, support, or respect expressed by some individuals was not expressed by all, I felt they expressed an overall feeling of the focus groups about the quality of their friendships.

*Closeness of friendships.* I found some of the descriptions of the closeness of their friendships to be the richest and most powerful of all the focus group comments. The depth and closeness of these relationships should come through in the quotations I chose:

CARLOS: I think that it is totally different from talking with somebody that does drink. In that, the people who I talk to that don't drink are normally, I'm talking to them because I know they don't drink. There are things that I trust them with, that I can tell them, that are a lot deeper than, you know, someone who is a little buzzed and a little out of it.

LINDSEY: You can be very real with those people [abstainers] and honest and open. You can have some interesting conversations with them, intelligent, interesting conversations and educational conversations.

LINDSEY: …we are totally open to be ourselves in that atmosphere. No one has to hide anything. We can talk openly, act crazy, and have a lot of fun.

MAX: I have a really close-knit bunch of friends…

KEISHA: I have a very, very close knit, about 3 or 4 friends…

SOPHIE: Um, I've met amazing friends since I've been here. Um, the friends they're all girls, they're amazing; girls that'll be in my wedding. Like, they're sisters to me. My guy friends are just big brothers to me, always looking out for me. It's like, someone's always there for me. So it's great.

JANE: With my friends, we all just get along really well. We accept each other for who we are and we might not agree on everything, but that's ok, 'cause we can deal with it and still have fun and just confide in each other, not going to go turn around and go to somebody else. We're really close

HERB:  Herb has really good close friends. Herb thanks God everyday for those friends that he doesn't deserve….I have like some other friends that I've met. We have one common bond, and it's [bound] on that we all believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God…. Just like people like loving me, just showing me like love that I wouldn't, I feel like I don't deserve. They love me for who I am. Like, I don't have to be someone I'm not with them, like when I'm around them. Like, I'm completely myself, and they're cool with that….But like, for some reason, they love me for who I am. Even if I was wrong to them, they'd see through that. They'd see past me and they'd look at the good in me and refuse to get mad. You know, that's what's made it tight. And we are open with each other. When we hurt, we tell each other, and that helps us grow stronger, instead of holding a grudge….and the best friends that I've had, like it's truly, truly been like amazing just to see how they just supported me. My friends, I love them so much.

*Supportive and respectful friendships.* I also uncovered common threads of supportive and respectful friendships in the participants. However, I found it difficult to specifically pull out comments about support and care, as they were often integrally woven into the fabric of other comments, so I extracted some of the best examples of participants feelings below.

SOPAL: I guess my friends drink, but most of them are supportive and caring.

JOSEPH: People that I respect and care about and who feel the same way about me…

KATIE: …We care for each other and pretty much would do anything for each other...

HAN: I do have groups of friends that drink, but they do respect my decisions

JACKIE: …but I also think it's encouraging for me, that um, makes me feel like I'm not all alone out there as far as like my decisions. Also, it reminds me why I'm not doing it.

AMIT: …a lot of my friends are supportive of that, I mean, because some of them are non-drinkers and some of them do drink.…They do realize that I don't drink and they have to just be happy with that. They want me to stay out of it.

BEN: …the friends that do drink respect that fact that I don't drink. So, like, they are supportive friends and things like that. My girlfriend shares very similar values that I do. So having that sort of group of friends, you know, from high school, you know, people that know you and you can trust and talk to. Even if they do drink or don't drink, that respect [inaudible]. That's nice

ALLISON: …Its nice to have one person here with you, in such a big place that is really respectful of you and cares about you so much. We have a really good relationship. She respects me totally for my decisions and stuff and she never questions me. She's just, she's really cool about it and I think, I think that friendships are as strong a bond as any…

CARLOS: …The people that are there that are drinking do have a form of respect for me for not drinking. I think that, it's, you know, cool that I don't drink, or they just respect my decision…

JULIE: Just verbal support from friends that are like, "Oh, that's really cool that you don't drink," or, "That's really respectable." Sometimes they are like, sometimes people say, "I wish I was still like that," or, "I wish I could do that." They are very ok with it and sometimes, then, they honor that.

*Different Types of Friends*

I found that the participants mentioned a few common types of friends or characteristics about their friends. I did not feel the descriptions below were as rich as those about the closeness

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of their friends or about their friends in relation to alcohol consumption. However, I think their words illustrate some parts of their friendships previously unexplored in this study.

*Friends from clubs or religious organizations.* One common theme I identified from participant responses seemed to be the friends they made from clubs or organizations. Their words describe some of their experiences below:

RALPH: I'd have to agree with Melissa. What my group of friends are mostly Christians from NLCF [New Life Christian Fellowship].

KIP: I'm part of VTU [Virginia Tech Union] which brings those plays, speakers, and all that stuff….All my friends within the organization keep me busy…

ABBAR: Student organizations will do things. I mean, you meet a lot of people through them and you are gonna meet people that drink and don't drink. A lot of times, just talking to those people at meetings and little socials with them, it's a good way to meet people.

*Diverse groups of friends.* Another common theme I identified was how participants identified their friends as diverse. I quoted some of their thoughts on the diversity of their friends below:

BOB: In reality though, I have lots of different groups of friends.

SCOTT: I think I've got such a diverse group of friends that I can't take influence from any of them because every single one of my friends is different…

LINDSEY: …Also, IV [Intervarsity Christian Fellowship] all kinds of stuff. Anyone, that group is really diverse, like everyone comes from different backgrounds but we still get along really well and are really good friends…

LINDSEY: My group of friends are the most diverse, craziest, funniest people you have ever met.

JACKIE: I have a real melting of friends. We all think a lot of different things and have different majors, but we are all are just, uh, we all like to have fun and we're silly and we're kinda nerdy…

NANCY: My friends range from a clearly eclectic group. My roommate, she's like from southern Virginia. She's like a cow, she's like from a beef cattle farm. I went to her house, and that's like a completely experience than I'm used to, like suburbia, USA. I know some other friends from, like Chicago. You have complete range of different experiences, which kind of keeps it interesting here at school.

*Friends from the residence halls.* I found a third common friendship type in those they made in the residence halls. I use some of their words below to describe their perceptions:

JANE: I met most, a lot of people from my dorm, because where we are a leadership community. We had a special retreat together, to get to know people We have classes together and the classes are broken down into peer groups.

JIN: Well, when I was living in my dorms, I think I was staying in West AJ [residence hall], that's where it's called the W.E.L.L. They don't drink or smoke or anything like that. It's the kind of program where they do that in the dorm. When I went there, there was, I mean, I couldn't even, I mean my door was open like 24/7…..It's just so fun. Then, I lived there one year and then I was in Vawter [residence hall]. That's [an] all guys dorm….It's just crazy. I mean, I knew everybody on the block…..We do crazy stuff. You know, we put like soap in the thing, in the hallway, and you just slide…

I discovered that the participant responses for research question three were mostly related to social activities, experiences with friends who drink or do not drink, quality of friendships, participation in athletic or outdoors activities, and different types of friends. Some of these responses were the richest and broadest of the entire study. Next, I examined the participants' perceived outcomes from abstaining.

*Outcomes of Abstention (Research Question Four): First Level Content Themes*

For research question four, I found 18 codes or themes that had enough responses to be triangulated (see Table 6). Of these 18 themes, 13 of them, which comprised 63.7% of the total number of triangulated, coded, recorded comments for research question four, were related to a positive impact on health, a positive impact on relationships, negative social consequences, and not having negative consequences. More specifically, those related to a positive impact on health (posimphealth [10.5%], health [4.0%], and calories [3.2%]) comprised 17.7% of the total codes for research question four; this means that of the comments made, about 17.7% of the content was related to these behaviors. Also, of the 13 codes, 16.9% of the content for research question four was related to positive impact on relationships (posimppersrel [6.5%], closefriend [3.2%], posimpfamrel [2.4%], nodrinkfriendeasy [2.4%], and famsupp [2.4%]) 16.2% of the content related to negative social consequences (lessfriend [8.9%] and leftout [7.3%]), and 12.9% of the content was related to not having negative consequences (fewneg [7.3%], notrouble [3.2%], and donotwantneg [2.4%]).

More than 60.0% of the triangulated content was related to these areas. The remaining five codes or themes comprised 36.3% of the content was related to a random assortment of positive outcomes including: posimpeduc (12.9%), posimplife (12.9%), posimpfin (5.7%), bettertime (2.4%), and posimpgod (2.4%). Additionally, only 16.2% of the content was related to

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Table 6

*Top 18 First Level Theme and Code Frequencies for Research Question Four*

| Theme Definition (Theme Code) | Frequency | Percentage |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Positive impact on education (posimpeduc) | 16 | 12.9% |
| Positive impact on live (posimplife) | 16 | 12.9% |
| Positive impact on health (posimphealth) | 13 | 10.5% |
| Do not have as many friends as people who are drinking (lessfriend) | 11 | 8.9% |
| Few negative outcomes from abstaining (fewneg) | 9 | 7.3% |
| Feeling left out or our of place (leftout) | 9 | 7.3% |
| Positive impact on personal relationships (posimppersrel) | 8 | 6.5% |
| Positive impact on finances (posimpfin) | 7 | 5.7% |
| Health (health) | 5 | 4.0% |
| High calorie content of alcohol (calories) | 4 | 3.2% |
| Close friends (closefriend) | 4 | 3.2% |
| Do not want to get into trouble (notrouble) | 4 | 3.2% |
| Having a better time abstaining than drinking (bettertime) | 3 | 2.4% |
| Do not want to experience negative outcomes of drinking (donotwantneg) | 3 | 2.4% |
| Family Support (famsupp) | 3 | 2.4% |

Table 6, continued

*Top 18 First Level Theme and Code Frequencies for Research Question Four*

| Theme Definition (Theme Code) | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Easy to find non-drinking friends (nodrinkfriendeasy) | 3 | 2.4% |
| Positive impact on family relationships (posimpfamrel) | 3 | 2.4% |
| Positive impact on relationship with God or spirituality (posimpgod) | 3 | 2.4% |

experiencing negative outcomes from abstaining, meaning that 84.8% of the content was related to positive outcomes. Participant comments in each content area are included below.

*Positive Impact on Health*

Through the focus groups, I discovered that some participants perceived that abstaining had a positive impact on their health. Some of their perceived benefits included consuming fewer calories when not drinking, avoiding potentially lethal health consequences from drinking, and just staying in general better health from not drinking. Their words describe their perceptions below.

MISSY: I think, definitely like my health….I'm not putting on extra weight from alcohol. I am more active than maybe I would if I drank…

TED: Physically, like, if I'm gonna get fat on something, I don't wanna get fat on, um beer, or whatever. I want to get fat on like, you know, like juice and desserts and stuff.

ROBIN: But, the whole freshman 15 is like really scary to me. It's just funny that like every girl at university or college that, take one of my friends, they come back and they are just like, you know, you can tell they just put on the weight…The girl was like really thin. You know she's gorgeous and she has this little beer gut. It's like, "Oh my Gosh."

KIP: Health, I don't have to worry about liver disease, so that's good…

NANCY: My health and like, I think a lot of people just have problems from drinking, especially for a long time. You know, a lot of health problems and issues. That and like, my family background, a lot of my, they like drink a lot…

*Positive Impact on Relationships*

I also discovered a theme of abstainers' perceived positive impact on their relationships. Some of this positive impact seemed to come from developing real and close friendships that

they felt they may have not been able to develop had they been drinking. Some abstainers also talked about a perceived positive impact on their family relationships. More than anything, I noticed that abstainers seemed grateful for the quality of their personal and family relationships that they attributed to abstaining. Here are some of their comments on this topic.

JANE: I guess like Wayne, I have genuine friends who, you know, who don't drink.

LINDSEY: …I guess relationships with friends, you are not gonna, like screw them over when you are not drunk, make smart decisions about the way you interact with them.

JACKIE: …I think it's probably affected my relationships with friends because I have time to devote to friends. Like, directly, not hazy between us because of some outside influence of alcohol…

REBECCA: I think its positive that you don't drink and just because you find a place where you can feel comfortable without having a drink, you find that group of friends who accepts you just the way you are. They don't laugh at you when you are drunk. You know what I'm saying, it's a real friendship, it's not like they are using you or laughing at you, you know. You are actually - there are places to find true friends.

CYBIL: Um, also treating my friends and family like I didn't even care about them at all. I feel, so like, everyday, I'm like so grateful that I have these wonderful friends and family. I can call my mom twice a day; we're so close now. It just seems like things have changed so much. I'm really grateful that I have a support system now, you know.

*Negative Social Consequences*

I also discovered a theme of abstainers experiencing some negative social consequences from abstaining. Some cited how they had lost friends or had a more difficult time making friends from the simple fact that they did not drink. Also, some abstainers said they felt left out

or somewhat different from their peers who drank; they seemed to think this was related to the fact that drinking and drinkers surrounded them. I included some of their comments below.

TED: …I feel like there are some people that don't want to be your friend because you don't drink…

RALPH: I can kind of see how some people say that not drinking would have its negative affects in that you lose that group of friends that laugh at you or whatever.

JIN: I guess the negative effect would be, you get to meet less people, I guess. You, you lose, you get a disadvantage [with those] social people. You can't really hang out with them. Kind of, you could hang out with them, but you can't really hang out with them, because, you're really not, you know, kind of there, drinking with them. So, it's kinda hard to get really close if you want to.

CARLOS: Some of my friendships or strong acquaintances have been extremely strained simply because of the fact that they drink and I don't . Whether they bring it up or whether I bring it up, regardless, it puts strain on our relationships. In certain situations, I've just been pressured to the point where you just gotta walk out and it's not cool. I've lost friends over something that is a multi-billion dollar industry, that markets and stuff like that. I've lost a friend over that.

KATIE: I've been through the same situation I've lost friends. I've, there's been major strain put on friendships over something I view as very petty….you feel lonely at times, just when you are, you know, the odd one out…

KIP: …When I do go to parties, I can levitate toward the people I already know as opposed to, if I were drinking, I would probably be a little more open and not so much a wuss…

NANCY:  I guess kind of part of me feels like you are not having the true college experience, you know, because, it's like you kind of feel old. Everybody else is going out to frat parties, you know, do the typical college thing to do and like, you feel like you're missing out sometimes when everybody else is going out. Like, it must be so great what they are doing…

*No Trouble*

Another theme I uncovered was that of experiencing fewer negative consequences from abstaining. Most of the comments were very similar and related to participants' stating that they experienced few or no negative consequences from abstaining. So, the depth and richness of the comments related to this theme was lacking.

KEISHA: I don't think any of 'em have. I don't think there has been a negative effect at all, on my decision not to drink.

BEN: I'd say there aren't many negatives that I've seen so far in my life.

BO: … I don't think anything was negatively affected, 'cause it's my choice and that's how I want to live my life. So, it should be no negativity anywhere there.

BILL:  Just, like legally. Two weeks ago, we were in a car wreck. We were rear ended by a drunk driver. Just the fact that when the cops came, I didn't have to worry about lying, like shying away, not letting them know that I wasn't drinking.

*General*

Aside from the groupings of themes mentioned above in relation to research question four, participants also spoke about a number or more miscellaneous positive outcomes from not drinking. Some participants felt that abstaining had a general, positive impact on their entire lives or that they had a better time abstaining than they would have drinking. Some individuals cited

specifically having improved finances, since they did not spend money on alcohol, and improved grades or educationally opportunities, since they had more focus and time to study since they were not drinking. Other individuals talked about a positive spiritual impact from not drinking. These more miscellaneous comments round out the overall feeling from most participants that they experienced many more positive than negative outcomes from abstaining. Here are some of their perceptions:

KATIE: I guess I hear a lot that these are the best years of my life. So, I really want to remember them…

BOB: Pretty much every area that you could possibly think of, friends wise, like I said at the very beginning, my relationship with Christ, you know, everything. If I were to start drinking, I feel like, yeah, that would really help tear a lot of things down that I hold dear.

KEISHA: I think that by choosing not to drink and having to stand up in my beliefs, that it's made me able to stand up for other beliefs that I have. That if I know I can make a decision not to drink, that I can also make a decision on other things, know that they will be listened to, and I will be respected for them.

JACKIE: I was going to say not drinking affects me positively academically and physically. Even with my belief systems, it helps with that, 'cause I'm not hindered in any way or distracted from what's important….Like as far as, it takes a lot of thought and time process to devote yourself to school….I think like, when you go out drinking sometimes you are erasing time, like you are just wasting time away. Um, it's not like I'm studying all weekend, but, I just feel like I have more brain focus….Um, and it's been good with my belief systems because I don't….have to worry about myself doing and things I shouldn't do.

JIN: It's definitely in school. My first priority is to graduate, to get a degree. That's one of the sacrifices that I'm, you know. It's definitely helped.

GEORGE: Like Jim said, my wallet is a lot thicker, bulkier because I don't drink

JENNY: I think, definitely, my grades…

BEN I'm a freshman right now. This past semester, because I know a lot of kids in the Engineering Department, there's a lot of kids in there….from high school. A couple of them had to retake classes and things like that. Not all of them were because of partying and things like that. Despite that, because I got so I wasn't drinking and many other things, because of a good work ethic, I was able to get really good grades and things like that. So, I guess in that manner, it helped me succeed in my education. Which, in the long run will help me get through college faster and get into a career and things like [that]. So, I feel that my not drinking first semester helped my grades, which will help my career, which will help my life [inaudible] domino effect, kind of.

MARTY: Obviously, academics. It's the fact that I think it's positive, positively, just because I can focus and I don't waste. I do some, I do some work on Saturdays and Sundays. I try to get some homework done. If my head is throbbing, it's kind of hard to do that. So, it's affected that, but, also the spiritual level. Drinking being, I mean, if you are doing that to your body, that's happening to God and that's not the way you should treat him and that's not going to encourage spiritual growth. So, it has definitely helped me by not being something has hindered my spiritual growth.

SHANNON: Definitely just school and classes. There's no way, with the work load that I have, if I were drinking every Friday or every Saturday, that I would be able to get everything done and have the same outlook and planning with everything.

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*Conclusion*

I coded a wide variety of content related to the focus groups. Examining this content in and of itself gives some sense of how the participants thought, perceived, felt, believed, and saw their world as abstainers. This snapshot of the content was rich and deep, with breadth and depth of responses. However, simply viewing the responses and related data on this level does little to uncover any of the underlying or greater patterns. I took their responses and grouped them into second levels of codes in a effort to uncover any deeper or underlying patterns to their experiences.

*Second Level of Coding*

After reviewing the focus group transcripts for themes related to content, I reviewed the transcripts and first level themes together to uncover themes that condensed the large amounts of data into smaller groupings. Whereas with the first level of coding I used the emergent theme coding technique (creating themes and codes as I progressively moved through the transcripts based upon the themes that were emerging), with the second level of coding I created a list of codes and themes before I began coding (see Appendix S for a full list and explanation of the second level of coding). I created the second level of themes by reviewing each response, looking to combine the content themes from that response into either a more condensed and underlying theme or into a theme that took the existing content themes and looked for deeper meaning or causality. When making the first level of themes and codes, I often gave each response several themes. For the second level, I often used fewer total themes and codes for a given participant response, sometimes using one or zero second level themes. I intended for the end result of the second level of coding to be an increased understanding of the complex and rich focus group transcript content.

When imagining the second level themes, I often combined several similar first level themes to condense the meaning. I also combined several first level themes that at first seemed unrelated, but when taken together, they created some deeper or additional meaning. First level themes were often useful in helping describe more than one second level theme. In condensing the codes from the first level to the second level, not all the first level codes or themes were used. As a result, there was not a specific formula that charted every first level theme into a second level theme. Additionally, each second level theme did not carry an absolute definition that occurred from a certain combination of first level themes in a certain order. Rather, the second level themes came from my own familiarity with the data observations that grew over time. However, I did define the second level themes and use these definitions as the basis for my second level coding. For a graphic representation of how I created some of my second level themes, see Figure 1, below.

Just as I did with the first level of coding, I examined the second level codes and related comments as they related to the research questions. So, for each research question, I include a frequency table of the related second level codes, an explanation of the second level frequencies and any relevant groupings of those frequencies, and direct quotations from the participants that illustrate the frequencies and my explanations.

*Motivation for Abstention (Research Question One): Second Level Themes*

For research question one, I found no substantial underlying patterns that were much different than those identified by the content identified through the first level of coding. As a result, many of the second level codes and themes are very similar to the first level codes and themes (see Figure 1 for a partial illustration of this). So, the difference with the second level coding for research question one is that I made the themes more inclusive, as I intended for one

*Figure 1. Translating First Level Themes to Second Level Themes for Research Question One*

First Level Theme                                    Second Level Theme
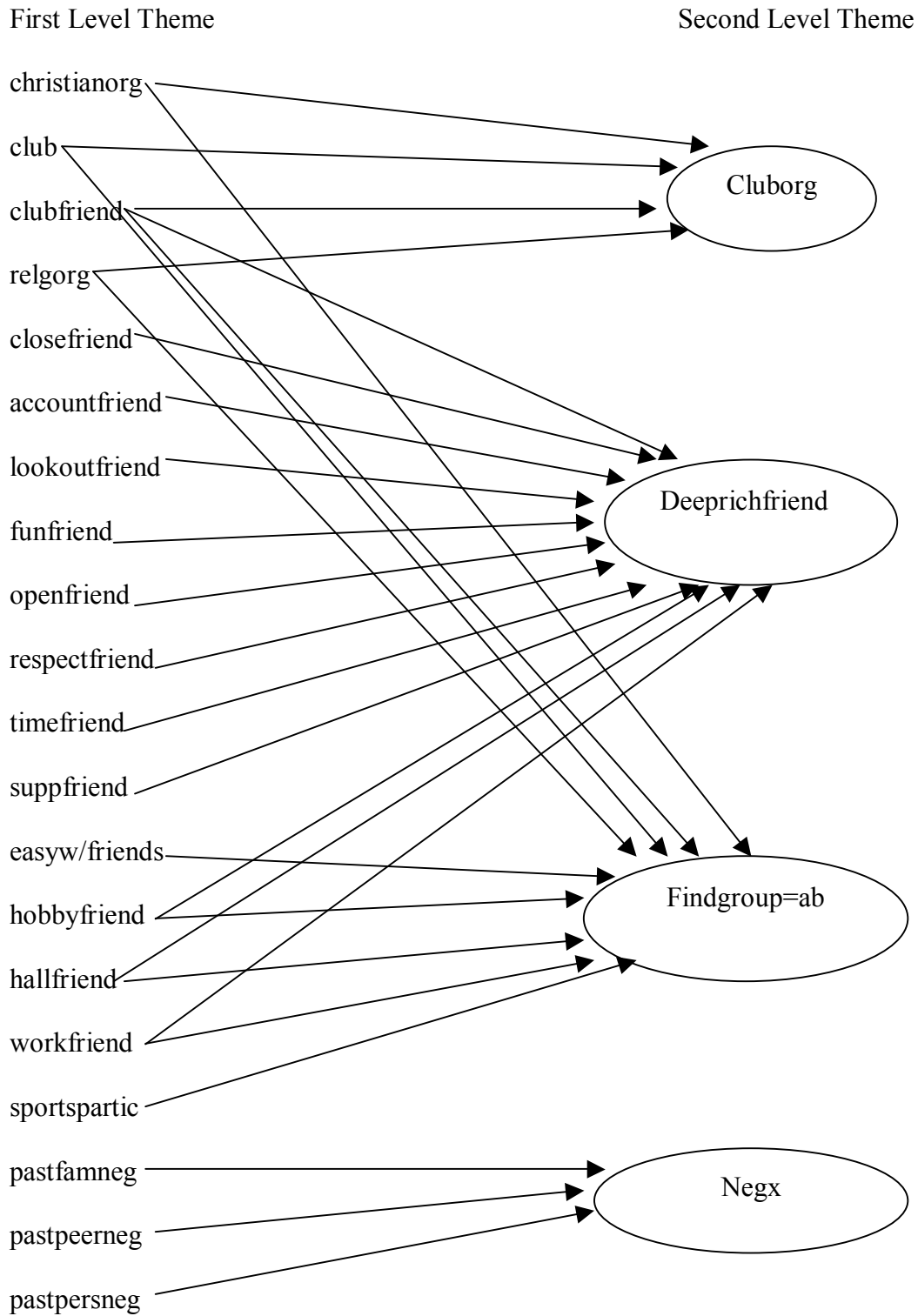
or two codes to account for a full and comprehensive view of the participant experiences. I identified a total 11 triangulated themes for research question one, which were generally related to spiritual and religious influence, the family influence, the effect of negative experiences, friends' impact, the influence of organizations and clubs, and personal conviction (see Table 7). More specifically, spiritual and religious influence (Relginfluen) comprised 22.5% of the content of the comments for research question one. Additionally, 20.6% of the content was related to family influence (Faminfluen), 30.8% of the content was related to the effect of negative experiences (Avoidneg [15.4%] and Negx [15.4%]), 15.0% was related to friends' impact (Friendinfluen [13.5%] and Ezdiff=friend [1.5%]), 7.1% was related to the influence of organizations and clubs (Findgroup=ab [6.0%] and Cluborg [1.1%]), and 1.5% was related to personal conviction (Ezdiff=convict). While I may not be able to represent the full spectrum of the participants' experiences related to research question one with these thematic areas, I found I could represent a large portion of it. Below, I chose the most representative and inclusive comments that I could identify in regard to the above themes.

*Spiritual and Religious Influence*

I discovered that the participants had a fairly wide range of spiritual and religious influences on their choice to abstain. This range included not only different religions (Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity), but also some very different beliefs and practices of the same religions. While religious experience was the most commonly cited, individuals also cited non-denominational and more spiritual influences. Their religious and spiritual influences also came from a wide variety of sources including participants' parents, the church of their home, church or religious organizations in college, and the participants' own spiritual experiences or religious convictions. While the breadth of religious experience and source was wide, I found that the

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Table 7

*Second Level, Triangulated Theme and Code Frequencies for Research Question One*

| Theme Definition (Theme Code) | Frequency | Percentage |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Religious influence is important and strong for abstainers. (Relginfluen) | 60 | 22.5% |
| Family Influence is important and strong for abstainers.(Faminfluen) | 55 | 20.6% |
| Abstainers want to avoid the negative consequences from drinking they have seen in others. (Avoidneg) | 41 | 15.4% |
| Past negative experiences from friends, family, and themselves may motivate them to abstain. (Negx) | 41 | 15.4% |
| Positive and negative influence from friends is important and strong for abstainers. (Friendinfluen) | 36 | 13.5% |
| Abstainers find supportive groups to help them keep from drinking alcohol. Important factor in not drinking. (Findgroup=ab) | 16 | 6.0% |
| Ease or difficulty in abstaining is associated with the strength of the conviction about abstention. (Ezdiff=convict) | 4 | 1.5% |
| Ease or difficulty in abstaining is affected by friends or people surrounding them. (Ezdiff=friend) | 4 | 1.5% |

Table 7, continued

*Second Level, Triangulated Theme and Code Frequencies for Research Question One*

| Theme Definition (Theme Code) | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Ease or difficulty in abstaining is affected by the pressure they feel to drink. (Ezdiff=press) | 4 | 1.5% |
| Campus activities, clubs, or organixations are an important part of abstainers' social environment. (Cluborg) | 3 | 1.1% |
| Whether high school friends drink or do not drink seems unimportant to abstainers in college. (Hischool=noab) | 3 | 1.1% |

influence of this experience upon the participants was quite similar; almost every participant who mentioned religion as an influence spoke of the influence as positive. The only hint of negative experience was related to some fundamental Christian upbringings that some participants resented. However, even with some resentment, they all recognized the importance and value of their religious and spiritual influences in helping them choose and in supporting their abstention efforts. I chose some of the more representative comments below.

AMIT: Actually, for me it would be more like three religions that actually influence me. I somehow I am all into religions and stuff. I follow Hinduism, which is my primary religion, but also Christianity and Islam. All over, everywhere, everyone, emphasizes on why alcohol is bad. In many stories, you can hear, like in mythological characters and stuff. Basically, they give the morals which are really important, and such, [which] have really helped me out.

HAN: I grew up in Singapore, which is in Malaysia. Also because of religion, where in Islam, it is prohibited to drink alcohol. I guess, in a way, the rules and the imposition that is given upon people, I think that's a huge influence. That is also a reason why people refrain from alcohol; if you grew up with it, I guess.

CYBIL: I would say, my beliefs in a Higher Power now, my belief in God now. Because at first, when I was drinking and everything, I mean, I always went to church, up until I was 18, you know, but I never really liked my church. Like, I never wanted to get involved or anything and I guess I kind of rebelled. Like, I found my Higher Power, a lot, from AA and that has just changed everything. A lot of nights, like when I think, "Oh my God, what am I gonna do?" I just pray, every single day. Before I wake up, I always go down on my knees and pray that I got a second chance.

SOPHIE: My Christian faith is - I just see drinking as a sin before you are 21…

WAYNE: I'm a Christian. I was pretty much raised in the church and everything and I've had that belief that it is pretty much wrong to get drunk, and everything.

FERGUSEN: I went to a Christian School for 12 years. So, I guess I can kinda consider [that] drinking wasn't really talked about or anything like that on the weekends, what everyone did. So, it's kind of not an issue.

RALPH: I am also a Christian, as I said earlier, and my faith has nothing really against alcohol. Jesus' first miracle was turning water into wine. We are also to follow man's law and the law is to not drink under 21…

KEISHA: When it says in the Bible that, "your body is the temple," to me, that includes any type of act that you have, whether it's drinking or drugs or sex or things like that. Knowing that it says straight out, that, "Your body is a temple that holds Christ." That was really big, that I wouldn't want Christ to have to live in a place that, you know, was filled with things that can cause so many problems.

HERB: …I grew up in the Baptist church. So God like that has definitely influenced, words like, "Don't drink. Don't do all this." You know, all these rules. I appreciate that now as more of about having a personal conviction. I don't have to hear all that, a preacher telling me, you know what's right and what's wrong. Like, I go to church and I enjoy the message, but me and God have this personal relationship. So, we're you know, I don't desire to drink, because I want to honor him…

*Family Influence*

Another larger theme related to motivations for abstention that I identified was family influence. Just as with religion, the participants' experiences differed. Some individuals grew up

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in alcoholic homes while others were raised by teetotalers. I also noticed a difference in the types of advice family gave in regard to alcohol. While some parents warned strongly or even forbade their children to drink, others warned of the dangers of alcohol consumption, but taught moderate alcohol consumption. The reaction of the participants was also different, as some wanted not to be like their alcoholic family members, others wanted to emulate their abstaining family members, and still others wanted to please their parents and not let them down. Just as with religion and spirituality, even though the participants' experiences varied, most spoke of the influence of their family as a positive factor in their choice to abstain.

> JOHN: I grew up, all my aunts and uncles are basically alcoholics and it was kind of definitely a turn off. My parents, neither of them drink and, kind of following in their footsteps, I guess.
>
> RYAN: I wasn't extremely exposed to it in my childhood, I guess.
>
> KELLY: I grew up in a family where it just wasn't considered necessary.
>
> JULIE: My family also, has always tried to, tried to teach me to do the right thing. They've had a pretty big influence on me, 'cause I try to show respect to them and what they want me to do…
>
> SHANNON: I'm just, the way my parents have always been, that, they would drink occasionally or you know, situation where there wasn't any kind of risk involved. I think that has very much influenced how I look at alcohol, where I don't see that there is anything wrong with drinking, but that, you need to be very aware of the situation you are in, if you decide to do so.
>
> LINDSEY: I think my parents have an influence on me too. It's not that they don't drink. I mean, they have beer in the house and everything and they drink occasionally. I think

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it's all about moderation and you don't get drunk necessarily. It's just like the respect that

I had for them. They told me not to do it. So, I just don't do it.

SCOTT: I kind of agree with her. It will just let my parents down. I am here to do school

work, not to drink. She's paying for this. There is no way I am going to let her pay for

this and I'm going to go drink, instead of do my work. I have enough work as it is. I don't

think I have time to drink.

AMIT: I think the greatest was my family, basically, especially my father. He's always,

he has just told me a few times that, the bad things about drinking. [He] just talked to me,

but never pestered me into that notion that you don't have to drink, because it seems that

some kids, just because their parents pester them, they go and drink. He had left it up to

me. Also, if a person can go 40 plus years without drinking, then why couldn't I. I mean,

if it's that easy, then why not?

*Negative Experiences*

I used negative experiences as a broad category for two completely different kinds of

experiences, the experience of avoiding the negative consequences of drinking and having

negative experiences (both personal and through others). A large majority of participants at some

time during the focus group session spoke about avoiding all kinds of negative experiences by

not drinking, which they seemed to identify as a strong motivator for abstention. Again, I found

that a good portion, and probably a majority, experienced some negative consequences from

drinking, either directly or indirectly. I discovered that negative experiences played a strong role

in motivation for abstention, according to the participants. I chose some representative comments

below.

GEORGE: Uh, it just smells bad. I don't like throwing up. So, I don't think I'd like to do that. Sort of like a lot of other people said, like, I'm under age right now, so its illegal. So, that's probably the main reason.

HAMAL: …Back in high school, I didn't drink throughout. Until one day, my friends decided one day, " Ah, let's just get Hamal drunk." So, they threw me a big party and they videotaped it. It was that kind of a, it was for a track team, and we had just won a big meet. So, we decided, they decided to just have fun. So, I was like, "Ok, cool, I'll try it." So, I just went all out, I think I had a bottle of So. Co. [Southern Comfort]. They video taped the whole thing. After a week of me not being able to really stand any noise or bright lights, I saw the video and I was like, "Ok, this why I never drank." So, I was like, "That's pretty easy, I just don't drink."

HAN: Yeah, it's because I landed myself in the hospital and I realized that my blood cannot tolerate any sort of alcohol, not even a glass or two. What it would do, is that I would get funny and really weird skin diseases. I had to be in the hospital for a week on dialysis machine to purify my [blood], and that was an experience, I guess. I couldn't speak. My entire skin was just burning.

CORBIN: I chose not to drink, because, well basically the same thing. Seeing people drink is kind of repulsive when you see 'em have a lot of drinks and they look really nasty. I just, I don't really like the taste of beer at all.

LEE: I just don't know want to drink, because I've seen people drinking and how they behave. I don't think it's appropriate. It deplores your character or something and you really don't know what you are doing.

REBECCA: I am kind of the same way, having heard, and actually having been present like when friends have had to be taken to the hospital or just bad things, like you know, getting a DUI, or I don't know, stuff like that. It's a just waste of time and just bad for your life

KELLY: It was horrible. She had a horrible attitude after she drank and she didn't even know if she drank too much and [she was] not attractive at all. [I] didn't want to see myself like that.

SAMANTHA: A girl that went to Virginia Tech last year, she was killed in a car accident by a drunk driver last year. Our school had a big program about it; they had the girl's mother talking and also the police department was the one that was sponsoring it. That had a pretty big impact on, as far as, not even wanting to be around people that are drinking.

JULIE: …I've been to a lot of places around people who are drinking and just the actions they do and just how they act around all these people. The fact that a lot of them can get really, physically sick, and especially the next day, feeling miserable. It's just something that I really don't want to do.

*Friends Impact.*

Another major theme I noticed related to motivating abstention was the impact of friends. Most abstainers seemed to have been influenced by their friends. I also discovered that, according to the participants, the ease or difficulty of not drinking may have depended on the participants' friends. It seemed that the nature of the participants' friends had an impact on their abstention, as being around other abstaining friends seemed to have a positive impact, while being around drinking friends had more of a negative impact. Abstainers used their friends as

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sources of support and positive and negative inspiration for not drinking. The participants larger experience seemed to show that abstaining friends offered support and had a strong positive influence, while drinking friends, depending on their behavior, could either provide a positive or negative influence on their abstention.

TIM: Originally, I think it was because, my friends didn't drink, or my close friends didn't drink. We just kind of thought it was pointless.

MISSY: …and in high school, none of my friend ever drank, and not a lot of people in my high school I don't remember doing that. So, I just never got into it.

KIP: …[what] helped me get to that point was in high school, some of my friends drink, but then, when I was hanging out with them, that's never what we did. Like, I had a group of friends and some might drink, but not when we were like, [the] group was with each other. So, we would just do all our stuff and that was cool and sort of, that's sort of how the seed was planted, at least in high school. So, that does help you out, I suppose. It does help me out.

MAUREEN: It's been so much easier for me to not to drink with Hamal because, 'cause he's my boyfriend and he's very supportive. If you don't have people around you who are not drinking, or if you have people around you who are not drinking, that makes it a lot easier not to drink.

JULIE: …Basically, opinions from friends and stuff too that there are plenty of opportunities for other things that you can do. So, like, it's ok to go to a party, to have fun and not drink. Just knowing that other people share that same opinion, makes it a lot more comfortable to not be like that.

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JENNY: I think just like the people I hang out with at college influence me, 'cause I'm in IV, Intervarsity Christian Fellowship, and like, pretty much no one in their drinks. So we all have fun together and there's no pressure to drink, because no one else is doing it. So that influences me a lot, I think, and my parents too.

JIM: I'd say indirectly, just because whoever you're hanging out with is going to influence you some. I mean, when using all my Greek friends as an example, that's all they do. Like, they go downtown Thursday, Friday, Saturday night. That's their community. Now, I don't hang out with people who do, and if they did drink, not saying it would make me want to drink more, but since they don't, the thought just never enters my mind…

AMIT: …actually felt the influence from even my friends. I had a really good group of friends. Even so, I guess a majority of them drank. It was the kind of stuff that they always kept me away from it, even though they drank. You know like, "You don't do this." They would never force me into anything or offer me a drink or notice the fact that I wouldn't drink, and that kept me slightly away from all this stuff, I guess.

MAX: I have a friend here who, whenever he drinks, tends to get very emotional and makes a scene and crying and lots of unpleasantness.

AMIT: Usually whenever I go to parties, some of my friends who do drink, I see them really, really drunk….You see them, they are lying in a gutter, the side [of the road]. They tend to get into fights, some of them funny, but some of them not really that funny. They could like get into some really big trouble. I've seen people do that. It actually happened to a very close friend of mine.

DENNIS: One of my friends at Virginia Tech right now, he's really deep into drinking and from what I see, he's not there all the time. He'll be, he might come to class drunk or still hazy from one of those hangovers that he has. His grades are really bad and I just don't see, you know, why would you go to college just to get drunk all the time and fail all your classes and stuff.

*Organizations*

Many participants, I found, belonged to or participated in student organizations. Some involvement came from outside the campus and some was in college student organizations. Participant involvement in these organizations varied from member to leader and levels of activity varied from occasionally to almost every day. Some participants even cited having a large portion of their friends from one particular student organization. These organizations may have had an impact on the participants' abstention. Finding a group with which the participants could identify, especially a group that supported their abstention through dry activities or with members who also abstained, seemed important to the participants in relation to their abstention. I chose some representative comments below.

CORBIN: I was in the Boy Scouts until I was 18 and that was kind of like a big thing with them too. They, also being, you know, just like a group of guys that got together and went out and went on hikes and stuff. They also taught us about, you know, substance free and stuff like and no drinking at the same time. So, that influenced my decision a lot…

HERB: I guess like my friends in an organization, Intervarsity Christian Fellowship here has helped me to be a person, to see who I am in Christ and like to just see that I don't

need like alcohol or any other substance…. To be accepted in IV, I am accepted, me for who I am.

MARTY: …my youth group and my youth directors and religious figures have influenced to show me that I can go hang out with these guys, and have a blast, and there is no alcohol involved, ever, with that sort of thing, obviously, in the youth group. Within that youth group, my friends would hold me accountable….

*Personal Conviction*

Although not one of the most common themes, personal conviction was also important in abstention. Most participants had some system of beliefs, morals, or philosophy to which they held true to through their abstention. A few participants' comments below should help illustrate this point.

ALLISON: …I mean, it's hard. Sometimes, I wish that it wasn't, that [I didn't] perceive myself as being so different, so, I mean, but I don't know, if anything like that happens, it makes me doubt myself or anything, I just look back to my beliefs and my morals.

KIP: Sort of, my beliefs or philosophies are [inaudible] sort of. I like to be the one accountable for everything I do. Like, I don't mind taking the blame for things, but I want to make sure that I'm capable. Like, that it was my blame and I that I did not have, I'm not using a scapegoat or anything. Its, I'll be held accountable for things that I do.

The stronger underlying second level themes for research question one included those related to spiritual and religious influence, the family influence, the effect of negative experiences, friends' impact, the influence of organizations and clubs, and personal conviction. I was not able to identify any themes that ran much deeper than those simply identified through

the content. However, there seemed to be strong support for these few themes. Next, I examined the second level themes for behaviors related to abstaining.

*Behaviors Exhibited to Keep from Drinking (Research Question Two): Second Level Themes*

For research question two, I identified several underlying themes of participant behavior related to not drinking. As a result, many of the second level codes and themes are much different to the first level codes and themes (see Figure 2 for a partial illustration of the development of these second level themes). With the second level themes and codes, I attempted to take several content level codes and draw some sort of deeper meaning and significance related to the participants' behavior. I was then able to group these second level codes and themes into even larger thematic groups. I identified a total 10 triangulated themes for research question two, which were generally related to the following larger thematic groups: their interaction with and perception of their social environment, friends and groups with which they associate, personal action, personal conviction, and general activity (see Table 8). More specifically, their interaction with and perception of the social environment (Ezdiff=press [21.8%] and Ezdiff=socsit [13.7%]) comprised 35.5% of the content of the comments for research question one. Additionally, friends and groups with which they associate (Ezdiff=friend [19.4%], Mkfriend=ab [4.2%], and Findgroup=ab [2.5%]) comprised 26.1% of the content, personal action (Ezdiff=action [18.3 %] and Avoidneg [2.5%]) comprised 20.8%, personal conviction (Ezdiff=convict) 15.5%, and general activity (Busyab) 2.1%. These 10 theme codes and five-area grouping cannot represent the full spectrum of the participants' experiences. However, I feel these themes and groupings should help illuminate some of the patterns behind the participant responses about their behavior related to abstaining.

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*Figure 2. Translating First Level Themes to Second Level Themes for Research Question Two*

First Level Themes                                      Second Level Themes



pressure

nopressure

drinktofit

altbev

nook

friendsdonotpressure

friendsdrink

easyw/friend

avoid

nonotok

drink=college

friendsdonotdrink

partyw/friend

respectfriend

Ezdiff=friend

Ezdiff=press

Ezdiff=action

Ezdiff=socsit
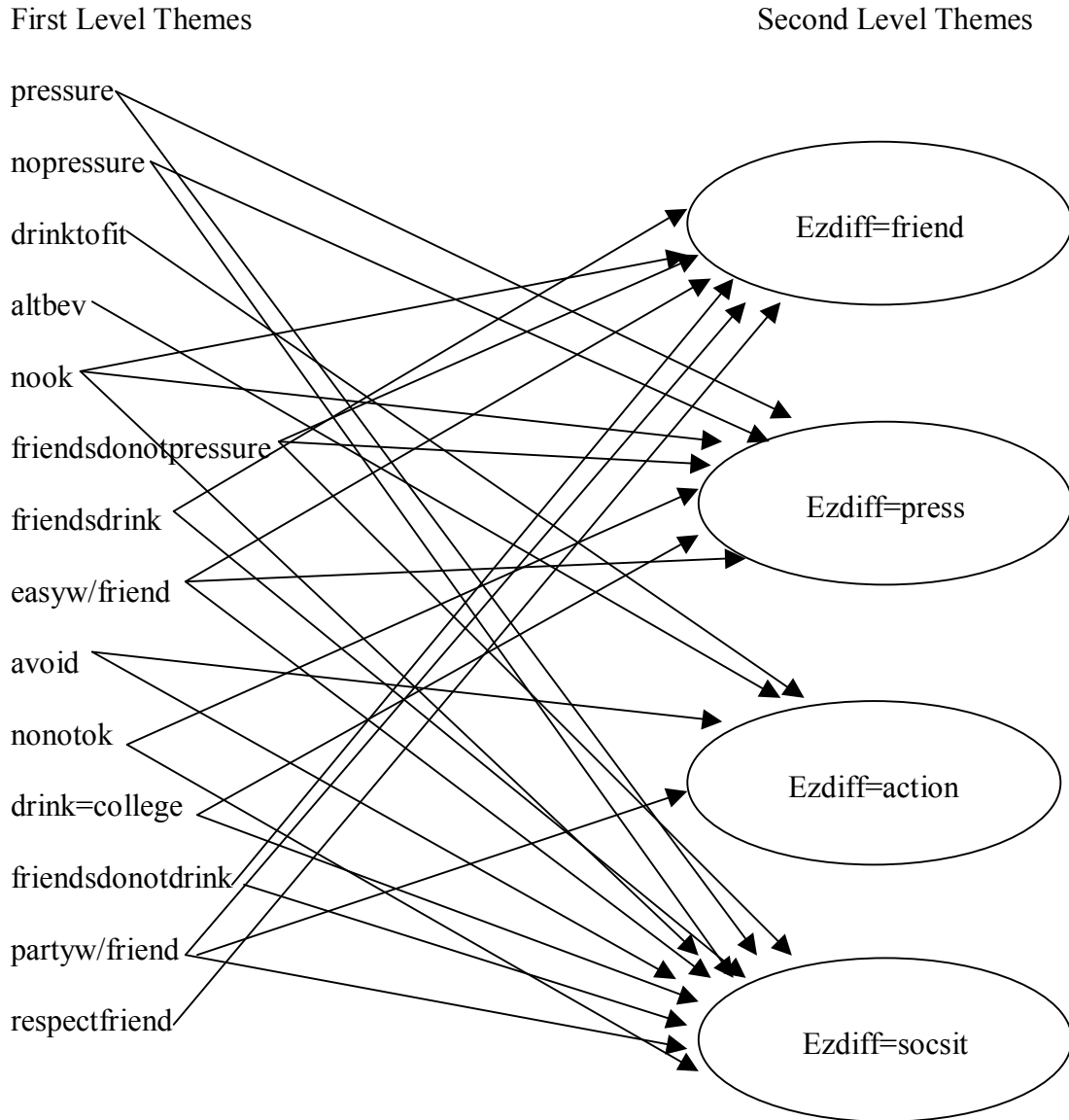
Table 8

*Second Level Triangulated Theme and Code Frequencies for Research Question Two*

| Theme Definition (Theme Code) | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Ease or difficulty in abstaining is affected by the pressure they feel to drink. (Ezdiff=press) | 62 | 21.8% |
| Ease or difficulty in abstaining is affected by friends or people surrounding them. (Ezdiff=friend) | 55 | 19.4% |
| Ease or difficulty of abstaining is affected by the actions an individual takes to keep from drinking. (Ezdiff=action) | 52 | 18.3% |
| Ease or difficulty in abstaining is associated with the strength of the conviction about abstention. (Ezdiff=convict) | 44 | 15.5% |
| Ease or difficulty of not drinking is affected by the social situation in which the students place themselves. (Ezdiff=socsit) | 39 | 13.7% |
| Abstainers making supportive friends is an important factor in helping them to not drink. (Mkfriend=ab) | 12 | 4.2% |
| Abstainers want to avoid the negative consequences from drinking they have seen in others. (Avoidneg) | 7 | 2.5% |
| Abstainers find supportive groups to help them keep from drinking alcohol. Important factor in not drinking. (Findgroup=ab) | 7 | 2.5% |
| Busy abstainer with many things to do. At least three cited things to do. (Busyab) | 6 | 2.1% |

*Interaction with and Perception of the Social Environment*

The most common thematic area I identified for research question two was the participants' perception of and interaction with the social environment. Many participants identified various levels of pressure to drink at Virginia Tech. Through their responses, I noticed that this pressure may have impacted the ease or difficulty of their abstention-related behaviors. Additionally, participants commented on the wide variety of social situations they encountered and sought out in the college environment. Just as with pressure, participant responses seemed to indicate that the ease or difficulty of their abstention may have been related to the nature of these social situations. I have identified some representative participant comments below.

REBECCA**:** I feel I get pressured a lot to drink, too. It's especially with people who don't understand, like, my background and where I'm coming from and stuff. They'll encourage me to go to their parties and they'll offer to buy my drinks and stuff like that.

JULIE: I think it depends on a lot on your atmosphere. If you're around people that you don't know, it's a little bit harder because they don't really know who you are and they don't realize you don't drink just because you don't feel like it, and they might push it on you a little bit more. If you're around people that you do know and that you are partying with, then, obviously, it is a lot easier not to.

CYBIL: …But before, like, especially guys, I've never had a girl do it to me, but guys will get into fights with me and they will be like, "Why don't you drink? You know, I don't understand. Why don't you just try this beer?" They are like so persistent that it really amazes me. You know, they won't let something go. They just have to be right. and have to try to give you alcohol.

SHANNON: …Whereas here, I, there's very much just because that's what everyone does. I think there's a lot more understanding among people here and just in general, of the college age, that if you don't, that's fine. You know, they might not agree with you, or, you know, might not even think that's what you should be doing, but they're not going to bug you about it.

CYBIL: If I go to a party, with my friends and I know there is going to be drinking there….and, my neighbors around me, all of them are guys and, they all love to get kegs and all that. But they know that the day they get a keg, they are going to buy me Sprite or they are going to do something. You know, I just have that, I guess, a backup, or I always have people around me, like my roommates are so understanding, or my best friend. If I want to leave a situation, there is no doubt about it, we go.

WAYNE: …I do every place I go. Um, from being around friends who usually don't, I don't think I've ever been to a really big party everybody is drunk or everything. I guess that I'm not being around it, pretty much.

ALLISON: Yeah, I go to parties sometimes, not all the time. Um, because here, there's not a lot of frat houses actually, there's mainly apartments where people are kinda crammed in the apartments. I mean, there are some frat houses and I mainly go to those, because there's usually dancing and stuff. I love to dance. Otherwise, I really don't have a lot of fun at the other parties, because I've had people, I've had beers spilled on me and people, like throw [up all] over on me and fall on me, and just, it's kind of gross. So, I mean, yeah, I'll go and have fun, if it's something I want. If it's something there that is of interest to me, I'll go.

BOB: Very often, I find myself, you can probably sometimes split, like when you go the sobriety group on one side and you got all the drunks on the other. Everyone is sober, so you are having a lot of fun, watching TV or playing video games or just watching the drunks make fools of themselves. It's a good combination. It's really fun.

*Friends and Groups With Which They Associate*

Making friends and finding groups with which they could identify was important to the vast majority of participants. These participants desired connection with others, and the process fr making friends and associating with groups had some level of influence on abstention. I discovered that making friends and finding groups with which they associated and could gather support was important to how they were able to practice not drinking. Additionally, there was some indication that the ease and difficulty of actually abstaining may have been related to their friends, both drinking and abstaining. Some supportive comments are below:

REBECCA: …But, then again, like they were saying, depends on your group of friends, and just like who you hang out with and stuff like that…

SOPHIE: I think it is really easy not to drink here. It's, I mean, there is all this going on, and there are so many other things to do. I mean, if you find the right group of friends or anything, then it's really not a concern.

SCOTT: …How easy is it not to drink? Its equally as easy, 'cause they provide certain theme halls, there's more than just the W.E.L.L. There are a lot of groups…

BO: …I think the people I hang out with and the groups I do stuff with, nobody ever drinks. There is really never reason for me to either.

HUNTER: Basically, it's all about picking and choosing your friends. If you've got somebody who just won't let go of the fact that you don't drink and stop bringing it up, I mean, why bother messing with them, because it's not worth it.

SHANNON: …And also, the people I'm with, the people I hang out with know how I feel about that and generally either have the same views or respect the views I have and wouldn't push it.

JOHN: I think at the beginning there was more pressure, because you didn't know as many people and you were trying to make friends and maybe you feel like you need to drink to fit in. But now, I have some good friends who also don't drink. It's a lot easier to just fit in and have a good time.

GEORGE: I think that it is fairly easy not to drink around here. There are so many, this is a really large campus and a lot of people here and tons of organizations and just like things to do…. You just gotta like find what your niche is or what not and you know, you're fine.

BILL: So, for the first week or two I didn't really know people, but then, I joined the crew team and like, always hanging out with those people, practicing all the time, just go to meets all the time. So, like as long as you can build a group of friends that you are comfortable with, it makes it very easy because then they respect your decision.

HUNTER: I just say, "No, I just don't." I try to keep myself out of situations where I am not going to have anybody to, I guess, support me or something like that…

HERB: …Basically, I need to have other people there to help me out 'cause even though like sometimes I try to rely on my own strength, I know that there is a powerful enemy out there that's trying to influence me to do something.…I need some other guys that,

hey, let's keep each other accountable….and then just basically just help each other out when we feel like we are being tempted.

*Personal Action*

I discovered that the participants engaged in a wide variety of behavior directly related to not drinking. This behavior, not surprisingly, had an impact on the ease or difficulty with which participants were able to abstain. There were also indications that some of this behavior related to abstention may be simply avoiding associated negative consequences of drinking. I chose some participant comments representative of this personal action below.

ABBAR: I just don't go places, I just don't hang around my friends when they are drinking. I don't go out with them when they drink. Uh, if they are drinking at my apartment or whatever, I'll go somewhere else, hang out with some other friends. I just want to.

JIM: I sort of agree with George. I'm so close to my 21$^{st}$, that if I screwed up now, if I got caught, then like, went to jail or whatever for being underage, it would suck. It's just not worth it.

GEORGE: If I'm at some social or something like that, or I'll offer to be a designated driver. So, that I'll, you know, still be able to hang out with everybody and also at the same time keep an eye on everybody, make sure they are getting' where they need to be, safely, at least….other than that, it's just being honest and stuff…

MISSY: I guess I do. It probably sounds stupid, but if um I'm at a party or something and someone hands me like um, alcohol. When no one's looking, I just poor it down the drain or something, just to get rid of it. Just so I don't have to be confronted with, um, "Like,

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why aren't you drinking?" 'cause I don't really feel like explaining it, I usually get rid of it somehow.

AMIT: I take some steps, actually, not to be offered drinks. Like go to a party, I see an empty beer can lying in the corner, I just take it and hold it in my hand, so people don't come around and say, "I wish you would drink," and stuff. Basically it's that at times and generally, I don't drink.

JULIE: Yes, I do attend parties where people are drinking. If people are playing drinking games, usually, I just have somebody drink for me, and usually, that's a lot funnier for them to have somebody else drink for me…

SCOTT: I agree with her. Bringing your own drinks where there is nothing but beer helps. I've found if you don't have, if you are not drinking anything at the time and a guy's like, "Do you want a drink?" just say no once. I've never been given a hard time about it…. I mean, I've had trouble getting water at parties, where there just was beer….and they see you drinking something else, they, most of the time, they don't even bother you.

JACKIE: …If I end up in a situation where there is drinking going on, or anything else worse than drinking going on, I usually try to get myself out of there, but, if it's not that scary of a situation, I don't feel that nervous, sometimes I'll just try to do something active, instead just standing around with people. Like, if there's a dance floor, I'll maybe dance around. 'Cause people can't walk up and make you have to drink and do stuff if you are really into dancing or something like that.

MAUREEN: …then, another thing you could do is just like kind of go along with the crowd and they might not even notice that you aren't drinking. Just be social and not like standoffish or anything and they usually don't care.

*Personal Conviction*

A majority of participants had sense of personal conviction and belief related to abstaining. Many of these same participants had such confidence in their conviction that they felt sure they would never drink. Others, while strong in their conviction, did not feel as sure in their ability to fend off the constant pressures to drink in the college environment. It seemed to me that their personal conviction had some level of impact on their ability to abstain. I chose some of the more inclusive comments below.

ALLISON: I think it's uh, easy, and it's easy, because you know you don't want to. If you do not have the desire to, then, there's no temptation there at all. So I think that part's easy…

BO: …If you don't drink, then that's your decision and you are the only one that can really make that or influence that. Um, if you just stay to what you believe and what you are going to do, then I don't know, I don't think it's very hard that you can't say "No" to anybody.

JACKIE: …I have, like my boyfriend, is really, really outspoken against alcohol….and sometimes when I get in situations when he's there and I'm there, a lot of people come up to me and be like, "We know you aren't drinking 'cause he's here and you think you are going to get in trouble with him. You know, you can just go hang out in this room and you can do this." And I'm like, "I'm not drinking 'cause I don't want to drink, not because he doesn't want to."…

RALPH: I think it completely depends on your mindset. I could go to a party where there is alcohol. No matter how hard people try, I'd never give in and take some alcohol. If you are not firm, if you don't really think about it at all and if you go and people start asking you about it, then you may start considering it in the back of your mind. So, then you may give in, eventually.

CARLOS: …I can joke with myself and just reinforce myself and back myself up, that I don't have to drink to prove myself to any of these people….If you've got that can in your hand and finger on the tab, first off, I wouldn't even be in that position. It's just an automatic thing, you don't have to think about it. If you gotta think about it, you shouldn't be there in the first place.

*General Activity*

Many abstainers were quite busy with a variety of activities. Their activities included personal hobbies, university events, school work, involvement in campus organizations, and just socializing, to name a few. I discovered that some participants felt that by keeping busy with their many activities that they were easily able to not drink. I include a few representative comments are below.

JANE: I stay busy with homework and there are activities for me and all going on.There is so much to do here, like non-alcohol related, concerts and stuff like that. So I just stay busy.

SAMANTHA: Usually, I keep pretty busy. I don't know, I enjoy talking to people [more] than engaging in drinking and stuff like that. And then, I study a lot. I'm kind of a study nerd. So, that would [keep me] away from that too. I'm involved in a lot of clubs and activities. I don't have a lot of time to go out drinking.

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I found that the major themes of participant responses for research question two were their interaction with and perception of their social environment, friends and groups with which they associate, personal action, personal conviction, and general activity. Next, I examined the purely social behaviors of abstainers.

*Social Behaviors (Research Question Three): Second Level Themes*

For research question three, I identified several underlying themes related to participant social behavior. Many of these themes were similar to the themes identified through the content level themes for research question three. Many of the second level codes and themes are much different from the first level codes and themes at first glance. However, upon deeper inspection, the overall themes were quite similar (see Figure 3 for a partial illustration of the translation from first to second level themes). With the second level themes and codes, I attempted to take several content level codes and draw some sort of deeper meaning and significance related to their behavior. I was then able to group these second level codes and themes into even larger thematic groups. I identified a total 25 triangulated themes for research question three. Of these 25, I was able to take 14 and place them into three larger thematic groups: deep, rich friendships and social environments; drinking friends and abstaining friends; and the importance of making friends; and associating with groups (see Table 9). More specifically, deep, rich friendships and social environments (Deeprichfriend [10.1], Richsoc [5.8%], Richsocaway [3.1%], and Connect [3.1%]) comprised 22.1% of the content of the comments for research question three. Additionally, drinking friends and abstaining friends

*Figure 3. Translating First Level Themes to Second Level Themes for Research Question Three*

First Level Themes                                    Second Level Themes
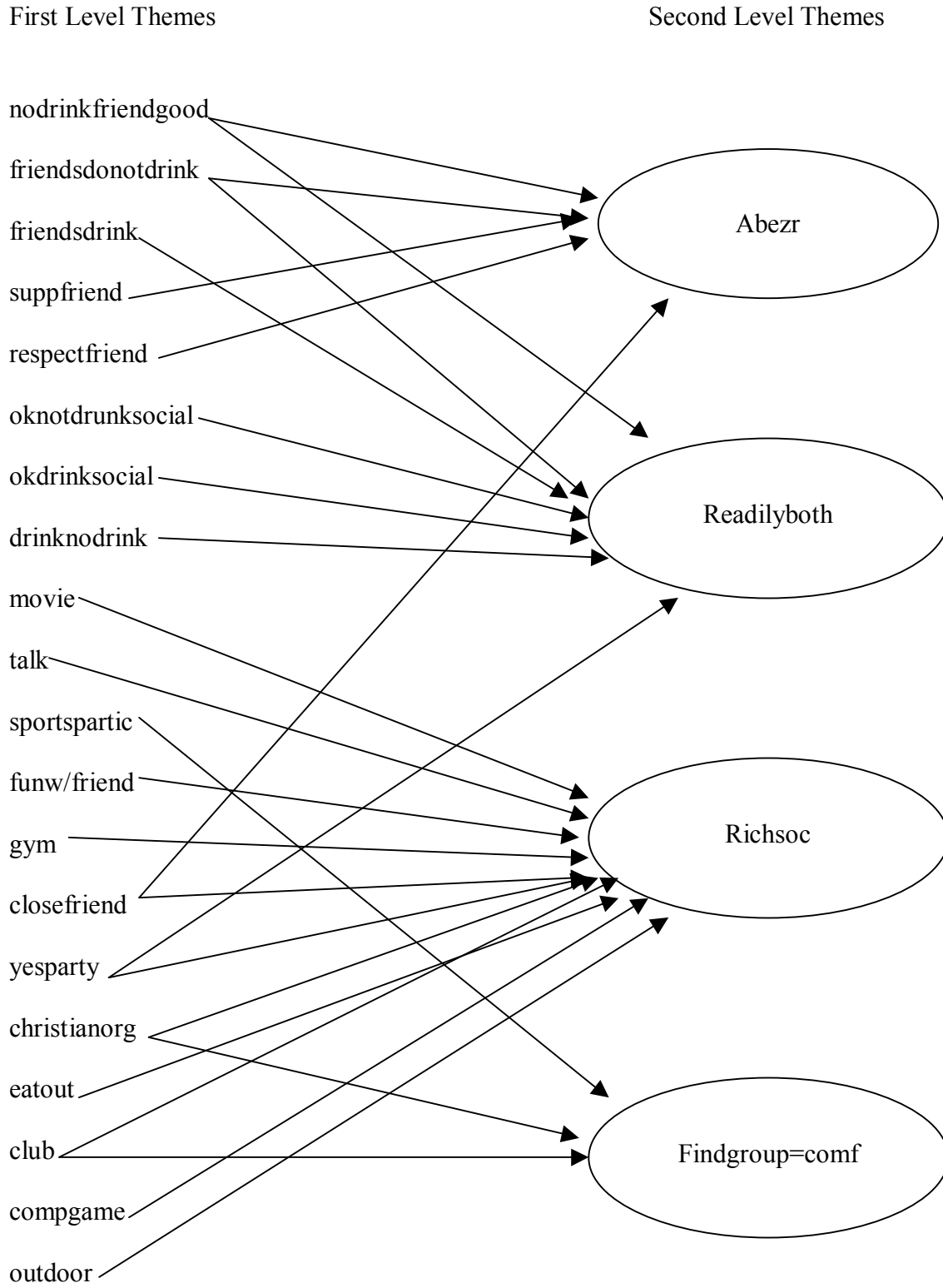
Table 9

*Second Level, Triangulated Theme and Code Frequencies for Research Question Three*

| Theme Definition (Theme Code) | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Busy abstainer with many things to do. At least three cited things to do. (Busyab) | 60 | 12.4% |
| Abstainers feel they have deep, rich, close friendships, especially with other abstainers. (Deeprichfriend) | 49 | 10.1% |
| Abstainers find it both easy and difficult to make friends with drinkers. (Friendezdiff) | 47 | 9.7% |
| Abstainers find it easier to make friends with other abstainers than with drinkers, in general. (Abezr) | 34 | 7.0% |
| Abstainers will readily make friends with or spend time with drinkers or abstainers. (Readilyboth) | 28 | 5.8% |
| Abstainers are part of a rich social experience and environment. (Richsoc) | 28 | 5.8% |
| Abstainers get support from family. (Famsupp) | 27 | 5.6% |
| Abstainers make friends with supportive others or abstainers to help them feel more comfortable in college. (Mkfriend=comf) | 24 | 5.0% |

Table 9, continued

*Second Level, Triangulated Theme and Code Frequencies for Research Question Three*

| Theme Definition (Theme Code) | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Finding and associating with a supportive group helps them feel comfortable in the college environment. (Findgroup=comf) | 23 | 4.8% |
| Ease or difficulty in abstaining is affected by friends or people surrounding them. (Ezdiff=friend) | 23 | 4.8% |
| Religious organizations and fellowships are an important part of many abstainers' social environment in college. (Relgorg) | 20 | 4.1% |
| Campus activities, clubs, or organizations are an important part of abstainers' social environment. (Cluborg) | 18 | 3.7% |
| Ease or difficulty of not drinking is affected by the social situation in which the students place themselves. (Ezdiff=socsit) | 17 | 3.5% |
| Desire to connect with people or groups of people. (Connect) | 15 | 3.1% |
| Abstainers create a rich social environment away from the general college social environment. (Richsocaway) | 15 | 3.1% |
| Ease or difficulty in abstaining is affected by the pressure they feel to drink. (Ezdiff=press) | 10 | 2.1% |
| Abstainers make friends or join organizations during their freshman year to help them feel more comfortable in the college environment. (Fresh=comf) | 8 | 1.7% |

Table 9, continued

*Second Level, Triangulated Theme and Code Frequencies for Research Question Three*

| Theme Definition (Theme Code) | Frequency | Percentage |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Abstainers feel left out or not a part their social environment because they do not drink and they feel most other college students drink or most activities revolve around alcohol. (Ableftout) | 8 | 1.7% |
| Ease or difficulty in abstaining is associated with the strength of the conviction about abstention. (Ezdiff=convict) | 5 | 1.0% |
| Family influence is important and strong for abstainers. (Faminfluen) | 5 | 1.0% |
| Number and closeness of friends varied widely. It is more important to have supportive friends than to have many friends. (Numclosefriend) | 5 | 1.0% |
| Ease or difficulty of abstaining is affected by the actions an individual takes to keep from drinking. (Ezdiff=action) | 4 | 0.8% |
| Abstainers find supportive groups to help them keep from drinking alcohol. Important factor in not drinking. (Findgroup=ab) | 4 | 0.8% |
| Positive and negative influence from friends is important and strong for abstainers. (Friendinfluen) | 3 | 0.6% |
| Abstainers making supportive friends is an important factor in helping them to not drink. | 3 | 0.6% |

(Friendezdiff [9.7%], Abezr [7.0%], and Readilyboth [5.8%]) comprised 22.5% of the content, and the importance of making friends and associating with groups (Mkfriend=comf [5.0%], Findgroup=comf [4.8%], Ezdiff=friend [4.8%], Fresh=comf [1.7%], Findgroup=ab [0.8%], and Mkfriend=ab [0.6%]) comprised 17.7% of the content.

*Deep, Rich Friendships and Social Environments*

By the nature of this category, the participant responses are some of the richest of all focus group responses. I discovered that almost all participants deeply valued and cherished a sense of close, personal relationships. Above anything else, abstainers seemed most concerned about their friends, with many commenting about spending time with friends as their most important activities outside of school. I also found that some participants, even if seemingly a little introverted, talked about either having or desiring close, personal friendships. Many abstainers also felt that by abstaining, they were able to have the types of relationships with others that they desired. As a complement to their friendships, abstainers also created rich social environments. Some of these environments were far away from alcohol, while others were intricately interwoven around it. I found that, while participants' activities varied widely, they all described social environments of which they were a part that were both interesting and fulfilling. The combination of close friendships and rich social environments left many abstainers with much to do. Since there was such depth in participant responses, I had difficulty culling truly representative quotations for this section. Here are some of the more representative comments.

> KEISHA: We go out to dinner and spend a lot of money going out to dinner and then go out to breakfast and we, I very rarely go out to parties. If anything, we'll go over to a couple of friends' house and we'll sit around. We'll rent movies or play Trivial Pursuit and joke each other, because we're stupid and we don't know the answers. It's just a lot

of goofy things. There are people there. If they drink, they'll have a little bit. Like they'll have one beer or something and that's all.

AMIT: I go to friends' places. They have a get together. I have a home cooked dinner. Some home food, like some of the Indian grad students just invite us over to have a nice home cooked Indian meal, because we really miss that once we come here. So that's there.  Plus, with other friends, go out and play pool as you said…

MUHAMMED: …They have potlucks. Where everybody brings some food and we all get together and share the food. Wednesday night….They call it VT Mug and it's VT undergraduate Muslim student organization…

KATIE: Most of those parties I go to, it has to be dancing. There has to be a dance floor. There has to be that. Um, social gatherings, it's like a bunch of us going over to someone's apartment, just watch a movie.

CYBIL: My roommates, every time I meet them, I feel like I am grinning from the inside. They just like, fill me up. I think it's like they've saved me, my life, more than once. When I did not want to tell my parents my problems, they called, you know. Like, it's kind of like hard love, I guess. You know, I just love them.

REBECCA: They are just, most of them are Christians. One of my roommates isn't, but, it is just the relationship that is very trusting and honest and transparent. We just tell each other everything. There is nothing to hide. We just feel totally comfortable with each other. I can't be friends with someone that I don't feel comfortable with. We laugh a lot and we're silly and we're friends.

MARTY: I don't have a whole lot of friends. I have a few really deep friendships…. It took a long time to develop what I would consider friends on a really deep level. Um, so,

like, most of like my friends that are friends to me are in Intervarsity [Christian Fellowship] and are people that challenge me spiritually. They are people that will hold me accountable for any sort of struggle that I might be having, people that I feel I can really open up to and tell anything. So, those are like my friends. I guess I said I don't interact really because of the way that I want my friendships to be. I don't interact much outside of people that I know are going to be spiritually challenging for me, I guess.

HERB: Ok, I meet with four people a week individually, just one on one. Just, we talk about our lives and get in depth and care for each other, go through scripture together…. Um, I am involved with small group Bible studies, more people. That's when we socialize. We talk about, we just have fun times and learning more about each other and just about our needs and about what we are going through, helping each other…

KIP:…And, also, I'm pretty open with my friends, and a few of my friends are pretty, I can pretty much be an open book when I want to be. I'll just let it out. Um, and that's, I guess that's my main stress reliever…talking to friends, getting whatever is bothering me or whatever is making me angry, let it out, and be, and then, they'll be talking to me, "Yeah, that person is making me mad, too." So, it is just having some solace with that person.

*Drinking Friends and Abstaining Friends*

Even though some participants had very few friends who drank, almost all made comments comparing the differences in being friends with drinkers and abstainers. Again, almost every participant commented to some degree about how being friends with someone who abstained was easier than being friends with someone who drank. Other abstainers seemed to have an instant bond and level of understanding associated with sharing not drinking in an

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environment that bombarded them with alcohol, or at least with other people engaging in drinking. Some people only associated with other abstainers, while, on the other hand, some participants readily associated with both drinkers and non-drinkers. Whether they associated with drinkers as friends or not, they often noticed how being friends with drinkers was difficult, even if only for the reason that their lives had to be different at the point when the drinkers were drinking. However, I found that there was no clear distinction made by the participants about associating with abstainers, as sometimes they were easy to get along with and at others, they were much more difficult. I chose some of the better and more representative comments below.

*Friends who do not drink.* Abstainers generally felt close to other abstainers and were able to have strong bonds of friendship. Some of the participant responses should help illuminate their experiences with friends who do not drink.

> VICKI: I think it's a lot more fun. I usually think they have a lot better personality, like they have a lot more interesting things to say, because they spend time, like free time in the week and stuff, like doing things other than just getting drunk, like actually go out and do fun things and have more things to talk about.
>
> BO: I think when you finally, or once you find somebody that doesn't drink, then it's kind of like your friendship can start. I don't really have any friends that I would say that really drink at all. I don't know, just not someone who I want to hang out with. So, once I know they aren't drinking and I don't drink, it's definitely someplace to start a relationship.
>
> JANICE: …I had a couple of classes with this one girl and when I first I met her, she was real quiet and things. I don't know how she figured out that I didn't drink. I must have not said anything on a weekend [inaudible]. It's just like, I didn't feel [uptight], I felt like

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I could let down my guard and I didn't have to be all stressing about being like, "Yeah, I'm a real party girl." You know, trying to be cool. You know, she understood that. I just felt like I could be closer to her. She was probably one of my close friends when I got down here, because we had that in common.

HERB: It's so, like assuring. It's in a sense of like freedom, like when you're with my friends, you just feel like, I don't know, you can be yourself and be goofy. Everybody will ask me, you know, like fun, they just make fun of things you do with humor. Just be who you were created to be. Like, me and five friends that usually don't drink, or they don't drink, it just, it gives gives you confidence…

ROBIN: It's exciting, like me, my roommate and I both don't and both, you know, go everywhere together [inaudible]. You know, it's very; it's easier to have someone there that doesn't drink with you when we're, when everyone at the party does.

JACKIE: I think I like it a lot. I think it's cool, because you….feel like you are really seein' the person….like who they are and they can talk to you….but I think it's rewarding, because interacting with people who aren't drunk, you just, you are learning more about them all the time.

*Comparing the two: drinker and abstainers.* Drinking friends were often more difficult to deal with than drinkers. However, this was not necessarily true for all the participants. Some of their representative responses are quoted below.

JIN: I guess, I don't care if they drink or not. As long as they don't pressure me into drinking, I'm pretty much carefree about it. I'm pretty much an outgoing kind of friend.

JOSEPH: For me, it's not much of a difference, 'cause like drinking is something they do, it's not who they are. That's, I think probably important. Drinking isn't really a big deal to me. I choose not to, they may choose to. It doesn't really affect me though.

ROBIN: I don't like to associate myself with one group. I am kind of like a group hopper, I guess. I just have my Bible study girls. We just, you know, stick together and don't drink. Then, I have people from Campus Crusade. I have people in my suite, you know. I have my frat guys. You know, just different people and I, they all have different beliefs. You know, most of my friends do drink.

MISSY: Sometimes, I find its like more work to talk to someone who drinks, just because if they are talking about how much they drink or if they got drunk, because I don't really have anything to add, I guess. To keep them from asking me, I constantly have to keep asking or talking to them to keep them occupied. I just find it's more work.

HAMAL: Well, it's just me and Maria hanging out, it's, there's like no overriding, like, priority to find alcohol. Like, before my roommates turned 21, every time I went out with them, they would be like, you know, the first priority is, "We need to get some alcohol." Then, the night can go on from there. I mean, it's just like, it's kinda of like if you have friends who smoke weed, it's kinda like the same thing. If you hang around with people who smoke weed, every time they go out, their first priority is to find some. Then, once they find some, then, "Ok, now we can do other stuff." So, I mean, if you hang out with people who don't do that and don't drink, then, the priority is just to have fun, rather than try to find stuff first.

NANCY: You can relax a lot more….'cause you're not going to constantly think about what are they going to do next. Like, I have a guy friend, who, he gets drunk and he

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scares me at times when he's drunk, 'cause he's a lot larger than I am and he can always overpower me. I don't trust him when he's drunk, like I do when he's sober. So, I guess you have to, just constantly keeping in mind situations that may occur in the future. You can't relax and enjoy things how they are right there.

KEISHA: I think there's a big difference if you are with people who only drink a little and people who get smashed. I have been to a party where almost every single person there was smashed and it was awful. Then, when I go, when I'm out with friends that only drink a little, then it's ok. Then, it's better. Then, we can still have fun; we can still communicate. It's not nearly as bad, like when you are with people who don't care about anything other than drinking…

BEN: I would say people that you talk to when they're drunk, that's a completely different story, but to just talk to somebody, you know, that drinks, I don't think that's a big deal. It's not like you ever, whenever you have a conversation with them it comes up, or something like that. As long as they are not in that state of mind, it's not going to affect the way you talk to them and things like that and it's nothing [inaudible] in your everyday conversation. I don't think it's any different from talking to somebody that doesn't drink….'Cause one of my really good friends; she drinks, you know, on the weekends, and things like that. I hang out with her during the week….it's never an issue because she drinks or something. It doesn't feel any different, because she goes out on the weekends and drinks.

NANCY: …It's scary, but also kind of amusing at times when you talk to people the night before, then you talk to them the next day or a couple of days later and they have no clue what happened. One of my suitemates, sometimes she gets drunk. One night, we left

like at 2:30 in the morning. We couldn't find her anywhere. We panicked. So, she just started walking. It was like freezing cold outside. She had no shoes on and like a jacket…

*The Importance of Making Friends and Associating with a Group*

I found that how abstainers felt and interacted with their social environment was sometimes related to how well they made friends and associated with groups. Almost every participant commented on the importance of making friends and associating with groups in feeling comfortable or feeling like they fit into the college environment, particularly in the freshman year. Some of this same comfort and feeling of inclusion of making friends and associating with groups was also tied to their comfort in not drinking. Just as with research question two, I found that the ease or difficulty of abstaining seemed to be associated with their friends. While the overriding themes were similar for many participants, the particulars of their experiences varied widely; I selected some of the more representative quotes below.

> HAN: …If you're going with a group of friends, close friends and they know you really well, you will feel the same. You won't feel left out or you won't feel pressure because they know you and you know yourself…

> AMIT: …So you usually, if you have a good group, then people usually try to protect you from the others. That is actually a really good thing and that will help you like. It's much easier if you're in a group of friends.

> SHANNON: I just think a lot of it's more of a mindset, than anything. I mean, you don't have to be at a party or in a situation where there's all these things that entertain you. I mean, if you can just have a couple of friends and even, just sitting around your dorm room, you can have a lot of fun, just doing whatever.

JENNY: I think there's always something to do. Like, even just going to someone and even just watching a movie with like a bunch of other people, I think I would rather socialize doing like that with a couple of people I know that like go to a party [where] I don't know anyone. I think it's more worthwhile to just hang out with people you know and have fun.

MISSY: I guess when I came here I didn't know anyone, 'cause no one from my high school came to Virginia Tech. So, that's why I joined the crew team and joined a sorority. I guess most of my friends come from there…

KIP: I think it's crucial to, if you're not going out to parties all the time, then to be a part of an organization….So my freshman year, I didn't do anything. [I] knew the people I knew from high school and few other random people that I met, and I was pretty miserable. But my sophomore year, [I] got involved with VTU and probably 50% of my friends come from that.

MARTY: I guess, like I said, like all my friends pretty much are from Intervarsity [Christian Fellowship], and the ones that are of age, 21 [are members there too]…. another reason I don't drink is 'cause it's illegal. But, the people who are legal, every once in a while they will have one drink. Um, but, there's this kind of rule among us, that if there are people that are under age within that group, then before anybody that is of age drinks, they either clear it with each individual person there or they just don't do it all. So, like, it's definitely very, very controlled and it's very, like, they make sure that they are consciously making the decision, not that they are just like, "Oh, give me a beer." Its like, "Ok, what is the effect of me having this beer right now? How am I influencing people who are freshmen? How am I influencing people who are around me?" So, that is

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an encouragement to me, because I see people who are of age truly drinking responsibly, like, they are truly being responsible…

NANCY: I'm a member of a couple of clubs. The Newman Community, which is the Catholic community here. They help me find people who are also of the same mindset, as far as drinking. [I am] part of the leadership community, again, people who have the same mindset. I guess you have a lot groups of people and some do choose to drink. A lot of people do not choose to drink. Like the whole, I can serve better if I'm not drinking, it's kind of like that whole mindset. I was also in a bowling league last semester and it's was fun and I met a lot of people that way. So, I guess different activities [with] different directions, you meet a larger group of people and some are like you.

MAUREEN: Me and Samantha are in the microbiology club. I'm the vice president. So we get a lot of interesting people in the major around. That's, I mean, not the typical socializing….You have your clubs and things, and you meet a lot of people who are in your classes and you eventually really get to know them. You can call them up on the weekends, go party with them or whatever, hang out.

KIP: …Wwe don't drink at VTU, 'cause our shows, putting them on, when you're sitting up beside the equipment or setting up the equipment, or various other things. Yeah, you get to know the people really well at the show if you are working the door with somebody, tearing tickets, or working security. You get to know them, because, yeah, you, you just do.

JULIE: I am a member of the Residential Leadership Community and a lot of people who are in there, have done a lot of things to get in that community or area. So a lot of people around me are really smart and dedicated to their work.…I guess that's one thing that the

community promotes is going around room-to-room, suite-to-suite and just introducing yourself to people. Especially with the first year students, the freshmen who come into the program, they encourage that so much, that everybody in the community really gets a chance to know each other. You would be walking anywhere, and you would know every 50 or 60 people, just because of being in the program…

*Busy Abstainers*

Finally, I discovered that many abstainers were quite busy with a wide variety of activities. The variety of their activities seemed virtually endless and they seemed at no loss for things to do as abstainers. Here are some of their responses.

JIN: I got a lot. I got a couple of lists here. Actually, I am a tennis freak. I play tennis a lot. I do driving. I'm into the Nitro RC cars…. I play a lot of PC, I do a lot of PC games. I go to movies, shopping. I love to eat, I go to restaurants, everywhere. I go everywhere. I go to Outback and all that stuff. and some exercise, I guess, some outdoor running. At night, you know, I'm like an internet guy. I can't live without the internet. So, I do all the shopping there. I don't think I could live without the internet…

MANDY: I do like a lot of stuff, like I just, whether it's just hanging out with my friends, then I'm involved with IV [Intervarsity Christian Fellowship], and then like we do Bible study on Wednesday, and a lot of times, like after that, people or someone's apartment. The same thing on Thursday. We'll usually like go out to dinner before and then, like just with people through IV and like my hall throughout the week will hang out and like go to Wal-Mart. I don't know, go bowling, whatever, just stuff. We didn't drink. There's lots to do without drinking.

ABBAR: The gym is open until midnight here. So, it's a good alternative to play

basketball or go lift weights or racquetball. It's all available here, til late at night. Also, if

it's still light outside and the weather is nice, then you can always go get a football game

out on the drill field or ultimate Frisbee or something.

HERB: Let's see, like other than sports what I like, just free time, throwing football,

playing football. Mad football is good. Like, I play basketball. I love playing drums. I

love jamming with twin brother. He's awesome on the guitar. Just in free time, play.

Also, just hanging out with my friends.

JANE: Um, I like dancing, too, doing stuff outdoors, working out, going to special events

here, like musicals that they have every couple of months. They are really fun. I like

hanging out with my dorm, because we are a really tight knit family in there. So, it is just

fun to be there and hang out.

I found several broad themes related to the participants social behavior including: deep,

rich friendships and social environments, drinking friends and abstaining friends, and the

importance of making friends and associating with groups. I also tried to identify the participant

comments that best summed up the nature of their social experiences and behavior. Next, I

examined some of the outcomes that abstainers perceived as a result of their abstention.

*Outcomes of Abstention (Research Question Four): Second Level Themes*

I identified several underlying themes related to participant social behavior for research

question four. Many of these themes were similar to the content identified through the content

level themes for research question three. While many of the second level codes and themes are

much different from the first level codes and themes at first glance, they are, however, condensed

versions of the wider variety of first level content codes (see Figure 4 for a partial illustration of

this). The second level themes and codes attempted to take several content level codes and draw some sort of deeper meaning and significance related to their behavior. I was then able to group these second level codes and themes into even larger thematic groups. I identified three triangulated themes for research question four (see Table 10). From these, I used two as their own thematic grouping, abstainers feeling left out and abstainers having many positive outcomes from abstaining. More specifically,  abstainers both feeling left out and experiencing many positive outcomes from abstaining contained 42.5% of the content of the comments for research question four. I feel these themes should help illuminate some of the patterns behind the participant responses related to their perceived outcomes of abstaining.

*Abstainers Feel Left Out*

The most consistent negative theme for this research question was that of feeling left out or out of place in the college environment. While the opinions expressed were not of a clear majority, their voices and experiences came clear as the only consistent negative outcome of abstaining in college. Simply, some abstainers felt left out and like they did not fit in because while the majority of students in college drank and created environments related to that drinking, they, on the other hand, were not part of that experience and sometimes were intentionally excluded because they did not drink. Some of their experiences are quoted below.

> KEISHA: I think my social life has been hurt a little bit, because I know that some of my friends invite me out, because they feel bad that they are drinking and I'm not. So, I just don't get invited sometimes.

> CYBIL: To be honest, sometimes I do get that self-pity feeling. You know, everyone out there, it seems like at Tech, can drink and it seems like they all belong and everything,

*Figure 4. Translating First Level Themes to Second Level Themes for Research Question Four*

First Level Themes                          Second Level Themes

donotwantneg

notrouble                                        Avoidneg

calories

health

posimpeduc

posimplife                                        Manypos

posimphealth

fewneg

posimppersrel

posimpfin

leftout                                           Ableftout

lessfriend

bettertime
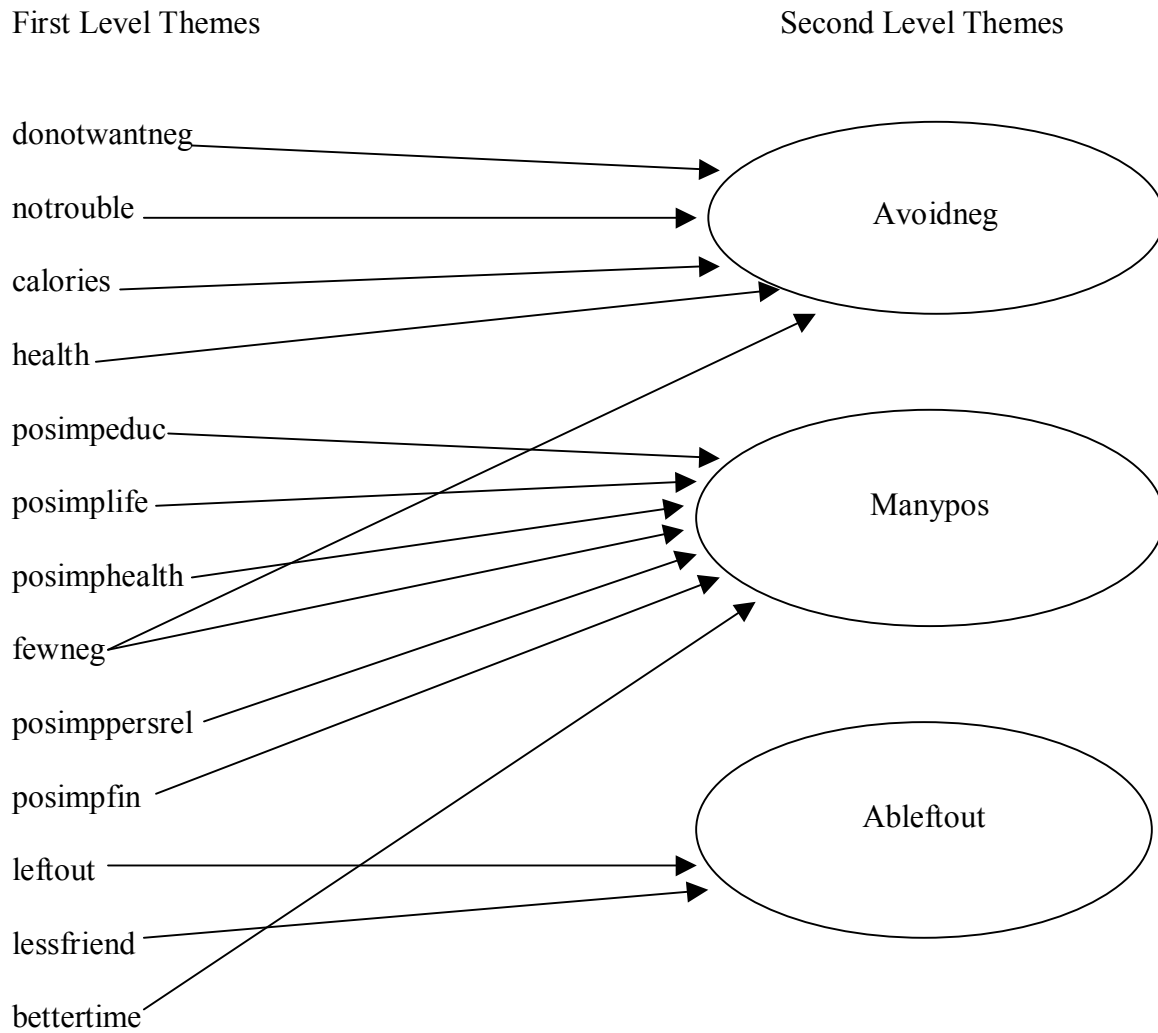
Table 10

*Second Level, Triangulated Theme and Code Frequencies for Research Question Four*

| Theme Definition (Theme Code) | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Abstainers feel left out or not a part their social environment because they do not drink and they feel most other college students drink or most activities revolve around alcohol. (Ableftout) | 17 | 42.50% |
| Abstainers believe that many areas of their lives are positively affected by abstaining. (Manypos) | 17 | 42.50% |
| Abstainers want to avoid the negative consequences from drinking they have seen in others. (Avoidneg) | 6 | 15.00% |

That's how you get a lot of days. They'll go away, but just sometimes you'll feel like that.

MISSY: My freshman year, I lived in the W.E.L.L.. Half my floor was the W.E.L.L. and half was like, people who weren't. I think the people who weren't in the W.E.L.L. kind of like looked at us differently and maybe didn't want to get to know us because they thought we were no fun or have a good time or go out. So, I think, like that way, they kind of stereotype you if you don't drink.

GEORGE: I think it's somewhat negative, just because how I consider myself open minded about how people make their choices whether they want to drink and how they want to deal with that. I think, I'd say my friends respect me and my decisions.

I'd say also that there are those people who just like, "What, you don't drink? pfshhhh.." I mean, just kind of blow you off and they don't even know your reason for not drinking or know you at all. They shoot you down before you even get a chance to talk to em. So that's a little bit negative, when people aren't open minded with people who don't drink.

JULIE: I think disadvantages are, their kinda, I mean, it could be looked at as an advantage…You're going against the social norm and you're going against what is considered the typical college student, and if you go against that image, then people, most people, would assume, especially people that drink on college campus, they assume that just about everybody else at college drinks. You could go ask somebody that would go out drinking with you or ask somebody to go buy beers or whatever. If you are somebody else who does that, I mean, and you encounter somebody who doesn't drink, then you are kinda just like taken aback, like oh, you are one of those people who doesn't drink. So, I guess, you're kinda at a disadvantage if you don't, in the fact that you do feel like an

outsider, at times. I mean, when you are around your people that you're friends with that don't drink, then you obviously don't feel like an outsider then, but, with the general kids at the college that does drink, you do feel like an outsider, at times.

HERB: …It just gives you a stress that is like, it's hard to go away, because, you know, I've been to places where I was the only one and it feels like so, "I don't know you." I feel, like so stressed, because you're like, you start thinking things in your head….and you get tempted and sometimes you can't help that and like that's going to come. Especially a lot of freshman, who do not drink, because if you are trying to carry everybody's load, saying, "I'm the one that doesn't drink, so all you guys can respect that." It has a lot of pressure. I dealt with that the first years, like at school, now it's kinda like I'm doing this just for the joy of myself and like all of that is just like burden's been like released, and now I can just enjoy it…

*Abstainers Experience Many Positive Outcomes*

While there were few identifiable negative outcomes of abstaining, participants cited numerous positive outcomes. I found a variety of positive outcomes that included better grades, more academic focus, better finances, better health, close friendships, and many others. Some of their self-identified positive outcomes are given below.

SOPHIE: I guess the positive would be everything I have accomplished in my life. I didn't have to do anything bad to get where I've gotten.

SAMANTHA: I think that the positive far outweigh the negatives. So it is not really an issue with me. Like I might say, one of my friends, I know that they go out at other colleges and go out drinking. They might have a broader social group of friends, or whatever, but, it is probably not very close friends and not people that they would trust or

regularly do things with. So it might be a smaller group of friends, but then again, they are probably closer friends that you know better. So it kinda outweighs that negative aspect.

KIP: Health, I don't have to worry about liver disease, so that's good. Um, financially, because, people who are going downtown, they are like, "I only have 40 dollars on me." And "I'm like, that's more than you need to spend in one night." So, financially, it helps me out. Um, also academically, [I] don't have to worry having a hangover the next day, not feeling like doing work or skipping class, or whatever. Uh, also, not regretting your actions, even though you always regret actions, but not having as much regret as some of my friends do.

Many participants had little to say for positive or negative outcomes by the time they came to the end of the focus group session. However, those who did answer were almost unanimous in giving responses related to not fitting in with the general student population and also experiencing many positive outcomes from abstaining.

*Conclusion*

In this chapter, I explored, in as much detail as possible without being too repetitive, every aspect of the focus groups sessions and the participant responses. Some of the further implications of this research are examined in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of my study was to explore the contours of the lives of college students who abstain from drinking alcohol. Specifically, I investigated the motivations, behaviors, and outcomes related to their choice not to drink. Through eight focus groups I collected rich, qualitative data on 53 abstainers. After examining the responses, I discovered several patterns, which I presented in Chapter 4. In this chapter, I discuss the results already presented and examine their implications.

I have organized the discussion of these results around three sections in this chapter. First, I explore the deeper meaning of these responses as they relate back to my research questions. Second, I return to the existing body of literature and examine how my results support and contradict this. Third, I discuss the further implications of how this information can be used for practice and research.

The Findings as They Relate to the Research Questions

I presented my initial interpretations of the participants' responses in great detail in Chapter 4. Specifically, I examined the content level themes and their related data along with some deeper overarching themes and their related data; I did all of this in relation to my research questions. In this section, I explore and discuss the deeper meanings of this same data as it relates to the research questions in a more condensed format. My intention is to bring experiences of the participants' lives together in such a way that a somewhat generalized understanding can be reached.

*Research Question One: Deeper Meanings From the Results*

Research question one was, *"What are abstainers' motivations for abstaining?"*

From the participants' responses, I identified several possible themes that indicate some answers to this question including: spiritual and religious influence, family influence, negative experiences, friends' influence, and belonging to organizations. Since I examined each of these themes already in Chapter 4, I will briefly tie each of them together and back to research question one.

*Spiritual and Religious Influence*

According to the participants' responses and my coding, I found that spiritual and religious influences appeared the most frequently as motivations for abstention. The spiritual and religious beliefs and influences were diverse, as they came from a variety of sources and spanned several world religions. I discovered that the end result for many participants was that spirituality or religion had a strong and positive influence on their choice to abstain. I found that most individuals who claimed this influence claimed it as a result of the substance of their beliefs. Some influence seemed to come from a sense of duty and obligation to their beliefs. However, I also found that some of this duty and obligation to their beliefs came from a desire to please their family, or how their family influenced them through their religion. Finally, while the substance and source of their religious beliefs seemed to be a strong influence, an even stronger influence appeared to come from participants who had personalized and internalized their spiritual and religious experiences; those with strong personal convictions that tied their beliefs to abstention seemed to have a concrete foundation for their abstention. Spirituality and religious influences were important factors in the majority of participants' decision to abstain.

*Family Influence*

I uncovered family influence for their abstention as another factor cited often by participants. From their responses, it seemed that participants' experiences included positive and

negative influence from their families. Some participants had positive family role models who taught them to abstain or to drink in moderation, while modeling this same behavior themselves as parents. For example, some participants talked about the fun their parents showed them they could have and by not drinking or by drinking in moderation. On the other extreme, other families preached abstention as the only choice, which left some individuals feeling obligated to abstain out of respect for their families. Other participants talked about negative influences from immediate or extended family members who had problems with alcohol. Whether they witnessed these problems directly or just heard stories, many participants cited these negative experiences as reasons for their abstention. Just as with religion, I discovered that participants felt their families' actions and words had a strong influence on their abstention.

*Negative Experiences*

Even though negative experiences were already mentioned in conjunction with families, participants also had personal or peer-related negative experiences that influenced their decision to abstain. While not in the majority, a number of abstainers had personal negative experiences with alcohol, most of which included drinking and getting sick or getting into trouble. Another larger segment of the participants experienced the negative consequences of drinking vicariously through their peers. Some of these experiences included watching their peers become sick, become dependent upon alcohol, or get into trouble as a result of their drinking. A great majority of participants, whether they experienced the negative outcomes directly or through others, wanted to avoid the negative experiences that they might experience from drinking.

*Impact of Friends and Organizations*

While I did not find the impact of friends and organizations to be given as much credit for their abstention as religion, family, or negative experiences, I did find them to have an

influence. It seemed that their friends could influence them both positively and negatively. Abstaining friends influenced the participants  positively by providing support for their abstention and sources of non-alcohol related socialization. Negatively, I found evidence that their drinking friends either made it more difficult for them to abstain through the pressure of drinking around them or provided inspiration for them not drinking through the trouble they had with alcohol. Organizations functioned much the same way as friends, in that abstainers were often importantly influenced by organizations made up of other abstainers in supporting their efforts at not drinking or in providing non-alcohol related social activities. I believe, as shown through the participant responses, that friends and organizations influence abstention not so much through any source of ideology or conviction they instill in the abstainers, but rather through the social support or lack thereof they provide in the college environment.

Some of the most important motivations for abstention as cited by my participants included spiritual and religious influence, family influence, negative experiences, friends' influence, and belonging to organizations. All of these provided ample reasons that influenced the participants' choice to not drink. Next, I examine some of the participants' reported behaviors that helped them abstain.

*Research Question Two: Deeper Meanings From the Results*

My second research question was "What behaviors do abstainers exhibit to keep them from drinking?" From my interpretations of the focus group transcripts, I discovered several themes that may serve as answers to this question. Participants' behaviors were related to their perceptions of their social environment, the friends and groups with which they associate, any personal action they take to avoid drinking, their personal sense of conviction, and their

involvement in a variety of activities. These attitudes that affect behavior and actual behaviors give some indication about what abstainers do to keep from drinking alcohol.

*Interaction with and Perception of Their Social Environment*

Just as all other people, abstainers have a perception of and interact with their environment. However, the ways in which abstainers interact with their environment and perceive this environment seems to have an impact on how well they believe they can abstain. Many abstainers spoke directly about the pressures they felt to drink, both direct (people offering them drinks) an indirect (many people around them drinking). I found evidence that abstainers associated the pressure they felt with the ease or difficulty with which they were able to not drink; the more pressure they felt, the more difficult they found it to abstain. In addition to the pressure they perceived from their environment, I identified that the participants felt the ease or difficulty with which they were able to abstain was based upon the nature of specific social situations. Basically, they were able to abstain in social situations where they were around their friends or other abstainers easier than in environments that contained fewer friends or had a lot of drinking. So the ability of abstainers to interact with their environment and feel comfortable when abstaining was related to the pressure they felt in that environment and the nature of the social situations in which they found themselves. While some of these reported results might not be actual behavior related to not drinking, they might help describe how abstainers perceive they are able to abstain.

*Friends and Groups With Which They Associated.*

I discovered that the ease or difficulty with which abstainers are able to avoid drinking is frequently related to the friends and groups with which they associate. While I found some evidence supporting the idea that their friends were an influence on their decision to not drink, I

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found much stronger evidence supporting the notion that making and connecting with friends was of paramount importance to their ongoing ability to abstain. Most importantly, abstainers needed to make friends with people who they felt were supportive or similar to them (i.e. friends that would be able to help them abstain). Additionally, I found evidence that abstainers reported they were able to abstain more easily if they found groups that were supportive of their abstaining through providing non-alcoholic activities or through a membership that consisted of either supportive or other abstaining students. Something about the process of making friends and finding groups seemed related to what the participants were able to do to abstain. Conversely, abstainers seemed to have more difficulty abstaining if they wre unable to make friends or find supportive groups. I discovered that making friends and finding groups with which they associated and could gather support was important to how they were able to practice not drinking. Just as making friends and finding groups is surely important to many college students, the same behaviors are important to abstainers; however, the importance of this process and behavior for abstainers is in their perception of their ability not to drink. Again, while these results may not be specific behaviors related to not drinking, these perceptions of their ability to practice such behavior may be important to understanding it.

*Personal Action*

This may seem to be a direct restatement of the question, in that abstainers take direct, personal action that helps them not to drink. However, I discovered that the actions abstainers took were sometimes related to the ease or difficulty in which they were able to abstain. Some abstainers faked drinking, stayed away from alcohol, took alternative beverages with them to parties, only went to parties with friends, or danced at parties; all of these activities helped participants not drink. However, I also found that some participants' actions also negatively

affected their abstention, such as going to parties alone, spending time around alcohol, or going to parties when they were not firm in their conviction not to drink. My investigation also turned up evidence that most abstainers wanted simply to avoid negative consequences and behavior; so, many abstainers' behavior related to abstaining was geared in such a way that they were able to avoid negative consequences of their potential drinking or of other peoples' actual drinking.

*Personal Conviction*

Again, while personal conviction may not be a specific behavior related to not drinking, it was an important factor in these participants' behavior to abstain. In terms of thinking processes related to their behavior, I discovered that almost all abstainers had a strong sense of personal conviction about their abstention. While the basis of their conviction was similar (i.e. they felt strongly that they did not want to drink), I found the underlying thought processes varied widely. Some individuals felt drinking was morally wrong; some felt drinking was wrong for them; and still others felt nothing was wrong with drinking for them, but they chose to not drink. Nevertheless, almost all of the participants had a strong personal feeling and belief systems informing them that they did not want to drink alcohol. Having a strong personal conviction seemed important to behavior directly related to not drinking for the participants in this study.

*General Activity*

Many abstainers were busy doing things other than abstaining (e.g. going to the movies, participating in sports, spending time with friends, spending time in the outdoors, spending time with school clubs, or even studying). This activity definitely took up time that they could have spent drinking and partying. However, I found that many abstainers would rather do these other activities than drink. I also found indications that their participation in these activities related to how easily they were able to abstain. The reason for this latter conclusion may be beyond the

scope of this study, but it may also be related to abstainers feeling like their lives are full and interesting while not drinking; therefore, they do not feel the need to drink. Whatever the case or the activity, these abstainers were for the most part busy with a wide variety of activities outside of drinking. These outside activities seemed related to what they did to keep from drinking.

In relation to research question two, I discovered that perceptions of their social environment, the friends and groups with which they associate, any personal action they take to avoid drinking, their personal sense of conviction, and their involvement in a variety of activities were all a part of the behavior they exhibited to keep from drinking. While some of these discoveries are not direct types of behavior, they are rather indications of the participants' ability to engage in behavior related to abstention. In the next section, I examine my findings about some slightly different behavior, the social behavior of these abstainers.

*Research Question Three: Deeper Meanings From the Results*

Research question three was, "What social behaviors do abstainers exhibit?" I found strong evidence supporting the fact that abstainers crave and create deep and rich friendships and social environments. Additionally, these abstainers were friends with both drinkers and abstainers, their experiences with the two being somewhat different. Similarly to research question two, I also discovered evidence of the importance of making friends and associating with groups; both of which seem related to being comfortable. Finally, I found evidence of abstainers who were busy with a wide variety of activity. All of this evidence together painted a rich picture of the social behavior and activity of abstainers.

*Deep, Rich Friendships and Social Environment*

According to the evidence I found, abstainers crave deep, rich, personal friendships. While for many abstainers the source of these close friendships did not matter (e.g. could be

either drinkers or abstainers), for a large majority the closer and more intimate friendships they craved came from their relationships with other abstainers. In fact, a majority of abstainers identified that they could much more easily make these friendships with other abstainers due to their shared experience and outlook related to not drinking. Additionally, I discovered strong evidence of the rich social environments that these abstainers created. Some examples included spending time with close groups of friends in intimate settings, eating, talking, playing, or involvement with larger groups of diverse abstainers who come together to support and fellowship with each other. The examples of the closeness, richness, and depth of these friendships and social environments were vivid in description and numerous in quantity, which may indicate their importance in identifying the social behavior of abstainers.

*Drinking Friends and Abstaining Friends*

Abstainers, I found, enjoy making friends. Some abstainers in my study made friends mostly with abstainers, some made friends mostly with drinkers, and some made friends readily with both. However, I discovered general differences in the experiences abstainers noted between drinking and abstaining friends. Generally speaking, for abstainers, drinking friends were harder to get close to and, while they could support their abstention, they did not always do so. Some of this difficulty may come from different perspectives and other difficulty may come when abstainers have to make a choice to participate in or to avoid drinking activities and behaviors. On the other hand, I discovered that abstainers made friends easier with and felt closer to other abstainer friends. Additionally, I found that abstainer friends were strong sources of support for not drinking. However, these opinions were not universal, as some individuals claimed to have many good friends who drank and did not note much difference between drinkers and abstainers. However, even in these voices of dissent, I found evidence in some

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comments that their friendships with drinkers were more difficult by some variables. The abstainers in my study had a wide variety of friends, many of which were important to their social behavior.

*The Importance of Making Friends and Associating with a Group*

Similarly to research question two, I discovered evidence that making friends and associating with groups is important to abstainers feeling comfortable in their college environment. For these abstainers, making friends and associating with groups during the freshman year was important to feeling comfortable during that year. While this pattern seemed to continue past the freshman year, it seemed to be particularly important for new freshman facing the thought of not drinking without supportive friends or groups. However, most individuals spoke about the importance of these friends and groups to feeling like they fit in or to feeling like they had support for abstaining. In fact, similarly to research question two, I also found evidence that making friends had a direct impact on how easy or difficult it was for the abstainers to not drink. Making friends and associating with groups seems important social behavior for abstainers.

*Busy Abstainers*

I already elaborated extensively on the nature of their social activities in Chapter 4 and some again in research question two. Rather than repeat similar information, I will briefly summarize. The majority of abstainers were busy with a diverse variety of non-alcohol related activities; these activities spanned from official university created activities, to those as part of student organizations, to those outside the university, to those created informally and personally by abstainers for their own enjoyment. Whatever the activity, most abstainers seemed to be active and busy individuals.

In terms of their social behavior, these abstainers crave and create deep and rich friendships and social environments, to be friends with both drinkers and abstainers, to find strong value in making friends and associating with groups, and to be busy with a wide variety of activities. While abstainers are part of rich and diverse social environment, participating in a variety of social activities, they seem to place a great deal of importance in the development and maintenance of close friendships. Whatever their behavior, the abstainers in my study also experienced positive and negative outcomes related to not abstaining.

*Research Question Four: Deeper Meanings From the Results*

Research question four was, "What are the outcomes of abstaining?" In response to this research question, I uncovered strong evidence of the negative outcome of abstainers feeling left out of the general college environment. On the other side I identified evidence that abstainers experience many positive outcomes from not drinking. In comparing the two, I discovered that the positive outcomes seem to outweigh the negative for these students.

*Abstainers Feel Left Out*

I found evidence supporting the fact that since abstainers do not drink, they often feel left out or feel like they do not fit in to the general college social environment. For these participants, this seemed to come from their own perception that most people in college drink or that drinking surrounded them. Whether their perception was accurate or not, the feeling remained that, somehow, they were different from the average college student and had an experience that was somehow different since they chose the pathway of abstention. Additionally, part of this feeling of not fitting in was not having as many friends since they did not drink. Some abstainers cited actual incidents where their friendships ended over drinking or not

drinking. These were the only negative outcomes related to abstention identified by my participants.

*Abstainers Experience Many Positive Outcomes*

I found evidence that abstainers experience many positive outcomes related to abstention. Some positive outcomes included getting better grades, having closer friends, fewer negative consequences, better finances, better health, and better career opportunities. While this list in no way demonstrates the range of participant responses, is does show that the abstainers in my study experienced many more positive than negative outcomes related to their abstention.

*Conclusion*

I feel that abstainers' most significant influences for abstention are related to their spiritual and religious beliefs and their family. These factors are tied into a sense of personal conviction that they gained through their own experiences and from influences from others. While these factors serve as a strong influence, they do not seem to be the most important factors related to how easily these same students feel they are able to resist pressure to drink or to be comfortable in their abstention. Once in college, I believe the most important factors are related to their friends and the groups with which they associate. If abstainers feel they have a good, supportive network of friends, or better yet, if they have a supportive group of friends that they network with using some larger organizations that they also feel are generally supportive to their abstention, they feel as though they fit in and can easily resist the pressures associated with not drinking. On the other hand, if abstainers do not make friends or find a group in which they find support, they seem to have a miserable time negotiating the college social scene and not drinking; being a college student with a head full of influence from religion or family, while at the same time having few supportive friends or groups was described as being a generally

unhappy college experience. So my evidence seems to indicate that matching supportive friends and groups with their convictions is important for abstainers to comfortably navigate life in college.

Results in Relation to the Existing Knowledge: How This Data Supports and Contradicts the Previous Literature

My results should also be examined in relation to previous research related to abstention. As noted in Chapter Two, there were very few studies that solely explored college abstainers. However, as part of larger studies on college alcohol consumption, there were some reported results and correlates of alcohol consumption that can be used to compare results. Through a reexamination of the literature, I discovered that my findings study both support and contradict some of this existing body of knowledge. Below, I discuss where my study and past studies both meet and diverge.

*Motivation for Abstention*

The previous literature on abstainers' motivation not to drink was sparse at best. However, attitude and attitude changes were identified as possibly having strong influence on whether students drink or abstain (Scott & Ambrosan, 1994). In my study, I identified some responses that may support this idea. For example, religious and spiritual influences often affected these students' attitudes toward alcohol or drinking and were often cited as reason for abstention. Likewise, family influences, past negative experiences, and friends or organizational influences also seemed to affect my participants' attitudes. In some cases, they even changed participants' attitudes toward alcohol consumption. Additionally, about 1.8% of the responses to research question one were related to choosing to not drink and usually involved having a strong

conviction in not drinking. These beliefs that helped the participants in this study abstain seemed related to their attitudes.

Another issue related to motivation for abstention in past research was that students who viewed the norm as less permissive were more likely to abstain. Importantly, the perception of peer norms, despite the campus norm, may affect student alcohol consumption (Perkins et al., 1999). Again, my findings related to peer influences for abstention seem to support this idea. For many individuals, their religious influences from their peers showed them that drinking was not acceptable, or at least not desirable. The friends with whom abstainers surrounded themselves would often support their ideas related to drinking being not acceptable for them. However, peer influences also contradicted this notion somewhat by presenting them with a norm of heavy alcohol use or even abuse.

A finding in previous literature related to motivations was that men were more likely than women to respond to accurate information about drinking norms they received on college campuses by drinking less (Schall et al., 1991). My findings included some results that were perhaps related. For example, some women in my study, including Julie, mentioned drinking norms more often than men; more importantly, they mentioned the idea of comparing their drinking to the norm more often than men. So while my results do not specifically support or contradict the findings of Schall et al.'s (1991), they do offer some information that may be used for comparison.

*Behaviors of Abstainers*

Previous studies identified almost no information directly related to the behavior of abstainers. I found no studies that specifically focused on what students do in order not to drink

or how abstainers behave in their social environment. As a result, none of my findings are usable for comparison to the almost nonexistent previous literature.

*Social Environment of Abstainers*

In a previous study, Goree and Szalay (1996) reported on the results of the Environmental Assessment Instrument, which explored the shared environment of groups of abstainers and groups of drinkers. They found that abstainers were less social than frequent drinkers. While my study did not specifically compare drinkers to abstainers, my results showed that many abstainers enjoy rich social environments and active lifestyles. Abstainers are often involved in a variety of activities and campus organizations. However, I did notice a trend in most focus groups of at least one or two individuals who seemed to have very limited social lives (e.g. having few friends or participating in few social activities).

Goree and Szalay (1996) also identified that abstainers liked activities with little social interaction or social interaction with few individuals such as watching movies, playing games, watching television, talking, or going shopping. My results generally supported these results as going to movies and talking were the top two social activities reported by my abstainers. While I did have participants who mentioned playing games, watching television, and going shopping, my participants were more likely to participate in sports, work out, spend time with friends, or participate in campus organizations. While on one hand, my study supports some of the activities reported by Goree and Szalay, on the other hand, I found that abstainers are highly interested in activities that are more social in nature and involve other people.

Goree and Szalay (1996) also reported that abstainers enjoy spending time with their friends and family, with friends becoming very close, almost like family. My findings generally support these ideas. Many of my participants spoke directly about the closeness and influence of

their family, talking about how much they enjoyed spending time with them. However, I also found a good number of participants who had problems interacting or relating to their families (i.e. some individuals felt little direct support or bond with their families). However, my findings strongly support the idea that abstainers enjoy spending time with their friends and that their friends become close, almost like family. Some of my richest data came from participants' responses about the quality and richness of their friendships. These abstainers talked about feeling love, intense connection, and deep support and understanding from their friends. For example, one participant named Cybil said, "My roommates, every time I meet them, I feel like I am grinning from the inside. They just like, fill me up…and, you know, I just love them." For many participants, the support and understanding they received from their friends far outweighed anything they received from their parents. For most participants, their relationships with their friends seemed to be one of the most important factors in their lives.

*Outcomes of Abstinence*

Wechsler et al. (1998) found that abstainers had their study and sleep interrupted, had to take care of drunken students, and were sometimes insulted or humiliated as a result of the behavior of drinkers (these were actually second-hand effects the suffered as a result of alcohol consumption of others). While my study did not examine drinking behavior, these participants did report experiences they had in relation to drinkers. A fair number of participants reported having their activities interrupted by drinkers and a small number reported having to take care of drunk students; in fact, several students reported powerful stories related to taking care of or dealing with drunken friends who had gotten into some sort of trouble. Finally, the most frequently reported outcome of abstaining for my participants was feeling like they did not fit in.

This is somewhat related to experiencing insults or humiliation, as many abstainers stated how they often felt looked down upon or talked down to by certain groups of drinkers.

Additionally, Wechsler et al. (1998) found that women abstainers experienced unwanted sexual advances as a result of drinking on campus. My study included similar results for women abstainers. While no women reported sexual assault as an outcome, they did report that men often appeared pushy in trying to get them to drink; some women noted the men's ulterior motives for this behavior as possibly trying to get them drunk to loosen up their sexual inhibitions. Some women also noted that men who had been drinking were sometimes rude or over aggressive in their flirting or sexual advances.

My study both supports and contradicts the findings of previous studies. The main areas of divergence seem to come from the richness of my qualitative approach; as my results sometimes support a particular finding in part, but go further to show how previous studies may have missed some key elements of abstainers' experiences. However, any support or contradiction must be treated cautiously, as my results can only apply specifically to the group of abstainers I studied at Virginia Tech. I may have found results more similar to previous studies had I studied a representative group of abstainers across the nation. Nonetheless, some of my findings may provide some insight to be used for current practice and future research.

Implications for Practice and Research

The results of my study have some immediate implications for practice in student affairs and future research about abstention and college alcohol programming. In terms of practice, many student affairs practitioners have operated without having any specific knowledge about the abstainer portion of their population; perhaps my results can be used as a basis of knowledge about these abstainers. Past research specifically focusing on abstention and incorporating the

experiences of abstainers into alcohol programming has been severely lacking. These results should spur future research addressing this population and its related concerns. However, any implications for both research and practice should be considered with the limitation in mind that these results are not universally applicable; rather, they should serve as a starting point for examining more specific populations to see if these results can be applied.

*Implications for Practice*

Examining the immediate implications of my research for practice for student affairs administrators or for the general campus community is important in drawing relevance to its results. While many of my suggestions are general in nature, I hope they provide some framework for how such results may be cautiously, yet practically used.

This study showed that family and religious influences prior to coming to college impacted the decision to not drink. Perhaps college marketers and recruiters could start by educating students and parents in information sessions held in high schools and on college campuses before students enroll. Some of this education might include demonstrating how a particular college or university has support mechanisms in place to help this support carry on into college.

Since families influence abstaining, college researchers may take what they already know about building relationships in combination with results from studies like this to help parents build better relationships with their children. This partnership may extend to help parents build these relationships with their children starting at early ages. As the children get closer to college age, their parents could then be taught how to build a healthy bridge of support spanning from high school and on to college.

Student affairs administrators could provide mechanisms to continue this family support and influence once in college. Again, this would have to be carefully taught to parents in a way that enabled them to continue supporting their children in healthy ways, as opposed to providing overbearing or damaging influence. Such support and influence may help these students continue abstinence while in college. Family programs could work on measures to continue parents' involvement in their students' lives throughout college in developmentally appropriate ways. Furthermore, this could continue through college and provide a framework for better family relationships once in the work world. This may not be a difficult sell for some parents since the current generation of parents seems very interested in being involved in their children's lives (Levine & Cureton, 1998). This approach of bringing parents along as partners in their children's developmental journey through college is much different from the often used current approach of cutting many parental ties and influence students as they enter college as freshmen.

Additionally, university programmers could look for ways to encourage a variety of religious groups to have exposure and contact with students on campus. They could encourage the religious groups to come together and be seen more openly through various forums, gatherings, and workshops. While specific religious groups cannot be supported, generally encouraging religious groups to seek greater exposure on campus may help students find additional sources of support for abstaining. Just as with educating the parents about healthy continued involvement in their student's lives throughout college, schools can take a more proactive role in encouraging religious involvement. Some administrators may shy away from such encouragement. However, just as with parental influence, religious influence is important enough that universities should do a better job of teaching students to negotiate any such support they desire.

Colleges and universities spend millions of dollars each year providing programs for their students; most of these programs are alcoholic-free. Abstainers appreciate having access to and being involved with a large variety of activities. While they do participate in some officially created alcohol-free activities, the majority of their activity is either off-campus or self-created. University programmers must concentrate and renew their efforts at finding attractive non-alcoholic programs and activities for students. More than anything, these activities need to be made attractive for all students, including abstainers.

Abstainers find it easier to abstain and feel more comfortable in the college environment when they feel associated with a group or organization. In response, universities also need to continue providing support for as wide a variety of non-drinking focused student organizations as possible. This variety will provide increased opportunity for abstainers to find supportive groups with which they can associate.

Abstainers find it easier to abstain and feel more comfortable in the college environment when they make friends. A particularly critical time for this seems to be during the freshman year. Perhaps residence hall staff, first-year programs staff, and student activities programmers need to provide numerous structured (or even mandatory) opportunities for students to socialize in groups without alcohol. There may be a possibility for more abstainers to meet other abstainers or other friends who may be supportive of their abstention through such measures.

Abstainers create and experience deep and rich friendships and social environments. It may be possible for college alcohol programmers and educators to focus on this information, especially in a qualitative way, as part of the positive aspects of not drinking. Another possible area of focus might be the fun that abstainers are able to have in the college environment without using alcohol.

While examining the immediate implications of my research is important, my research has limitation related to its universal applicability. The results cannot be universally applied to all university populations. However, through future research, the results of this study may be made more specifically or more universally applicable.

Implications for Research

While I did find both previously undiscovered information and results that greatly enrich the existing body of knowledge, any future research based upon these results should consider the following limitation: my results focused on the results of a small group of abstainers from one university and cannot be universally applied. However, my rich data provides not only the opportunity for future explorations of it specifically, but also provides a limited basis for more broad reaching studies. I examine some suggestions for future research below.

My study did not examine the findings in relation to the demographics collected. A future study might include looking at the same or similar research questions and comparing the result across demographic characteristics. In fact, my results could be reanalyzed based upon my own collected information and demographic information.  Such research should show more specific patterns, similarities, and differences.

Additionally, my study only examined one institutional size and setting. Researchers should examine these same questions at other types of schools. Such findings may show if these findings can be applied more universally than to just abstainers at institutions like Virginia Tech.

My study also did not examine a proportional sample of the abstainer population. As a result, the results are not universally applicable. Future studies related to abstainers should attempt to gather a pool of randomly proportional individuals.

In terms of future research, *c*ollege alcohol programmers use information about student drinking to focus their efforts. However, much of their programming has been done without specific information related to abstainers. Perhaps these same programmers should investigate how this information, or more universally applicable information on abstainers could fit into their current and future alcohol programming initiatives.

My study also only examined abstainers. Another important group in the college environment seldom studied is low-risk drinkers. Using techniques similar to this study, perhaps future research could focus some attention on low-risk drinkers. The results of studies related to abstainers and low-risk drinkers could be combined with the plethora of existing knowledge on high-risk drinkers to form a more comprehensive body of knowledge. Such a body of knowledge should help college alcohol education and programming efforts to be more specifically designed and implemented.

Additionally, the information in this study was obtained through purely qualitative techniques. Since this research has broken some ground in the field related to the experiences of abstainers, perhaps future research could focus on developing a quantitative instrument geared toward studying abstainers. Such an instrument would allow for researchers to sample larger portions of the nation's university population and, perhaps, come up with more universally applicable results.

Conclusion

My findings showed abstainers have a complex array of experiences concerning why they choose to abstain, their behavior related to not drinking, their social behavior, and their perceived outcomes from abstaining. While I discovered many patterns and themes related to my research

questions, I also found a range of differences of opinion. This group of abstainers did not have a monolithic set of motivations, behaviors, or outcomes.

These are a diverse group of individuals who believe strongly in their own personal abstention. As a group, they are not on any sort of prohibition crusade, bent on getting the rest of the college campus to follow their ways. They are socially savvy and generally not naïve about the college-drinking environment. Most have seriously considered the choices between their abstention and the possibilities of drinking. They also feel great pressure to drink and often feel left out and not included. However, they largely enjoy a rich social environment and a close, supportive group of friends. The abstainers in this study, even the ones who had difficulty not drinking when surrounded mostly by drinkers, seemed steadfast in their chosen lifestyle. Probably most striking of their experiences, was their ability to create their own environment within the larger drinking college environment; within their environment, they were able to live happy lives well outside the established drinking norms.

These abstainers may represent a larger group of abstainers on this campus; they may even represent a larger group of abstainers on campuses across the nation. However, without future research, none of this can be known.

College alcohol programmers and student affairs administrators across the country are trying, sometimes in vain, to reverse the sometimes tragic drinking trends on college campuses. All too often, administrators respond when a student dies or is needlessly injured as a result of drinking on campus. This is, in my opinion, too little too late. College administrators pay lip service to changing their campus drinking cultures, creating seamless living and learning environments, and providing experiences that will help their students grow and develop as individuals. However, by only responding to the drinking situation when problems arise or by

only creating programs that are marginally effective, these administrators are doing just that, paying lip service.

Real change in relation to student drinking can only happen with a strong and committed coalition of university stakeholders. Such a coalition will most likely involve recruitment and admissions staff, alcohol programmers, student affairs professionals, faculty, students, parents, top university officials, governance boards, and, where applicable, state governments. They must all be brought together and start moving in unison toward change, if real change is to be affected. However, many opponents see this change as threatening; they think a change in drinking culture will fundamentally change the quality of their experience at college. What they have been mostly unaware of until now is the experience of those who choose to not drink. It reasons to assume that some of their attitudes are based upon limited information, if not outright ignorance.

There are groups of students who come to college wanting drinking to be a part of their experience. Others demand that drinking will be part of theirs. However, there is also a growing group of students coming to college each fall that choose to not drink (Wechsler, Lee et al., 2000). Someplace in the middle is a group of students who sometimes drink and sometimes do not drink. These students in the middle may often times feel pressured to drink when they do not want to drink, just as the abstainers in my study did. These students in the middle may, at times, cave in to the pressure and drink, feeling that perhaps everyone else around them is having fun and drinking. Many abstainers in my study felt the same sorts of pressure. Perhaps the experiences of abstainers and low-risk drinkers can be educationally shared in ways that may allow more students in the middle to make the choice of not drinking when presented with the option on any given night; not drinking is surely an option for a portion of every campus population.

A strong coalition of support can perhaps effect such changes. As groups of abstainers entering college continue to grow, and as groups of students in the middle see abstaining or low-risk drinking as more of an option, the environmental press on college campuses may start to change. Instead of feeling like everyone around who is having fun or who is cool is drinking, students may start to feel like abstention on any given night is a viable option for having a truly good time. More importantly, as more students feel they want to do this on a more regular basis, the campus culture and climate may start to slowly change to one that is more supportive of students' growth and development both in and out of the classroom. Most stakeholders would agree that drinking, while fun for some, is generally not supportive of the missions of most colleges and universities for such growth and development.

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Appendix A

Focus Group Protocol

I. Introduction

    A.  Introduce yourself.

    B.  Talk briefly about the study.

II. Setting the Tone

    A.  Briefly give an overview of the questioning procedure (e.g. questions asked to the group. Respondents talk in turn, in any order they desire. Moderator may call on participants to participate.)

    B.  Be respectful of each other's opinions.

    C.  Do not interrupt each other.

    D.  No right or wrong answers. All answers are opinions and experiences. Give as much information as possible or as much as comfortable.

    E.  For any particular question, if you feel you have already covered the information in a previous question, you do not need to repeat the same information.

III. Consent

    A.  Session will be tape-recorded. Only used for purposes of this study.

    B.  Strict confidentiality will be observed. No real names used for any reports.

    C.  Do not have to answer any questions you feel uncomfortable answering.

    D.  May leave the session at any time. Only participants who finish the entire session will receive compensation.

IV. Questions

A. Section One: Motivations

    1. In a sentence or two, why did you decide not to drink?

    2. What experiences have you had that contributed to this decision?

        a. Have any people influenced you? If so, how?

        b. Have any organizations or institutions influenced you? If so, how?

        c. Have any belief systems or philosophies influenced you? If so, how?

        d. Have any opinions influenced you? If so, how?

        e. Has your community influenced you? If so, how?

B. Section Two: Behaviors Exhibited to Keep From Drinking Alcohol

    1. In a sentence or two, what do you do to keep from drinking alcohol?

        a. Do you use any particular techniques or tricks to keep from drinking?

        b. Do you attend parties where people drink alcohol? If so, what do you
           do at parties where people are drinking to keep from drinking?

        c. Describe how difficult or easy it is to not drink at VT?

    2. Do you feel any pressure at VT to drink? If so, describe the pressure you
      feel?

C. Section Three: Social Behaviors

    1. What do you do for fun?

    2. What do you do to socialize?

        a. Describe the types of social gatherings or parties you attend.

        b. What is it like to socialize at parties, gatherings, or events at Virginia Tech as
           an abstainer?

    3. Some people claim then drink to relieve stress. What do you do to relieve

stress?

      4. In a sentence or two, tell me about your group of friends?

          a. Describe what it is like to find friends who don't drink.

          b. Describe what it is like to socialize with friends who don't drink.

          c. Describe what it is like to socialize with people who drink?

      5. Tell me about any support you get from your friends about your choice to not drink.

      6. Tell me about support you get from your family about your choice to not drink.

   D. Section Four : Outcomes

      1. What areas of your life do you feel are positively affected by your choice to not drink?

      2. Specifically, how were these areas affected?

      3. What areas of your life do you feel are negatively affected by your choice to not drink?

      4. Specifically, how were these areas affected?

V. Briefly summarize the focus group answers and preliminary themes.

VI. Give the participants a chance to respond to the brief summary. Here is their chance to correct any of their answers or give their interpretation of what they heard.

VII. Closing

  A. Thank the participants.

  B. Remind them of their confidentiality. They can tell others what they said, but they cannot tell what others in the room said. Cannot reveal identity of other participants.

C. Invite them to contact the researcher later for the results of the study.

VIII. Distribute the Money

IX.  After the participants leave, take 15-20 minutes to write down any notes, thought, or

preliminary themes from the session.

Appendix B

E-mail to W.E.L.L. Resident Advisors Soliciting Support for Study

Dear W.E.L.L. Staff Member,

My name is Chris Cotner. I am a graduate student in the Higher Education and Student Affairs program at Virginia Tech. Currently, I am looking for participants in a study I am conducting with undergraduate college students who abstain from drinking alcohol. I am hoping to get several residents from the W.E.L.L. to participate in my study. I have already obtained permission from Gerry Kowalski, the Director of Residence Education, to conduct this study.

I need your help in obtaining participants for this study. Please forward the following e-mail to your W.E.L.L. residents. This e-mail briefly explains the study and asks your W.E.L.L. residents to contact me with any questions or if they want to participate.

Also, if you qualify for the study, you are welcome, as staff members, to participate.

Thank you so much for your help.

Sincerely,

Chris Cotner
231-4831
ccotner@vt.edu

Please copy and paste the message below into a new e-mail message to your residents.

Appendix C

E-mail to W.E.L.L. Residents Soliciting Participation in the Study

Dear W.E.L.L. community resident,

My name is Chris Cotner. I am a graduate student in Higher Education and Student Affairs at Virginia Tech. Currently, I am looking for participants for a study I am conducting on college students who abstain from drinking alcohol. Specifically, I am forming focus groups and then asking the groups about their experiences related to not drinking while in college.

To qualify for the study, you must have abstained from drinking alcohol for a period of at least one year prior to the study. Exceptions will only be made for individuals who drank alcohol in minimal quantities (one to two drinks per occasion or less) for special religious or cultural celebrations on infrequent occasions (less than six times per year).

**Additionally, I will be paying each individual $15.00 cash for their participation in this study. That's right, $15.00 for about 90 minutes of your time.**

The available time slots for the study are listed below:
Thursday, 1/31/02, 12:20 PM - 1:50 PM
Saturday, 2/2/02, 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM
Saturday, 2/2/02, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM
Tuesday, 2/5/02, 9:20 AM - 10:50 AM
Wednesday, 2/6/02, 3:30 PM - 5:00 PM
Thursday, 2/7/02, 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM
Saturday, 2/9/02, 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM
Saturday, 2/9/02, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM

So, if you are qualified and still interested in this study, please call me at 231-4831 during one of the following times to sign up for a focus group:
Mondays, 11 AM - 3 PM
Tuesdays, 11 AM - 2 PM
Wednesdays, 11 AM - 2 PM
Thursdays, 11 AM  2 PM

If you need to get in touch with me at another time or on a weekend, try Or, call me at 961-9343 during the following times. Please don't call after 11 PM.

If I am not there, please leave a voice message. If you have difficulty reaching me by phone, then please send me an e-mail at ccotner@vt.edu.

Finally, if you cannot participate, but have a friend who is able to participate, refer his or her name to Chris Cotner. If the individual qualifies for and completes the study, then you will receive $5.00 for your referral.

Sincerely,
Chris Cotner

Appendix D

Phone Screening Instrument

Section A: Abstainer Definition
1. Introduction. Read to the potential participant.
   For the purposes of this study, the term "abstainer" is defined as follows. A person who has drank no alcohol for a period of at least one year prior to this study.
   First, I need to see if you fit our definition of what it means to be an abstainer. So, I need to ask you some questions about being an abstainer.
   (NOTE: The only exception is for students who drank alcohol in minimal quantities (one to two drinks per occasion or less) for special religious or cultural celebrations on infrequent occasions (less than six times per year).
2. Based upon this definition, do you consider yourself an abstainer (Yes or No)?
3. Have you had any alcohol to drink during the past year (Yes or No)? If "Yes," then proceed to question 4. If "No," then proceed to Section B, below.
4. Have you drunk alcohol on more than six occasions during the past year (Yes or No). If "Yes," then tell the participant that they do not qualify for the study and proceed to Section D. If "No," then proceed to question 5.
5. When you drank alcohol, was for the purposes of special religious or cultural celebrations only (Yes or No)? If "Yes," then proceed to question 5. If "No," the inform the participant they do not qualify for the study and proceed to Section D.
6. When you drank alcohol on these special religious or cultural occasions, approximately drinks did you consume per occasion? If the answer is two drinks per occasion or less, then inform the participant they qualify for the study and proceed to Section B. If the answer is more than two drinks per occasion, then inform the participant the do not qualify for the study and proceed to Section D.

Section B: Demographic Information
1. W.E.L.L. resident (Yes or No)
2. Name
3. Gender
4. Age
5. Ethnicity (African-American, American Indian, Asian, Caucasian, Hispanic, Other)
6. Class in school (Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior)
7. Major course of study
8. Residence (On or Off Campus)
9. Mailing address
10. E-mail address
11. Home phone number

Section C: Focus Time Scheduling
1. Which of the following times are you available for participation in the study.

2. Time Slots
Thursday, 1/31/02, 12:20 PM - 1:50 PM
Saturday, 2/2/02, 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM
Saturday, 2/2/02, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM
Tuesday, 2/5/02, 9:20 AM - 10:50 AM
Wednesday, 2/6/02, 3:30 PM - 5:00 PM
Thursday, 2/7/02, 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM
Saturday, 2/9/02, 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM
Saturday, 2/9/02, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM

Section D: Referral Information
1. Introduction.
Please read the following:
Do you know anybody who meets the criteria for participation in this study who we could contact (Yes or No)?  If the person qualifies and completes this study, we will pay you $5.00 for your successful referral. If "Yes," proceed to Question 1, below. If "No," then thank the participant for their time. Before hanging up the phone, be sure to tell the individual that you are still paying $5.00 per referral. So, if they find anybody in the near future, please have them contact me.

2. Name of referral
3. Phone number of referral
4. E-mail address of referral

Section: Closing
1. Thank you for your interest in this study. You have successfully met the qualification criteria for participation. Please come to (location TBA) for your focus group session on (choose date according to session availability and participant choice). It would be best to arrive about 5 minutes early in order to get properly situated. If you find you cannot participate in this study, please contact me in advance (ccotner@vt.edu or 231-4831). Remember, you will receive $15.00 cash for your complete participation in this study on the day of your focus group, which is only 90 minutes. I look forward to seeing you then. Goodbye.

Appendix E

Sign-Up Verification E-mail to Study Participants

Hello <NAME>

Recently you agreed to participate in a focus group about your experiences abstaining from drinking while attending Virginia Tech. You are signed up for the focus group session meeting **DATE, TIME** The focus group will meet in **The Cranwell International Center** (located at the top of Clay Street, behind the Washington Street Tennis Courts on the VT campus). Please come prepared to participate for a full 90 minutes. Also, please arrive a few minutes early if at all possible in order to get everyone settled so we can begin the group on time. Remember, **you will receive $15.00 cash** immediately after the focus group for your participation.

If you have any questions or find you cannot participate, please contact me as soon as possible (ccotner@vt.edu or 231-4831).

Thank you in advance for you time. I look forward to seeing you there.

Sincerely,

Chris Cotner

Appendix F

E-mail to Referred Students Soliciting Participation in the Study

Dear <NAME>,

My name is Chris Cotner. I am a graduate student in Higher Education and Student Affairs at Virginia Tech. Currently, I am looking for participants for a study I am conducting on college students who abstain from drinking alcohol. Specifically, I am forming focus groups and then asking the groups about their experiences related to not drinking while in college. I am contacting you because you were directly referred to me by <name of referral source> as someone who might be interested in participating in this study.

To qualify for the study, you must have abstained from drinking alcohol for a period of at least one year prior to the study. Exceptions will only be made for individuals who drank alcohol in minimal quantities (one to two drinks per occasion or less) for special religious or cultural celebrations on infrequent occasions (less than six times per year).

**Additionally, I will be paying each individual $15.00 cash for their participation in this study. That's right, $15.00 for about 90 minutes of your time.**

The available time slots for the study are listed below:
Thursday, 1/31/02, 12:20 PM - 1:50 PM
Saturday, 2/2/02, 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM
Saturday, 2/2/02, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM
Tuesday, 2/5/02, 9:20 AM - 10:50 AM
Wednesday, 2/6/02, 3:30 PM - 5:00 PM
Thursday, 2/7/02, 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM
Saturday, 2/9/02, 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM
Saturday, 2/9/02, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM

So, if you are qualified and still interested in this study, please call me at 231-4831 during one of the following times to sign up for a focus group:
Mondays, 11 AM - 3 PM
Tuesdays, 11 AM - 2 PM
Wednesdays, 11 AM - 2 PM
Thursdays, 11 AM  2 PM

If you need to get in touch with me at another time or on a weekend, try Or, call me at 961-9343 during the following times. Please don't call after 11 PM.

If I am not there, please leave a voice message. If you have difficulty reaching me by phone, then please send me an e-mail at ccotner@vt.edu.

Finally, if you cannot participate, but have a friend who is able to participate, refer his or her name to Chris Cotner. If the individual qualifies for and completes the study, then you will

receive $5.00 for your referral.

Sincerely,
Chris Cotner

Flier Posted in Academic Buildings and Off-Campus Apartments to Solicit Participation

# Do You Want to Earn $15.00?
# Do You Not Drink Alcohol?

If you are a VT undergrad and have drunk no alcohol for at least the past year, then you may qualify.

I am looking for study participants who are willing to talk about their experiences with not drinking while being students at Virginia Tech.

<u>Call or E-mail For More Information</u>
*Contact: Chris Cotner*
*Phone: 231-4831*

*E-mail:* **ccotner@vt.edu**

**(Space is limited. Study ends by Mid Feb. Signup Now.)**

Appendix H

E-mail Reminder to Study Participants 24 hours Before the Focus Group

Hello <NAME>

This is a brief reminder that you are signed up for the focus group session meeting **DATE, TIME** The focus group will meet in the Cranwell International Center. Please arrive a few minutes early if at all possible in order to get everyone settled so we can begin the group on time. Remember, you will receive **$15.00 cash** immediately after the focus group for your participation.

If you have any questions or find you cannot participate, please contact me as soon as possible ([ccotner@vt.edu](mailto:ccotner@vt.edu) or 231-4831 or 961-9343).

Thank you in advance for you time.

Sincerely,

Chris Cotner

**Below are the Directions to the Cranwell International Center**

**Walking**
Cranwell is located behind the Washington Street Tennis Courts on campus. On Washington Street, just past the end of the tennis court fence closest to downtown, there is a sign for the Cranwel International Center. There is a sidewalk going up a hill, next to the Tennis Court Fence. Follow that sidewalk to the top of the hill, toward the flag pole. The Cranwell Center is the large brick house at the top of the hill. Just come in and ask for the focus group session.

**Driving on Main Street from downtown Blacksburg**
If you are driving from downtown on Main Street, turn right on Clay Street, toward Campus. Pass the Blacksburg Police Station. Continue to the 3-way stop. Continue straight through the intersection. At the top of the hill, Clay Street ends and dumps onto a gravel driveway. Follow the driveway through the hedgerow. The driveway curves sharply to the left. Continue on to the parking lot. Park anywhere in the parking lot. The Cranwell Center is the large brick house next to the parking lot. Just come in and ask for the focus group session.

**Driving on Main Street from Christiansburg**
If you are driving from the Christiansburg direction on Main Street, turn left on Clay Street, toward Campus. Pass the Blacksburg Police Station. Continue to the 3-way stop. Continue straight through the intersection. At the top of the hill, Clay Street ends and dumps onto a gravel driveway. Follow the driveway through the hedgerow. The driveway curves sharply to the left. Continue on to the parking lot. Park anywhere in the parking lot. The Cranwell Center is the large brick house next to the parking lot. Just come in and ask for the focus group session.

Appendix I

Focus Group Informed Consent Form

**Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University**

**Informed Consent for Participants
in Research Involving Human Subjects**

I. Purpose of the Research
The purpose of this study is to understand more about the lives of college students who abstain from drinking alcohol. Specifically, the study explores the motivations, behaviors, and outcomes related to their choice not to drink. The study participants are approximately 48 undergraduate students attending Virginia Tech.

II. Procedures
This information for this study will be gathered through focus groups. Each participant will be assigned to a focus group of eight other students. Each focus group will meet at a designated time and place for approximately one and one half hours. Approximately 30 minutes will be used for to administrative tasks and approximately one hour of the time will be used for data collection. Focus group participants will be asked a series of questions about their motivations, behaviors, and outcomes related to their choice to abstain from drinking alcohol while in college. Each participant will choose a pseudonym with which they desire to be referred during the focus group sessions. The focus group sessions will be tape-recorded to preserve the accuracy of participant responses.

III. Risks
The risks associated with this research should be no more than those participants may encounter in their daily lives. However, should a participant experience any trauma as a result of participating in a focus group (such as remembering unpleasant experiences), the participant will be given access to the professional counseling services at the Schiffert Health Center.

IV. Benefits
One benefit for participants should be an increased sense of belonging and community at the university through sharing similar experiences with other students at the university. Additionally, this information will give college alcohol programmers and educators in-depth insight into the lives of college student abstainers. This information may be used to focus future programming and educational efforts to possibly reduce drinking rates, to reduce the negative effects experienced as a result of drinking, or to change the college environment to be more beneficial to those who choose to abstain from drinking.

V. Confidentiality and Anonymity
Focus group participants will only be referred to by their pseudonyms on the focus group tape recordings, on any subsequent written transcripts of the tape recordings, and in any subsequent reports. At no time will the real names or identity of participants be revealed to anyone other than the researcher; strict confidentiality will be observed in all phases of the research. The

researcher will transcribe the audiotapes. Both the tapes and the transcripts will be kept in a secure location for the duration of the research project.

VI. Compensation
For their participation in the study, participants will receive $15.00 cash. The financial compensation is only available to participants who participate in a full focus group session.

VII. Freedom to withdraw
If participants at any time feel they no longer wish to participate, they may freely withdraw. The option to withdraw is available at any point in the study. Participants are also free to not answer any questions that they desire not to at any point during the research.

VIII. Approval of Research
This research project has been approved, as required by the Institutional Review Board for Research Involving Human Subjects at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University and by the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies.

IX. Subject's Responsibilities
I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I have the following responsibilities:
1. Report to my focus group session at the designated time and location.
2. Participate fully in my focus group session by answering any questions asked to the best of my ability.
3. Participate fully in my focus group session by remaining for the duration of the one and one half hour session.

X. Subject's Permission
I have read and understand the Informed Consent and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent:

_____Date_____
Subject Signature

Should I have any questions about his research or its conduct, I may contact:
Chris Cotner  (Researcher)                      231-4831/ccotner@vt.edu

Steve Janosik (Faculty Advisor)                 231-9702/sjanosik@vt.edu

David Alexander (Department Head)               231-5643/mdavid@vt.edu

David M. Moore (Chair, IRB)                      231-4991/moored@vt.edu

Appendix J

Cash Receipt Log

Cash Receipt for Focus Group Participation

By signing this form, I acknowledge receipt of $15.00 cash for my complete participation in a focus group on <date, time, location>.

Name            SSN             Signature           Date

Appendix K

Example of First and Second Level Code Tally Sheet for Research Question One

| Question# | First Level Code | Frequency | Question # | Second Level Code | Frequency |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | chooseno | 1 | 1 | AvoidNeg | 3 |
| | donotdrinksurround | 1 | | Faminfluen | 4 |
| | drinkactnotlike | 4 | | Negx | 4 |
| | famdrink | 1 | | | |
| | faminfluen | 2 | 2 | AvoidNeg | 1 |
| | famnodrink | 1 | | Faminfluen | 3 |
| | famraredrink | 1 | | Friendinfluen | 1 |
| | honorpar | 1 | | Negx | 3 |
| | nocontrol | 1 | | | |
| | nodesire | 1 | 3 | Faminfluen | 2 |
| | noreason | 1 | | Relginfluen | 2 |
| | pastfamprob | 2 | | | |
| | physrep | 2 | 4 | AvoidNeg | 1 |
| | | | | Cluborg | 3 |
| 2 | chooseno | 1 | | Friendinfluen | 3 |
| | donotwantneg | 1 | | | |
| | drinkactnotlike | 1 | 5 | Relginfluen | 1 |
| | faminfluen | 3 | | | |
| | famnodrink | 1 | 6 | | |
| | famsaidno | 1 | | | |
| | pastfamprob | 4 | 7 | Relginfluen | 1 |
| | relginfluen | 1 | | | |
| | rolemodelthem | 1 | 8 | Ezdiff=action | 5 |
| | | | | Ezdiff=convict | 2 |
| 3 | chooseno | 2 | | Ezdiff=friends | 4 |
| | faminfluen | 2 | | Ezdiff=press | 1 |
| | pastfamprob | 1 | | | |
| | relginfluen | 2 | 9 | Ezdiff=action | 1 |
| | rolemodelthem | 1 | | Ezdiff=convict | 2 |
| | | | | Ezdiff=friends | 2 |
| 4 | club | 1 | | Ezdiff=press | 1 |
| | clubfriend | 1 | | | |
| | health | 1 | 10 | AvoidNeg | 1 |
| | hischool | 1 | | Ezdiff=action | 2 |
| | pastpeerprob | 1 | | Ezdiff=friends | 1 |
| | peerrolemodel | 1 | | Ezdiff=socsit | 1 |
| | sportspartic | 2 | | | |

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Appendix L

First Level Theme Codes and Descriptions

| Theme Code | Definition of Theme Code |
| --- | --- |
| aa | Alcoholics Anonymous |
| accountfriend | Being accountable to and for friends |
| adultdrinkresp | Adults drink responsibly |
| alcedu | Educational programs on alcohol, alcohol education efforts. |
| alcoeasy | It is easy to get alcohol in college |
| alconostressrelv | Alcohol does not relieve stress |
| altbev | Drink alternative beverages, non-alcoholic |
| annoydrunks | Drunk people are annoying |
| apartfriend | Friends from apartments |
| art | Art |
| avoid | Avoid alcohol/drinking |
| baby | Babysitting drinking friends, keeping an eye on them |
| bar | Out at a bar/night cluyb |
| bettertime | Better things to do with time than drinking |
| body=temple | Belief that the body is the temple of Christ/God |
| break | Break things |
| calories | High calorie content of alcohol |
| campprog | Campus programs |
| chat | Chatting with people online |

First Level Theme Codes and Descriptions, continued

| Theme Code | Definition of Theme Code |
|---|---|
| christian | Christian Faith |
| christianfriend | Christian friends |
| christianorg | Involvement in a Christian organization or club |
| church | Go to church a lot |
| churchfriends | Many friends from church |
| churchinfluen | Church influences not drinking |
| classfriend | Friends from class |
| clean | Clean things |
| closefriend | Close friendships |
| club | Clubs/Student organization involvement |
| clubfriend | Friends from clubs or organizations |
| clubsnodrink | Lots of groups/clubs that do not drink |
| comminfluen | Community influence |
| comminfluenno | No or negative community influence |
| compgame | Computer games |
| concert | Any type of concert |
| culture | Cultural Issues |
| dance | Dancing |
| danger | Drunk people can be dangerous |
| date | Go out on dates or spend time with boy/girlfriend |

First Level Theme Codes and Descriptions, continued

| Theme Code | Definition of Theme Code |
| --- | --- |
| dd | Designated driver |
| deep | Deep inperpersonal connection, meaninful. |
| diffsoc | Difficult to socialize and find friends as an abstainer |
| diversefriend | Very diverse group of friends |
| donotdrink | Just do not drink alcohol |
| donotdrinksurround | Surrounded by people who don't drink |
| donotremem | Drinkers don't remember what they did while drinking |
| donotwantalcoaround | Do not want alcohol around |
| donotwantneg | Don't want to experience the negative aspects of drinking that others have experienced |
| drink=college | People think college is about drinking, or that everybody drinks in college |
| drink=cool | People think drinking is cool |
| drink=drunk | College students drink to get drunk |
| drink=wrong | Drinking is morally wrong |
| drinkactnotlike | Don't like the way people act when they are drunk |
| drinkfriendhischool | Drinkings friends from high school |
| drinkfriendwork | Drinking friends from work |
| drinkgames | Drinking games |
| drinknodrink= | Not much difference socializing with drinkers or abstainers when they are not drinking |
| drinknotok | Not ok to be around drinkers |
| drinknotsmart | Drinking is not smart/intelligent |

First Level Theme Codes and Descriptions, continued

| Theme Code | Definition of Theme Code |
|---|---|
| drinkok | Nothing wrong with drinking in moderation |
| drinksurround | Surrounded by people who drink |
| drinktalk | People talking mostly about drinking |
| drinktofit | Drink to fit in |
| drinktonumb | Drink to forget about problems/drink to be numb |
| drive | Drive a car |
| drunknotok | Getting drunik is not ok |
| easyno | It is easy to not drink |
| easysoc | Easy to socialize and find friends as an abstainer |
| easyw/friend | If you find a good group of friends, it is easy to not drink |
| eatin | Eating in |
| eatout | Going out to eat |
| fakebev | Faking drinking or fashioning a non-alcoholic bev to look like an alcoholic bev |
| famdrink | Family generally drinks |
| faminfluen | Family/parents influence not drinking |
| fammoddrink | Family does drink in moderation |
| famnodrink | Family never drinks |
| famraredrink | Family rarely drinks |
| famsaidno | Family said not to drink alcohol |
| famsaidnothing | Family said nothing about alcohol/drinking |

First Level Theme Codes and Descriptions, continued

| Theme Code | Definition of Theme Code |
|---|---|
| famstrongchrist | Family strongly centered in Christianity |
| famsupp | Family support |
| famtrust | Trust one's family |
| fewfreinds | Do not have very many friends |
| fewneg | Few negatives from not drinking |
| frat | Go to Fraternity parties |
| fratno | Don't go to fraternity parties |
| freshparties | Freshmen go to a lot of drinking parteis/Going to parties as Freshmen |
| freshsoc | Difficlut to find friends and activities as a freshman abstainer |
| friendinfluen | Friends influences not drinking |
| friendsame | Friends are pretty much the same as the abstainer in question |
| friendsdonotdrink | Most of friends do not drink |
| friendsdonotpressure | Drinking friends do not pressure to drink |
| friendsdrink | Most of friends drink |
| friendsdrinkeasy | Easy to be friends with people who drink |
| friendsdrinkhard | Hard to be friends with people who drink |
| friendspress | Drinking friends pressure to drink |
| funnydrunks | Drunk people are funny |
| funw/friend | Having fun with friends |
| games | Play games |

First Level Theme Codes and Descriptions, continued

| Theme Code | Definition of Theme Code |
| --- | --- |
| getaway | Get away from stress |
| god | Belief in God |
| greek | Member of a Sorority or Fraternity |
| greekfriends | Friends from fraternities or sororities |
| guyspressgirls | Guys pressure girls to drink |
| gym | Go to the gym/workout/exercise |
| hallfriend | Friends from the residence halls |
| hardnodrink | It is hard to not drink |
| health | Health |
| hischool | High School |
| hischoolfriend | High School friends |
| hit | hit things |
| hobby | Hobby |
| hobbyfriend | Friends with the same hobbies |
| home | Stay at home |
| honorgod | Getting drunk dishonors God, desire to honor God by not drinking/getting drunk |
| honorpar | Want to honor parents |
| invitelots | Get invited to lots of drinking parties |
| keepbusy | Keep busy doing things |
| leader | Serve in a leadership in an organization/club |

First Level Theme Codes and Descriptions, continued

| Theme Code | Definition of Theme Code |
| --- | --- |
| leaveuncomf | Leave a situation or party if feeling uncomfortable |
| leftout | Feling left ouf or out of place |
| lessfriends | Have less friends because of abstaining |
| lessfun | Do not have as much fun as people who are drinking |
| lookoutfriend | Friends who look out for each other |
| lotsfriend | Many friends |
| lotstodo | There are a lot of things to do other than drinking/not drinking |
| makefriend | Making friends |
| meet | Meet people/make friends |
| mostpartyalc | Most parties have alcohol |
| movie | Go to the movies/rent movies to watch |
| negimpcareer | Alcohol has a negative impact on future career |
| negimpeduc | Negative impact on one's education |
| negimpgrades | Alcohol has a negative impact on grades |
| negimphealth | Negative impact on health |
| negimplife | Alcohol has a negative impact on life |
| negimpschool | Alcohol has a negative impact on success in school |
| no | Just say, "No," when asked to drink |
| noabstainhard | Hard to not drink when you are surrounded by drinking and not abstainers |
| noalcohome | No alcohol in the family home growing up |

First Level Theme Codes and Descriptions, continued

| Theme Code | Definition of Theme Code |
|---|---|
| noalcparty | Non-alcoholic parties |
| noben | No benefit |
| nocontrol | Don't like feeling drunk/out of control |
| nodesire | No desire to drink |
| nodrink=fun | Don't have to drink to have fun |
| nodrink=right | Not drinking is the right thing to do |
| nodrinkfriendcomm | Have a lot in common with non-drinking friends |
| nodrinkfriendeasy | Easy to find non-drinking friends |
| nodrinkfriendfree | Non drinking friends allow a person to be themselves, to be free. |
| nodrinkfriendgood | Friends that don't drink are special/great/good |
| nodrinkfriendhard | Hard to find non-drinking friends |
| nodrinkfriendnodrink | Non-drinking friends do not concentrate their socialization on drinking |
| nodrinkfriendrelate | Non-drinking friends understand and relate to you |
| nodrinkfriendsdeep | Friendships with abstainers are deep |
| nodrinkfriendsupp | Just being around friends who don't drink is supportive |
| nodrinkfriendthere | Non-drinking friends are there for you when you need them |
| nodrunksocial | Do not like to socialize with drunk people |
| nofamsupp | No specific or overt support for not drinking from family |
| nofriends | Do not have many friends |
| nofun | Not having fun |

First Level Theme Codes and Descriptions, continued

| Theme Code | Definition of Theme Code |
|---|---|
| nomon | No money to drink |
| nonotok | People don't take, "No," for an answer |
| nook | People take, "No," for an answer. |
| noparty | Do not go to drinking events/parties |
| nopressure | Do not feel pressure to drink |
| noreason | No reason |
| nosoc | Not a very social person, don't socialize much |
| not21 | Don't want to drink if under 21/Drinking is illegal under 21 |
| notempted | Not tempted to drink |
| notfun | Drinking parties are not fun |
| notodo | Nothing to do around Blacksburg, or on campus |
| notrouble | Don't want to get into trouble |
| notwithcrowd | Don't want to go along with the crowd |
| okdrinksocial | Socializing with drinkers or drinking is ok |
| okmelegdrink | It is ok for me to legally drink |
| oknotdrunksocial | Socializing with drinkers when they are not drinking, especially intoxicated |
| okotherslegdrink | It is ok for others to legally drink |
| oncamp | Living on campus/being on campus helps no drinking |
| openfriend | Open, honest friendships |
| othersdonotdrink | There are other people at parties that do not drink. |

First Level Theme Codes and Descriptions, continued

| Theme Code | Definition of Theme Code |
| --- | --- |
| otherseemeneg | Don't want others to perceive me negatively when/if I drink alcohol |
| outdoor | Doing things outdoors (camping, fishing, hiking, climbing) |
| parentspay | Parents pay for school |
| parsupp | Support from family/parents |
| partrust | Parent's trust |
| partydonotknow | Go to parties where I do not know people there |
| partyknow | Go to parties if I know the people there |
| partyw/friend | Go to parties with friends |
| pastfamneg | Family's negative experiences/problems with alcohol |
| pastpeerneg | Peer's problems with alcohol/Peer's past negative experiences with alcohol |
| pastpersneg | Past personal problems with alcohol/Personal negative experiences with alcohol |
| peerrolemodel | Strong older peer role models |
| physrep | Physical repulsion with alcohol or people drinking alcohol (taste, smell) |
| playtricks | Playing tricks on drunk people |
| posimpcareer | Positive impact on career |
| posimpeduc | Positive impact on education |
| posimpfamrel | Positive impact on family relationships |
| posimpfin | Not drinking has a positive influence on financial matters |
| posimpgod | Positive impact on relationship with God or spirituality |
| posimphealth | Positive impact on health |

First Level Theme Codes and Descriptions, continued

| Theme Code | Definition of Theme Code |
|---|---|
| posimplife | Positive impact on life |
| posimppersrel | Positive impact on personal relationships |
| posimpsoc | Positive impact on social interactions/aspects |
| pour | Pour out alcohol |
| pray | Pray |
| pressure | Feel pressure to drink |
| quiet | Be quiet |
| read | Read something |
| real | Friendships that are real and genuine |
| relg | Religious faith |
| relgdrinkmod | Religion says drink in moderation |
| relgdrinkok | Religion says it is ok to drink |
| relgdrinkwrong | Religion says that drinking is wrong |
| relginfluen | Religious influence |
| relgorg | Religious organizations |
| reshall | Residence halls |
| respectfriend | Friends who respect you |
| rolemodel | Strong role models |
| rolemodelfriend | Serve as a role model for others |
| roomfriend | Roommates are friends |

First Level Theme Codes and Descriptions, continued

| Theme Code | Definition of Theme Code |
| --- | --- |
| samesexfriend | Friends of the same sex |
| schoolwork | Do school work |
| selfpity | Self pity |
| shop | Go shopping |
| sing | Sing |
| sleep | Sleep |
| social | Socializing |
| sportspartic | Participate in sports |
| sportswatch | Watch others play sports |
| strangersno | Do not accept drinks from strangers |
| stricter | Society or universities need to enforce alcohol laws more strictly |
| suppfriend | Supportive or accepting friends |
| surf | Surfing the internet |
| talk | Talk to friends/peers/others |
| timefriend | Spend time with friends |
| travel | Travel |
| trustfriend | Trusting or trustable friends |
| tv | Television |
| video | Renting or watching videos at home |
| visfam | Visiting family |

First Level Theme Codes and Descriptions, continued

| Theme Code | Definition of Theme Code |
|---|---|
| visfriend | Visiting friends |
| volun | Volunteer |
| walk | Taking a walk |
| W.E.L.L. | Living in the W.E.L.L. learning community |
| wonder | Wonder what it would be like to drink |
| workfriend | Friends from work |
| write | Write |
| yesparty | Go to drinking events/parties |
| youngdrinkmore | Younger people drink more |

Appendix M

Table of First Level Theme Code Frequencies for Research Question One:

All Triangulated Theme Code Frequencies

| Theme Definition (Theme Code) | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Religious influence (relginfluen) | 47 | 6.1% |
| Do not want negative consequences from drinking (donotwantneg) | 44 | 5.7% |
| Family influence (faminfluen) | 42 | 5.5% |
| Past peer negative experiences (pastpeerneg) | 32 | 4.2% |
| Influence from friends (friendinfluen) | 31 | 4.0% |
| Having no desire to drink (nodesire) | 30 | 3.9% |
| Related to the Christian faith (christian) | 27 | 3.5% |
| Community influence (comminfluen) | 18 | 2.3% |
| Past family problems (pastfamprob) | 18 | 2.3% |
| Do not surround themselves drinkers (donotdrinksurround) | 17 | 2.2% |
| High School (hischool) | 17 | 2.2% |
| Family does not drink alcohol (famnodrink) | 16 | 2.1% |
| Friends do not drink alcohol (friendsdonotdrink) | 16 | 2.1% |
| Do not drink or drinking is illegal if under 21 (not21) | 15 | 2.0% |
| Making the conscious choice to abstain. Say no. (no) | 14 | 1.8% |
| Do not like feeling drunk or out of control (nocontrol) | 14 | 1.8% |

Table of First Level Theme Code Frequencies for Research Question One:

All Triangulated Theme Code Frequencies, continued

| Theme Definition (Theme Code) | Frequency | Percentage |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Religion, not specific (relg) | 14 | 1.8% |
| Christian organizations or clubs (christianorg) | 13 | 1.7% |
| Influence from the church (churchinfluen) | 13 | 1.7% |
| Influence from the church (churchinfluen) | 13 | 1.7% |
| Getting drunk dishonors God or abstaining is honoring God. (honorgod) | 13 | 1.7% |
| Do not like the way people act when they drink (drinkactnotlike) | 12 | 1.6% |
| Health (health) | 12 | 1.6% |
| Not drinking is fun (nodrink=fun) | 12 | 1.6% |
| No reason to drink (noreason) | 12 | 1.6% |
| Religion says to drink in moderation (relgdrinkmod) | 11 | 1.4% |
| It is ok to drink (drinkok) | 10 | 1.3% |
| Religion says that drinking is wrong (relgdrinkwrong) | 10 | 1.3% |
| Friends drink alcohol (friendsdrink) | 9 | 1.2% |
| Belief that the body is the temple of Christ/God and should not be contaminated (body=temple) | 8 | 1.0% |
| Surrounded by people who drink (drinksurround) | 8 | 1.0% |

Table of First Level Theme Code Frequencies for Research Question One:

All Triangulated Theme Code Frequencies, continued

| Theme Definition (Theme Code) | Frequency | Percentage |
| --- | --- | --- |
| It is not ok to get drunk (drunknotok) | 8 | 1.0% |
| Desire to honor one's parents (honorpar) | 8 | 1.0% |
| Do not want to get into trouble (notrouble) | 8 | 1.0% |
| Serve as a role model for one's peers (peerrolemodel) | 8 | 1.0% |
| Supportive friends (suppfriend) | 8 | 1.0% |
| culture | 7 | 0.9% |
| It is not smart to drink (drinknotsmart) | 7 | 0.9% |
| Physical repulsion with alcohol or people drinking alcohol. (physrep) | 7 | 0.9% |
| Living in the W.E.L.L. learning community (W.E.L.L.) | 7 | 0.9% |
| Better things to do with one's time that drinking (bettertime) | 6 | 0.8% |
| No or negative community influence (comminfluenno) | 6 | 0.8% |
| Belief that it is wrong to drink (drink=wrong) | 6 | 0.8% |
| Family said not to drink alcohol (famsaidno) | 6 | 0.8% |
| High school friends (hischoolfriend) | 6 | 0.8% |
| Negative impact on life in general (negimplife) | 6 | 0.8% |
| No benefits to drinking (noben) | 6 | 0.8% |
| Participation in sports (sportspartic) | 6 | 0.8% |

Table of First Level Theme Code Frequencies for Research Question One:

All Triangulated Theme Code Frequencies, continued

| Theme Definition (Theme Code) | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Alcohol programming or education (alcoedu) | 5 | 0.7% |
| Go to church a lot (church) | 5 | 0.7% |
| Friends from church (churchfriend) | 5 | 0.7% |
| Family drinks in moderation (fammoddrink) | 5 | 0.7% |
| Serve as a role model for others (rolemodelthem) | 5 | 0.7% |
| Spending time with a friend (timefriend) | 5 | 0.7% |
| Drunk people can be dangerous (danger) | 4 | 0.5% |
| Just do not drink alcohol under any circumstances, for any reason (donotdrink) | 4 | 0.5% |
| Family rarely drinks (famraredrink) | 4 | 0.5% |
| Alcohol has a negative impact on grades (negimpgrades) | 4 | 0.5% |
| Do not feel pressure to drink (nopressure) | 4 | 0.5% |
| Do not want to go along with the crowd (notwithcrowd) | 4 | 0.5% |
| Do not want others to perceive me negatively if or when I drink. (othersseemeneg) | 4 | 0.5% |
| Campus or student club or organization (club) | 3 | 0.4% |
| Do not want alcohol around (donotwantalcaround) | 3 | 0.4% |

Table of First Level Theme Code Frequencies for Research Question One:

All Triangulated Theme Code Frequencies, continued

| Theme Definition (Theme Code) | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| People think college is about alcohol, or that everybody in college drinks (drink=college) | 3 | 0.4% |
| People think drinking is cool (drink=cool) | 3 | 0.4% |
| College students drink to get drunk (drink=drunk) | 3 | 0.4% |
| Talking about drinking (drinktalk) | 3 | 0.4% |
| Family drinks (famdrink) | 3 | 0.4% |
| Friends do not pressure to drink (friendsdonotpressure) | 3 | 0.4% |
| Having fun with one's friends (funw/friend) | 3 | 0.4% |
| Alcohol has a negative impact on school (negimpschool) | 3 | 0.4% |
| There was no alcohol at one's home (noalchome) | 3 | 0.4% |
| Past personal problems related to alcohol (pastpersprob) | 3 | 0.4% |
| Do school work (schoolwork) | 3 | 0.4% |

Appendix N

Table of First Level Theme Code Frequencies for Research Question Two:

All Triangulated Theme Code Frequencies

| Theme Definition (Theme Code) | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Go to drinking parties or events (yesparty) | 44 | 6.4% |
| Make the conscious choice to abstain. Say no (no) | 37 | 5.4% |
| Drink to fit in (drinktofit) | 34 | 5.0% |
| Any type of pressure to drink (pressure) | 33 | 4.8% |
| Do not experience pressure to drink (nopressure) | 29 | 4.2% |
| Drink non-alcoholic, alternative beverages (altbev) | 26 | 3.8% |
| Do not go to drinking parties or events (noparty) | 24 | 3.5% |
| People accept, "No," for an answer (nook) | 22 | 3.2% |
| University, on-campus programming (campprog) | 21 | 3.1% |
| Friends do not pressure to drink (friendsdonotpressure) | 17 | 2.5% |
| Friends drink alcohol (friendsdrink) | 17 | 2.5% |
| It is difficult to abstain (hardnodrink) | 17 | 2.5% |
| Easy to abstain when with friends (easyw/friend) | 16 | 2.3% |
| Simply avoiding drinkers or drinking (avoid) | 15 | 2.2% |
| People do not readily accept, "No," as an answer (nonotok) | 14 | 2.0% |

Table of First Level Theme Code Frequencies for Research Question Two:

All Triangulated Theme Code Frequencies, continued

| Theme Definition (Theme Code) | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| College is about drinking or everyone drinks in college (drink=college) | 13 | 1.9% |
| Friends do not drink alcohol (friendsdonotdrink) | 13 | 1.9% |
| Do not have a desire to drink (nodesire) | 13 | 1.9% |
| Attend parties with friends (partyw/friend) | 13 | 1.9% |
| Friends who respect you (respectfriend) | 11 | 1.6% |
| Designated driver (dd) | 10 | 1.5% |
| Having fun with friends (funw/friend) | 10 | 1.5% |
| Socializing (social) | 10 | 1.5% |
| Dancing (dance) | 9 | 1.3% |
| Just do not drink alcohol (donotdrink) | 9 | 1.3% |
| There are a lot of things to do other than drinking (lotstodo) | 9 | 1.3% |
| Surrounded by people who drink (drinksurround) | 8 | 1.2% |
| Spending time with friends (timefriend) | 8 | 1.2% |
| Surrounded by people who do not drink (donotdrinksurround) | 7 | 1.0% |
| Talking about drinking (drinktalk) | 7 | 1.0% |
| Easy to not drink (easynodrink) | 7 | 1.0% |
| Keep busy doing things (keepbusy) | 7 | 1.0% |

Table of First Level Theme Code Frequencies for Research Question Two:

All Triangulated Theme Code Frequencies, continued

| Theme Definition (Theme Code) | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Not drinking is fun (nodrink=fun) | 7 | 1.0% |
| Tempted to drink (tempted) | 7 | 1.0% |
| Not tempted to drink (notempted) | 6 | 0.9% |
| Do school work (schoolwork) | 6 | 0.9% |
| Participate in sports (sportspartic) | 6 | 0.9% |
| It is easy to get alcohol in college (alcoeasy) | 5 | 0.7% |
| Out at a bar or night club (bar) | 5 | 0.7% |
| Do not want alcohol around (donotwantalcaround) | 5 | 0.7% |
| Do not like the way people act when drinking or drunk (drinkactnotlike) | 5 | 0.7% |
| Go to fraternity parties (frat) | 5 | 0.7% |
| Friends pressure to drink (friendspressure) | 5 | 0.7% |
| Feeling left out (leftout) | 5 | 0.7% |
| Nothing to do around town or on campus (notodo) | 5 | 0.7% |
| Other people at parties who do not drink (othersdonotdrink) | 5 | 0.7% |
| Do not want the negative consequences from drinking (donotwantneg) | 4 | 0.6% |

Table of First Level Theme Code Frequencies for Research Question Two:

All Triangulated Theme Code Frequencies, continued

| Theme Definition (Theme Code) | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Faking drinking or fashioning a non-alcoholic beverage to look like an alcoholic beverage. (fakebev) | 4 | 0.6% |
| Health (health) | 4 | 0.6% |
| Get invited to a lot of drinking parties (invitelots) | 4 | 0.6% |
| Most parties have alcohol (mostpartyalco) | 4 | 0.6% |
| Do not like to socialize with drunk people (nodrunksoc) | 4 | 0.6% |
| Drinking parties are not fun (notfun) | 4 | 0.6% |
| No time to drink (notime) | 4 | 0.6% |
| Only go to parties where you know someone (partyknow) | 4 | 0.6% |
| Do not accept drinks from strangers (strangersno) | 4 | 0.6% |
| Supportive friends (suppfriend) | 4 | 0.6% |
| Talk to friends, peers, or others (talk) | 4 | 0.6% |
| Playing drinking games (drinkgames) | 3 | 0.4% |
| It is ok to drink (drinkok) | 3 | 0.4% |
| Hard to be friends with people who drink (friendsdrink=hard) | 3 | 0.4% |
| Drunk people are funny (funnydrunk) | 3 | 0.4% |
| Guys pressure girls to drink (guyspressgirls) | 3 | 0.4% |
| Leave a drinking situation if uncomfortable (leaveuncomf) | 3 | 0.4% |

Table of First Level Theme Code Frequencies for Research Question Two:

All Triangulated Theme Code Frequencies, continued

| Theme Definition (Theme Code) | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Friends look out for each other (lookoutfriend) | 3 | 0.4% |
| Hard to not drinking and not abstainers (noabstainhard) | 3 | 0.4% |
| It is ok to socialize with drinkers (okdrunksocial) | 3 | 0.4% |
| Go to parties with people you do not know (partydonotknow) | 3 | 0.4% |

Appendix O

First Level Theme Code Frequencies for Research Question Three:

All Triangulated Theme Code Frequencies.

| Theme Definition (Code) | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Go to a movie (movie) | 56 | 3.8% |
| Talk with friend, peers, or others (talk) | 53 | 3.6% |
| Participate in sports (sportspartic) | 46 | 3.2% |
| Spend time with friends (timefriend) | 40 | 2.7% |
| Have fun w/friends (funw/friend) | 36 | 2.5% |
| Have friends who drink alcohol (friendsdrink) | 34 | 2.3% |
| Workout, exercise, or go to the gym (gym) | 33 | 2.3% |
| Close friend (closefriend) | 27 | 1.9% |
| Friends who do not drink are special, or good to have (nodrinkfriendgood) | 26 | 1.8% |
| Go to parties where there is alcohol (yesparty) | 26 | 1.8% |
| Christian organization or club (christianorg) | 25 | 1.7% |
| Friends do not drink alcohol (friendsdonotdrink) | 25 | 1.7% |
| Supportive or accepting friends (suppfriend) | 25 | 1.7% |
| Family support (famsupp) | 22 | 1.5% |
| Friends who respect you (respectfriend) | 22 | 1.5% |

First Level Theme Code Frequencies for Research Question Three:

All Triangulated Theme Code Frequencies, continued

| Theme Definition (Code) | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Eat at a restaurant (eatout) | 21 | 1.4% |
| Socializing with drinkers when they are not drinking (oknotdrunksocial) | 20 | 1.4% |
| Belong to a club or organization (club) | 17 | 1.2% |
| Play computer or video games (compgame) | 16 | 1.1% |
| OK to socializing with drinkers when they are drinking (okdrinksocial) | 16 | 1.1% |
| Friends from clubs or organizations (clubfriend) | 15 | 1.0% |
| Friends from the residence hall (hallfriend) | 15 | 1.0% |
| Spending time doing activities outdoors (outdoor) | 15 | 1.0% |
| Having divers friends (diversefriend) | 14 | 1.0% |
| Not much difference socializing with drinkers or abstainers when they are not drinking (drinknodrink=) | 14 | 1.0% |
| Friends do not pressure to drink (friendsdonotpressure) | 14 | 1.0% |
| Have a lot in common with friends who do not drink (nodrinkfriendcomm) | 14 | 1.0% |
| Parent's trust (partrust) | 14 | 1.0% |

First Level Theme Code Frequencies for Research Question Three:

All Triangulated Theme Code Frequencies, continued

| Theme Definition (Code) | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Serve as a rold model for others (rolemodelthem) | 14 | 1.0% |
| Make the conscious choice to abstain. Say no (no) | 13 | 0.9% |
| Get away from the source of stress (getaway) | 13 | 0.9% |
| Hobbies (hobby) | 13 | 0.9% |
| Feeling left out or not included (leftout) | 13 | 0.9% |
| Friends who are also roommartes (roomfriend) | 13 | 0.9% |
| Easy to socialize and find friends as an abstainers (easysoc) | 12 | 0.8% |
| Having  a lot of friends (lotsfriend) | 12 | 0.8% |
| Non-drinking friends do not concentrate their socialization on drinking (nodrinkfriendnodrink) | 12 | 0.8% |
| No support from family (nofamsupp) | 12 | 0.8% |
| Saying, "No," is ok (nook) | 12 | 0.8% |
| Open, honest friendships (openfriend) | 12 | 0.8% |
| To read (read) | 12 | 0.8% |
| Socializing (social) | 12 | 0.8% |
| Eating in (eatin) | 12 | 0.8% |
| Friends who are Christians (christianfriend) | 11 | 0.8% |

First Level Theme Code Frequencies for Research Question Three:

All Triangulated Theme Code Frequencies, continued

| Theme Definition (Code) | Frequency | Percentage |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Friends from class (classfriend) | 11 | 0.8% |
| To dance (dance) | 11 | 0.8% |
| Drinkers are sometimes dangerous (danger) | 11 | 0.8% |
| Talking about drinking (drinktalk) | 11 | 0.8% |
| High school friends (hischoolfriend) | 11 | 0.8% |
| Desire to honor and respect one's parents (honorpar) | 11 | 0.8% |
| Not drinking is fun (nodrink=fun) | 11 | 0.8% |
| Sleep (sleep) | 11 | 0.8% |
| Do not like the way people act when they are drunk or drinking (drinkactnotlike) | 10 | 0.7% |
| Drinking friends from work (drinkfriendwork) | 10 | 0.7% |
| Playing games (games) | 10 | 0.7% |
| Friends look out for each other (lookoutfriend) | 10 | 0.7% |
| Do not go to drinking events or parties (noparty) | 10 | 0.7% |
| Socializing with people (socialsmall) | 10 | 0.7% |
| Watching movies on video (video) | 10 | 0.7% |
| Making art or crafts (art) | 9 | 0.6% |
| Going out on a date (date) | 9 | 0.6% |

First Level Theme Code Frequencies for Research Question Three:

All Triangulated Theme Code Frequencies, continued

| Theme Definition (Code) | Frequency | Percentage |
| --- | --- | --- |
| It is ok to drink alcohol (drinkok) | 9 | 0.6% |
| Go to fraternity parties (frat) | 9 | 0.6% |
| It is difficult to abstain if your friends drink (friendsdrinkhard) | 9 | 0.6% |
| Friends are similar or the same as you (friendssame) | 9 | 0.6% |
| Do not like to socialize with drunk people (nodrunksocial) | 9 | 0.6% |
| To do school work (schoolwork) | 9 | 0.6% |
| People think college is about drinking or that everybody drinks in college (drink=college) | 8 | 0.5% |
| Stay at home (home) | 8 | 0.5% |
| A lot to do other than drinking (lotsdoto) | 8 | 0.5% |
| Parties where alcohol is not served (noalcparty) | 8 | 0.5% |
| Hard to find non-drinking friends (nodrinkfriendhard) | 8 | 0.5% |
| Being quiet (quiet) | 8 | 0.5% |
| Drunk people are annoying (annoydrunk) | 7 | 0.5% |

First Level Theme Code Frequencies for Research Question Three:

All Triangulated Theme Code Frequencies, continued

| Theme Definition (Code) | Frequency | Percentage |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Difficult to socialize and find friends as an abstainer (diffsoc) | 7 | 0.5% |
| Easy to make non-drinking friends (nodrinkfriendeasy) | 7 | 0.5% |
| Praying (pray) | 7 | 0.5% |
| Walking (walk) | 7 | 0.5% |
| Friends who hold each accountable (accountfriend) | 6 | 0.4% |
| Campus programming (campprog) | 6 | 0.4% |
| Family influence (faminfluen) | 6 | 0.4% |
| Family said to not drink (famsaidno) | 6 | 0.4% |
| Family said nothing about drinking (famsaidnothing) | 6 | 0.4% |
| Abstaining is less fun than drinking (lessfun) | 6 | 0.4% |
| Non-drinking friendships allow for more freedom to be yourself (nodrinkfriendfree) | 6 | 0.4% |
| Non-drinking friends understand and relate to you (nodrinkfriendrelate) | 6 | 0.4% |
| Do not have any or many friends (nofriends) | 6 | 0.4% |

First Level Theme Code Frequencies for Research Question Three:

All Triangulated Theme Code Frequencies, continued

| Theme Definition (Code) | Frequency | Percentage |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Not having fun (nofun) | 6 | 0.4% |
| Not ok to say, "No." (nonotok) | 6 | 0.4% |
| Other people at parties also do not drink | | |
| (othersdonotdrink) | 6 | 0.4% |
| Only go to parties with friends. (partyw/friends) | 6 | 0.4% |
| Residence hall (reshall) | 6 | 0.4% |
| Babysitting for drunk people (baby) | 5 | 0.3% |
| Going to a bar (bar) | 5 | 0.3% |
| Breaking things (break) | 5 | 0.3% |
| Going to a concert (concert) | 5 | 0.3% |
| Drunks are funny (funnydrunk) | 5 | 0.3% |
| Going shopping (shop) | 5 | 0.3% |
| Tempted to drink (tempted) | 5 | 0.3% |
| Visiting with friends (visfriend) | 5 | 0.3% |
| Serving as a volunteer (volun) | 5 | 0.3% |
| Alcohol does not relieve stress (alcnostressrelv) | 4 | 0.3% |
| Belonging to clubs that do not center around | | |
| alcohol (clubnoalc) | 4 | 0.3% |
| Designated driver (dd) | 4 | 0.3% |

First Level Theme Code Frequencies for Research Question Three:

All Triangulated Theme Code Frequencies, continued

| Theme Definition (Code) | Frequency | Percentage |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Drinking friends from high school (drinkfriendhischool) | 4 | 0.3% |
| Driving (drive) | 4 | 0.3% |
| Getting drunk is not ok (drunknotok) | 4 | 0.3% |
| Easy to not drink when with friends (easyw/friend) | 4 | 0.3% |
| Family drinks in moderation (ffammoddrink) | 4 | 0.3% |
| Having few friends (fewfriend) | 4 | 0.3% |
| Keeping busy (keepbusy) | 4 | 0.3% |
| Friends who do not drink are there for you (nodrinkfriendthere) | 4 | 0.3% |
| Doing things on campus (oncamp) | 4 | 0.3% |
| Do not want others to perceive me negatively when or if I drink alcohol (othersseemeneg) | 4 | 0.3% |
| Only go to parties with people you know (partyknow) | 4 | 0.3% |
| Pressure to drink (pressure) | 4 | 0.3% |
| Friends of the same sex (samesexfriend) | 4 | 0.3% |
| Wondering what it is like to drink (wonder) | 4 | 0.3% |

First Level Theme Code Frequencies for Research Question Three:

All Triangulated Theme Code Frequencies, continued

| Theme Definition (Code) | Frequency | Percentage |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Drinking beverages as alternates to alcohol (altbev) | 3 | 0.2% |
| Do not want the negative consequences of drinking (donotwantneg) | 3 | 0.2% |
| Family does not drink (famnodrink) | 3 | 0.2% |
| Freshmen go to parties (freshparty) | 3 | 0.2% |
| Difficult to find friends and activities as a freshman abstainer (freshsoc) | 3 | 0.2% |
| Friends pressure you to drink (friendspressure) | 3 | 0.2% |
| Fraternity or Sorority friends (greekfriend) | 3 | 0.2% |
| Friends who practice the same hobbies (hobbyfriend) | 3 | 0.2% |
| Serving as a leader in a campus organization (leader) | 3 | 0.2% |
| Leave a drinking situation if uncomfortable (leaveuncomf) | 3 | 0.2% |
| Many things to do other than abstaining (lotstodo) | 3 | 0.2% |
| Hard to abstain when you are not surrounded by abstainers (noabstainhard) | 3 | 0.2% |

First Level Theme Code Frequencies for Research Question Three:

All Triangulated Theme Code Frequencies, continued

| Theme Definition (Code) | Frequency | Percentage |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Past family problems (pastfamprob) | 3 | 0.2% |
| Watching sports (sportswatch) | 3 | 0.2% |
| Friends you can trust (trustfriend) | 3 | 0.2% |
| Writing (write) | 3 | 0.2% |

Appendix P

Second Level Theme Codes and Descriptions

| Theme Code | Theme Code Description |
|---|---|
| Abezr | Abstainers find it easier to make friends with abstainers than with drinkers, in general. |
| Ableftout | Abstainers feel left out, not included, or not a part of the college social environment because they do not drink and they feel most other college students drink. They also may feel that most college activities revolve around drinking. |
| AvoidNeg | Abstainers want to avoid negative consequences from drinking they see in others. |
| Busyab | Busy abstainer with many things to do. At least three cited things to do. |
| Cluborg | Campus activities, clubs, and organizations are an important part of the abstainers' social environment in college. |
| Connect | Desire to connect to other people or groups of people. |
| Deeprichfriend | Abstainers feel they have deep, rich, close friendships, especially with other abstainers. |
| Diversefriend | Abstainers have diverse friends. |
| Ezdiff=action | Ease or difficulty of abstaining is affected by the actions an individual takes to keep from drinking. |
| Ezdiff=convict | Ease or difficulty in abstaining is associated with the strength of the conviction about abstention. |
| Ezdiff=friend | Ease or difficulty of abstaining is affected by the friends and the people with which college students are surrounded in college. |
| Ezdiff=press | Ease of difficulty of not drinking in college is affected by the pressure college students feel to drink. |
| Ezdiff=socsit | Ease of difficulty of not drinking in college is affected the type of social situation in which college students place themselves. |

Second Level Theme Codes and Descriptions, continued

| Theme Code | Theme Code Description |
| --- | --- |
| Faminfluen | Positive and Negative influence from family is important and strong for abstainers in college. |
| Famsupp | Abstainers get support from family. |
| Findgroup=ab | Abstainers find supportive groups to help them keep from drinking. Important factor in not drinking. |
| Findgroup=comf | Finding and associating with a supportive group helps them feel comfortable in the college environment. |
| Fresh=ab | Making friends, joining organizations, and general involvement during the freshman year is important for not drinking. |
| Fresh=comf | Abstainers make friends, join organizations, and general involvement during the freshman year to help them feel more comfortable in comfort in the college environment. |
| Friendinfluen | Positive and negative influence from friends is important and strong for abstainers in college. |
| Friendezdiff | Abstainers find it both difficult and easy to make friends with drinkers. |
| Hischool=noab | Whether high school friends drink or do not drink does not seem important to college students' choice to abstain. |
| Manypos | Abstainers believe that many areas of their lives are positively affected by abstaining. |
| Mkfriend=ab | Abstainers make supportive friends to help them keep from drinking. Important factor in not drinking. |
| Mkfriend=comf | Abstainers make friends with supportive others or abstainers to help them feel more comfortable in comfort in the college environment. |
| Negx | Past negative experiences from friends, family, and themselves may motivate them to abstain. |
| Numclosefriend | The Number and closeness of friends varies widely. It is not as important for abstainers and the support they feel with not drinking or in fitting Second Level Theme Codes and Descriptions, continued |

Second Level Theme Codes and Descriptions, continued

| Theme Code | Theme Code Description |
|---|---|
| | socially as it is for them to have some degree of supportive friends or groups with which they spend time, socially. |
| Readilyboth | Abstainers will readily make friends with or spend time with drinkers or abstainers. |
| Relginfluen | Religious influence is important and strong for abstainers in college. |
| Relgorg | Religious organizations and fellowships are an important part of many abstainers' social environment in college. |
| Richsoc | Abstainers are a part of a rich social experience and environment. |
| Richsocaway | Abstainers feel they have a rich social experience and environment that they create themselves, away from the general college social environment. |

# CHRIS COTNER

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## EDUCATION

**2000 - 2002    Virginia Tech**                    *Blacksburg, VA*
  *MA Education, December 2002*

**1994 - 1995  University of North Carolina**    *Greensboro, NC*
  *MA History Candidate, degree not completed*

**1989 - 1993  James Madison University**          *Harrisonburg, VA*
  *BA History, Minor Secondary Education, Cum Laude*
  Deans List, President's List, Sigma Chi Fraternity

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## STUDENT AFFAIRS EXPERIENCE

**2002-Present   Longwood University, Residential and Commuter Life**   Farmville, VA
*Residence Education Coordinator*

- Live-in professional responsible for 465 bed, co-educational, upper-class residence hall (Cunningham Hall). Duties included emergency response, counseling, discipline, advising, supervision.
- Managed all departmental assessment efforts (created and managed processes, created instruments, created and managed databases, calculated statistics, analyzed data, and compiled reports).
- Supervised, advised, and trained 10 Resident Advisors (paraprofessional student staff) and 1 Office Manager. Co-supervised 1 Desk Supervisor and 10 Desk Aides.
- Regular weeklong on-call responsibilities for all on-campus residents.
- Responsible for Cunningham's discipline. Judicial Hearing Officer. Judicial Board (student) advisor.
- Facilities management and programmatic advising for 2 in-building learning communities (ISH [International Studies Hall] & GLOBE [Theatre and Performing Arts Hall]).
- Facilities management and policy/programmatic advising for 2 in-building fraternities (AXP and TKE).
- Advisor for Cunningham Hall Council.
- Created campus-wide and building-wide programming. Advised RA and student in-hall programming.
- Advisor for Java Hut (student run coffee house located in Cunningham Hall).
- Budgetary responsibility for $5000.00 (Hall, office, and other departmental funds).

**2001-2002       Virginia Tech, Cranwell International Center**   Blacksburg, VA
***Cranwell Center Graduate Assistant***

- Helped plan and facilitate orientation for incoming international students (fall and spring).
- Served in on-call capacity for emergency response during fall orientation.
- Assisted in emergency response for international students related to Sept. 11 events.
- Managed 24-hour temporary housing for incoming international students (July/Aug 2001).

- **Cranwell Center Graduate Assistant, continued**
- Supervised 4 student staff workers for temporary housing operations.
- Assisted international students in locating on and off campus housing.
- Developed and implemented social and educational programming for international students.
- Served as counselor for international students (e.g. crisis and academics).
- Primary Advisor to International Undergraduate Association.
- Assisted processing student immigration paperwork (e.g. F & J Visas, I-20, IAP-66, OPT, CPT.)
- Instructor for an English Conversation Group for international students.
- Assisted handling walk-in and phone customers at Cranwell main desk.

**2000-2001    Virginia Tech, Residence Education          Blacksburg, VA**
*Theme Housing Graduate Assistant*
- Program development and advising for Theme Housing Living and Learning Communities (W.E.L.L. [Wellness Lifestyle], World [International], Residential Leadership Community, Wing [First Year Experience], Biological and Life Sciences, and Design Collaborative).
- Primary Theme Housing Advisor for W.E.L.L. RAs (paraprofessional student staff), W.E.L.L. Student Community Board, and World RAs (2000-2001).
- Theme Housing Co-advisor for Residential Leadership Community RAs, Biological and Life Sciences RAs, and Design Collaborative RAs (Spring 2001).
- Jointly responsible for Theme Housing supervising, advising, and training for 45 RAs.
- Developed and implemented training for Theme Housing RAs and W.E.L.L. Community Board.
- Co-instructor for Healthy Living Class (Fall 2000).
- Theme Housing RA Selection Process – Chair
- W.E.L.L. Housing Selection - Chair
- Budget oversight for W.E.L.L. and World Programming ($1,800).
- Developed and implemented various programs and community development activities for Theme Housing RAs and students.

**2001 – Summer   Virginia Tech, RDP Marketing and Conference Services   Blacksburg, VA**
*Practicum – Research Assistant*
- Researched marketing and conference services at 100 U.S. colleges and universities.
- Analyzed data statistically from departmental and regional surveys.
- Developed survey instruments for department assessment and evaluation use.

**2001 – Spring   Virginia Tech, College Alcohol Abuse Prevention Center   Blacksburg, VA**
*Practicum – Research Assistant*
- Performed statistical analysis for various university research projects related to alcohol consumption.
- Developed and facilitated focus groups on low-risk drinking. Analyzed and presented findings.
- Researched various topics related to college alcohol consumption.
- Assisted in facilitating alcohol education classes for students referred judicially.
- Assisted in implementing Social Norms Marketing campaign for Virginia Tech.

**1997 - 2000    Virginia Tech, Residence Education    Blacksburg, VA**

***Office Services Assistant (1997-1998), Office Services Specialist (1998-1999), Program Support Technician (1999-2000)***

- Office Manager for Area Office responsible for the Administration of 5 - 8 residence halls, 45 RAs, and 2,000 students (1997-2000).
- Provided student services, University payroll system (Banner), University Judicial System administration, room changes, key inventory, space management, office inventory, and other administrative functions for the Area (1997-2000).
- Trainer, project leader, and consultant for 3 full-time Area Office Managers (1998-2000).
- Directly trained and supervised student office workers (1998-2000).
- Aided in the management of 30 – 70 student employees (night monitors) (1997-2000).
- Developed Area and Departmental administrative processes (1997-2000).
- Responsible for the first-year organization and implementation of Residential and Dining Programs decentralization process in the Summit Area (1997-1998), jointly responsible for developing pilot project to fully decentralize Central Area operations (1998-1999), and coordinated the decentralization and opening of 4 full-service Area Offices (1999-2000).
- Wrote training manual and developed training program for Office Managers (1997-2000).
- Provided continuing training for Office Managers (1997-2000)
- Developed on-line incident reporting for Area (1997-1999).
- Created and managed databases for Areas and Department (1997-2000).
- Created and managed web pages for office (1997-2000).
- Organized end of semester room changes for all Area Offices (1999-2000).

**Committee Experience**

- Longwood University Multicultural Advisory Committee – Member (2002-2003)
- Longwood University Construction Impact Committee – Member (2002-2003)
- Longwood University Alcohol and Other Drug Committee –Member (2002-2003)
- Longwood University Greek ATOD/Sex Assessment Committee – Member (2002-2003)
- World International Living Community Program Revision Committee – Co-Chair (2001-2002).
- Association for Student Development Drive-In Conference Panel Committee – Member (2001).
- Sexual Assault Facts and Education (S.A.F.E.) -Facilitator (2000-2002).
- Theme Housing W.E.L.L. Housing Selection – Chair (2000-2001).
- Theme Housing RA Selection Committee – Chair (2000-2001).
- Coordinator for Theme Housing Programs Search Committee - Member (2000-2001).
- RDP Key Committee –Co-Chair (1998-2000).
- RDP Housing Transitions Committee – Member (1998-2000).
- RDP Decentralization Committee - Member (1998-1999).
- Area Coordinator Search Committee - Member (1999-2000).
- Residence Director Search Committee – Technical Support (1998-1999).
- New RA Selection Committee – Administrative support and process facilitation (1997-1998).

**Awards, Affiliations, and Presentations**

- Award - National Residence Hall Honorary Award - Spotlight of the Year (1999-2000).
- Award – Departmental, Pioneering Spirit (1998-1999).
- Award – Departmental, Outstanding Service to Students (1997-98).
- Member - ACPA (2001-present).
- Member - NASPA (2002-present).
- Member – Virginia Tech Association for Student Development (2000-2002)
- Member  - National Residence Hall Honorary (1998-2002).
- Presentation at U.S. Dept. of Education's National Conference on Alcohol, Other Drug, and Violence Prevention in Higher Education: "Focus Groups on Low-Risk Drinking at VT."

## OTHER WORK EXPERIENCE

**Summer 1997     First Union National Bank**                    Roanoke, VA
*Corporate Security Associate*

**Spring 1997      First Union National Bank**                   Roanoke, VA
*Customer Relations Representative, Bank Card Division*

**1996 – 1997      United Parcel Service, Roanoke Airport**      Roanoke, VA
*Airport Operations Clerk*

**1995 – 1996      Lawnscapes**                                  Greensboro, NC
*Owner/Operator*

**Spring 1995      Academic Development Services**               Greensboro, NC
*Academic Tutor*

**1993-1994        Triad Water Conditioning**                    Greensboro, NC
*Sales Representative*

## ACCREDITATIONS

VA Teaching Certification – Secondary Level – History

## REFERENCES

Attached

# References for Chris Cotner

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