

**THE RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS OF ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION
IDENTIFIED WITHIN A YOUTH CENTRE ON THE WEST COAST OF
NEWFOUNDLAND**

by © Ernest James Power

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Abstract

The current study sought to explore why the at-risk youth of Corner Brook, Newfoundland, have been choosing to consume alcohol or not. This was accomplished by conducting semi-structured interviews, and compiling the common risk and protective factors associated with their use. Overall, participants indicated that they largely chose to consume alcohol either because they thought it was fun, it would help them cope with various problems, or because they were pressured into doing so. On the other hand, they also chose to avoid or consume less alcohol once they were educated on its dangers, kept busy, and had a safe place to go such as the local Community Youth Network. Furthermore, it is important to consider how participants described education in the current study, which was learning from both personal and vicarious experiences, in addition to being told the cold hard facts of alcohol consumption, in combination with a personal story, from a trusted adult, who communicated this information in a very passive way. The implications of these findings are discussed.

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The Risk and Protective Factors of Alcohol Consumption Identified Within a Youth Centre on the West Coast of Newfoundland

The purpose of this research was to explore why the at-risk youth of Corner Brook, Newfoundland have been choosing to consume alcohol or not. This was accomplished by conducting semi-structured interviews, and compiling the common risk and protective factors associated with their use. While numerous studies have already attempted to explain why youth tend to consume or avoid alcohol in general, none have specifically addressed why the youth of Western Newfoundland are making these decisions. Accordingly, this research is intended to address this gap in the literature, as well as help meet the needs of the community where underage drinking is a significant issue.

Chapter 1: A Review of the Literature

Yet, before the current study is discussed at length, it is important to consider the present literature on teenage alcohol consumption. For the purposes of this paper, the term *youth* shall henceforth refer to those between the ages of 12-18, and be used interchangeably with *adolescent* and *teenager*. What follows is a review of the current prevalence rates of underage drinking in Canada, as well as Newfoundland and Labrador; a rationale for why the early consumption of alcohol is harmful; and, the previous research on why youth tend to consume or avoid alcohol in general.

The Scope of the Problem

According to the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (2007), alcohol is the most commonly used substance by adolescents. Current prevalence rates suggest that 70% of Canadian youth have consumed alcohol within the past year (Canadian Centre on Substance

Abuse, 2014), with about 50% of them having had their first drink before the age of 15 (Freeman, King, & Pickett, 2011). Moreover, it is estimated that up to 30% of all Canadian youth have engaged in binge drinking (Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, 2014), with the general prevalence of use substantially increasing with each grade level (Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse Use and Addiction, 2017; Taylor, 2016). To illustrate, 19.6% of Canadian youth from grades 7-9 have reported consuming alcohol, as compared to the 58.3% of youth from grades 10-12.

Youth from Newfoundland and Labrador appear to demonstrate similar behaviour, as a recent provincial survey indicated that 47% of those from grades 7-12 had chosen to consume alcohol within the past year (“Newfoundland and Labrador,” 2012). Of that sample, 31.4% reported binge drinking within the past 30 days prior to the survey, along with 28.1% endorsing that they regularly consume alcohol twice or more a month. Likewise, general prevalence rates also drastically increased with each grade, as 7.4% of students in grade 7 reported consuming alcohol, as compared to 75% of students in grade 12.

Why This is a Problem

The above percentages are a cause for concern due to the vast and considerable damaging effects of early alcohol consumption. While adolescence is often characterized as a time of experimentation where youth have a natural tendency to seek new and thrilling experiences, such as the consumption of alcohol (Geldard, Geldard, & Foo, 2016), the problem is that most youth do not drink in moderation; rather, they tend to either binge drink, or abstain from alcohol altogether (Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, 2014; US Surgeon General, 2007). Thus, when they do choose to consume large amounts of alcohol, they run the risk of brain damage

(Brown et al., 2009), the chance of developing alcohol dependence (Cable & Sacker, 2007; Grant & Dawson, 1997; Guttmanova et al., 2011; Hingson, Heeren, & Winter, 2006; Hingson, Heeren, Zakocs, & Winter, 2002; Kokotailo et al., 2010), and engaging in a number of risky behaviours, such as drinking and driving (Brown et al., 2009; Kokotailo et al., 2010), and having unprotected sexual intercourse (Miller, Naimi, Brewer, & Everett Jones, 2007). As a general rule, all of these consequences serve as a function to the amount of alcohol consumed and how early youth have begun to consume alcohol (Morean, Corbin, & Fromme, 2012). Furthermore, based upon research done with adolescent rats (Little, Kuhn, Wilson, & Swartzwelder, 1996), human teenagers are thought to be less sensitive to the motor-impairing and sedative effects of alcohol, which makes it difficult for them to moderate how much alcohol they are consuming (Brown et al., 2009; Spear, 2000; White & Swartzwelder, 2004). Therefore, they are likelier to drink more, for longer periods of time, as they are not accurately attuned to how intoxicated they are becoming, amplifying their chances for experiencing the detrimental effects of alcohol.

To this end, the following sections will outline, and briefly discuss, how the early and heavy consumption of alcohol is known to impact normal brain development; increase the likelihood of developing alcohol dependence, which give rise to a number of health complications; as well as to influence youth to engage in other risky behaviours, due to impairments in judgement.

Brain damage. The teenage brain is especially vulnerable to the damaging effects of alcohol as it is still developing (Guerri & Pascual, 2010). As evidenced through research by McQueeney et al. (2009), adolescents who engaged in binge drinking had widespread reductions of fractional anisotropy, which is “a measure of the directional coherence of brain tissue” and

“estimate of white matter integrity” (p. 1278), when comparing participants with no history of an alcohol use disorder (AUD). These results suggest that adolescents run the risk of compromising their white matter integrity in major fibre tract pathways throughout the brain when they engage in binge drinking behaviour.

With regards to adolescents with AUDs, however, Medina et al. (2008) discovered that they had significantly smaller anterior ventral prefrontal cortex volumes as compared to controls. Similarly, De Bellis et al. (2000) determined that adolescents with AUDs had significantly reduced hippocampal volumes as well. Furthermore, De Bellis et al. also found a positive correlation between total hippocampal volume and the age of onset, as well as a negative correlation between volume and duration of the AUD; in other words, the earlier and longer a participant abused alcohol, the smaller his/her hippocampus was.

Research done on adolescent rats have also demonstrated how ethanol significantly inhibits the induction of long-term potentiation (LTP) and N-methyl-D-aspartate (NMDA) receptor-mediated synaptic potentials in hippocampal slices, when compared to adult rats (Swartzwelder, Wilson, & Tayyeb, 1995a; Swartzwelder, Wilson, & Tayyeb, 1995b; White & Swartzwelder, 2004). The implication of this damage being that alcohol consumption during adolescence is likely to produce cognitive deficits, including memory and learning impairments (Guerri & Pascual, 2010). Moreover, research from Crews, Braun, Hoplight, Switzer, and Knapp (2000) revealed that adolescent rats who were exposed to heavy episodes of drinking were found to have significantly damaged frontal cortical olfactory regions, as well as damaged anterior perirhinal and piriform cortices, when compared to adult rats. Thus, there is evidence

that the overall early and heavy use of alcohol can significantly damage and impact the normal development of the teenage brain.

Alcohol dependence. As previously suggested, adolescents run the risk of developing alcohol dependence with heavier consumption of alcohol and earlier onset of alcohol use. The World Health Organization (2014) defines alcohol dependence as:

a cluster of behavioural, cognitive, and physiological phenomena that develop after repeated alcohol use and that typically include a strong desire to consume alcohol, difficulties in controlling its use, persisting in its use despite harmful consequences, a higher priority given to alcohol use than to other activities and obligations, increased tolerance, and sometimes a physiological withdrawal state. (p. 13)

With this in mind, results from the National Longitudinal Alcohol Epidemiologic Survey indicated that the prevalence of lifetime alcohol dependence was 47.3% among those who began to consume alcohol at 13 years of age, compared to 30.6% and 16.5% of those who initiated their use at 16 and 19 years of age, respectively (Grant & Dawson, 1997). Furthermore, this survey also demonstrated that the odds of developing alcohol abuse were reduced by 8% for each year the age of onset was delayed. Hingson et al. (2006) found similar results, as they determined that the lifetime prevalence of alcohol dependence was 47% amongst their sample who consumed alcohol before the age of 14, compared to 17% who began drinking at 19 years of age.

Accordingly, these percentages are a cause for concern due to the considerable damaging effects of alcoholism, which is known to contribute to more than 200 health conditions (World Health Organization, 2014). What follows is a summary of the more well-known consequences.

Health consequences. It has long been established that heavy alcohol use is associated with the development of gastrointestinal diseases, such as cirrhosis of the liver (Rehm et al., 2010) and both acute and chronic pancreatitis (Irving, Samokhvalov, & Rehm, 2009); cardiovascular diseases, which impact atrial fibrillation, hypertension, and may cause a haemorrhagic stroke (Roerecke & Rehm, 2012); neuropsychiatric conditions, such as epilepsy (Samokhvalov, Irving, Mohapatra, & Rehm, 2010), depression and anxiety disorders (Boden & Fergusson, 2011; Kessler, 2004); various cancers, including cancer of the mouth, liver, colon, rectum, and female breast (International Agency for Research on Cancer, 2012); as well as infectious diseases, such as pneumonia and tuberculosis, due to the weakening of the immune system (Jaramillo, Stadlin, Williams, Lönnroth, & Dye, 2008). Overall, it is evident that alcohol dependence has profound effects on the human body, which are bolstered the sooner one begins to consume alcohol.

Other consequences. Outside of brain damage, and all of the complications that arise with alcohol dependence, youth are also more likely to engage in a number of risky behaviours while consuming alcohol. One of the most prominent being the engagement of high-risk sexual activities, which include having unprotected sexual intercourse with multiple partners (Miller, Naimi, Brewer, & Everett Jones, 2007) that increase the likelihood of contracting STIs such as HIV (Fortenberry, 1998), as well as becoming teenage parents (DeWit, Adlaf, Offord, & Ogborne, 2000; Dooley, Prause, Ham-Rowbottom, & Emptage, 2005; Odgers et al., 2008). Youth from Coleman and Cater's (2005) qualitative study reported that this is because alcohol: a) makes potential partners more sexually attractive; b) serves as a socially acceptable "excuse" for their behaviour; c) increases their confidence and lowers their inhibitions; d) impairs their

judgement for recognizing and controlling risky situations; and e) makes them “black-out” and completely lose control over their situation. These explanations were provided in increasing significance, such that blacking-out and losing control served as the most powerful reason for engaging in risky behaviour while consuming alcohol.

Other risky behaviours that youth tend to participate in while consuming alcohol also include drunk driving (Brown et al., 2009; Kokotailo et al., 2010), becoming violent (Bradley & Greene, 2013; Mason et al., 2010; Stafström, 2007), and participating in various crimes (DeWit, Adlaf, Offord, & Ogborne, 2000; Dooley, Prause, Ham-Rowbottom, & Emptage, 2005; Odgers et al., 2008).

Summary. Consuming alcohol at an early age can produce a number of troubling consequences. While youth can increase their chances of engaging in risky behaviours and developing alcohol dependence the sooner they initiate their use, what is arguably most unsettling is the potential brain damage that can occur, which may lead to cognitive and functional changes by adulthood (Brown et al., 2009). Accordingly, it stands to reason that further research into why youth are choosing to avoid, or consume, alcohol is warranted, so that preventative programs can be tailored to meet their communal needs, in hopes of offsetting the consequences described above.

Previous Research on Why Youth Tend to Avoid or Consume Alcohol

Arguably, the most effective way to do this is through researching the common risk and protective factors of alcohol consumption unique to a particular area. To clarify, a *risk factor* is a variable that increases the probability of a teenager’s decision to consume alcohol, whereas a *protective factor* is a variable that reduces or inhibits a teenager’s decision to consume alcohol.

A clear trend in the literature supports this approach, as an increasing number of studies have focused upon identifying and targeting the common risk and protective factors of underage drinking (Baheiraei, Soltani, Ebadi, Foroushani, & Cheraghi, 2016; Jones, Feinberg, Cleveland, & Cooper, 2012; Prince et al., 2015; Rawana & Ames, 2012; Scholes-Balog, Hemphill, Reid, Patton, & Toumbourou, 2013), so that preventative programs may be tailored to suit the needs of their respective populations, and thereby impede the onset of alcohol consumption. Past research has identified a number of risk and protective factors, which range from individual choices and circumstances, influences from both peer and family members, to one's geographical location. Accordingly, the following sections will serve as a summarization of the current literature on why youth tend to avoid or consume alcohol.

Individual influences. At the individual level, one of the most common reasons youth have for consuming alcohol is simply believing that it is pleasurable and fun (Comasco, Berglund, Orelund, & Nilsson, 2010), usually in the context of friends. That is to say, youth will often consume alcohol at social gatherings under the impression that it will enhance the event (Kuntsche & Müller, 2012), as well as help them further bond with their peers (Acier, Kindelberger, Chevalier, & Guibert, 2014; Bernstein, Graczyk, Lawrence, Bernstein, & Strunin, 2011). As suggested through research by Frederiksen, Bakke, and Dalum (2012), youth often consume alcohol to feel included in social gatherings, and view alcohol as a *social lubricant*, which will allow them to foster or maintain a friendship. All in all, it appears that they consume alcohol due to positive expectations (Comasco et al., 2010).

With regards to the typical amount of alcohol that is consumed under this mindset, however, the literature appears to be mixed. For instance, Kuntsche and Müller (2012)

discovered that, “those who had their first drink ‘to have more fun at a party’ or ‘because it was exciting’ had a higher likelihood of risky drinking” (p. 34). This finding was in line with previous research from Järvinen and Gundelach (2007), who determined that Danish youth, aged 15-16, were more likely to positively view extreme drinking experiences, such as vomiting and blacking out, as they felt it enhanced their social capital. On the other hand, several other studies have demonstrated that youth tend to consume alcohol in relatively moderate amounts when they drink for predominately social reasons, as opposed to youth who drink to *cope* with various hardships, who are inclined to drink quite heavily (Bernstein et al., 2011; Kuntsche, Knibbe, Gmel, & Engels, 2006; Tucker et al., 2014).

As personified by participants in Bernstein et al.’s (2011) study, youth who drink to cope often do so to “numb feelings of loss, ... ‘feel better,’ ‘ease problems’ and not think about things that made them angry or sad” (p. 1208). While these statements are unsettling for obvious reasons, they are further confounded with the fact that adolescents who drink to cope are significantly more likely to develop alcohol dependence (Carpenter & Hasin, 1999; Tomlinson & Brown, 2012; Veilleux, Skinner, Reese, & Shaver, 2014). Over time, it is theorized that individuals start to develop automatic “neurological, cognitive, and affective responses” once they begin to pair alcohol use with stress and coping, such that a “self-enforcing negative cycle” manifests (Prince et al., 2015, p. 95), whereby “automatic appetitive behaviors” overpower the free decision to consume alcohol (Garland, Boettiger, & Howard, 2011, p. 746). In other words, individuals become increasingly dependent on alcohol to cope with their problems – which is known to lead to a plethora of health problems, as described above in previous sections. Lastly, adolescents who drink to cope often display *impulsive* and *hopeless* personality traits (Hudson,

Wekerle, & Stewart, 2015), battle anxiety and depression, and come from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Stapinski et al., 2016).

Research has also identified several protective factors that have been shown to help youth avoid dangerous alcohol consumption. In particular, youth from Prince et al.'s (2015) study reported that being engaged with meaningful activities (e.g., school, work, sports, church) decreased their likelihood of drinking because they were “keeping busy” (p. 101). In addition, they specified how thinking about their future goals deterred them from drinking, as they recognized that consuming large quantities of alcohol would drastically obstruct these goals. Finally, some of the participants stated that becoming a parent themselves positively affected their decision to avoid alcohol, as they did not want to expose their children to “those types of environments” (p. 102).

The peer influence. For quite some time, it has generally been accepted that parental influence diminishes during adolescence and is superseded by that of their peers (Epstein, Bang, & Botvin, 2007; Geldard et al., 2016; Iwamoto & Smiler, 2013; Newcomb, 1997). As such, there is often a pressure to conform to the norms of a selected group (Arnett, 2000), which may include the regular consumption of alcohol, in order to become fully accepted. This influence has become clear in the literature, as numerous correlational studies have demonstrated a strong link between adolescents' alcohol use, and that of their peers.

For instance, through a systematic review of longitudinal studies published between 1997-2011, Leung, Toumbourou, and Hemphill (2014) were able to determine a significant relationship between teenage drinking habits and affiliations with peers who reported alcohol-use or other deviant activities. This finding is unsurprising as other authors were able to find positive

correlations between adolescent alcohol consumption and the frequency of peer alcohol use (Huang, Soto, Fujimoto, & Valente, 2014), greater proportion of alcohol-using friends (Tucker, Pollard, de la Haye, Kennedy, & Green, 2013), number of offers to consume alcohol (Schwinn & Schinke, 2014), and encouragement from both friends and family members to use alcohol (Tucker, Cheong, Chandler, Crawford, & Simpson 2015).

Conversely, Tucker et al. (2015) was actually able to validate the inverse of ‘peer encouragement,’ as they found ‘peer discouragement’ to be a significant protective factor of adolescent drinking. Likewise, Stevens-Watkins and Rostosky (2010) demonstrated that adolescents’ “perceived close friends’ substance use” was likely to inhibit their decision to consume alcohol, as they presumably felt less pressure to do so (p. 1435). Finally, participants from Prince et al.’s (2015) study noted how “prosocial relationships with non-parental adults,” (e.g., coaches, teachers, preachers) have decreased their likelihood of consuming alcohol, as adults often intervened by offering guidance whenever pressing situations became apparent (p. 101).

The parental influence. With regards to familial influences, however, the general consensus appears to be that permissive parents are the most likely to have children that will consume alcohol (Janssen et al., 2014). To clarify, permissive parents may be described as those who provide few rules and guidelines for their children, which makes almost all forms of behaviour tolerable - and punishment a rarity (Cablova, Pazderkova, & Miovsky, 2014). Overall, they appear to fully respect their children’s decisions, and would rather be seen as a *friend* than a parental figure (Cablova et al., 2014).

Accordingly, these parents often express lenient attitudes towards alcohol (Mares, Van Der Vorst, Engels, & Lichtwarck-Aschoff, 2011) and convey permissive messages about its use (Kam, Basinger, & Abendschein, 2017; Reimuller, Hussong, & Ennett, 2011), which ultimately increases the likelihood of their children consuming alcohol. Common examples of these messages include, “It’s okay to have a few drinks during special occasions,” or “...only when you’re with family,” or “...only if you stay in the house where I can keep an eye on you.” Yet, regardless of whether these parents have good intentions or not, they are letting their children know that consuming alcohol is okay under certain conditions (Kam et al., 2017). Furthermore, Kam et al. (2017) suggested that it is often ambiguous when parents try to teach their children about drinking *responsibly*, as youth may misinterpret their words for approval.

Related to this notion of ambiguity, is the ineffective parental cliché of, *do as I say, not as I do* (Kam et al., 2017). Even though discouragement from parents is known to reduce the amount of alcohol adolescents consume (Aas & Klepp, 1992; Miller & Plant, 2003), when parents’ own drinking behaviour, or nonverbal language, is incongruent with what they are saying, their message will likely be lost, as children become aware of their parents’ true beliefs (Dailey, 2008; Ennett, Bauman, Foshee, Pemberton, & Hicks, 2001; Kam, 2011; Kam et al., 2017; Miller-Day & Dodd, 2004). Moreover, consistent with social learning theory (Bandura, 1971), adolescents are also likely to mimic their parents’ drinking habits, as demonstrated through correlational research (Mares et al., 2011), as well as a study by Miller-Day and Dodd (2004), in which they noted how participants refrained from either smoking and consuming alcohol simply because their parents did not.

With regards to whether the parental provision of alcohol is related to later problematic use, however, the literature appears to be mixed. Some studies suggest that adolescents tend to consume less alcohol when it is provided by their parents (Allen et al., 2014; Foley, Altman, Durant, & Wolfson, 2004; Hayes, Smart, Toumbourou, & Sanson, 2004; Kelly, Chan, & O’Flaherty, 2012), whereas others note how it increases their use – particularly under certain conditions (Foley et al., 2004; Jackson, Henriksen, & Dickinson, 1999; Komro, Maldonado-Molina, Tobler, Bonds, & Muller, 2007). For instance, Foley et al. (2004) determined that youth were likelier to consume more alcohol when it was provided by their parents at a party, while Jackson et al. (1999) noted how grade five children from low socioeconomic backgrounds were at-risk of problematic use by grade seven when their parents provided it for them. Accordingly, while there appears to be little academic consensus on exactly how, and why, youth eventually consume more or less alcohol when it is provided by their parents, it stands to reason that children of permissive parents are most at-risk of later problematic use, as they likely do not monitor or set clear rules, resulting in irresponsible use.

Authoritative parents, on the other hand, would likely do the exact opposite of that, as this parenting style is defined by setting clear, but reasonable limits on their children’s behaviour, in addition to explaining and discussing why such rules are in place (Cablova et al., 2014). This parenting style is optimal for healthy development, and thus, is most likely to produce children who generally avoid alcohol (Cablova et al., 2014). As such, research has consistently demonstrated that in combination with having negative views about alcohol (Aas & Klepp, 1992; Miller & Plant, 2003) parents who monitor their children’s activities (Borawski, Ievers-Landis, Lovegreen, & Trapl, 2003; Hurt, Brody, Murry, Berkel, & Chen, 2013; Ledoux,

Miller, Choquet, & Plant, 2002), know where they are (Gossrau-Breen, Kuntsche, & Gmel, 2010), and provide clear rules against alcohol consumption are less likely to have children who consume alcohol (Schwinn & Schinke, 2014; Van den Eijnden, Van de Mheen, Vet, & Vermulst, 2011; Van Zundert, Van Der Vorst, Vermulst, & Engels, 2006). Yet, while it may be easy to interpret the above information as a call for rigorous parental control, Gossrau-Breen et al. (2010) suggest that positive parent-child relations are actually at the heart of reduced alcohol consumption, as parental monitoring usually is indicative of a positive family environment, whereby everyone is in open communication with one another. Results from Ledoux et al.'s (2002) study appear to support Gossrau-Breen et al.'s claim, as they were able to demonstrate that youth who had poor relationships with their parents were more likely to consume alcohol.

Finally, on a different note, another major way in which an adolescent's family may influence him/her to avoid alcohol is through bearing witness to the damage it has done to his/her family (Prince et al., 2015). That is to say, some youth will refrain from consuming alcohol as they dread the consequences they have seen within their own family, as well as the fear of becoming an alcoholic themselves (Prince et al., 2015).

Urban vs. rural influences. Lastly, with regards to whether an adolescent's geographical location has an affect on his/her decision to consume alcohol, the literature appears to be mixed. Some research suggests that urban youth tend to consume more alcohol than rural youth (Falck, Siegal, Wang, & Carlson, 1999), where as other studies have found the exact opposite (Atav & Spencer, 2002; Gfroerer, Larson, & Colliver, 2007; Kenny & Schreiner, 2009; Lambert, Gale, & Hartley, 2008), or no difference at all (Johnson et al., 2008; Levine & Coupey,

2003). Yet, what does remain clear is that each area has its own problems, which may put youth at risk for consuming alcohol.

To illustrate, rural youth are known to have increased sensation seeking tendencies (i.e., an innate drive to pursue new and exciting activities that arouse the senses), but less outlets to expend them upon (Gordon & Caltabiano, 1996; Spoth, Goldberg, Neppl, Trudeau, & Ramisetty-Mikler, 2001). Accordingly, this may lead them to consume alcohol when they are itching for something to do – but have few recreational options. Moreover, this problem may be further confounded by the lack of substance abuse and general health care services in their rural area, as well as transportation to them (Puskar, Tusaie-Mumford, Sereika, & Lamb, 1999). On the other hand, urban youth likely have easier access to alcohol, due to the increased alcohol outlet density (Paschall, Grube, Thomas, Cannon, & Treffers, 2012), which puts them at increased risk for consuming it as well. Nevertheless, it is apparent that both urban and rural youth are at risk for consuming alcohol due to the unique factors of each area.

Summary. Overall, it is evident that youth tend to consume or avoid alcohol for a variety of reasons. At the individual level, youth appear to be most at risk when they maintain that consuming alcohol is a fun and great way to bond with their peers, as well as a means to cope with their problems; but, they also appear to be protected when they are kept busy or have children of their own. Negative peer associations tend to put youth at risk for consuming alcohol as well, likely due to the constant exposure; in the same way that youth who avoid alcohol discourage their friends from doing so. Likewise, permissive parents put their children at risk for consuming alcohol when they convey lenient attitudes towards alcohol and serve as poor role models for responsible use. Authoritative parents, on the other hand, generally protect their

children from alcohol by monitoring their behaviour and setting clear rules on its use. Lastly, youth appear to be at risk for consuming alcohol regardless of their geographical location, as each community likely has their own risk factors unique to their area.

Literature Review Conclusion

To summarize, it is without question that the underage consumption of alcohol is a concerning matter. While some may not appreciate the seriousness of this issue, as most Canadians begin consuming alcohol in their teenage years (Freeman et al., 2011), and thereby, may view this experience as *a rite of passage* – the risks and consequences of this behavior are simply too great to ignore. Brain damage, alcohol dependence, and other perilous outcomes are not things that should to be taken lightly. Therefore, further research is warranted on why youth choose to consume or avoid alcohol, so that common risk factors may be targeted and diminished, and protective factors bolstered.

Chapter 2: The Current Study

To this end, the current study sought to explore why at-risk youth residing in Corner Brook, Newfoundland, have been choosing to consume alcohol or not. While some risk and protective factors are likely universal, it is logical to assume that these youth will have specific reasonings for their behaviour, which warrant an investigation so that local preventative programs may be tailored to the specific needs of the community, resulting in optimal outcomes. Furthermore, not only is this research intended to benefit those of Corner Brook where underage drinking is a significant problem, but it is also meant to address a gap in literature, as more research is needed to address why Newfoundland adolescents are choosing to consume or avoid alcohol.

Through semi-structured interviews in a qualitative framework, the current study broadly asked participants, “Thinking back to a recent time you drank alcohol, what were some of the things that influenced you to drink the alcohol?” and “Thinking back to a recent time you were able to resist drinking alcohol, what were some of the things that influenced you to not drink the alcohol?” Upon further exploration, common risk and protective factors arose, which shed light onto why youth from Corner Brook are choosing to consume alcohol or not. The following chapter outlines the methods and methodology employed in this process.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In this section, I describe the methodology and methods used to answer my research questions. I first explain why I have selected a qualitative methodology for my research, and then proceed to justify the selection of the research site and participants, how I gathered and analyzed the data, and lastly, how I demonstrated that my results are credible and trustworthy.

Justification of Qualitative Methodology

As previously mentioned, recent research has yet to fully address why at-risk youth residing in Corner Brook, Newfoundland are choosing to consume alcohol or not. Thus, qualitative methodology was chosen to explore this phenomenon, as “qualitative research is best suited to address a research problem in which you do not know the variables and need to explore” (Creswell, 2015, p. 16). Accordingly, an exploratory, emergent, and inductive process was utilized in the current study to gather and analyze the data; everything was built from the ground up.

In order to obtain the richest data possible, detailed descriptions of why these particular youth are choosing to consume alcohol or not, were captured through in-depth interviews, which

allowed me to actively “clarify and summarize material ... and explore unusual or unanticipated responses” (Merriam, 2015, p. 16). Flexibility was necessary for my design, as participants had unique and complex reasons for their behaviour, consistent with the traditional qualitative “ontological assumption of multiple truths or multiple realities,” where “each person has an understanding of reality from an individual perspective” (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2012, p. 94).

Likewise, I was only interested in understanding why *these* particular youth were choosing to consume alcohol or not. Qualitative research only concerns itself with exploring given phenomena within a specific context (Creswell, 2015). Numerous studies have already attempted to explain why youth tend to drink or avoid alcohol in general; I desired to discover the common factors unique to this area.

Rationale for Participants and Research Site

To explore why some at-risk youth in Corner Brook, Newfoundland are choosing to consume alcohol or not, I interviewed the youth who regularly visit the Community Youth Network: Corner Brook & Bay of Islands, YMCA Site Inc. (CYN). This research site was chosen partly because I had access to it, as I previously worked for CYN as a youth worker. This was important to note as Belgrave, Zablotsky, and Guadagno (2002) affirm that:

If your selection was primarily pragmatic, do not try to hide this; readers will see through such attempts, and your credibility will be compromised ... should you be observing a particular social world because ... you have access, this speaks to feasibility. Consider the strengths this brings to your work. If you already know the setting fairly well, maybe you are in a position to anticipate key activities and/or events, or have rapport with key informants. (p. 1432)

Likewise, in the spirit of credibility, it is important to emphasize in this section how I took several steps throughout this study to ensure that my personal biases were kept in check, which are further detailed within this chapter below.

Moreover, Belgrave et al.'s (2002) last point of rapport is particularly meaningful, as I spent three years learning how to quickly and efficiently develop rapport with new youth who had come to the centre for the first time. Therefore, I maintain that establishing rapport with the participants in the current study was relatively easy, as I already knew the *lingo* and how to be *hip*, which allowed me to verbally and nonverbally establish a safe and comfortable environment. Likewise, having or developing rapport with participants is an essential component of the interviewing process (Fontana & Frey, 1994), as it is likely to “encourage engagement, commitment, and honesty” (Leavy, 2014, p. 429), as well as “lead to the collection of superior data of a deeper and more meaningful form” (Ryan & Dundon, 2008, p. 449).

Lastly, I also selected CYN as a site as it was an excellent fit for the purpose of the research. I wanted to explore the experiences of at risk youth and this site maintains connections with such youth.

Site Description

CYN is a youth focused non-profit organization that supports the learning and development of youth between the ages of 12-18 in Corner Brook and the Bay of Islands, which is also an extension service of the Humber Community YMCA. The Humber Community YMCA is a charitable organization that has been providing opportunities for citizens in Corner Brook and surrounding areas to grow in spirit, mind, and body. This is accomplished through programs and services that promote holistic health, education, personal and civic personality,

philanthropy and volunteerism and the values of respect, honesty, responsibility, caring, and inclusion. All youth within the age range are welcome to drop-in to the youth centre from 4:00-8:30 p.m. Tuesday to Thursday, and from 4:00-9:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. All of CYN's services are completely free; the only requirement is a permission slip. In the youth centre, youth are free to play billiards, videogames, board games, watch Netflix, or just spend time in a safe, supervised environment.

Recruitment Method

Participants were recruited through convenience and snowballing methods. Convenience approaches are those which recruit participants based on the ease and availability of them (Merriam, 2009), whereas snowballing approaches enable participants to recruit others to the research themselves (Lichtman, 2013). All 15-18 year old CYN youth were invited to participate and had the option of telling others about the study.

During youth centre drop-in hours CYN youth workers approached those eligible to participate and asked if they would like to participate in a study about teenage drinking. Participants were offered a \$10 Tim Horton's gift card as an incentive to participate. Those who were interested were told that this is a study conducted by Ernest Power, a former youth worker of CYN, to fulfil his thesis requirements, as a graduate student of Memorial University's Masters of Education (Counselling Psychology) program, and Dr. Greg Harris, a professor at Memorial University. They were informed that the research interview would not be conducted until a month from now and would take approximately one hour to complete. Those still interested in participating were then given a permission slip (see Appendix B and C), which had to be returned to CYN signed by their legal guardian; emancipated youth and those 18 years of age,

however, were legally capable of consenting themselves, and therefore, did not require their guardian's permission. Once returned, these consent forms were filed under lock and key, until I collected them when I began interviewing. Likewise, some participants recruited others once they completed the study and those new participants also received a \$10 Tim Horton's gift card.

Data Collection

After the CYN youth workers successfully recruited a group of participants, I traveled to Corner Brook, and waited in the youth centre during drop-in hours for the full work week (i.e., five days), in hopes of encountering the youth who agreed to participate. I chose to wait in the youth centre as opposed to scheduling individual appointments as most of the participants had unpredictable schedules. Once participants arrived, I confirmed whether they were still interested in continuing with the study, and then proceeded to guide them to the private YMCA boardroom where the interviews were conducted. Interviews were audio recorded and followed a semi-structured guide (see Appendix A). Main themes from the interview, along with some of my emerging interpretations, were summarized at the end of each interview and confirmed with the participant. In addition, I also asked for feedback on the interview itself. Finally, I chose not to take notes during the interview, as I was concerned such note taking would interrupt the natural flow of our conversation, and thereby impede the results. Instead, reflective notes were written at the end of each interview.

Following my first interview, I phoned my supervisor to discuss how the interview went. This included how key topics were emerging such as drinking to cope, peer pressure, and keeping busy to avoid alcohol. We also discussed unanticipated topics such as the influences of adults on participant alcohol consumption. This discussion encouraged me to reflect upon which

topics needed to be emphasized, as well as the new questions that needed to be asked, going forward in my research. In addition to this discussion, I also fully transcribed my first interview before I conducted my second one, which further allowed me to reflect on the data and evolve my interview questions, accordingly. Likewise, the reflective notes I took between each interview influenced how proceeding interviews were conducted. This moving back and forth between data collection and analysis was to be expected as Marshall and Rossman (2006) suggest, “In qualitative studies, data collection and analysis typically go hand in hand to build a coherent interpretation. The researcher is guided by initial concepts and developing understandings that [he/she] shifts or modifies as [he/she] collects and analyzes the data” (p. 155).

Establishing rapport and confirming consent. As previously discussed, I felt confident in my ability to quickly establish rapport with the participants, due to my years of experience working with this demographic. Moreover, I also embodied a demeanour almost identical to Postmus’ poise (2013), as seen in her words:

How does one learn this skill of quickly establishing rapport? From personal experiences, I have learned that if I am genuine about my intent, truly care about the person in front of me, and demonstrate quickly that I am the learner in the relationship with no motive other than to learn from the participant, then I am able to create a safe and comfortable environment ... Often, I rely on not only my verbal communication skills but also nonverbal cues that indicate my openness to learn from the participant. (p. 251)

All of these concepts were demonstrated while interviewing my participants, which is largely evidenced in my interview preamble (see Appendix A). Furthermore, my initial preamble also

allowed me to verbally explain the consent process again – emphasizing that they were free to discontinue at any time – as well as the limits of confidentiality within my study. Lichtman (2013) recommends this process as she believes that, “you, as the interviewer and researcher, set up a situation in which the individual being interviewed will reveal to you his or her feelings, intentions, meanings, subcontexts, or thoughts on a topic, situation, or idea”

Rational for Conducting Semi-Structured Interviews

I chose to conduct semi-structured interviews largely because they allowed me to probe deeply into my participants’ experiences due to the one-to-one communication (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013) and because of the inherent flexibility during the interview process (Merriam, 2009). This method permitted me to stray away from my general list of questions and probe for additional information whenever unanticipated comments and reactions surfaced that were important to further pursue (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Each topic was covered by “asking one or more questions and using a variety of probes (e.g., ‘Tell me more about that’)” and concluded “when the conversation ... [had] satisfied the research objectives” (Bernard & Ryan, 2010, p. 29). Moreover, this method is “particularly appropriate when the information to be shared is sensitive or confidential” (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 358) - which it clearly was - and is best for whenever “the researcher has only one opportunity to interview someone,” as was the case with me (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 359).

Interview Length and Participant Demographics

The mean average length of the interviews was 28:55 minutes, and ranged from 22:47-37:25 minutes. Thus, with such a range, it is apparent that some participants were more engaged

than others; I could seemingly only extract surface level information from some, whereas others were happy to share and discuss issues in more detail.

In the end, 9 youth agreed to participate in the study (7 males and 2 females). Their ages ranged from 15-18 years of age, with a mean age of 17 years. The mean age of the male participants was 17 years and 1 month, with a range of 16-18 years, and the mean age of the female participants was 16 years and 6 months, with a range of 15-18 years.

Achieving Data Saturation

After conducting nine interviews, I reached data saturation, which is the point where researchers stop collecting data as participants are no longer providing new or relevant information that will alter the developing findings in progress (Saumure & Given, 2008). Similar information on topics such as, drinking to cope, having fun, and peer pressure arose over and over again, which suggested that my data collection stage had been completed.

Data Analysis

For pragmatic reasons, generic qualitative analyses were chosen to guide this study, which have been defined by Caelli, Ray, and Mill (2003) as research “which is not guided by an explicit or established set of philosophic assumptions in the form of one of the known qualitative methodologies” (p. 2). Unfortunately, “generic qualitative research is not supported by [an] abundance of referent literature,” which makes finding a standard analytical procedure difficult (Caelli et al., 2003, p. 8), but I was able to uncover Marshall and Rossman’s (2006) generic data analysis strategy, whereby they suggest that “analytic procedures fall into seven phases: (a) organizing the data; (b) immersion in the data; (c) generating categories and themes; (d) coding the data; (e) offering interpretations through analytic memos; (f) searching for alternative

understandings; and (g) writing the report” (p. 156) - while also affirming that this process will not unfold in a linear fashion, as “it is not neat” (p. 154). This approach made the most practical sense for my study, and therefore, was implemented accordingly.

Organizing the data & immersion in the data. Marshall and Rossman’s (2006) first and second steps unfolded concurrently, which began with me transcribing all of the data myself. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and attempted to capture the true essence of the conversation by noting when participants laughed and paused. This process was assisted by a transcription pedal, which “is used to pause, rewind and fast forward the recording quickly without changing the programme you’re in or taking your fingers off the keyboard” (Burke, Jenkins, Higham, 2010, p. 2). However, while this pedal undoubtedly made the process more efficient, it still was a laborious and intensive task; on average, it took me one hour to transcribe just ten minutes of data. Yet, this strenuous work was incredibly beneficial, as it allowed me to become intimately familiar with the data.

Transcriptions were organized by participant, double spaced, line numbered as well as page numbered, and included the participant’s pseudonym and order number on the top right-hand corner. I continuously worked with both digital and hard copies.

After all of the interviews were transcribed, I continued to immerse myself in the data by spending a great deal of time reading and re-reading through all of the transcripts until I was able to make meaningful connections and start to draw out reoccurring important findings amongst the data. Marshall and Rossman (2006) recommend this process, as “reading, rereading, and reading through the data once more forces the researcher to become intimately familiar with those data. People, events, and quotations sift constantly through the researcher’s mind” (p.

158). Likewise, I continued to make physical notes during this process as my thoughts were emerging.

Coding. I chose to conduct Marshall and Rossman's (2006) forth "coding" step before their third "generating categories and themes" step because I did not believe I could adequately generate solid categories and themes before my data was coded. However, after conducting and transcribing all of the interviews myself, along with reading and rereading the data several times, tentative categories and themes were emerging in my mind, which were written out, accordingly.

I began the coding process by reading through the first transcript, while writing down open codes in the margins whenever I came across a chunk of noteworthy data. These open codes were also compiled on a separate piece of paper, which served as my master list that helped guide my future coding. I then carried these codes forward as I began to code my second transcript, while also constantly referring myself back to the master list to ensure I was not producing similar (i.e., redundant) codes, to see if certain codes were best described another way (i.e., if their labels needed to be changed), or if new codes needed to be generated. This whole process again encouraged me to reflect on the categories and themes that were emerging, as well as if my codes were reminiscent of the literature I had read. Likewise, I was careful to check my biases throughout by actively practicing self-awareness and letting the data stand on its own by building the codes from the ground up.

After all of the transcripts had been open coded, I then went back to my first transcript and read it again along with my open codes to see if my initial codes were representative and congruent with the rest of my data. In addition, I also simultaneously copied and pasted my lined and coded data into separate Microsoft Word documents, which were labeled by their

corresponding open codes. Essentially, I began placing my data into virtual buckets as I was reading through and confirming my initial codes. This process made data management, retrieval, and analysis more manageable as I formally began to generate categories and themes.

Generating categories. Once all of my coded data had been sorted into Microsoft Word documents, I studied my master list of codes and began to group them into categories under virtual file folders. The initial overarching categories (i.e., folders) were easy to generate, as they were what I initially sought to discover: “risk factors: and “protective factors.” Thus, once I sorted all of my Microsoft Word documents into these two folders, I began to organize my data further by generating subcategories (i.e., subfolders), where I grouped similar clusters of data together. For example, I initially had seven different codes (i.e., documents) that described “peer pressure.” Accordingly, I created a “peer pressure” subfolder, under the main “risk factor” folder, where I dropped and collected each of these codes. Not only did this process help me further organize my data, it also generated supplementary thoughts on how certain themes were related.

Offering interpretations through analytic memos & generating themes. As previously noted, I wrote out my emerging reflective thoughts throughout my entire data analysis, which was recommended by Marshall and Rossman (2006) in their words, “Writing notes, reflective memos, thoughts, and insights is invaluable for generating the unusual insights that move the analysis from the mundane and obvious to the creative” (p. 156). This habit helped me stay attuned to the clear patterns in the data and key phenomena of interest, as I noted when several participants spontaneously raised similar issues.

Yet, in order to fully immerse myself in the data to uncover themes and look for interpretations, I printed off my codes and categories, cut them out, and began to maneuver the words around until a story began to emerge. While bearing in mind my previous analytic notes, this tactile approach allowed me to bring “meaning and coherence to the themes, patterns, categories, [as I developed] linkages and a story line that [made] sense and is engaging to read” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 161). Likewise, it also compelled me to determine which segments of my data were useful or not, and if they contributed to my emerging story (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

Searching for alternative understandings. Marshall and Rossman’s (2006) sixth step, where they encourage researchers to “search through the data ... [and challenge] the very understanding [they are] putting forward, search[ing] for negative instances of the patterns, and [incorporating them] into larger constructs, as necessary,” was largely implemented throughout my entire analysis, but particularly when I began formulating my initial story in step five (p. 162). As I maneuvered the words into coherent themes, I was forced to question whether my thought process was logical or not; if an idea was not probable, I reflected on it until I could make it fit with my emerging story, or make my emerging story fit with it.

Writing the report. Marshall and Rossman (2006) affirm that, “Writing about qualitative data cannot be separated from the analytic process” (p. 162). As such, my analysis did not fully conclude until my final report was completely written; thoughts continued to be debated and revised whenever they were summarized on paper, which enabled me to craft the most comprehensible results possible.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

In order to ensure that my results were credible and trustworthy, I engaged in three strategies: (a) clarifying my own biases, (b) summarizing my interpretations with my participants, and (c) being in regular contact with my supervisor, as well as having my final report thoroughly examined by the thesis examiners at Memorial University.

Clarifying my own biases. According to Merriam (2009), “investigators need to explain their biases, dispositions, and assumptions regarding the research to be undertaken,” in order to protect the credibility of their results (p. 219). To begin, I should explain that while my research is certainly valuable for health reasons, I am largely interested in pursuing it due to my professional passion for helping at-risk youth. Throughout my career, I have always wanted to work with teenagers, as I feel that I can connect and relate with them on a level most cannot – probably because I still carry a number of teenage pastimes. Yet, it was during my time as a youth worker at CYN that I discovered my true passion for assisting those at-risk. My work was so incredibly rewarding, that it inspired me to develop a practical thesis, whereby I could further assist them through gaining insights into their most salient issues. After much reflection, I decided to focus my research on their consumption of alcohol, as it is arguably the most universal teenage problem. Therefore, as previously stated, my goal became to identify the most common reasons for why they are choosing to drink or not, in hopes of developing results that will allow me (and all those who care for youth) to hinder their consumption of alcohol, by reducing these risk factors and enhancing the protective ones.

Moreover, because I used to work for CYN, and think highly of their services, I feel it is necessary to acknowledge that I may have a bias to report information that looks good upon the

centre, such as its protective role in helping youth not to drink. However, I attempted to remedy this by letting the data speak for itself.

Summarization. Another way I attempted to ensure the validity of my results was by summarizing, and discussing my emerging interpretations of the participants' accounts, at the end of each interview. To elaborate, once the interview concluded I asked them something along the lines of, "Okay, so if I were to summarize everything you just told me, you predominately do/don't drink because ...". This process was inspired by Merriam's (2009) notion of *member checking*, where researchers take their preliminary analyses back to their participants to confirm whether their interpretations are correct or not, thereby, reducing the possibility of reporting incorrect information. I unfortunately did not have the opportunity to do this as my participants were not interested in being re-interviewed at a later date; therefore, I had to be sure that my interpretations were correct before each interview terminated.

Being in regular contact with academics. The final way I attempted to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of my results was through another process inspired by Merriam (2016), which was *peer examination*. In short, this strategy involves, "discussions with colleagues regarding the process of study, the congruency of emerging findings with the raw data, and tentative interpretations" (p. 259). Thus, while I did not wholly engage in this process, I was in regular contact with my thesis supervisor, throughout my entire study, who ensured that my design, data, interpretations, and overall thought processes were sound. Likewise, this study was also thoroughly examined by the thesis committee at Memorial University, as suggested by Merriam (2016), "Certainly there's a sense in which all graduate students have this process built into their thesis or dissertation committee reads and comments on the findings" (p. 249).

Summary

Overall, it is clear to see how the present methods and methodology were appropriate for this study. The qualitative framework allowed me to explore and deeply probe into why these adolescents were choosing to consume alcohol or not; CYN was accessible and served as an excellent fit for the research site; generic qualitative analyses were undoubtedly pragmatic; and, I have sufficiently demonstrated how my results are credible and trustworthy. Next, I will discuss the common risk and protective factors of alcohol consumption that emerged from the data.

Chapter 4: Results

In this chapter, I explore my thematic interpretations of participants' experiences in relation to their decisions to consume alcohol or not. All participants reported that they had consumed alcohol on at least one occasion.

Results were divided into two overarching areas, which were the identified risk and protective factors of alcohol consumption. In order to help further explore participant risk factors I developed a thematic flow chart (see Figure 1) to help illustrate how I saw relationships between the various risk factors. Protective factors are presented in Figure 2.

Figure 1. Risk factor flow chart.

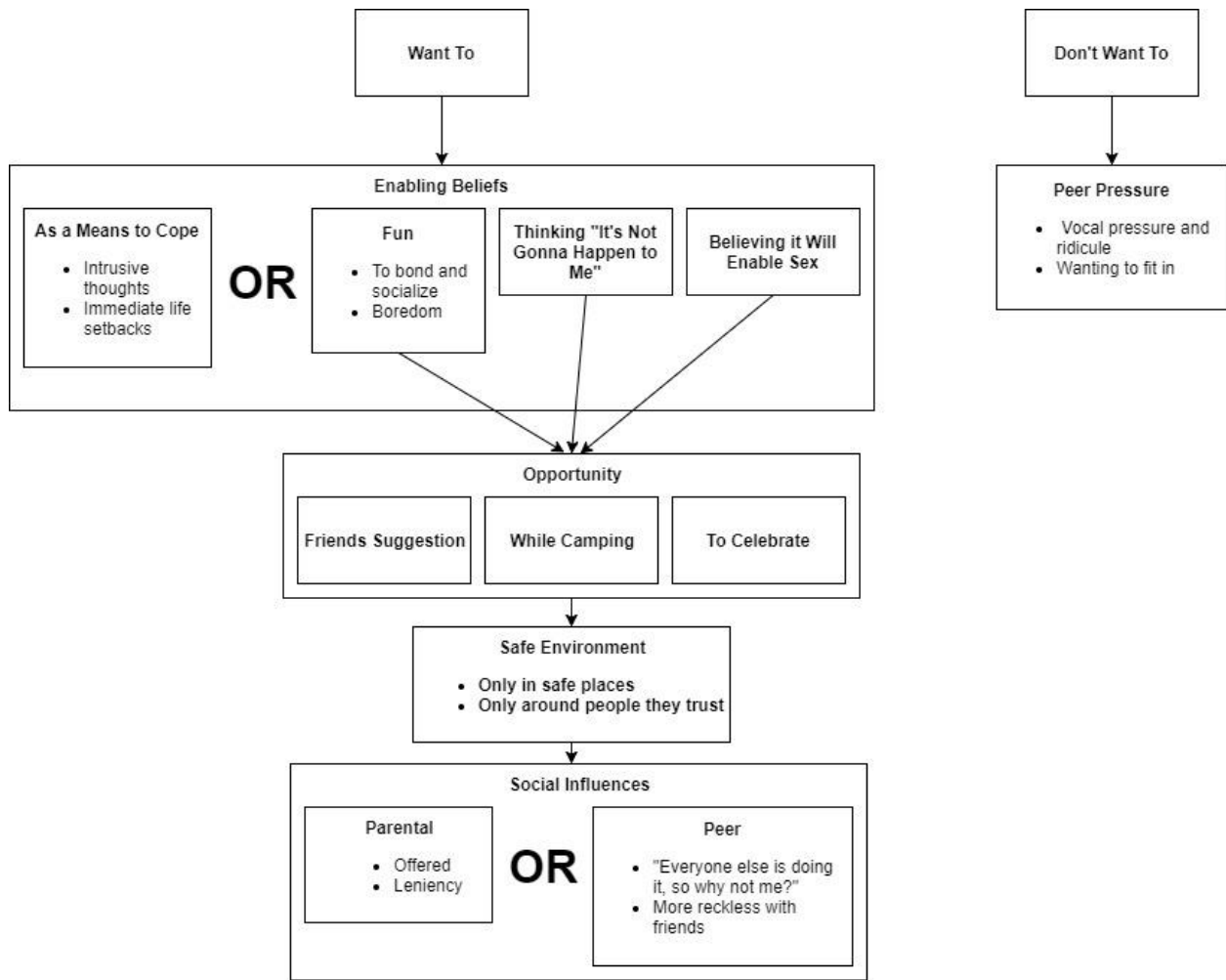
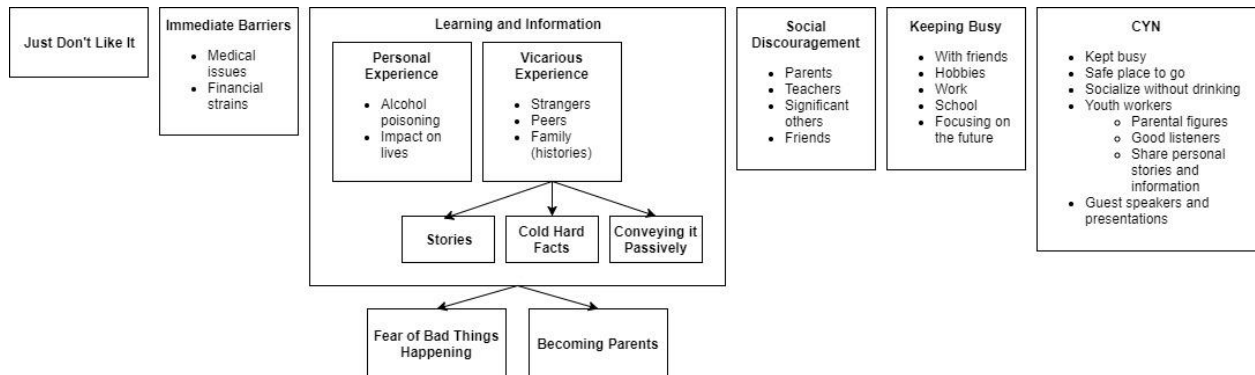


Figure 2. Protective factors.



Moreover, I wish to remind the reader that participants chose their own pseudonyms for this study. I chose to respect their choices and left their pseudonyms unchanged.

Risk Factors

Generally speaking, participants indicated that they consumed alcohol either because they wanted to, or did not want to (e.g., they were pressured to do so). For those who did want to consume alcohol, enabling beliefs about alcohol appeared to facilitate their behaviour. These beliefs largely took the form of either drinking to *cope* or for *pleasure*. Participants who consumed alcohol to cope usually did so whenever they experienced intrusive thoughts or immediate misfortunes, whereas participants who consumed alcohol for pleasure often required a social prompt or opportunity to do so. Participants who consumed alcohol for pleasure were also further likely to consume alcohol whenever they felt they were in a safe environment, and influenced to do so by either their parents or friends.

Enabling beliefs. As suggested, youth in this study appeared to have certain underlying beliefs, or specific cognitions, that may have contributed to their choices to consume alcohol. Some youth believed it aided in their ability to cope with depression or other forms of distress, whereas others held a more general view that it was fun, such as Ms. Pink stating that she consumes alcohol “sometimes [because of] stress, and sometimes just wanting to have fun.” This pleasurable notion, furthermore, was connected with the belief that drinking enabled them to bond and socialize with their peers, in addition to being an option for something to do when they were bored. Lastly, some participants shared how their beliefs of *nothing bad will ever happen*, or that consuming alcohol would lead to sex, appeared to facilitate their behaviour.

Drinking to cope. Over half of the participants reported that they have consumed alcohol in order to cope with depression and other stressors. Mr. Hortons and Unicorn specifically stated how drinking to cope was their number one reason for consuming alcohol. Mr. Hortons stated, “in my drinking days it was more so depression” that influenced him to drink alcohol, while Unicorn similarly expressed, “It’s the mostly likely, like... out of all that it’s just most likely depression – number one.” Overall, there appeared to be two underlying beliefs when it came to consuming alcohol to cope with depression or general distress: (a) to cope with intrusive thoughts and (b) to cope with immediate life setbacks.

In terms of coping with intrusive thoughts, Mr. Red reported that he often consumed alcohol whenever memories of being bullied crept into his mind, as seen in his words:

...I remember every bad thing that’s happened to me, every bad thing I’ve done, every bad thing that’s been said to me comes towards me, I relive all these and the only way for me to forget about it is when I either have some kind of substance or a drink in my hand.

Just to temporarily forget it and just let it be.

Likewise, Unicorn shared that he has consumed alcohol in order to “help [him] forget everything” as well.

On the other hand, Remedy Man discussed how he has consumed alcohol to deliberately avoid thinking about life’s hardships, differentiating how this act is separate from drinking to forget:

No, it wasn’t to forget. It was to kinda keep my mind off of it, trying to stay away from all that, just... I tried to have fun. Just hang out with people, have a couple of drinks and keep my mind off everything.

Thus, while some youth consume alcohol as a means of coping with thoughts that have already arisen, Remedy Man reported that he has done so in order to prevent thoughts from arising in the first place.

In terms of coping with immediate life setbacks, some youth disclosed that they have consumed alcohol in order to cope with immediate misfortunes. For instance, Remedy Man shared how he has consumed alcohol as a way to deal with death, having to move, and breaking up with his girlfriend. He stated, “I just had a rough batch in my life. I was going through a break up. I was moving. I feel like I was losing everything,” and “I [drank] when [a significant other in my life] passed away, I did when my girlfriend left me ... ‘cause that was the only way I could deal with it other than doing drugs.” Likewise, Ms. Pink expressed how she consumed alcohol in order to cope with significant stress in her relationship with her father:

...a couple years ago, back when I was still going through a thing with my dad it was just him kind of like... all the stress that he put on me lead me to do it. Just to kinda like, forget in a way what was going on around me.

On the other hand, some participants discussed how they will consume alcohol with their friends as a way to collectively cope with stress. Mr. Red reported:

...we’re just trying to get away from our own demons, ya know? Like, we all have our own demons in this game, “we’re just on different levels dealing with the different devils,” is what someone once said to me ... [My friends] are just like me. They are just trying to find a getaway to uh, relieve ourselves from the stress...

In addition, Mr. Hortons reported how he sometimes is pressured to consume alcohol whenever his friends are *drinking to cope* and not wanting to drink alone, as seen in his words,

“And, then ya got some of those buddies who are... they could be having personal problems their self, that’s why they could be drinking. Ya know? And, some of them don’t want to drink alone.”

Believing it is fun. The other predominate belief that facilitated participants’ behaviour was their view that consuming alcohol was fun. As bluntly stated by Unicorn:

Fun for me is like, Oh, let’s go have a fire, let’s go have a couple of drinks, there’s nothing to do on this day. For me when I was sixteen, fun was just drinking. Drinking was fun. Drinking and drunk equals fun.

Moreover, Ms. Pink noted how the media’s portrayal of consuming alcohol, and how the media connects this with having fun, influenced her to consume alcohol:

Um, well I mean, in a way it’s just kinda thinking like, I have a boring life. What can I do to make it better? And then you see like, in movies and things like that, like how much fun people have when they’re at a bar, like when they’re at a party. So, you think, “Well, if I do it, I’m gonna have that much fun.” And, just kinda say, for literally like a couple of hours your life seems more fun.

To bond and socialize. Related to this pleasurable notion of alcohol, a number of participants reported how they have consumed alcohol under the pretense that it would enable them to further bond and socialize with their peers. For instance, Remedy Man seemingly described a romanticized occasion where alcohol appeared to play a large factor in the fun he had with his friends:

...I mean, have a couple drinks, have a laugh with the guys, chill, and just play music, play beer pong, whatever. It’s just to have fun, really ... like, when we went to my

[family's] house, we had a couple of drinks, played beer pong, played pool, played some video games ... And, then we'll chill out and have a fire, just sit by the fire for hours.

Talk and have a laugh.

Boredom. Related to the above, several participants reported how they have consumed alcohol primarily because they were bored; that is to say, their cognition of *it's something to do when you're bored*, enabled their behaviour. For example, Mr. Hortons expressed how he has consumed alcohol as a way to "get out of the house," as seen in his words, "I did it 'cause I went out with the b'ys, have a nice night, whatnot, get out of the house, instead of being stuck in the house all day long." Moreover, Unicorn and Ms. Pink appeared to allude to *drinking out of boredom* when they discussed how they drink for fun as well.

Thinking "It's not gonna happen to me." Ms. Pink also raised another point of how she is inclined to consume alcohol whenever she can convince herself that no harm will come to her as a direct result of her drinking. This is seen in her words, "Umm... what usually pushes me, like either to drink is when I just kinda say, 'Well, it's not gonna happen to me. Stop worrying about it.' And that'll push me to do it." Although, Ms. Pink was not specific in which harm she was referring to, this cognition of 'It won't happen to me' seems to have been part of her decision to consume alcohol.

Believing it will enable sex. Unicorn stated multiple times that he would consume alcohol under the assumption that it would lead to sex:

Well, a lot of teenagers' drink because they feel like having sex while drunk. And, when I drink, of course, my hormones come up to action. So, I tend to you know, either cheat when I'm in a relationship or when I'm single I kiss another girl or something.

Unicorn also noted “A lot of girls tend to drink, just to get fun. Like, ‘Wahoo, we’re going drinking.’ That was my point in my brain, like ‘Oh, they’re gonna go drinking. They’re gonna get drunk with me, equals sex’.” Lastly, he stated that having sex was one of his main reasons for consuming alcohol:

There are things like, “Oh, I wanna have a good time,” that involves drinking. “Oh, I want to get laid” - drinking. What are the girls or anything like that? Those are the ... main things that involves me... to push me towards drinking.

Opportunity. As previously mentioned, participants who consumed alcohol for pleasure typically required a social prompt or opportunity to do so. Such prompts included the suggestion from friends who were bored, going on camping trips, and celebrations (e.g., Christmas). Moreover, these participants appeared to be further at risk of consuming alcohol when they were given the opportunity to drink in a perceived *safe environment*, in addition to being influenced to do so by their parents and friends by way of opportunity.

Friends’ suggestion. Several participants indicated that they have consumed alcohol primarily because their friends suggested it as an activity, when they were bored and looking for something to do. This is first seen in Kiwi’s words:

Just normally like, sometimes they can be in an adventurous mood, so it’s like, “Let’s go do this, let’s go do this. Let’s go camping, let’s go rafting.” Something that don’t include alcohol in it. Other times they’re just like, “Well, let’s go drinking,” am I’m like... [participant shrugs]

Similarly, Remedy Man reported:

Like, it would be like, “Hey guys, wanna hang out?” “Yeah, let’s hang out. What are we gonna do?” “Well, we’ll do this, we’ll do that,” and then one of us will message, “Well, what else are we gonna do?” And, then one of us will say, “Well, we can drink or something?” And, then the other ones will say, “Maybe, maybe not, whatever, no, yes,” we’re not feeling pressured, it’s just a suggestion.

These participants were influenced to consume alcohol when they were presented with the opportunity from their bored friends.

While camping. In relation to consuming alcohol for something to do, White Chocolate discussed how he sometimes will drink while he camps:

Well, I don’t drink much now. Like, I might have one or two ever year, but out camping, in my opinion, is somewhat a different story as there’s nothing much to do, but I still don’t drink 24/7 out there like most people ... Like, where’s there’s not much out there to do in the night, so... Other than just sit down at a fire. And the service out there for like cellphone service is pretty bad, so...

Thus, in conjunction with his cognition of *drinking is something to do when you’re bored*, it appears that the event of camping provided an opportunity for White Chocolate to consume alcohol.

To celebrate. Furthermore, several participants reported that they have consumed alcohol as a way to celebrate special occasions, and were therefore, presented with the opportunity to do so whenever they occur. When Kiwi was asked what had influenced her to consume alcohol the last time she had done so, she had nothing other to say than, “It was my

birthday.” Other occasions that were specified included Christmas, “grade skip day,” family weddings, “I [just] got out of the hospital,” and other “special occasions.”

In a safe environment. Nearly half of the participants declared that they only will consume alcohol when they are presented with an opportunity to do so in a perceived safe place, surrounded by people they trust.

Only in safe places. When Mars was asked where he tended to consume alcohol, he reported, “...places I feel like, or I know, are safe and no one’s gonna try to take advantage of me, or if something bad can happen, it’s always controlled.” When asked with the same question, Remedy Man replied:

...sometimes when me and guys go camping I’ll have a drink. Or, I’ll drink at home, or at my [family’s] house. That’s about it. I won’t drink anywhere else that... I won’t drink in places that are unsafe. Like, if I go drinking in the woods we make sure that there’s water nearby and that somebody will be sober there. We always do. And when I’m at my [family’s] we have designated drivers, cops on speed dial. And, when I’m at home, I’m at home, so if anything happens people are there.

Only around people they trust. In addition to discussing how he only will consume alcohol in safe places, Mars reported that he will only drink with people he trusts, particularly with regards to beverages that others give him:

Yeah, but now if I was at a party, someone gave me I dunno... say someone poured me up a cup. I mean like, first of all, if they gave me like a can, so... but if it was at a party someone gave me a cup I probably wouldn’t do it unless I knew the people and I trust

them 100%. ‘Cause who knows, someone could slip ya some, like kinda drug like, roofies or something like that in it. But, it was an option, and I’m like “Eh, why not?”

Likewise, when Remedy Man was asked who tends to be present when he consumes alcohol, he stated:

...my friends, my family, like my cousins, my dad, the guys. At least somebody I know that will take care of me when I’m intoxicated... when I do get intoxicated for some reason ... people I trust a 100% ... I would never do it with a bunch of people that I don’t trust.

White Chocolate echoed Mars and Remedy Man’s core message when he too reported, “I won’t get drunk with people I won’t know in a way, so... Like, I won’t go drinking if I won’t know anyone.”

One of the most common groups of people that participants reported feeling safe enough around to consume alcohol were their own families. White Chocolate simply stated, “I only drinks around family,” while Mars similarly discussed:

I knew I was in a safe environment. I was kinda like around with family and whatever. And you know, it’s like, “Okay, we’ll give you this much” ... they knew I was responsible enough ... Well, I mean like... it was a social gathering kinda thing. I mighta had a sip or so, but it wasn’t even like... I mean... it wasn’t so much like, “Oh here,” like “get loaded,” kinda thing. It was like, ya know “We think you’re responsible enough now, you know. You can have some.” But, I knew like I was in a comfortable environment. I knew people that were around me.

All things considered, regardless of whether these participants were making a *safer* choice by only choosing to consume alcohol within a perceived safe environment, this attitude appeared to facilitate their behaviour whenever they were granted the opportunity to do so in such a place.

Social influences. All participants indicated that they have been influenced to consume alcohol by either their family or friends, and thus have done so when the opportunity arose.

The parental influence. Almost every participant reported that they have consumed alcohol on at least one occasion because their parents offered it to them. Yet, it is important to consider that a number of these offerings were given for celebratory reasons. For example, Ms. Pink shared, "...but if we're at like a family event or something, like my aunt's wedding for instance, [my mother] let me have a glass of wine at dinner." Similarly, Mars discussed how his mother offered him an alcoholic beverage on New Year's Eve, but was careful to point out "...but, [my mother] didn't tell me, 'Oh, drink it.' It was like, 'Hey, if you want some, have some'." Likewise, when describing his mother's view on underage alcohol consumption, Mr. Red stated:

...but my mother on the other hand, she uh doesn't mind giving me a drink every now and then, but that's only on special occasions, either on my birthdays and uh, on Christmas and something like that. She doesn't mind a glass of wine or a shot of vodka or something like that for celebratory reasons.

A number of participants also discussed how their parents' leniency around alcohol consumption contributed to their behaviour as well. This took the form of allowing their children to consume alcohol in the house, while setting limits, in addition to wanting to know as

many circumstantial details as possible whenever their children consumed alcohol outside of the house. For instance, Kiwi stated:

...other times your parents are nice about it and they'll say, "Well, yes you can drink, but only on the weekends because you have school. And, it has to be in the house so I can supervise you and you're not getting in trouble" ... that's kinda like how my mom did it. She didn't like the fact that I was drinking. But, she told me she'd rather do it in the household where she can supervise me, rather than me being out in public, getting in trouble, getting brought home by the cops and stuff.

Mr. Hortons, furthermore, appeared to praise his family's decision to allow him to consume alcohol in the house, as he felt it helped develop his sense of consuming alcohol responsibility, as seen in his words, "...if you're with your family, you know, usually they're just like, 'Alright, well you can't drink too much,' you know? There's a limit ... and when I'm with my friends there's no limit." Mr. Hortons later expanded upon these comments regarding responsibility, adding how his parents wanting to know the circumstantial details of his alcohol consumption contributed to his behaviours as well:

And, my parents and ya know, my grandparents and what not, they say ... tell us where you are to, be responsible about it, ya know? So, I was more so told to do it responsibly ... My dad ya know, he always told me "Let me know where you're to, who you're with..."

Peer influences. Different from peer pressure, some participants discussed how they were influenced to consume alcohol around their friends simply because, as stated by Mr. Red, "...everyone else [was] doing it so why not me?" Ms. Pink shared a similar response when she

recanted "...if you're around people and somebody randomly shows up and starts drinking then it kinda inclines you to want to do it too. 'Cause it's something that everybody else is doing."

Furthermore, Kiwi was careful to differentiate this influence from traditional peer pressure when she stated:

Well, there's nothing really that pushes. It's just more so drink 'cause that's what everybody wanted to do ... Well, usually that's all everybody wanted to do in the summer was drink ... School's out, so it's like, "Okay, well, we'll all go in the woods and drink. Oh, well I'll go swimming and drink ... Well, I didn't really want to, but I kinda wanted to, right? Like, it was iffy I wasn't completely pressured, but I didn't completely want to either. I've always been iffy on it anyway.

Mr. Hortons also raised an interesting point of how his behaviour will change when he consumed alcohol with his friends. He reported that he is more likely to consume alcohol with a group of friends, and that his likelihood for doing so exponentially increases with the amount of people there. Coupled with this, he also discussed how he tends to become more reckless when consuming alcohol with his friends:

Yeah, 'cause with your friends, you know, you kinda get careless ... Ah, you kinda get a bit of the reckless side, ya know? You just feel like you can do what you want. You ain't gotta worry about someone telling you no, or ... Well, things get broken. Like, if you're at a party or something, someone's window, chair, or table might be broken, a fight might start out.

Overall, it was clear that these participants had consumed alcohol due to an influence from their family or friends, and thus did so whenever they were presented with an opportunity.

Peer Pressure. As previously discussed, participants in this study either consumed alcohol because they wanted to, or did not want to. As such, almost every participant reported that they had done so on at least one occasion because they were pressured by their peers. Mr. Hortons appeared to speak for most of the participants when he said, “It’s almost like, you can’t say no kinda thing.” Moreover, when summarizing her final thoughts, Ms. Pink concluded that she generally will avoid consuming alcohol unless one of her friends really pressures her to do so. Overall, it appeared that participants described two general forms of peer pressure: the first being concrete vocal pressure and ridicule, and the second being the notion of *wanting to fit in*.

With regards to being ridiculed, Ms. Pink shared a story of where she witnessed one of her friends being ridiculed for not consuming alcohol, and thus vicariously learned that she never wanted to be *that* person:

...if you don’t do it then you’re not cool. Or... you’re not like... you shouldn’t be hanging out with the crowd that you’re hanging out with and everybody will kinda just look down on you as in like, “Well, you don’t wanna have fun. You’re like a really boring person” ... I’ve seen somebody else go through it. But, I’ve never experienced it firsthand ... Um, it was like a group of like friends, and we were all kinda standing around, and one of my friends wanted to throw a house party. So, everybody was kinda like, “I’m down for it,” and whatever. And, she was kinda standing on the corner like, “I don’t think this is a good idea. I don’t want to.” And, after everybody saying, “Oh, come on, come on,” she finally said, “No, I’m not going.” And, they just kinda like, made fun of her. Kinda saying like, “Oh, you don’t wanna have fun,” and “You’re too pussy,” and stuff like that.

In another scenario, Mr. Hortons stated that he was pressured into consuming alcohol with his friends after he was ridiculed for being sober and manipulated into thinking that he was ruining their night:

Ah, well it's frowned upon really, to me. 'Cause you go out with a bunch of your buddies and whatnot, trying to have a good time. And, they be like, "Oh, you're being a bum," you know? "You're ruining the night," and whatnot. And, you don't wanna be the bum that ruins the night ... it's happened a few times ... You're just not in the mood, and all of a sudden you're pressured in to that mood.

On the other hand, Mr. Hortons also shared how his friends will sometimes pressure him to consume alcohol, but not maliciously, as they believe they are just looking out for their friend's *fun* factor:

Ah, when you're out drinking, ya know, your friends are drinking, they want you to come join. So, they're gonna try and basically encourage you, or try to lift the mood so you want to drink ... they're having a good time and they want... basically to have a good time with you. So, they just try and get you to have a good time. But, it does not always end up to be a good time ... Yeah, ya know? "We're having a good time, you should come join," or ya know, "You come with us," ya know, "We're going here later," ya know, "We'll take you with us."

With regards to consuming alcohol in order to *fit in*, a number of participants reported that they did so out of fear of being rejected by their peers. For example, when Unicorn was asked why he consumed multiple shots of alcohol from his friends within a single sitting, he stated:

‘Cause I get pressured ... Like, well... if I don’t do this, then I’m not cool ... Like, I don’t fit in with the b’ys. I’m not cool enough to chill with them ... So, I try to drink on their level.

Related to this idea was the notion that some participants felt pressured to consume alcohol in order to fit in with the “older crowd,” which have typically been defined by multiple participants as peers within their “twenties.” As seen in Mr. Horton’s words:

...basically, I wanted to fit in with the crowd I was with. Go out and have a good time.

Yeah, I kinda grew up with the older crowd, so I just wanted to fit in really. And, then I just hooked, and now I’m a recovering alcoholic. So, I’ve been told by my counsellor.

Similarly, when Jackson was broadly asked what influences him to consume alcohol, he reported:

Friends, really ... Well, usually all my friends are drinking, so... that’s basically how I got into it ... Yeah, basically I... actually I wanna say it was my brother, ‘cause he drank with his friends, well... his friends are my friends. But, yeah... his friends and my brother, basically that ... I guess ‘cause, like... at the time I didn’t really want to be the sober one there, and I just wanted to fit in with all them. So, it wasn’t really peer pressure, I dunno, I just kinda wanted to fit it ... No, they weren’t like, telling me to take, like forcing it down or anything. They offered, and I was like, “Yeah, sure. Whatever.”

Jackson’s words also demonstrate how some participants consumed alcohol solely because they did not want to be *the odd one out*. Mr. Horton further established this in his words:

Ah, fit in with friends, you know? You know, you go to a party with them, you go hang out with them, and they offer it to you, and you say no, you’re kinda like the outstanding

one, you know? Everybody is getting hammered and you're just staring at them like, "You're all being idiots." You feel like the odd one out.

Finally, Jackson discussed how he sometimes will have just one alcohol beverage to temporarily fit in:

Ah, I'll probably have a drink with them because ya know, just to fit in with them for a bit, but I wouldn't get plastered drunk with them or anything. I'd just have a drink and then leave, or something like that.

Overall, most participants reported giving into peer pressure (at least once in their lives), and consumed alcohol when they did not really want to. This was done either to avoid ridicule, or because they wanted to fit in.

Concluding remarks. To summarize, it appears that participants in this study have identified three main pathways in which they are at risk for consuming alcohol. Either they are at risk of drinking to cope with life's various hardships; for believing it is pleasurable, which is often facilitated by opportunity to do so; or, when they do not want to, but are pressured to do so by their peers. In the following section I will explore potential protective factors identified by participants in the current study.

Protective Factors

Participants avoided alcohol in a number of ways, and did so for a variety of reasons. For instance, some chose not to consume alcohol simply because they did not enjoy it, whereas others presumably did, but had immediate barriers, such as medical and financial strains. Yet, perhaps their most cited reason was because of the harmful lessons learned from both personal

and vicarious experiences, such as having alcohol poisoning, or bearing witness to their own family's struggle with alcoholism.

As participants were sharing these stories, a spontaneous inquiry arose, whereby I felt compelled to ask what adults would have to relay in order for them to actually stop or reduce their consumption of alcohol. Almost everyone agreed that such adults would have to tell a personal story and share their harmful experiences with alcohol, as well as provide the cold hard facts of alcohol consumption, while conveying a calm and passive demeanor.

In addition to this information, a number of participants also identified how becoming parents; receiving discouragement from their parents, teachers, and peers; keeping busy; and, being a patron of CYN has helped them to avoid alcohol as well.

Just don't like it. As suggested, several participants reported that they avoid consuming alcohol simply because they do not like it - citing the adverse symptoms of intoxication, its effects on memory, and the taste. For instance, Ms. Pink stated, "I really dislike the feeling of being intoxicated so much. And, usually I won't remember anything. And, I mean, what's the point of having fun if you don't remember?" White Chocolate appeared to echo Ms. Pink's thoughts on memory, when he discussed how he never drinks to the point of intoxication because "...I like to remember what I do." Furthermore, when White Chocolate was asked to elaborate on his statement of, "I'm just not a big fan of it, like... I'll do it every now and then, but that's about it," he indicated that it was both the feeling of being intoxicated and taste of alcohol that was unpleasant to him. Similarly, Jackson discussed, "I don't really like the taste of it or anything ... Drinking wasn't really my thing, so... yeah. I don't drink much at all."

Immediate barriers. With regards to the participants who presumably did enjoy consuming alcohol, a number of them discussed how immediate barriers outside of their control hindered their behaviour, which included medical issues and financial strains.

Medical issues. Both Remedy Man and Unicorn shared that they have medical concerns which prevent them from consuming large amounts of alcohol. Remedy Man reported that his medical has a heart problem which forces him to limit his intake:

... I know my friends don't care if I have a drink or two, but if I get intoxicated they don't want to see me get intoxicated because I do have a [medical] problem. So, getting intoxicated isn't very good for me. That's because I only drink to a small buzz, because I know if I go anymore it might kill me. So, because when I went to the doctors they told me I do have a limit of alcohol; I cannot get intoxicated completely unless I might die. So, I don't.

Likewise, upon recalling the last time he consumed alcohol, Unicorn stated, "It was about two months ago. I only had one beer ... I only had one 'cause of my pills. Because if I drink too much I will have a [serious reaction]."

Money. Another reported barrier to consuming alcohol was having the financial means to do so, as simply stated by Ms. Pink, "...it's expensive." According to Mr. Hortons, it was only after he spent all of his money on alcohol, and thus could not afford it anymore, that he began to seriously consider the impact it was having on him:

Basically, it's all I was doing at one point, was doing nothing but drinking - day in day out. And, basically it just burned a hole in my pocket. I became broke, and I just ended up being sober and looking at it like, "I can't get it; I'm fed up with it."

Unicorn also shared a similar reflection, where he discussed and regretted the amount of money he spent on alcohol over the years:

...I'm [older now] now, and I'm more mature, I think about, if I didn't drink, I just stood around the b'ys drinking I could've had more fun, more laughs, and not waste my money ... I could've just saved up my money and got clothes or something I really wanted, instead of just spending it on, "Oh, let's go spend it on booze. Let's go have a good time." And, you spend like, hundreds of dollars on booze.

On another note, Kiwi additionally discussed how her mother's refusal to provide her with money helped offset her behaviour, to which Kiwi ultimately praised her for:

...like, if I was going out, and it was a weekend or something, she wouldn't give me money because she knew what I was up to ... she was probably being protective because not giving me money so that I could [not] drink is helping me not get brought home by the cops, not have a criminal record, not being in lock up for a night. Who knows? I could get drunk and fall into a river and die. She's trying to protect me.

Unicorn reported that his parents share a similar mentality, as they refuse to give him money unless he does chores, which he never wants to do. Unicorn believes his parents purposefully do this in order to avoid giving him money for alcohol, as seen in his words, "...do dishes and all that stuff or you won't get money and they don't want to give me money, [because] I'll spend it on alcohol or drugs..."

Learning and information. As previously mentioned, one of the largest protective themes participants discussed was how they have stopped or considerably reduced their consumption of alcohol based upon information learned from personal and vicarious experience,

as well as from personal stories and the “cold hard facts” of alcohol consumption relayed from trusted adults.

Personal experience. A number of participants relayed that they have significantly reduced and limited the amount of alcohol they consume due to their experiences with alcohol poisoning, along with reflecting upon the impact it was having on their lives. For instance, when Jackson was asked what were some of the things that influenced him to avoid consuming alcohol the last time he had an opportunity to do so, he replied:

The last time I chose not to was because there was... actually one time I did get alcohol poisoning because I obviously drank way too much, and I just didn't want to feel like crap again, so I just didn't wanna...

Jackson later reported that he has seldom consumed alcohol since, and is careful to know his limits whenever he does, as seen in his words, “I might, I may have a couple of drinks every now and then, but I won't get like plastered drunk...” Likewise, Unicorn also shared how he had alcohol poisoning twice, which limited his behaviour as well.

On a different note, Mr. Hortons reported that he considerably reduced the amount of alcohol he would typically consume after reflecting upon the toll it was taking on him:

Well, you know, it's alright to go out for a night here and there. But, when you're out 24/7 just doing nothing but drinking, all day all night, ya know, it will take its toll, ya know. You're not sleeping right, not eating right, ya know? You're not doing nothing that you should be doing right.

Remedy Man, furthermore, came to a similar conclusion after he reflected upon his alcohol consumption and realized it was not helping him fix any of his problems; in fact, it was making them worse:

...I was going through a really rough time and I realized that drinking wasn't helping me at all. It didn't fix anything; it didn't help anything. I just kinda made things worse. I mean, drinking didn't solve anything. So, I just stopped ... I cut back a lot and I stopped drinking completely, pretty much. I only maybe... once a month now, that's it ... umm, in the past when I did drink to get away from that stuff. It made me feel like, that the next day I would completely forget it and I wouldn't have to worry about it anymore. And, I did feel like that for a bit, but this time I realized that I was lying to myself the whole time. It wasn't helping. Nothing was helping me deal with it, but actually dealing with it and trying to move on.

Vicarious experience. Likewise, several participants reported that they had considerably reduced or stopped consuming alcohol after they witnessed and reflected upon how alcohol had impacted the people around them, which included family, friends, and even strangers.

The impact of strangers. White Chocolate reported that he seldom consumes alcohol because he has witnessed several people damage their lives with it. One of these individuals was a homeless man unknown to him:

Uh, well there's a homeless guy who came up to [a local community center], well he wasn't homeless at the time, but he used to be homeless ... he said how drinking pretty much put him bankrupt and homeless. Because he used to go drinking every weekend.

Furthermore, another stranger who contributed to White Chocolate's mentality was one of his role models who struggled with alcohol abuse as well:

Plus, one of my favorite role models too is [someone famous]. He used to drink all the time. He got suspended from [what he does]. Like, drugs and everything... he started drinking then it turned into drugs – he got suspended. So, now that he got a kid, he quit everything.

In short, White Chocolate expressed that by witnessing several strangers damage their lives by consuming alcohol, he has chosen to generally avoid it as he does not wish to go down a similar path.

Witnessing peers. In addition to reporting that he seldom consumes alcohol due to the impact it has had on strangers, White Chocolate also discussed how witnessing his peers struggle with alcohol has influenced his decision as well. When asked why he feels so passionately about avoiding alcohol, he stated:

Just because I seen the way people lives with it; if they get \$20 they're gone to get a case of beer, or a flask or something ... Over by [the local hangout], people asking to go get them beer and stuff ... Yeah, or they'll go get someone to buy them liquor and then they'll drink it. And then, they'll get stopped by the cops, or pass out in a ditch.

Moreover, White Chocolate later discussed how his friend's alcohol related developed medical condition contributed to his decision to seldom consume alcohol as well, as seen in his words, "Ah, well I have a lot of friends who ... did drink and can't now 'cause drinking screwed stuff up ... my friend, she got bladder issues because drinking."

In a similar case, Remedy Man reported that he has considerably reduced the amount of alcohol he typically would consume, due to witnessing the impact alcohol has had on his friends' lives:

And, also I don't want to get drunk because I've seen what happens when certain people are drunk. Like, I've seen my friends get drunk and mess up their lives and everything ... So, I don't like the fact they're drinking. Also, [I know people that] did die because of drinking. So, I do kinda have... I do like to drink, sometimes, yes to have fun, but I don't like to drunk a lot because I don't trust it.

Family histories. Some participants also shared that they tend to avoid consuming alcohol based upon the damage they have witnessed within their own families. In fact, Ms. Pink cited her family's history with alcohol as one of her main reasons for avoiding it. When asked what were some of the things that influenced her not to consume alcohol the last time she had the opportunity to do so, she stated:

...the most recent time is because of what my family has gone through with it. And, where like, my dad and my grandfather and stuff, they have past alcohol abuse and stuff like that. It just kinda made me think, "Well, I don't wanna go through that." I don't wanna be put through that because I've already been put through the stress and everything else of what goes on while they're in the different state of mind.

Thus, whenever she is faced with a situation that involves alcohol, Ms. Pink reported that she often asks herself, "Well, what happens if [alcoholism] does [happen to me]?" Adding, "...it kinda like, makes me really anxious ... and I just don't [want to] do it."

Moreover, Ms. Pink discussed how she tends to avoid alcohol because she does not want to relive or think about the damage it has done to her family:

...ever since I was really young my father had problems struggling with it. And, it's usually just something that I don't wanna relive and rethink. And, usually if I ever go drinking it's something that I always think about ... Yeah, and I just don't wanna go through it every time, and kinda thinking that I'll like, disappoint my mother and stuff like that, which, she's had a harder time with it then I have.

Ms. Pink later went on to expand this notion of *not wanting to disappoint her family*, as seen in her words:

Umm, where my stepdad has like a past of it, but like, he quit drinking all together. He has a past of like alcohol addiction. And my mom, when she was with my dad, she went through it. And, I don't want to bring that back on to my parents, and make them have to relive it again if it did happen to me.

Remedy Man also expressed a similar notion when he too discussed how he does not want to disappoint his family:

...[my father] doesn't want to see me become like my great grandfather and my grandfather, and become an alcoholic ... Yeah, I don't want to disappoint them, but also I don't want to hurt them because I know alcohol can hurt a family. I've seen it tear apart a family before and I don't want to see that in my family.

Likewise, Ms. Pink shared how her parents actively discourage her from consuming alcohol as they do not want her to end up like members of their family. She reported that her mother told her, "I don't want this to happen to you. I don't want you to go down that road..."

Stories. As demonstrated by Ms. Pink, a number of participants indicated how stories from their parents, and other trusted adults, shaped the way they view and consume alcohol. In fact, when this topic spontaneously arose during the initial interviews, I was compelled to explore what parents, teachers, public health nurses, etc. would have to relay in order for the participants to actually stop or reduce their consumption of alcohol. Most of them agreed that the person would have to be passive (i.e., not preach the information), but yet give cold hard facts of the consequences of consuming alcohol, as well as tell personal stories that they could relate to.

To begin, Ms. Pink stated, “In my opinion, I think that they would have to sit you down and say like, and kinda give a personal experience in a way, but make you see how they seen it.” Overall, participants appeared to take to the stories most relatable to them.

Furthermore, upon discussing how his parents influenced his decision to consume alcohol, Jackson stated, “My mom and my dad, they’ve told me stories about when they were younger ... Like, when they tell me their stories about like their past, from them like drinking, my anxiety is like...” Moreover, Jackson also discussed how his friends’ parents influenced him not to drink:

Well, they’ve told me their stories about like what happened to them and stuff like that, when they were younger. And, just how it kinda messed them up. How it affects their job, it can affect your job and all that.

Adding to this, Jackson reported how one of his teachers impacted his decision to consume alcohol by also disclosing a story, as seen in his words, “The same reason my friends’ parents, like... they’ve shared their stories with me and stuff ... [to] the whole class.”

Unicorn provided similar remarks when he reported how his father's friend shared stories from his past, which influenced him to reduce his level of alcohol consumption:

...he tells me he's been through the experiences of being pressured, being drunk, falling in a ditch, losing his money and all that stuff. He doesn't want that to happen to me, so tells the stories to make me feel like, well not feel like, but wonder like, "Well, I don't want to do this, so I'm not going to. Maybe I should make the right choice, and not go drinking and end up in a ditch somewhere dead where no one can find me." And, I basically don't want to die of course.

And, when asked how his parents influenced him to consume alcohol, Unicorn reported, "Same thing, they've been through experience. And, since it's my parents they want me to have a great life, and stay safe, and not hopefully die of alcohol poisoning."

The cold hard facts. In conjunction with wanting to know personal and relatable stories, nearly all of the participants affirmed that they would like to be told the cold hard facts surrounding the dangers of alcohol consumption in order for them to actually stop or reduce their behaviour. When Mr. Hortons was asked for his thoughts on the matter, he reported:

Well, you kinda gotta get into a bit of detail about it. Ya know, ah what the disadvantages are, like ya know, you go out, ya get plastered, a fight breaks out, and ya know, one of you or the other guy is going to the hospital, and the other one's in handcuffs up on charges, ya know. It could lead into a bit of pain, or a bit of trouble ... Yeah, parties could get out of hand. Drinks could be, ya know, slipped with like drugs or whatnot. So, ya know, things could get bad...

Furthermore, he also indicated that trusting adults should not give up on communicating these cold hard facts to youth, as seen in his words:

Well, some people ya know, they... certain things be said, and depending on by who.

‘Cause a hundred people could say the same thing, and just one person makes it more clearer to someone, and they take it in right then and there. Other people could take in the same information at a different point and time.

Overall, Remedy Man appeared to echo Mr. Hortons’ core thoughts as well:

I would say, say some experiences of what could happen if you do drink. Like umm... for instance, there when certain people drink rape can happen, car accidents, fighting, jail, everything ... Yeah, facts about it. Like, true facts. Like, if you’re out drinking at a young age you can go to jail ... And, they could get drunk and do something stupid. Just cold hard facts or... yeah, just cold hard facts mainly about what can happen, and what would happen if you did drink to intoxication.

Upon discussing wanting to know the cold hard facts of alcohol consumption, most participants agreed that the best way to do so was either to show or discuss something shocking. For instance, Ms. Pink recalled that one of the most impactful things she ever saw was a shocking video she watched in school:

...they showed this one in school that had a really big impact on me that it was like a movie thing where these kids were at a party and they... one of their friends crashed their car in like... it was really, really bad.

Mr. Red was also a strong believer in promoting shock value while providing the facts of alcohol consumption to adolescents, as seen in his words:

Like, if you're not careful you could wind up in prison or worse dead. Plain and simple ... Yes, throw in some shock factor into it, like uh if we don't stop doing this, if we don't stop taking this out of control this is where it's gonna lead us, in jail or in the back of a SWAT car, the back of an ambulance, or in the back of a hearse. One of the three if we take this out of control.

Mars provided similar remarks when he discussed how shocking before and after pictures are likely to discourage him from consuming alcohol:

Well for me? To show a before and after picture, kinda like before, if they ever touched alcohol, and after they touched it. Like, how badly it screwed up their lives, and kind of like give the inside scoop of what like, what went on with their life. Did they get divorced and they got really depressed? Did they lose... did their wife die, or...? Any life event, or anything really, like that triggered them to drink and kinda like those pictures when a meth addict before, and a meth addict after, and their life is just ruined, destroyed. And, they should do the same thing with alcohol. Or like, tell it like, umm... this is what's gonna happen if you keep up drinking. Or, umm... the side effects of things. That's what I think they should do.

How to communicate this. As participants were reporting how they want to hear the cold hard facts and consequences of alcohol consumption, it became clear that they wanted this information conveyed in a particular way, or else speakers would run the risk of losing their audience. Most participants agreed that this information had to be presented seriously and with passion – but not preached (i.e., presented passively). Moreover, some participants suggested presenting a variety of information, as well as providing ideas for other safer activities.

When asked how presenters should convey this information, Ms. Pink reported:

I'd say, usually like a serious attitude about it ... Like to kinda like drill it into your mind and let you know that they're not joking about this, that this is a serious thing and the consequences are like... usually bad when it comes out of it. Whether it be getting arrested or a hangover. All of it is still kinda bad in a way.

Likewise, Mr. Hortons stressed how important it is to have genuine passion while presenting this information:

'Cause all it takes is really how you word it, and how like vocal it is ... Ah, like in a song you can feel the power of the... who singing it, like their mood. So, you basically kinda get the feel of it ... Ah, I don't say be loud or anything like that. Just kinda, summarize it up into events that have happened, could happen, and ya know, what could the outcomes be, and you know, what could really be ... Yeah, kinda gotta get a personal feeling with it...

Remedy Man echoed Mr. Hortons when he stated that presenters should “genuinely care” about what they are talking about, specifically highlighting how the presenters at CYN do appear to do this, as seen in his words, “The presenters here do care; they show people that they care. They're not just there flapping their lips and waiting to get paid. They actually do care.”

Yet, as important as it is to convey information about alcohol consumption seriously and passionately, presenters must remain passive and not preach it. For instance, Mr. Hortons insisted that presenters should be “calm about it. Not sit there, ‘Don't drink! Blah, blah, blah,’ ya know? Like screaming at them ‘No’...” As suggested by Kiwi, when authority figures simply tell adolescents ‘No,’ “Well, then you want to rebel. ‘Cause they're telling you what to

do, so then you're just like, 'No,' like 'Not happening. I'm gonna do what I want'..." Adding that if someone told her not to drink the weekend, she would be more inclined to do so.

Mr. Red, moreover, had quite a lot to say on passivity, but perhaps the most potent thing he discussed was:

I will say one thing though, when it comes to getting youth like us to put down the bottle, or put down the joint, or whatever, when it comes to stuff like that, instead of doing it like aggressively or assertive aggressiveness, just come at us with an assertive, passive kinda tone, ya know? Like, instead of just like flaunting it off on us, like saying "you'll never get anywhere doing that," or "you have no idea what you're doing," that kinda thing. Just come over and ask us why we do this, kinda like what we're doing right now. Just sit down, talk to us and we'll open up to ya given the chance, you know? Instead of barking orders at us, we'll let you know what's going on ... Like uh, instead of making us put down the bottle, just give us, just make us understand what we're doing is wrong, like... I'm trying to think how to properly explain this, like we know it's wrong, yes, don't get me wrong, we know it is, but like show us where it would lead us, that kinda thing. Like, talk to us about it, like when it comes to abusing it ... But uh, like I will say maybe show in a little shock value or shock appeal as well, is what I will say, but not in a bad way, but just like show us, tell us where this can go if we don't know what we're doing. Like, if we take this out of control, like this is what's gonna happen. Like, give us the scenarios, but at the same time, in a calm and passive way.

In addition to conveying a certain attitude, Jackson suggested that presenters should provide a variety of information on the dangers of alcohol consumption when they are talking to

adolescents. When he was asked what presenters do that turns him off from listening, he stated, “I guess saying the same thing over about it.” I then confirmed the word “variety” with him, to which he agreed.

Finally, Kiwi suggested that presenters should provide options for other activities that do not involve alcohol when presenting upon the dangers of it as well:

Well, I mean it’s not the right thing to do. There’s lots of other activities you can do that don’t involve alcohol. Go fishing, go camping ... Yeah, ‘cause it might put those options in your head, and then you thinking the next time you wanna go drinking you’re just like, “Well, maybe I should go fishing. Maybe I should go camping.”

Fear of bad things happening. Once participants took in all of their learnings based upon personal and vicarious experiences, as well as personal stories and the cold hard facts of alcohol consumption relayed from trusted adults, a number of them indicated how they reduced their level of alcohol consumption, as they feared the plethora of adverse consequences. Upon explaining why he normally does not attend house parties or functions where alcohol is robust, White Chocolate stated:

Pretty [much] just ‘cause, shit goes down ... Like, cops show up and that. And, someone would just blame me if I was just there not drinking ... Ah, just a fight or anything ...

Because if I do witness one I’m hauled into it ... So, like if I don’t go and shit goes down, I can’t be in the blame.

Moreover, he also reported how he avoids alcohol, “Just ‘cause I pretty much knew that it would ruin my life in a way. That’s the reason I don’t [consume alcohol] much now.”

Likewise, Ms. Pink appeared to arrive at a similar conclusion, as seen in her words, "...also, not wanting my parents to find out, and getting caught, and things like that. The consequences that come with it ... Uh, well the consequences of it. I mean getting in trouble and stuff. It's not worth it."

Becoming parents. Taking into consideration what they have learned about alcohol throughout their lives, some participants decided to stop or reduce their consumption of alcohol once they became parents themselves.

When Kiwi was asked "thinking back to a recent time you were able to resist drinking alcohol what were some of things that influenced you not to drink the alcohol?" She simply stated, "My son ... It's why I stopped." Adding that she has not really consumed alcohol since he was born, as seen in her words, "No, not really. Like, there was that one time three months after he was born and that was it."

When asked to elaborate on this decision, she discussed how her own mother's history with alcohol influenced her to stop drinking:

'Cause I care about him, and my mom used to drink when I was little. Like, not all the time, but it was like occasional on the weekends, and we'd always be in our rooms, and when we'd come out mom would be in the kitchen with all her friends drinking. And, I remember what I felt like growing up like that, so I don't wanna put my son through that. Mr. Hortons also expressed similar thoughts on reducing his alcohol intake once he became a parent, as seen in his words:

Well, there when I had a baby, ya know? I couldn't sit around being a drunk all the time. So, it eventually just got to me, ya know ... Yeah, I got big responsibilities ... Ah, well

everyone's got responsibilities, but ya know, when there's a child involved, you know, you don't want them growing up watching you sit there and drink all day. And, some people get aggressive when they drink, so you don't want that around an infant or a young child, so...

In addition, Mr. Hortons elaborated on the need to be in a proper head space while caring for children, which influences him not to drink at all:

Ah, well I'm a dad, so you know, I kinda gotta look at it, you know? I got big responsibilities now. He's not an infant anymore ... he's up running around, so I gotta be in the right state of mind and on my toes at all times ... Ah, well babies when they're up running around, ya know, one minute they could be there in their crib, next minute they could be gone out of the crib and out around the house ... You gotta be alright at all times.

Social discouragement. All participants indicated that they have been influenced to stop or considerably reduce their consumption of alcohol based upon interactions with their parents, teachers, significant others, and friends.

The parental influence. With regards to their own parents, a number of participants described how they have limited their alcohol intake due to their parents encouraging them to drink responsibly, with some role modeling that behaviour, in addition to communicating that they care.

To begin, Mars discussed how he currently consumes little alcohol as his mother has always encouraged him to drink responsibly, "...my mom tells me, you know like, be

responsible when I'm drinking, be responsible when I'm doing anything really." Moreover, when asked to elaborate on what else had contributed to his behaviour, he reported:

...It's just growing up in a good household ... just growing up with common sense, ya know? People around you telling you the rights and wrongs of stuff and it's all my doing if I want to do it or not. So, and it's a part of growing up I guess - becoming an adult...

Remedy Man shared similar words, as his father also encouraged him to consume alcohol responsibly, in addition to behaving responsibly around alcohol as well:

He looks at me and says, "Don't drink a lot, pace yourself, don't become an alcoholic, don't get drunk and do something stupid, don't go into anyone's car." My dad shows that he cares about me a lot when I'm drinking. And, in general he shows that he cares a lot.

Likewise, some participants indicated that they have limited their alcohol intake because they have witnessed their own families consume it responsibly. For instance, White Chocolate reported, "Pretty much, like... none of my family drinks all the time, like 24/7, or every weekend. So, the way I look at it, they don't drink 24/7..." Therefore, he is not inclined to drink that much either. Mr. Hortons gave similar remarks upon discussing how he learned "Not to do it when you got responsibilities," after witnessing how his father and stepfather consumed alcohol:

Ah, my dad really ya know, 'cause like I grew up... my stepdad was drinking all the time, but he drank when he wasn't working and stuff like that. So, that wasn't too bad and then my dad really just... he drank a lot on the weekends when we went out camping...

On another note, upon exploring how Remedy Man's family helps him not to consume alcohol, he stated:

Well, it's not what they say or do. They show that they care about me, and I guess when I was younger I was too blind to kinda see that. I didn't care when I was younger. I never realized that my family does care about me no matter how mad my dad gets at me, and we argue, he loves me still.

The power of teachers. Like parents, teachers were described as having the ability to considerably reduce participants' level of alcohol consumption. This was accomplished through teaching responsible behaviour, the damage of excessive use, and starting a lunchtime meditation club.

When asked "how do adults in your life who are not your parents or guardians influence you to drink?" Mr. Hortons replied, "Well, ah... my teachers encourage me to drink responsibly if I was. They didn't encourage me to drink. They just more so encourage me to do it responsibly." And, when he was asked if he actually listens to their general message of being responsible, he stated:

I didn't at first, and then once my drinking became an everyday thing, ya know, ya just start thinking about random stuff and one day it just popped my mind, because ah I went to school and I was hungover and my teacher could see... or my teacher could notice I was hungover. And, he come up to me, and was like, "Had a good night last night, or wha?" Then I told him it was a bad night and that it just sucked and I got sick and everything like that. And, he come on, he said, "Well b'y. ya know you should be more

responsible about it, and not go out and drink till you get sick, ya know? Just go out and have a few drinks and fit in.”

On the other hand, Ms. Pink reported that her teachers’ encouragement not to consume alcohol at all, due to the many dangers of excessive use, influenced her not to do so, as seen in her words:

Usually my teachers and stuff, they’re kinda like harp on us a lot about not doing it because, well of course it’s bad for you, things like that ... Usually, just like the damage it does and what it can do to a family and what it can do to your relationships with your friends and your job and stuff like that.

Finally, Mr. Red discussed how one of his teachers significantly impacted his level of alcohol consumption by being passive and starting a lunchtime meditation club:

There was one teacher in my high school who I can say without a doubt that she uh, she would try whatever she could to uh, make sure we did not go down this route. And as passively as possible, she doesn’t want us to like force us, she doesn’t want to ram it down our throats, but she does it in a way... she does it nicely, that’s wonderful. She just tries to uh, get us to go down the right path, trying to see where our lives are going. She even started her own club, like uh zen club, or like a meditation room kinda thing, like instead of using these to relax, you can come in and meditate here. Like, she plays some wonderful soothing songs ... [D]uring my final year of high school ... my teacher, she managed to get me ... down to only [consume alcohol] once a month. Because I’ve been going there, I’ve been attending the seminars that she had, the little meditation rooms and that, basically I’m following what she was saying: peace and zen ... [This club presented]

us a clear mind and clear thoughts because basically in zen mode we basically uh, use our mind a lot I can't really explain it honestly, but the gist is that we basically open our minds and basically explore our own little world to uh, see what we're doing and really think about what we're actually, what our actions are doing to other people, and what actions we are doing to ourselves as well.

Encouragement from significant others. Remedy Man and Mr. Red both indicated that they reduced their level of alcohol consumption after their girlfriends encouraged them to do so. Mr. Red had the most to say on this topic:

Well, I can say there was one person that I will say that at the time I would do anything to make sure she was happy. She was basically my encouragement to clean myself up. It was because of her I also gave up smoking as well. It was my current girlfriend at the time. She was always needy for me. What I mean by need I mean she was uh, needy in a right way. Like trying to get me on a right track. Trying to get me on a right path. Make sure I was okay...

The peer influence. Likewise, a number of participants further reported how their friends have influenced them to cease or limit their consumption of alcohol by discouraging its use, physically withholding it to inspire pacing, and just being around those who seldom drink.

Ms. Pink discussed how her best friend actively discourages her from consuming alcohol by getting her to think about its natural consequences:

...well my best friend, she'll kinda be like my mom in my ear saying, "Don't do it."

Like, "I'm gonna beat you, don't do it" [laughs] ... Yeah, she kind of looking out for my best interests in a way because she thinks ahead of me. She thinks well if you go

drinking, what if this happens? And then you can't get out of it. And then what if this happens, and what if your parents find out? What if the cops show up? And she kinda like, puts those thoughts in my head. So, then I don't want to do it.

In addition to being frightened by the damaging effects of alcohol, it is likely that Ms. Pink avoids it because she does not want to disappoint her friend. Remedy Man appeared to echo the notion of not wanting to disappoint his friends as well, as seen in his words:

...I know people that drink ... and certain things that have happened, I'm very disappointed in them for. And, I'm very mad about for. And, I realized that I was being a hypocrite because I was doing it too. So, they stopped, and I stopped. It's just certain things have happened to people that I care about a lot because of alcohol. And, I know if I do it I would be disappointing them, 'cause it would be the same experience as them ... 'Cause they're my boys, and they got my back no matter what ... And, I've been through a lot when it comes to alcohol, and they know that ... So ... they don't like drinking...

Furthermore, Mr. Horton's shared how he sometimes will discourage his friends from consuming alcohol, particularly when he knows they are on probation:

Ah, well ya know, they just could be looking out, ya know? Basically, if someone's on probation, for example, and ya know, one of their conditions is not be out drinking and disturbing the peace and what not, ya know, that would be a bad time to go out drinking...

On a different note, Unicorn discussed how his older friends will engage in harm reduction by physically limiting his alcohol intake in an attempt to get him to pace himself:

...the older crowd... like my sister's told them to keep an eye on me when I'm drinking or into fights or anything. So, when I used to go drinking, I used to go drinking with them because they knew my limits. I didn't at the time. So, when I got too drunk they're like, "Alright [Unicorn], sit down, you're done." And I was like, "Alright" ... But, some other friends are like, "Here's your shot, wait an hour, come back and get another one." And then, I'll do that. They'll come back, another one, and wait another hour, and that'll be a repeated progress ... Because they've been through the experience before of, "How was I pressured?" And, they don't want it to happen to other people. So, they watch out for us, and say well ... "This happened to me, I don't want it to happen to you. I want you to have a good drinking experience, but not being pressured."

Finally, nearly half of the participants shared how they simply are not inclined to consume alcohol when they spend time with friends who seldom drink. For instance, when I asked, "How do your friends influence you not to drink, or what role do they play in that decision if at all?" White Chocolate stated, "Ah, well I have a lot of friends who don't drink or can't drink, so..." with Mr. Hortons similarly reporting:

Well, you got a scattered good friend that don't drink, or occasionally drinks ... They're not really a binge drinker, ya know? They're an occasional drinker, or they're just not a drinker at all, but normally it's occasional drinkers, ya know, they only drink maybe their birthday, Christmas, or like gotta be a special occasion.

Likewise, when asked, "What are some things in your life that help you to avoid drinking alcohol?" Unicorn replied:

Hanging out with people that don't drink, not at all, but only once in a blue moon. Say, if their mother had a party they may go drink, hang out with those people, and that's it – they won't drink anymore...

Keeping busy. In relation to participants reporting that they avoid alcohol when they spend time with friends who seldom drink, a number of them also discussed how their friends will further reduce their alcohol consumption by keeping them busy and offering to do other activities that do not involve alcohol. Moreover, beyond the scope of their friends, this notion of “keeping busy” to avoid alcohol was fairly prominent amongst the participants, as all but two indicated how it influenced their decision. Some ways in which participants reported keeping busy included their hobbies, work, school, and focusing on the future.

As noted by Jackson in relation to his friends and staying busy, “...we just like to be outside, basically ... like, they like being busy.” Moreover, Mars explained that, “...we keep each other occupied, you know? Drinking's not even on our mind at all.” And, when I clarified his words by asking, “Okay, so in a way they're kinda keeping you busy, and not putting your mind on it?” he replied, “Yeah, exactly. Even if they weren't I wouldn't be thinking about it all, 'cause I only think about it when it's brought up in a conversation or something.”

Likewise, upon discussing how his non-drinking friends influence him to consume less alcohol, Mr. Hortons added:

...they might encourage you to do something else. Like, you know, “Hey, it's a good day. You don't need to go out drinking. Let's go fishing or something like that. Let's go have a fire on the beach or something” ... basically they just try and say, “Come on over to the house and play some games instead of going off with them drinking,” and whatnot

... just trying to do something that does not involve drinking ... Yeah, “Let’s go game out. Play some Call of Duty,” or something.

Kiwi shared similar words, as she too discussed how her friends will offer other activities in order to avoid consuming alcohol. This is seen in her words, “Well, some of my friends they don’t want to drink. They’re like, ‘Let’s go swimming,’ ‘Let’s go camping,’ ‘Let’s do something fun,’ instead of including alcohol in it. Like, ‘Let’s go rafting.’ Ya know?”

Related to this notion of activities, a number of participants reported how their various hobbies keep them busy and help them avoid consuming alcohol. When asked, “Is there anything in your life that helps you avoid drinking alcohol?” White Chocolate simply stated “Sports,” with Jackson similarly replying, “Just ... going for walks and stuff ... Yeah, just that and a lot of sports.” Mars had the most to say on the matter, however, as he discussed how:

I have better things to do because alcohol is not an important thing in my life. Umm... like, I have my music, I have my friends, you know? I have different things I like to do. I like going outside, hanging out down here, like out with my friends or whatever, at CYN, you know? Things like that avoid me from keeping myself out of doing stuff like alcohol or drugs or anything like that.

Likewise, a handful of participants further shared how their jobs and schoolwork keep them busy and help them to avoid alcohol as well. Mr. Horton’s stated, “Ah, when I was working I didn’t bother with it,” with Mr. Red similarly discussing how his determination to “focus on working on my job, saving up money” and “of course, my school as well. Trying to focus on that, get that, get in there, get my education” have helped him to avoid alcohol.

Moreover, Mr. Red also shared how *focusing on his future* has kept him busy too, as seen in his words:

Ah, I keep myself occupied. Like uh, trying to focus on getting my life together is my main goal. I already got a house I've been trying, I've been looking at to rent out for me and a few of the b'ys ... and we were trying to focus on getting a job here in the city to uh, obtain that thing. Basically, that's my main focus.

CYN. Yet, another way participants kept busy was through participating in activities at CYN. In fact, every participant unanimously agreed that CYN helped them stop or reduce their consumption of alcohol in some way. Such protective reasons included that it was a safe place to go (where they could socialize without drinking), the support of the youth workers, and the regular information that was given through presentations and guest speakers.

To begin, nearly half of the participants reported that they were less inclined to consume alcohol when they were kept busy participating in events at CYN. For instance, Remedy Man stated that, "...if you're in the CYN there's no kind of feeling to drink. You have a lot of stuff there to distract you from that," and when I clarified his words by asking if it kept him busy, he replied, "Yeah, you have friends, there's activities, there's games, there's pool, you can do anything down there, and it's fun." Unicorn and Mars, furthermore, appeared to echo Remedy Man's statement, as they both discussed how CYN kept them out of trouble. Unicorn shared that, "Back when CYN was open until 11:00pm I found that that helped out, because it gets you, you know, stayed in at CYN, have fun activities without going drinking and getting caught by the cops. And all that stuff," with Mars similarly reporting:

...it's keeping me out of trouble ... And, it's just... if I had nothing else better to do with my time, I'd probably would be out trying to get high or wasted or something like that ... It's just going down there like, have fun... Like, just be out around people ... It keeps me busy, yeah.

Lastly, Kiwi discussed how CYN tires her out, and thereby, makes her less likely to consume alcohol, as seen in her words:

...it keeps you busy from 4-8:30pm, and then normally then we're running around with everyone else down here, playing pool and stuff. Ya gets tired, so you just wants to go home and go to sleep. That's what I'm like, just go home and go to sleep.

Another way in which participants reported that CYN helps them to stop or reduce their consumption of alcohol is simply by being a safe place where they can go whenever they are pressured to drink. Although White Chocolate discussed how he often will stay at CYN to avoid alcohol whenever his peers go drinking, Mr. Hortons shared perhaps the most compelling story, as he revealed how he has gone to CYN multiple times in order to avoid peer pressure. One such story is exemplified below:

Ah, last summer ... I bumped into a couple of old friends of mine ... And, they were up there with a case of beer, and they was trying to get me to have a couple. I was like, "No b'y, I gotta go," ya know, "I'm kinda busy, I gotta do something." Just made up something like that and get out of that moment, and I just went down to the CYN.

Related to this, Mr. Hortons further shared his enthusiasm for how CYN appears to be a great place to socialize without being pressured to consume alcohol, as seen in his words:

...they offer a lot of programs. So, basically you do some of those programs and come up for a night, hang out, play some pool, they do activities there too so... yeah. It's a place to hang out with your buddies and not be out on a drunk. You still get to socialize, but you're not out drinking and socializing ... So, you can go up there, have the time of your life, and not even have to drink to have a good time.

On a different note, over half of the participants reported how the CYN youth workers helped them to reduce their level of alcohol intake by being parental figures, good listeners, and sharing personal stories and information about the dangers of alcohol consumption. This caring role is first exemplified by Kiwi:

Yeah, they're kinda like parents to us. Like, they're not our actual parents, but they're like parental figures [laughs] ... Like, they treat us basically like we're their kids ... like, they're all the time telling us, ya know, be nice ... Like, if we do something wrong, they discipline us by banning us. Then we get upset because we're banned. 'Cause we want to be there.

Moreover, Kiwi further emphasized how the youth workers are good listeners, as seen in her words, "When [Kiwi's boyfriend] needed someone to talk to because, well when... yeah... he hurt himself, they were there. Like, they're there for us when we need them." Remedy Man also appeared to believe that the youth workers were good listeners, as he discussed how talking to them made him less inclined to consume alcohol:

And also, the youth workers, talking about it, having programs about talking about alcohol and drinking and what it can do, stuff like that ... So, like [Youth Worker's name], whenever I'm depressed I'll go in the back and talk to him about things, and just

kinda rant. Like, when I'm depressed I enjoy a rant. I love to rant to about stuff when I'm depressed.... They're good listeners, and they do give some helpful advice, yes. To help me get through depression and when I rant and let it all out I don't feel like drinking. I don't feel like... I feel like having a good time after. Like, when I went through my breakup [Youth Worker's name] helped me out through that, and I appreciate him a lot for that.

Likewise, several participants reported how the youth workers' personal stories and information on alcohol consumption impacted their decision to avoid alcohol. For instance, Mr. Hortons discussed how these spontaneous and earnest conversations have influenced him to consume less alcohol:

Uh, sitting down there, you know? Every now and then you just strike a topic or something. You just strike the conversation, and you just talk about it, and you know? Some of them do have experience about it and, you know? You share info, so you know, you just look at one another you take in what you listen to ... Ya know, if they had a bad time with something, they try and help you with yours. That way you don't fall in a bad footstep.

Lastly, Ms. Pink and Jackson further discussed how the poignant information given by the youth workers impacted their decisions as well. Ms. Pink recalled, "...like the damage it does and what it can do to a family and what it can do to your relationships with your friends and your job and stuff like that," with Jackson similarly reporting, "...they teach ya a lot about alcohol and alcohol abuse ... It's mostly why I don't. Like, they actually help me."

In addition to the youth workers sharing information about the dangers of alcohol consumption, a number of participants further reported that they reduced their level of drinking upon attending the regular informational sessions held by CYN, as described by Ms. Pink, “Yeah, in a way just kinda like, all the presentations and stuff that they do kinda opens your eyes.” These sessions appeared to have the most effect on Remedy Man, however, as seen in his words:

...presentations about it, that’s helped a lot too ... Because sometimes the presenters will tell like... I won’t say stories, but they’ll show videos or something about drinking and, they’ll show certain things, they’ll talk about things that happen, and I realized that if people keep drinking, and if I keep drinking that could happen to me. And, I don’t want that to happen ... Like, umm... there was a... they showed a short clip of a car accident, and that reminded me of my friend. And, the fact that that could happen to me at any point if I keep going the way I’m going ... And, I didn’t want that, so I cut back a lot.

Concluding remarks. Although participants have identified many reasons for avoiding alcohol, it appears that they have largely done so based upon information learned from either personal or vicarious experiences, or from the stories and facts relayed from trusted adults. Accordingly, their advice to caregivers, which was to share personal stories along with the cold hard facts of alcohol consumption, in a passive demeanor, are important findings from this study. Furthermore, participants also cited keeping busy and being a regular member of CYN to be prominent factors in their avoidance of alcohol as well. Therefore, it would appear that being educated, occupied, and having a safe afterschool program to attend are three broad ways in

which these participants avoided alcohol. A total summary and discussion of the main findings are presented in the following chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussion

What follows is an interpretation and discussion of the most significant findings in this study, as well as its implications and limitations.

All in all, it appeared that participants had three main reasons for consuming alcohol. Some believed it was a fun and pleasurable thing to do; others thought that it would aid in their ability to cope; and some did not want to, but did so anyway, out of peer pressure. Overall, these findings were not surprising as several other authors have found similar results.

For instance, Siviroj, Peltzer, Pengpid, Yungyen, and Chaichana (2012) found that Thai high school students were motivated to consume alcohol due to social reasons, social enhancement, and to cope. Prince et al. (2015) demonstrated that their participants consumed alcohol to feel included in social gatherings, to cope with stress or loss, or if trusted adults encouraged their behaviour. And finally, Cooper (1994) determined that her participants regularly consumed alcohol for social, enhancement, coping, and conformity reasons – which are practically parallel to the current study.

To discuss each of these main findings individually, however, a great deal of research has already demonstrated how youth consume alcohol as a way to have fun (Comasco et al., 2010; Katainen, Lehto, & Maunu, 2015), bond with their peers (Acier et al., 2014; Bernstein et al., 2011), celebrate special occasions (Kuntsche, & Gmel, 2006; Patrick, Fairlie, & Lee, 2018) and relieve boredom (Siviroj et al., 2012; Victorio, 2001). Thus, while the majority of the current findings appear to be fairly universal and self-evident, what was interesting was the amount of

participants who alluded to boredom in their decision to consume alcohol. This finding was likely due to Corner Brook being a fairly rural city, with a population of 19,547 (Statistics Canada, 2016). As such, it is logical to assume that participants turned to alcohol when they were looking for something to do but had few recreational options to choose from. Furthermore, this finding is also concerning as Siviroj et al. (2012) determined that “boredom susceptibility was the strongest predictor for hazardous drinking” amongst their sample (p. 1255). A suggestion to address this problem will be discussed in the implications section below.

The other main findings of *drinking to cope* and out of *peer pressure* were expected as well, due to the apparent universality of their risk. As previously mentioned, a great deal of research has already demonstrated how some youth will consume alcohol as a way to cope with various problems (Grob et al., 2014; Hudson et al., 2015; Stapinski, et al., 2016; Topper, Castellanos-Ryan, Mackie, & Conrod, 2011), due to the short-term dissociating and numbing effects of alcohol. As is the case with peer pressure too, where numerous articles have indicated how it is an age-old risk factor for consuming alcohol (Iwamoto & Smiler, 2013; Santor, Messervey, & Kusumakar, 2000; Trucco, Colder, Bowker, & Wieczorek, 2011). Becoming a member and being accepted by a peer group is often of critical importance to adolescents (Santor et al., 2000), where consuming alcohol may be “the price of group membership” (Clasen & Brown, 1985, p. 452). Accordingly, it was not surprising when a number of participants indicated that they consumed alcohol in order to fit in with the (often older) crowd they were spending time with.

On the whole, however, it appears that the majority of the risk factors found within this study are fairly conventional. Consuming alcohol for fun, to cope with various problems, and

out of peer pressure are well-established predictors for use among adolescents. Yet, what was surprising was the magnitude of participants who reported consuming alcohol to cope and due to peer pressure. Over half of the participants indicated that they have turned to alcohol to cope with various problems, and almost all of them acknowledged that they have consumed alcohol as a result of peer pressure.

While peer pressure is concerning due to the amount of alcohol that is unwillingly consumed, youth who drink to cope are of special concern as they are known to drink quite heavily (Bernstein et al., 2011; Kuntsche et al., 2005; Tucker et al., 2014), and thereby, have an increased chance of developing alcohol dependence (Carpenter & Hasin, 1999; Tomlinson & Brown, 2012; Veilleux et al., 2014). Therefore, preventative programs on the West Coast of Newfoundland are encouraged to adopt rigorous methods to combat these risk factors, which will be further discussed in the implications section below.

Turning now to the main protective factors that were discovered in this study, participants appeared to avoid or reduce their level of alcohol intake once they were properly *educated* on the dangers of its use, were kept *occupied*, and had a *safe place to go*, such as CYN.

As such, a unique concept of education emerged from this study, whereby participants identified both *personal* and *vicarious experiences* to be integral in their decision to avoid or consume less alcohol, which were further bolstered once they were told the *cold hard facts* of alcohol consumption, in combination with a *personal story*, that was conveyed in a *passive* way.

With regards to learning from personal experience, this finding was not unusual, as it is only human nature to reflect upon and learn from past mistakes, such as experiencing alcohol poisoning. Moreover, research from Prince et al. (2015) supports that youth often avoid or

decrease their level of alcohol consumption once they learn “from past mistakes” or focus “on ‘who I want to be’ or ‘not be’ in the future” (p. 101).

Similarly, participants learned to avoid or significantly cut back on the amount of alcohol they were consuming once they witnessed strangers, friends, and family members suffer the harmful effects of alcohol. This finding was in line with observational learning (Bandura, 1974), whereby organisms learn and respond to their environment by observing the behaviour of others; direct experience and reinforcement is not required. Thus, after participants observed people spending all of their money on alcohol, or enduring severe alcohol related medical issues, for example, they vicariously learned how harmful alcohol can be, and thereby, stopped or greatly reduced their level of alcohol intake.

Furthermore, as an extension of this idea, a number of participants indicated how hearing personal stories from trusted adults about the dangers of alcohol influenced their decision to avoid or consume less as well. As previously mentioned, when this topic spontaneously arose during the initial interviews, I felt compelled to ask and explore what parents, teachers, public health nurses, etc. would have to relay in order for them to actually stop or reduce their behaviour. Overall, they predominantly responded that such a person would have to remain passive (i.e., not preach the information), yet still convey the “cold hard facts” of alcohol consumption, in combination with a personal story that they could relate to. As such, it appears that these suggestions are the most important findings of this study.

To discuss, it is without question that stories have the inherent ability to influence attitudes and behaviours towards a given subject, as they arguably are a form of vicarious learning. While researching “the characteristics, contexts and implications of drinking stories

among young drinkers,” Tutenges and Sandberg (2013) determined that a number of their participants engaged in heavy episodic drinking in order “to build a repertoire of personal drinking stories,” whereby they could brag about how intoxicated they became or how a silly adventure emerged from their drunkenness (p. 538). As such, these authors were able to demonstrate how stories “told with pride and amusement” were likely to influence adolescents to drink quite heavily (p. 538). The current study found the opposite, or rather, shed a different light on Tutenges and Sandberg’s findings, as I was able to determine how negative stories relayed from trusted adults were likely to discourage adolescents from consuming alcohol. All in all, what does remain clear is that stories have an immense potential to impact an adolescent’s decision to consume alcohol.

With regards to the participants’ suggestion that adults should impart the cold hard facts surrounding the dangers of alcohol consumption, this finding was admittedly surprising, due to the rebellious nature of adolescence. To elaborate, it is long been established that some youth have a tendency to reject authority, as they value their independence and individuality (Grandpre, Alvaro, Burgoon, Miller, & Hall, 2003). Therefore, it was surprising to learn that they actually wanted to hear the consequences of alcohol consumption from authority figures, which traditionally may have been seen as a way to hamper their self-determination.

Accordingly, it is paramount that adults must adhere to the participants’ final item of advice while conveying this information, which is to remain passive and not preach these facts. For the reasons described above, youth are not prone to being told what to do. Therefore, if adults attempt to *lecture* adolescents on the dangers of consuming alcohol, they likely will ignore

their messages, or even purposefully do the opposite as an act of defiance (Grandpre et al., 2003; Hornik, Jacobsohn, Orwin, Piesse, & Kalton, 2008).

To summarize, the participants of the current study have essentially suggested that the most effective way to educate them on the dangers of alcohol is for adults to provide them with the cold hard facts, in a passive way, while wrapping up the message with a personal story.

Turning now to another major protective factor that was found within this study, a large number of participants identified how *keeping busy* helped them to avoid or consume less alcohol, which often took the form of engaging in personal hobbies, work, and school. This finding was relatively unsurprising as past researchers have demonstrated how youth tend to consume less alcohol when they are occupied (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Prince et al., 2015). Furthermore, it only stands to reason that if youth spend most of their time engaging in hobbies, or working at a part-time job, for example, then they will have less time and opportunities to attend events where alcohol is rampant.

Finally, the last major finding that was discovered in this study was how CYN itself served as a protective factor for participants' alcohol consumption. While little literature currently exists on how youth centres help adolescents to avoid or consume less alcohol, this finding was relatively expected as CYN houses a number of the major protective factors found within this study.

For instance, CYN has regular guest speakers and youth workers who provide cold hard facts and share personal stories around the dangers of consuming alcohol; and, they offer a great deal of fun activities, which keep youth occupied. Moreover, several participants identified how CYN is a safe place to go where they could socialize without consuming alcohol, and thus, avoid

the peer pressure to do so; as well as how the youth workers serve as good listeners and parental figures, whereby the participants felt comfortable enough to discuss their feelings and alcohol urges with them.

All in all, CYN appeared to be a notable protective factor for the participants at hand, as they unanimously agreed that it helped them avoid or reduce their level of alcohol consumption.

Having discussed the major results found within this study, the following section will now discuss several suggestions on how to make practical use of its major findings.

Implications

To begin, consuming alcohol to cope and out of peer pressure were significant problems amongst the participants. As previously mentioned, over half of them acknowledged that they have consumed alcohol to cope with various problems, and almost everyone reported that they had done so out of peer pressure as well. Therefore, it stands to reason that preventative programs on the West Coast of Newfoundland could consider these concepts upon program delivery. These concepts could be expanded upon in currently existing programs.

Likewise, presenters would do well to remember the advice that was given by the current participants while delivering these programs, which is to remain passive, provide the cold hard facts, and wrap up each section with a personal story.

It is also likely that these three pieces of advice would combat the participants' mentality of drinking for fun and pleasure. It is logical to presume that once youth are properly educated about the dangers of consuming alcohol, via their own advice, that they would be less likely to view it as a fun activity, and thereby, would cease or consume considerably less alcohol.

Moreover, it would further stand to reason that if adults encouraged youth to reflect upon their

own negative drinking experiences, as well as how alcohol has negatively impacted those closest to them, that they would likely cease or considerably limit the alcohol they consume as well.

Another prominent implication of the current research is how important it is to keep adolescents busy, so they will have less opportunities to consume alcohol. One way to do this is to encourage schools to offer extra-curricular and after school programs, while accounting for the diverse needs and interests of their students. Likewise, all levels of government are encouraged to invest in free, public recreational services, such as skateparks, swimming pools, outdoor movie nights, etc., in order to keep youth occupied and away from alcohol. Moreover, various levels of the government could also provide incentives to businesses to hire more part-time youth, whereby they would agree to pay half of their wages, for example, so youth would spend more time working, and have less time to attend events where alcohol is rampant.

Finally, youth centres like CYN are paramount in assisting youth to either avoid or considerably reduce their level of alcohol consumption, as they are likely to house most of the protective factors found within this study, as well as ways to combat the major risk factors. Therefore, youth unfamiliar with these services should be encouraged to attend them.

To summarize, it has been suggested that the concepts of drinking to cope and peer pressure should be targeted in Corner Brook; adults would do well to remember to remain passive (i.e., not preach), provide the cold hard facts, and wrap up their discussion with a personal story, where appropriate, when they attempt to educate youth on the dangers of alcohol, as well as encourage them to reflect upon their own and others' negative experiences with alcohol; and finally, youth should be kept busy and encouraged to attend youth centres. The following section will discuss the limitations of this study.

Limitations

The current study focused upon an in-depth exploration of several youth residing on the West Coast of Newfoundland. As such, the purpose was to understand the experiences of a small subset of participants. Therefore, the study is not necessarily generalizable, but instead offers a rich description of a few participants and their experiences with alcohol. Readers should be cautious in drawing generalizations or interpreting findings beyond the immediate study participants.

Another limitation was that all of the results were self-reported. That is to say, I had to trust that everything the participants said was accurate. Therefore, it is possible that some of the information may not have been accurately recalled. Moreover, these results have also yet to be empirically validated. Thus, as a whole, they must be interpreted with caution until these concepts are further researched. As well, given that I was previously employed by CYN, results need to be interpreted in this context. Participants may have been wary to completely share their stories with me due to my previous role with CYN.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

To summarize the major findings of this study as a whole, it was evident that the participants chose to consume alcohol either because they thought it was fun, it would help them cope with various problems, or because they were pressured into doing so; on the other hand, they also chose to avoid or consume less alcohol once they were educated on its dangers, kept busy, and had a safe place to go such as CYN.

Overall, these findings appear to be fairly conventional, with the exception of the protective potential of youth centres, and the three big pieces of advice that participants gave to

adults when they are trying to communicate the dangers of alcohol (i.e., remaining passive, providing the cold hard facts, and sharing a personal story).

As such, all of those who care for youth on the West Coast of Newfoundland, would do well to keep the major findings of this study in mind while attempting to guide youth away from consuming alcohol.

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Appendix A: Preamble and Research Questions

Thank you for coming in today, your time is greatly appreciated. There are just a few things I'd like to go over before we get started. So, you obviously know you're here today to be interviewed about any past experiences you might have had with alcohol – not about your current use or future plans, though, as that would be illegal. I would just like to know that I am not here to judge you today, nor will I be disappointed in anything you share with me. I know I used to work here, and that you still might see me as a youth worker, but that is not my role today. Today, I am just an outside researcher who is only interested in obtaining the facts for my thesis – that's it. In addition, I want you to know that everything you tell me today is going to be held in the strictest of confidence, but with a handful of exceptions. First, if you are 15 or 16 years of age, and I become aware, or have reasonable cause to suspect, that you or someone else you know is experiencing child abuse, or is in any clear and imminent danger, I have a duty to report those claims to Child, Youth, and Family Services, under the Children and Youth Care and Protection Act. However, if you are 17 or 18 years of age, and disclose any information suggesting that you or someone else is at risk of being harmed, I also will be ethically obligated to ensure your or someone else's safety, which may require me to report that information as well. Do you have any questions about that? Outside of those limitations, you can trust that only you, I, and my thesis supervisor (all the way out in St. John's) will know this information. And, you will only be identified through a pseudonym in my final report. For example, I would say, "Mr. Orange reported that he has never consumed alcohol." Would you like to come up with your pseudonym now? [Participant creates a pseudonym]. Great. Finally, know that you are free to leave at any point, and if I notice that you are becoming considerably distressed, I will stop the

interview and refer you to the Executive Director of CYN, Lisa Buckland, who is a registered social worker trained in crisis intervention. Okay, that about wraps up everything. Do you have any final questions? Great, now I would like to ask you some general questions about any experiences you may have had with alcohol...

Initial Questions:

- 1) First of all, have you ever consumed alcohol before? (If yes, proceed to question 2, if not, proceed to question 3).
- 2) Okay, so thinking back to a recent time you drank alcohol, what were some of the things that influenced you to drink the alcohol? (allow for response, then prompt: what were you thinking, how were you feeling, who was present, where were you, significant events happening in life that day)
- 3) Alright, so thinking back to a recent time you were able to resist drinking alcohol, what were some of the things that influenced you to not drink the alcohol? (allow for response, then prompt: what were you thinking, how were you feeling, who was present, where were you, significant events happening in life that day)

Now I would like to ask you some specific questions about your drinking:

Individual Factors

NOTE: questions 4-6 will be skipped if the participant has never drank before

- 4) Where do you tend to drink? What's happening when you drink?
- 5) Who tends to be present when you drink?

- 6) What are some things in your life that seem to push you to drink alcohol?
- 7) What are some things in your life that help you to avoid drinking alcohol?
- 8) Do you feel CYN has helped you avoid or reduce your level of drinking in any way?

Peer/Friend/Mentors Influences

NOTE: question 9 will be skipped if the participant has never drank before

- 9) How do your friends impact your drinking, or what role do your friends play in your drinking?
- 10) How do your friends influence you not to drink, or what role do they play in that decision, if at all?
- 11) How do adults in your life - who are not your parents/guardians – influence your drinking (or decision not to drink) (prompt: e.g., teacher, coach, preacher, CYN staff member, social worker)?

Family Factors

- 12) How do your parent(s)/guardian(s) influence your drinking/non drinking?

Thank you for taking the time to talk to me today... Do you have anything else you would like to add that we have not covered (about your drinking or) about the times you avoided drinking?

Any comments or feedback about the interview itself?

Thank you again...

Appendix B: Participant Consent Form

Risk and Protective Factors of Alcohol Consumption

Consent to Take Part in Research

TITLE: Risk and Protective Factors of Alcohol Consumption in Corner Brook, Newfoundland's Youth

INVESTIGATOR(S): This study is being conducted by Ernest Power as per the requirements of Memorial University's Masters of Education (Counselling Psychology) program. I am under the supervision of Dr. Gregory Harris (Professor, Faculty of Education).

You have been invited to take part in a research study. Taking part in this study is voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether to be in the study or not. You can decide not to take part in the study. If you decide to take part, you are free to leave at any time. Furthermore, upon request, any information collected up until that point may be destroyed; otherwise, it will continue to be used by the research team. This information will only be used for the purposes of this study.

Before you decide, you need to understand what the study is for, what risks you might take and what benefits you might receive. This consent form explains the study.

Please read this carefully. Take as much time as you like. If you like, take it home to think about for a while. Mark anything you do not understand, or want explained better. After you have read it, please ask questions about anything that is not clear.

The researchers will:

- discuss the study with you
- answer your questions
- keep confidential any information which could identify you personally
- be available during the study to deal with problems and answer questions

1. Introduction/Background:

'Teenage drinking' is a universal problem with countless damaging effects. Numerous studies have demonstrated a harmful connection between developing alcohol dependence later on in life; as well as, brain damage, and placing oneself at higher risk of engaging in drunk-driving, violence, sexual assault, and risky sexual behaviors. Thus, it is imperative to understand why, or why not, teens are choosing to drink, so that this behavior may be offset accordingly.

2. Purpose of study:

To explore the risk and protective factors of why teens aged 15-18 are choosing, or not choosing, to consume alcohol.

3. Description of the study procedures:

You will be interviewed in a private area (i.e., YMCA boardroom) on your past experiences with alcohol. This interview will be audio taped.

Version date: (1) April 3, 2016

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Participant's Initials: _____

4. Length of time:

Each interview will last approximately one hour.

5. Possible risks and discomforts:

If you are 15-16 years of age, and I become aware of any child abuse experienced, or of any clear and imminent danger to yourself or others, I have a duty to report those claims to Child, Youth, and Family Services (CYFS). However, if you are 17-18 years of age, and disclose information suggesting harm, I also will be ethically obligated to ensure your or someone else's safety, which may require the reporting of that information as well.

If you become noticeably distressed at any point during the interview, I will conclude the interview, and refer you to the Executive Director of CYN, Lisa Buckland, who is a registered social worker trained in crisis intervention.

6. Benefits:

It is not known whether this study will benefit you.

7. Liability statement:

Signing this form gives us your consent to be in this study. It tells us that you understand the information about the research study. When you sign this form, you do not give up your legal rights. Researchers or agencies involved in this research study still have their legal and professional responsibilities.

8. What about my privacy and confidentiality?

Protecting your privacy is an important part of this study. Every effort to protect your privacy will be made. However, it cannot be guaranteed. For example we may be required by law to allow access to research records.

When you sign this consent form you give us permission to

- Collect information from you
- Share information with the people conducting the study
- Share information with the people responsible for protecting your safety

Use of your study information

The research team will collect and use only the information they need for this research study.

Your name and contact information will be kept secure by the research team. It will not be shared with others without your permission. Your name will not appear in any report or article published as a result of this study.

Information collected for this study will be kept for five years.

Information collected and used by the research team will be stored on Ernest Power's encrypted external hard-drive, and the physical data will be stored in Dr. Harris' office in a locked filing cabinet. Ernest, along with Dr. Harris, are responsible for keeping it secure.

Your access to records

You may ask the researchers to see the information that has been collected about you. Upon request, we will provide a one-page written summary of our results.

9. Questions or problems:

If you have any questions about taking part in this study, you can meet with the investigators who are in charge of the study. These people are: Ernest Power and Dr. Greg Harris

Investigators' Email Addresses: epower@grenfell.mun.ca and gharris@mun.ca

Or you can talk to someone who is not involved with the study at all, but can advise you on your rights as a participant in a research study. This person can be reached through:

Ethics Office at 709-777-6974

Email at info@hrea.ca

This study has been reviewed and given ethics approval by the Newfoundland and Labrador Health Research Ethics Board.

After signing this consent you will be given a copy.

Signature Page

Study title: Risk and Protective Factors of Alcohol Consumption in Corner Brook, Newfoundland's Youth

Name of principal investigators: Ernest Power and Greg Harris

To be filled out and signed by the participant:

	Please check as appropriate:
I have read the consent form.	Yes () No ()
I have had the opportunity to ask questions/to discuss this study.	Yes () No ()
I have received satisfactory answers to all of my questions.	Yes () No ()
I have received enough information about the study.	Yes () No ()
I have spoken to Ernest Power and he has answered my questions	Yes () No ()
I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study	Yes () No ()
• at any time	
• without having to give a reason	
• and, that my information will be destroyed upon request	
I understand that it is my choice to be in the study and that I may not benefit.	Yes () No ()
I understand how my privacy is protected and my records kept confidential	Yes () No ()
I agree to be audio taped	Yes () No ()
I agree to take part in this study.	Yes () No ()

_____ Signature of participant	_____ Name printed	_____ Year / Month / Day
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_____ Signature of witness	_____ Name printed	_____ Year / Month / Day
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To be signed by the investigator or person obtaining consent

I have explained this study to the best of my ability. I invited questions and gave answers. I believe that the participant fully understands what is involved in being in the study, any potential risks of the study and that he or she has freely chosen to be in the study.

_____ Signature of investigator	_____ Name printed	_____ Year Month Day
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Telephone number: _____

Appendix C: Guardian Consent Form

Risk and Protective Factors of Alcohol Consumption

Consent to Take Part in Research

TITLE: Risk and Protective Factors of Alcohol Consumption in Corner Brook, Newfoundland's Youth

INVESTIGATOR(S): This study is being conducted by Ernest Power as per the requirements of Memorial University's Masters of Education (Counselling Psychology) program. I am under the supervision of Dr. Gregory Harris (Professor, Faculty of Education).

Your child/dependent has been invited to take part in a research study. Taking part in this study is voluntary. It is up to you to decide if he/she can participate in this study. Your child/dependent can also decide not to take part in the study. If you give your permission for your child/dependent to participate in the research, he/she is free to leave at any time. Furthermore, upon request, any information collected up until that point may be destroyed; otherwise, it will continue to be used by the research team. This information will only be used for the purposes of this study.

Before you decide, you need to understand what the study is for, what risks your child/dependent might take and what benefits you might receive. This consent form explains the study.

Please read this carefully. Take as much time as you like. Mark anything you do not understand, or want explained better. After you have read it, please ask questions about anything that is not clear. If you sign the form, please also know that I will call you to review the consent form with you before I interview your child/dependent.

The researchers will:

- Phone and discuss the study with you
- answer your questions
- keep confidential any information which could identify your child/dependent personally
- be available during the study to deal with problems and answer questions

1. Introduction/Background:

'Teenage drinking' is a universal problem with countless damaging effects. Numerous studies have demonstrated a harmful connection between developing alcohol dependence later on in life; as well as, brain damage, and placing oneself at higher risk of engaging in drunk-driving, violence, sexual assault, and risky sexual behaviors. Thus, it is imperative to understand why, or why not, teens are choosing to drink, so that this behavior may be offset accordingly.

2. Purpose of study:

To explore the risk and protective factors of why teens aged 15-18 are choosing, or not choosing, to consume alcohol.

Version date: (1) April 3, 2016

-1-

Participant's Initials: _____

3. Description of the study procedures:

Your child/dependent will be interviewed in a private area (i.e., YMCA boardroom) on his/her past experiences with alcohol. This interview will be audio taped.

4. Length of time:

Each interview will last approximately one hour.

5. Possible risks and discomforts:

If your child/dependent is 15-16 years of age, and I become aware of any child abuse experienced, or of any clear and imminent danger to themselves or others, I have a duty to report those claims to Child, Youth, and Family Services (CYFS). However, if they are 17-18 years of age, and disclose information suggesting harm, I also will be ethically obligated to ensure their or someone else's safety, which may require the reporting of that information as well.

If your child/dependent becomes noticeably distressed at any point during the interview, I will conclude the interview, and refer him/her to the Executive Director of CYN, Lisa Buckland, who is a registered social worker trained in crisis intervention.

6. Benefits:

It is not known whether this study will benefit you.

7. Liability statement:

Signing this form gives us your consent for your child/dependent to be in this study. It tells us that you understand the information about the research study. When you sign this form, you do not give up your legal rights. Researchers or agencies involved in this research study still have their legal and professional responsibilities.

8. What about your child's/dependent's privacy and confidentiality?

Protecting your child's/dependent's privacy is an important part of this study. Every effort to protect your child's/dependent's privacy will be made. However, it cannot be guaranteed. For example, we may be required by law to allow access to research records.

When you sign this consent form you give us permission to

- Collect information from your child/dependent
- Share information with the people conducting the study
- Share information with the people responsible for protecting your child's/dependent's safety

Use of your child's/dependent's study information

The research team will collect and use only the information they need for this research study.

You and your child's/dependent's name and contact information will be kept secure by the research team. It will not be shared with others without your permission. Your child's/dependent's name will not appear in any report or article published as a result of this study.

Information collected for this study will be kept for five years.

Information collected and used by the research team will be stored on Ernest Power's encrypted external hard-drive, and the physical data will be stored in Dr. Harris' office in a locked filing cabinet. Ernest, along with Dr. Harris, are responsible for keeping it secure.

Your access to records

You may ask the researchers to see the information that has been collected about the study. Upon request, we will provide a one-page written summary of our results.

9. Questions or problems:

If you have any questions about taking part in this study, you can meet with the investigators who are in charge of the study. These people are: Ernest Power and Dr. Greg Harris

Investigators' Email Addresses: epower@grenfell.nmun.ca and gharris@mun.ca

Or you can talk to someone who is not involved with the study at all, but can advise you on your rights as a participant in a research study. This person can be reached through:

Ethics Office at 709-777-6974
Email at info@hrea.ca

This study has been reviewed and given ethics approval by the Newfoundland and Labrador Health Research Ethics Board.

After signing this consent you will be given a copy.

Signature Page for Parent/Guardian

Study title: Risk and Protective Factors of Alcohol Consumption in Corner Brook, Newfoundland's Youth

Name of principal investigator: Ernest Power

To be filled out and signed by the parent/guardian:

Please check as appropriate:

- | | | |
|---|---------|--------|
| • I have read the consent form | Yes { } | No { } |
| • I have had the opportunity to ask questions/to discuss this study. | Yes { } | No { } |
| • I have received satisfactory answers to all of my questions. | Yes { } | No { } |
| • I have received enough information about the study. | Yes { } | No { } |
| • I have spoken to Ernest Power and he has answered my questions | Yes { } | No { } |
| • I understand that I am free to withdraw my child/dependent from the study | Yes { } | No { } |
| o at any time | | |
| o without having to give a reason | | |
| o and, that his/her information will be destroyed upon request | | |
| • I understand that it is my choice for my child/dependent to be in the study and that I may not benefit. | Yes { } | No { } |
| • I understand how my child's/dependent's privacy is protected and my records kept confidential. | Yes { } | No { } |
| • I agree for my child/dependent to be audio taped | Yes { } | No { } |
| • I agree for my child/dependent to take part in this study | Yes { } | No { } |

I consent for my child/dependent _____ to take part in this study.
Print Name

Signature of parent/guardian _____ Name printed _____ Year Month Day _____

Signature of person conducting the consent discussion _____ Name printed _____ Year Month Day _____

To be signed by the investigator:

I have explained this study to the best of my ability. I invited questions and gave answers. I believe that the parent/guardian fully understands what is involved in being in the study, any potential risks of the study and that he or she has freely chosen for the child/dependent to be in the study.

Signature of investigator _____ Name Printed _____ Year Month Day _____

To be signed by the minor participant

Study title:

Name of principal investigator:

Assent of minor participant:

I understand the purpose of this research

I understand that it is my decision to take part in this study. I can stop taking part if I chose.

I understand that taking part in this research may not help me.

I understand that there may be risks to participating in this study.

I agree that I will take part in this study

Signature of minor participant

Year Month Day

Name printed

Age