Alcohol consumption motives and consequences in the South Korean university student culture

Alina Angeliki Eleni Karellos
Master's Thesis
Social and Public Policy
Faculty of Humanities
and Social Sciences
University of Jyväskylä

ABSTRACT

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The purpose of the present study is to examine the connection between alcohol and student culture in the Korean university environment. More specifically I aim to shed light on the motives that guide drinking, as well as the social consequences related to it. I will approach the matters through the perspective of social identity theory and aspects of group behavior. In a more general level, the aim of this study is to understand the ways in which alcohol is connected to university environment and group behavior, in order to support the development of new approaches in policies controlling harmful drinking.

The research followed a qualitative approach with data collected during a student exchange semester in South Korea, in the latter half of 2017. All together seven semi-structured interviews were collected and analyzed through thematic content analysis.

The findings of this study indicate that alcohol consumption is strongly connected to the Korean student culture. Alcohol is used as a medium of bonding and in most socializing events. Its use enhances the sense of collectivism and group homogeneity. The drinking motives that emerged indicate that students participate in drinking activities to achieve a sense of belonging to the group, which will enhance their positive self-concept. Students not participating in drinking activities face negative social consequences that may endanger their position as a group member.

Keywords: alcohol, student culture, university, drinking motives, Korea, group behavior

CONTENTS

TABLE OF FIGURES

1. INTRODUCTION

Alcohol consumption has had different meanings and roles throughout the human history, from ceremonial and ritual uses to leisure time and as a medium of socializing in various situations. Despite alcohol being a substance consumed worldwide, drinking can have different notions and meanings in different cultural contexts. In some cultures, alcohol and its excessive use are connected with the concept of youth. At times alcohol can be associated with the new-found independence of young adults and can be used as a tool to express rebellion or carefreeness. For several young adults the first encounter with alcohol occurs when entering tertiary education, where drinking can be a big part of student life. Alcohol is used in student life as a tool for socializing and bonding however, excessive amounts of alcohol consumption can lead to unfortunate consequences. (Beccaria & Sande, 2003; Blane, 1979; Schulenberg & Maggs, 2002.)

This study aims to shed more light in the connection between alcohol consumption and student life in the Korean university environment. Since student culture and socializing holds a focal point in several students' academic life, the values and norms within it can play an important role in shaping their overall academic experience. By researching in which ways alcohol is connected to this academic experience, we gain a deeper understanding of individual and group behavior of students. Since the Korean society is deemed as generally permissive to alcohol consumption, while policies controlling it are not strict, it is important to study how this culture of alcohol appears in the tertiary education environment.

The Korean context

South Korean values and societal structures are a product of changes and long traditions throughout the country's history. From the Japanese colonization from 1910 to 1945, followed by independence in 1945, the Inter-Korean war from 1950 until this day and authoritarian regimes from the late 1950s to the late 1980s, to economic growth, the Republic of Korea has an eventful

history of societal changes. Throughout these changes some values have remained untouched while others have been adapted to new ones. Up to this day, collectivism is a prevalent value that encourages cooperation and harmony (Lee, Bell & Watson, 2007). In collectivist societies, which are to a large extent based on Confucian values, the individual is required to constantly acquire knowledge not only through academic achievements but also by actively participating in the community. Loyalty, brotherhood and collectivism are basic characteristics of Confucianism with individuals who are not responsive to the people and the community around them being considered as self-centered. (Tu, 1985.)

With the reconstruction of the modern Korean nation-state, collectivity was emphasized as the foundation of national well-being once again undermining the benefit of the individual. Thus, the newly constructed norms that were founded on the teachings of Confucianism, were imposed by the reformers to ensure national stability, meaning that the individuals and especially women, ought to sacrifice their personal interests for the common good. (Lowy, 2007.) Nationalism, which was the organizing principle of the modern Korean nation-state, resulted in cultural arrangements and societal structures that were highly hierarchical and the military culture that extends to practices into social life is still prominent in the everyday lives of Koreans to this day. (Choi, 2009; Kendall 2002.)

As collectivism is a value deeply rooted in the Korean society, there would be no reason to assume its lack of presence in the Korean university environment. In this study, the use of alcohol will be examined while taking into consideration the Korean societal context of collectivism and group behavior.

2. ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION AND STUDENT CULTURE

To gain a better understanding of the aim and the outcomes of this study, it is essential to go through the contextual framework of alcohol consumption and student life. In this chapter, I present information on alcohol consumption patterns, along with information on alcohol consumption in Korea. The framework of student life will also be presented in this chapter, with an emphasis on group behavior and integration into the academic environment. The connection between student life and alcohol consumption will also be discussed, with some references to previous studies. Finally, the connection between Korean university student life and alcohol consumption will be briefly presented. The information presented sets a foundation for a better understanding of the purpose of this research.

2.1 Alcohol consumption

The consumption of alcohol is known to be prevalent throughout human history, from ancient civilizations until the modern day. Alcohol consumption can be seen as part of religious rituals, a stress-reliever, a way of celebration or a tool to help individuals socialize. However, the physical, mental and social damages of excessive alcohol consumption have also been a focal point in the modern day society. Hazardous amounts of consumption lead not only to personal but also social consequences that governments aim to control by setting regulations and guidelines. (OECD, 2015.)

2.1.1 Patterns and motives of alcohol consumption

As the consumption of alcohol is one of the focal points of this study, it is essential to go through some key elements of alcohol consumption, such as drinking patterns and drinking motives. By patterns of drinking, we refer to the amount and the period of consumption of alcoholic beverages.

Drinking patterns can be divided to moderate, hazardous and Heavy Episodic Drinking (HED) or Binge drinking. (WHO, 2014.) While a common global guideline on the frame of hazardous consumption has not been agreed up on, each country has set regulations and guidelines on the amounts of alcohol that consist a standard drink and the hazardous drinking limits. The World Health Organization (WHO) has defined hazardous drinking as a pattern of consumption that increases the risk of causing harmful consequences for the user. A standard drink of 10 to 12 grams of pure alcohol and an average of three drinks for men and two for women has been implemented by several OECD countries (OECD, 2015). Binge drinking refers to consuming hazardous amounts of alcohol, at least 60 grams of pure alcohol as defined by the WHO, in one session in the past thirty days. Binge drinking increases the risk of acute consequences and the risk of injuries of the individual and the population. (OECD, 2015; WHO, 2014.)

As seen above, the consumption of alcohol does not fall under a single pattern and can be context dependent. The motives of the consumer often define the amount and the pattern of alcohol intake. Quite a common tool describing drinking motives is the four-factor motive (Cooper, 1994; Cox & Klinger, 1988). According to the motivational model of drinking, alcohol consumption relates to the motives of the individual to avoid negative sanctions or obtain positive rewards in the form of social approval. These motives are divided to internal and external motives. The internal motives include coping and enhancement motives and the external motives consist of social and conformity models.

Through social motives the individual consumes alcohol to attain positive social reward, such as being a part of the group and being socially accepted by their peers. Conformity motives on the other hand align with the need to avoid social rejection that might be ignited by not participating in drinking, thus being left out. (Cooper, 1994; Cox & Klinger, 1988.)

2.1.2 Alcohol consumption in Korea

Before going further into researching the impact of alcohol in the everyday lives of students, it is essential to understand the significance and the scale of alcohol consumption in Korea among the general population. Alcohol consumption and social life are strongly connected in the Korean culture. It is related to formal and informal socializing environments as it is a way of ensuring stronger group identity in a way of bonding or as a way of communication and overcoming the otherwise hierarchal ways of everyday life. (Choi, Park & Noh, 2016.) We could say that the connection of alcohol with the Korean society can also be seen through the types of alcohol consumed with 70% of alcohol consumed being beverages produced in Korea (WHO, 2014). The rate of alcohol consumption in the past has been significantly high, reaching 14.8 liters of pure alcohol per capita in 1980, with the OECD average being 11.4 liters. The WHO (2014) reported the total alcohol per capita consumption in Korea to be at 12.3 liters in 2008-2010, while the average of the Western Pacific Region was at 6.8 liters. However, the alcohol consumption rate has been decreasing ever since with recent data indicating that the average Korean consumption has decreased to 9.1 liters per capita, with the OECD35 countries average being 9.0 (OECD, 2017). In Korea, what is also significant is the aspect of heavy drinking with the average 20% of the drinking population consuming 66% of the overall alcohol consumed (OECD, 2015). Although alcohol consumption is more prevalent among the young male population with a college graduate degree, the overall amounts of consumption are higher among older males who are self-employed or in the agricultural industry (Sharpe, Abdel-Chany, Kim & Hong, 2001).

The Korean national definition of quantity in grams of pure alcohol contained in a standard drink is 8.5 g. The hazardous drinking limit national guideline is 14 units per week for men and 10 units for women. Concerning heavy episodic drinking, guidelines are yet to be defined. However in the Korean National Health & Nutrition Examination Survey, heavy episodic drinking was defined as 7+ drinks for men and 5+ for women. (OECD 2015.) According to the same survey conducted by Korean Institute for Health and Social affairs, drinking in general in the span of twelve months among consumers of both genders has not showed any significant difference in educational levels. Hazardous drinking, on the other hand, showed some variation as for men, the probabilities are significantly higher among lower educated men. For women the pattern is similar, although the

probabilities for hazardous alcohol consumption in general are significantly lower. (OECD, 2015.) In terms of socioeconomic status, the survey shows that hazardous drinking probabilities are significantly higher for members of the low and mid-low socioeconomic groups, while concerning moderate drinking, alcohol consumption is not related to socioeconomic status (Sharpe et al., 2001).

As of the regulations, the national legal minimum age for on and off premise sales is 19. In alcoholic beverage sales, there are no restrictive policies regulating sales connected to time and location (e.g. concerning the density of population), neither are there regulations on sales to intoxicated individuals (OECD, 2015). The Korean national maximum legal blood alcohol concentration for all driver categories is 0.05%. On to legally binding regulations, although there are some restrictions in advertising, product placement, sponsorship and sales promotion are not legally restricted (OECD, 2015).

2.2 University student culture and alcohol consumption

Student life and academic culture is a vast topic that can be discussed through various approaches. For this chapter, I present the context of student life in the aspect of group behavior and integration to the community, to emphasize specifically those notions that are used in this study and to set a framework for my data analysis and for the presentation of the results. In the latter part, I present information about alcohol consumption in student life, with an emphasis on previous studies researching the connection of drinking motives and norms and student life.

2.2.1 Student culture

For several students, studying at the university signifies a new beginning and a newfound independence. In some cases, it also signifies the start of a life as a young adult as opposed to the one of a student dependent on their parents. During this age of 17-22, young adults go in a phase of increasing emotional and economical independence from their parents, picking a profession,

confirming their gender and sexual identity, attempts to behave with social responsibility and that of shaping their own values and beliefs (Newman & Newman 1987; Pulkkinen 1988). This transition takes often place, when young adults start their journey as university students. This newfound university community consists of shared values and norms. According to Ylijoki (1998), these shared norms and values, which are created after long lasting traditions, shape the academic culture which in turn upkeeps collective values that fulfill academic and critical purposes. To integrate in this new community, freshmen ought to internalize these shared values in order to fit in. As Becher (1989) mentions, for a person aspiring to become a fully-fledged member of a new group, it is necessary to conform to the group's cultural rules. Agreeing with Becher, Ylijoki (1998) mentions that the full integration of the novices to the academic tribe, terms that she uses to describe freshmen and subcultures of the university environment, is achieved only through complying with the culture and the unwritten rules that extend outside the official academic curriculum.

Since integration to university life is not only achieved by abiding to formal rules related to academic studies, behavior and socializing that are taught outside the official curriculum are important (Ylijoki, 1998). The role of introducing this new code of conduct is often taken up by senior students of the faculty, who also have the role of guardians of the values of the academic culture. Consequently, senior students evaluate whether novices pass the evaluation of a fully integrated member of the academic clan. (Ylijoki, 1994.) Becher (1989) claims that in gaining membership of a specific sector of academia, loyalty plays a major role. Loyalty to the group's norms and traditions secures one's position as a member of the group. The customs and rules of conduct and forms of communication that are common for the in-group members secure the well-being and the longevity of the group. By not abiding to these rules, one risks his/her position as a group member. (Becher, 1989.) Ylijoki (1998) connects Harré's (1983) social and personal identity projects to the academic tribes and integration of novices. Through a social identity project, the individual gains membership of a group by accepting its traditions, values and beliefs through a procedure that Harré calls appropriation. Through social appropriation, the individual internalizes the identity virtues and the social heritage attached to the group they are integrating into as a way

to become a member of the community. Social appropriation is seen as a necessary tool for the individuals to attach themselves in different communities and through that to build their social identity. Ylijoki connects the social identity project with socializing in the academic environment, seeing that freshmen aim at shaping an academic identity by accepting the values imposed by their fellow students and seniors, therefore attaching themselves to their academic tribe. (Ylijoki, 1998.)

2.2.2 Student culture and alcohol

According to Osberg et al. (2010), freshmen entering student life can have varying preconceptions on the level of alcohol being involved in student culture. For some students alcohol can play a focal point in socializing, while for others it is not strongly associated with social gatherings (Osberg et al., 2010). Alcohol consumption in the tertiary education environment can, however, be the cause of unwanted side effects and alcohol related physical and social problems (Hingson, Zha & Weitzman, 2009; Knight et al., 2002). Due to the negative consequences excessive alcohol consumption might bring to one's life, it is important to get a good understanding in what ways and to which volume alcohol is used in the university environment. The connection between student life and alcohol has been studied from various vantage points with both quantitative and qualitative approaches. One of the ways to understand and consequently intervene in collegial alcohol consumption, is by researching to what extent it is connected with social norms. Previous studies (Borsari & Carey, 2003; Neighbors, Lee, Lewis, Fossos, & Larimer, 2007) have showed that descriptive and injunctive norms are directly and independently connected to drinking among tertiary education students.

A commonly reoccurring theme concerning drinking and norms is that of students overestimating how much their peers drink, which leads to having misconceptions on normative drinking behavior, thus drinking more to fit in. Overestimating what is the normative drinking amount can lead to heavy drinking which causes problem-drinking. (Lewis & Neighbors, 2006.)

In their research, Johnston and White (2003) researched how binge drinking among first year college students is connected with norms, self-efficacy and social identity. Their findings indicated that group norms that had to do with extensive alcohol consumption were configured by the student's identification with a specific group and were noted to be prevalent among students identifying more strongly with the reference group. Binge drinking was found to be predicted by factors such as peer pressure from important individuals in one's life. When examining binge drinking as normative behavior, it has been revealed that members belonging to a group considering binge drinking as a normative behavior were most likely to drink. However, the level of group norms affecting the individual was analogous with the level the individuals identified themselves with the specific group. (Johnston & White, 2003.) Alcohol consumption and its connection to injunctive norms was also studied by LaBrie, Hummer, Neighbors and Larimer (2010). In their research, LaBrie et al. (2010) investigated the connection between injunctive norms and alcohol consequences among college students. Interestingly, it has been evident that perceived injunctive norms connected to close friends and parents, as well as personal attitudes related to alcohol consumption are significant to consumption consequences. (LaBrie et al., 2010.)

The perception of alcohol's role in student life was researched by Osberg et al. (2010). The findings showed that individuals who internalize the importance of alcohol in student life are more likely to develop alcohol-developed problems. Drinking motives were found to be related to conceptions of college drinking culture. Social and enhancement drinking motives appeared more often among students who identified strongly with the notion that alcohol is closely connected with student culture. Using alcohol to achieve a better mood and social rewards were connected with internalized regarding college drinking culture. (Osberg et al., 2010.)

2.2.3 Korean university student life and drinking

Korean university student life, as many other aspects of social structures in Korea, is highly hierarchical. The element of military culture is also present in the student life in forms of violence and group discipline and in a generally oppressively hierarchical collective culture (Kwon, Nah,

& Moon, 2010). Alcohol consumption is often focal in the Korean student life with an estimated 90% of Korean university students drinking (Chun, 2002; Chung, 2007). As Jang, Sohn and Yu (2018) mention, the Korean university environment is permissive of excessive drinking behavior with students often boasting about large amounts of alcohol consumption. Korean collegial drinking rose as a problem already during the 1990s, when deaths caused by alcohol-related accidents and diseases reached approximately 1600 people between ages of 20 and 29 (Chun et al., 2012). More recently, Jang et al. (2018) mentioned that in their study 67% of the university student participants were classified as problem drinkers. These findings were mentioned to be in accordance with the findings of the Korean Alcohol Research Foundation, showing that Korean university students are a highly concentrated drinking population, seeing that university students drink more than the rest of the adult population on a monthly drinking basis (Jang et al., 2018).

The Korean educational system is highly competitive even in tertiary educational level, so researching possible correlation of high-level academic stress and alcohol consumption is important. In their study Jung et al. (2018) found alcohol consumption to be significantly related to stress among students. Contrary to these findings, Chung and Lee (2012) discovered in their study that examined the relation of alcohol and student stress levels that, although the drinking frequency was not significantly different between low and high stress level groups of students, high schoolwork related stress was not analogous to the alcohol consumption. Moreover, it was found that university students with lower stress level tend to drink more, and in positive situations and not as a coping mechanism. (Chung & Lee, 2012.)

Further on, in their study Choi, Park and Noh (2016) examined the correlation of social norms and drinking motives among Korean college students. The focus of this study was on social norms and on the external social and conformity drinking motives. According to the findings of this study, students tended to drink more and more frequently when they perceived that other students were likely to approve of a greater amount and frequency of consumption of alcoholic beverages. Social drinking motives were positively connected with the higher amounts of consumption, as those who drank to enhance social interactions with others drank more. Conformity motives were found to

be positively related to frequency of consumption, but negatively related to quantity. Students who drank to avoid social rejection drank more frequently but in smaller amounts. Interaction between social norms and drinking motives was also noted, and the interaction of injunctive and conformity motives was seen to be significantly related to the frequency of alcohol consumption. The correlation of injunctive norms and social motives was not significant but the interaction of descriptive norms and social motives was significant concerning both the frequency and the quantity of consumption. As Choi et al. (2016) indicated, South Korea is a collectivist society with more pronounced injunctive norms. Thus, campaigns targeting injunctive norms could be possibly effective in tackling drinking problems in tertiary education.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this third chapter, I will present the theoretical frameworks that were used in this study. I will start with an introduction of the main ideas of social identity theory and how it is connected to group behavior. In the second part of this theoretical framework chapter, I will introduce theories related to group behavior, such as social categorization theory, group norms and beliefs, and the black sheep effect. These theories will be used as essential tools in understanding how alcohol is connected to student life through group behavior and social identity.

3.1 Social identity

Identity is inarguably a big part of an individual's self-concept that guides and gives meaning of her/his existing in the society. While one's identities often tend to be divided in theory to personal, social and cultural identity, and positioned opposite to each other, the modern individual combines simultaneously several identities (Deschamps & Devos, 1998).

The concept of social identity was first introduced by Tajfel and Turner (1979) in the field of social psychology. Social identity is constructed through parts of self-perception that derive from social categories and groups that the individual is a member of (Dechamps & Devos, 1998). Social identity can also be relational and contextual as it is formed through social relations and self-perception in social context (Wearing, 2011). Through belonging to a group, the individual's emotional significance is enhanced, which is also why social identity is connected to the sense of belonging and the sense of being a part of the society. The social identity theory is built on three basic structures. The first one being that one seeks to attain and preserve a positive social identity that affects her/his self-esteem. According to Tajfel and Turner, individual positivity is one of the key elements driving an individual to gain a positive self-concept. When individuals fail to achieve positive self-concept by comparing themselves to other individuals, they seek to achieve this positive self-concept through intergroup comparison as members of a group. (Dechamps & Devos,

1998.) The second structure is that social identity is based on intergroup comparisons that take place between the group, that the individual is a member of, and other groups. The result of this comparison determines whether the identity is positive or negative. This comparison, that is conducted in order to satisfy the aforementioned need of a positive self-image, occurs, according to Turner (1975), with the benefit of a positive self-image through the positive group image. Through favoritism of fellow group members one can achieve an improvement of their social identity. Lastly, group members experiencing negative identity seek either to leave the group or, if that is not possible, they seek a positive distinction within the group in other ways. In other words, when the intergroup differentiations are proven not to be as beneficial, especially in the case of direct, strong interpersonal comparisons the individual sheds this group identity. (Dechamps & Devos, 1998.)

As the social identity of the individual consists of social features that are shared within a group of people, the members of the said group tend to create and share common backgrounds. The intergroup behavior aspect is focal while constructing one's social identity. The feeling of belonging in a group and the identity are formed by the very structure of intergroup differences thus making differentiation equally important to similarities. Interestingly, while whether the social identity of a certain group is positive or not, is dictated by the comparison with other groups, individual groups tend to identify their differences as favorable to their own group (Dechamps & Devos, 1998.)

Identity, be it personal or social, is societally preconditioned to exist and to guide individuals' actions and way of social interaction and functioning in the modern society (Deschamps & Devos, 1998). As the strength of one's social and personal identity are analogous, since they both satisfy the need of a positive self-image, it will be interesting to find out during this study the level to which personal and social identity is prominent in the drinking motives of the participants.

3.2 Group behavior

The human as a member of the community perceives himself by various vantagepoints, one of them being through social structure (Bokzanski & Tolkki-Nikkonen, 1990). According to interpretive sociology, the relationship between the individual and the society is created by interactions through routines, while attaching meanings to these interactions that are shaped by normative frameworks (Scott, 2015). In these normative routines and interactions, group behavior plays a major role, as explained by the social identity theory. In this second part of this chapter I will present contexts of group behavior that are linked to social identity.

3.2.1 Self-categorization and group prototype

According to the self-categorization theory, individuals tend to define and evaluate themselves through social categories that they deliberately categorize themselves into (Serino, 1998). During this categorization process, we have the appearance of cognitive representations of the self. These cognitive representations reflect the membership of individuals in groups. Since the individual is a part of several groups, there are also multiple representations of oneself. One can identify as being part of a group when the image of the self and the in-group prototype match (Marques, Paez & Abrams, 1998). By group prototype, we refer to the possible individual or group of people that upkeep certain images and values that hold a group together. Group prototypes guide the norms of actions in the group but also serve as a distinctive image of intergroup differences. Individuals identify with groups to the extent that they perceive a match between the self and the in-group prototype. (Bar-Tal, 1998; Marques, Paez & Abrams, 1998.)

3.2.2 Group norms

Social norms guide one's actions and perceptions of how they are supposed to behave in social environments. Norms can be divided to descriptive and injunctive. By descriptive norms, we refer to perceptions of how others behave and what is typical behavior. Injunctive norms refer to the

perception of what behavior is approved or disapproved by the peers. (Jacobson, Mortensen & Cialdini, 2011.) People intentionally talk about or signal what is and what is not normative in a group (Hogg & Reid, 2006). Group norms can serve as a guide of intergroup differentiation, but also as a guide that members use to judge in-group members and thus, to secure in-group's superiority (Marques, Paez & Abrams 1998). Related to alcohol consumption in university and collegial environment, descriptive norms relate to the quantity and frequency of drinking as well as the prevalence of drinking by others. In the case of injunctive norms, it is connected to how much others approve or disapprove of one's drinking habits. (Choi, Park & Noh, 2016; Hustad, Pearson, Neighbors & Borsari, 2014; Pearson & Hustadt, 2014.)

3.2.3 Group beliefs

Group beliefs refer to the convictions that members of a group share, and that define their groupness. Group beliefs are important because they build the concept of togetherness and group confidence and enhance group stability. They also define the boundaries of the group and its distinction among other groups. Accepting a group's beliefs, the individual accepts the membership in the group. (Bar-Tal, 1998.)

Often, the group beliefs define the norms of the group, which are then accepted in the group as the truth and the guideline of action. However, group beliefs can be a source of in-group imbalance, since questioning said prevalent norms and beliefs can bring instability to the group's confidence and thus, its reason of existence. Thus, groups use various mechanisms to maintain the members' high confidence in group beliefs. In this case, the consumption of alcohol among students could be assumed to be a mechanism of group boding and belief enhancement. (Bar-Tal, 1998.)

3.2.4 Black sheep effect

What is crucial in a group's stability, is in-group homogeneity. In order to achieve that, in-group members need to identify with the group beliefs and norms. As mentioned above, group norms

and beliefs guide acceptable in-group behavior that members are expected to comply with. During the in-group interaction, any norm deviant behavior is frowned up on and strongly discouraged, as it can be hazardous to the group's image and stability. In-group members with deviant behavior can experience the Black Sheep Effect. (Marques & Paez, 1994.)

According to the black sheep effect, members of a group tend to judge more favorably outgroup members with deviant behavior than in-group members with also deviant behavior. At the same time, qualities of in-group members that are favorable are exaggerated against positively qualified outgroup members. The black sheep effect is connected to the social identity theory and the need of the individual for a positive self-image that can be achieved by identifying with positive values of a group. The deviant in-group members tend to distort the dominant unison and beliefs, altering the group unity and thus endangering the group stability and subsequently the positive self-image of the individual. The black sheep of a group is seen as a more hazardous and threatening person than outgroup members with analogous behavior. Subsequently, the good values of in-group members who serve as the group prototype, are exaggerated focusing on reconstructing the sense of common beliefs, norms and group values, achieving group stability and validity. (Marques & Paez, 1994; Marques, Paez & Abrams, 1998.)

4. RESEARCH PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

In this chapter I will introduce the research purpose and the research questions that will be answered later on. This chapter will also be an overview of the research methods chosen for this study as well as of the procedure I followed and the decisions I had to make during this process. Finally, I will go over to the ethics involved in a research project and how ethical guidelines were implemented in this study.

4.1 Research purpose and questions

Alcohol consumption can be seen as a medium of socializing, a stress reliever or a way to avoid social sanctions. However given the downsides that excessive alcohol use can bring to one's life, it would be crucial to understand how big a role alcohol plays in socializing in the university student environment. While being a student in different countries, and seeing different aspects of student culture and ways of bonding including alcohol, I became interested in researching the ways alcohol is involved in the Korean university environment. It is important to understand the perceptions of students on alcohol consumption in the university environment in order to think of possible methods to tackle risks and harms from excessive use of alcohol. The purpose of this research is not to form a generally accepted overall view about the patterns of drinking among the Korean student population, but through a qualitative approach to understand the perceptions of reasons of drinking among students themselves. Based on my research interest and the previously existing literature, the research question of this study is formed as follows:

What are the motives and social consequences of drinking in the Korean University environment?

Through this research question, I intend to shed light to the reasons and motives of drinking alcohol in the university environment. More specifically, I am interested to know how students perceive

alcohol consumption. Furthermore, I aim to discover the possible social consequences of alcohol consumption, whether positive or negative as perceived by the students themselves, as well as the possible social consequences for students who do not take part in alcohol consumption related activities. By discovering the level of importance that alcohol holds in the university environment, we can get a good understanding of the ways university students socialize, and suggest possible alternatives to tackle harmful consequences of excessive alcohol consumption.

4.2 Qualitative research

"Qualitative research aims at understanding the phenomenon or event under study from the interior. It is the view of one subject or of different subjects, the course of social situations (conversations, discourse, processes of work), or the cultural or social rules relevant for a situation which you would try to understand." (Flick, 2006, p. 74)

As seen from the definition given by Flick above, with the help of a qualitative research approach, an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study can be achieved. Taking into account the sensitive and somewhat intimate nature of the issues discussed in this study, as well as the fact that the main goal of this study is to understand the nature of drinking patterns and context, the qualitative research approach was deemed appropriate. Through qualitative research, the subjective viewpoints that are formed by several social backgrounds are given a chance to be heard (Flick, 2006). Furthermore, Flick (2006) states that analyzing cases that are situated in a specific place and timeframe, through examining the subject's activities in their local contexts is achieved through a qualitative approach. Gray (2014) claims that, through qualitative research, a deeper understanding of the issue studied is attained, taking into account the context in which the subjects under study act. According to Creswell (1994), qualitative research is an appropriate method for topics of explorative nature and for studies that do not seek to test and validate pre-existing theories. As the purpose of this research is to explore the drinking habits of university students and not to test a theory, the qualitative approach was deemed appropriate. As Flick (2006) claims,

narratives that are limited by time and situation are required in research because the rapid social change is bringing social researchers in new contexts, and qualitative research can be used for those contexts. As in qualitative research there is not one specific pattern of procedure, but various traditions involving ways to collect data and analyze it, it is important for the researchers to choose appropriate tools that will help them recognize various perspectives that enhance their study and that will help them bring across the message they want to relay (Creswell, 1994; Flick, 2006). The methods and tools used for this this study have been selected after careful consideration and will be described further below.

4.3 Semi-structured interviews

In qualitative research, there are several methods for data collection, and it is up to the researcher, based on the aim of the study, to choose the right tool to conduct a study. The data collection tool selected for this study is semi-structured interviews. In semi-structured interviews, there are no specific closed questions but the researcher guides the discussion with guiding questions, without limiting the interviewees answers. In semi-structured interviews the discussion is focused on specific themes, that are the same for every participant. (Flick, 2006.) As Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2018) mention, the flexibility of interviews as a data collection method enable the researcher to clear up misunderstandings and make clarifications as the discussion takes place. Additionally, one of the benefits of interviews as a data collection method is that during the information gathering process, the researcher can gather some of the motives behind the answers or make clarifications and ask the interviewees to justify or clarify their answers (Hirsijärvi & Hurme, 2017). The interviewees are free to express themselves on the topic and the discussion is guided by their answers. Through the intimacy of one-on-one interviews, it was possible to get a more personal opinion from the participants and discuss opinions on matters that the students might not be able to express openly in the fear of the opinion of their peers. Through semi-structured interviews, some themes were maintained throughout the discussion. However, the participants

were free to discuss their opinions freely on the subjects discussed. The questions posed by the interviewer were open-ended, to give room for the participants to express themselves in the best way they saw suitable and elaborate freely on the topic.

4.4 Data collection and participants

Finding suitable participants for this study was of primary importance for its success. The university environment was familiar, since I was part of the student body as an exchange student for the fall semester 2018. Even before arrival, while applying for the exchange, the host university staff were informed of my intentions to research their students and to find interviewees for this study. One of the initial barriers that I was called to overcome, was that of language. Due to my lack of fluency of Korean language, it was deemed necessary the interviews to be conducted in English, thus finding interviewees fluent in English was crucial. The student body of the host university was large, thus narrowing down the number of participant candidates was also necessary. I decided that the best approach would be contacting students through courses and activities involving speaking English. Courses conducted in English that were aimed at both Korean and international students, thus securing a better possibility of finding English-speaking students, were the first source of participants. I approached faculty staff of said courses and explained the purpose and aim of my study, asking for permission to approach the students by making announcements or getting possible recommendation from the staff. After the announcement, that explained the ways in which the study was to be conducted as well as the requirements for participants, students volunteered to be interviewed. The second source of participants was an extracurricular language exchange student club. I approached the president of said club and after explaining my task, I was able to approach a few volunteers. Overall, seven students volunteered to participate in this research.

For this study, the focus was on female university students. The focus on female students, as mentioned further above was for several reasons. Primarily, I was interested in discovering

whether gender is somehow specifically shown during alcohol consumption, as a phenomenon perceived by the students themselves. Furthermore, by specifying the subjects of the study by gender I aim for a deeper understanding of the topic, without having to take into account possible differences in perceptions caused by gender itself. The participants interviewed are female students between the ages of nineteen and twenty-three. The participants are all undergraduate students, in various stages of their studies, varying from sophomore to students near the end of their studies. As of the educational background, the participants are from various departments and majors such as Global Studies, Sociology, Business and Arts and Culture. The selection of interviewees includes drinkers and non-drinkers, as I deemed it important to include perceptions from both sides for a better understanding of drinking habits and motives as expressed by both sides.

After the initial approach and contact information exchange, the interviews were scheduled. The interviews took place in the university campus facilities through the course of 3 weeks. Before starting the interview, the participants were once again informed about the purpose of this study, and the procedure that would follow. A consent form explaining the privacy and anonymity procedures was presented and clarifications were made when needed. After signing the consent form, the interviewees were informed that notes would be taken and the interviews would be recorded for research purposes. The duration of the interviews varied, with the shortest one being twenty-six minutes and the longest fifty-five minutes long. Since the interviews followed a semi-structured pattern, the discussion was open and the participants were asked to express their own opinions on the topics asked. As an opening, the interviewees were asked general questions on topics like alcohol consumption and Korean culture, and later on the questions were more specific, according to the topics of interest of this research. All interviews were conducted in English without obstacles, and translation mobile applications were used by the interviewees when needed.

4.5 Method of data analysis

Choosing the suitable data analysis method is crucial for the success of the vision of the researcher. One of the purposes of qualitative data analysis is to help the researcher reduce the large amount of data collected and to form certain categories and themes that will later be interpreted (Creswell, 1994). As there are several qualitative data analysis methods, depending on the approach of the researcher chooses to take, it is important to use the method that will bring forwards the matters that the researcher seeks to discuss. In the qualitative research approach, data analysis is a recursive process with the researcher getting familiar with the data in several stages comparing sections of it until they become familiar with the contents; it is a constantly developing process. (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Grbich, 2013). Creswell (1994) mentions that, while proceeding to data analysis, the researcher needs to be flexible with the findings and consider unexpected results or findings that differ from the expected ones. The procedure of analysis is one of comparing and contrasting the data (Creswell, 1994).

For this study, the most appropriate method to be used as a tool to analyze the collected data was thematic analysis, seeing that one of the goals is to identify themes and patterns of alcohol consumption in student life. By using thematic data analysis, the researcher dissects the qualitative data into smaller patterns that can then be described in detail and into themes that then are compared to each other. (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018.) Due to the idiosyncratic nature of thematic analysis, there are no commonly specific rules as to what a theme or a code consists of (Grbich 2013). In general a theme can consist of features that are common in the answers of most participants. The themes can emerge by the guided interview themes or they can emerge throughout the data, and they are interpretations of the researcher on repeated patterns of meaning found throughout the data. (Braun & Clark, 2006; Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2017.) What is important, according to Flick (2006), is the interpretation of the data and the outcome of the themes, as interpretation is the primary tool to theory development of the research. Thematic analysis was also deemed suitable for this research because it is not tied to a specific theoretical framework, but is versatile and can be used by different approaches depending on the interpretation. (Braun & Clarke, 2006.) For this research, I decided to take an inductive approach

in this thematic analysis. In the inductive approach, the themes emerge from the data and not from a pre-existing theoretical frame or preconception. (Braun Clarke, 2006.)

The first step taken after each data collection session was preliminary data analysis. Through preliminary analysis of the interviews I gained a better understanding of the topics discussed and possible underlying themes that emerge at a first glance. (Grbich, 2013). Listening to the recorded interviews while taking notes made it possible for me to decide whether the amount of data collected was satisfying and whether the data was inclusive of all the topics that were discussed. The phase of preliminary data analysis was followed by that of data transcription. The transcribed interview material was overall 60 pages. Through the process of transcription I was able to get even more familiar with the contents of the interviews. After transcription, that data was read thoroughly and notes were taken. With the research questions in mind, I segmented the most interesting patterns in the data, to narrow down its vast amount. Initial codes were made on key phrases or responses, which were all later on grouped and attached to a larger labeled theme. The themes that emerged were re-evaluated and some changes were made, by adding some of the codes or slightly altering them. The themes that emerged were codes and patterns that appeared to be interesting, relevant, and meaningful for the purpose of this study. (Boyatzis, 1998.) Finally, after attaching overarching labels to the themes, they were conceptualized and linked with theory and literature. (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Grbich, 2013)

4.6 Ethics

While conducting a study, an aspect that should be always be taken into account is that of ethics. According to Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2018), ethics are connected to research in two ways. First, through the results that will lead to ethical decision making and, second, through decisions that have to be made during the research process. The tools that researchers are allowed to use and the line that ethics are taken into account are discussed when talking about ethics. The Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity (TENK, 2012) has set some guidelines for Responsible conduct of research and procedures for handling allegations of misconduct in Finland, which guide

researchers towards an ethical code of conduct. Meticulousness and transparent accuracy throughout the research process are mentioned to be crucial during a research project. Ethical data acquiring methods and citing appropriately, thus giving other researchers credits for their work, are also focal for a responsible conduct of research. (TENK, 2012.) By complying with these guidelines, the researcher adds credibility to the results of the research and ensures high scientific quality.

On to more specific technical aspects of research, the methodology used also comes with decisions concerning ethics that have to be taken. Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2017) mention that when choosing interviews as the method of data collection, the study has to deal with multifaceted ethical aspects. The researchers should be aware of the ethics aspects they might come across during the whole process, even before the start of the research. Due to the nature of the qualitative research approach, there are no specific fixed steps, however there are some norms and guidelines concerning research conduct that are valid throughout the research process. Ethical decisions have to be taken throughout the research process, from planning to interviewing and finally to reporting of results. Before the interviews, the participants need to be informed of the purpose of the study, their position in it and the respect of their anonymity. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2017.)

For the current study, the multifaceted ethical guidelines were taken into consideration. For the theoretical aspects, careful citing and referencing was applied, in order to credit the rightful owners of intellectual property. During data collection, the participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their role in it. The participants were given a consent form with their rights and guidelines that will ensure their anonymity throughout the process of this study. A copy of the consent form was offered for every participant. While explaining the context of the study, no information was hidden while simultaneously making sure that the information given would not guide the answers of the participants. In the phase of transcription, the answers of the participants were meticulously transcribed with accuracy while concealing possible information that might give away their identity, such as their names or names of staff of the faculty. Lastly, anonymity and respectful reporting of the results was applied.

5. RESULTS

The purpose of this chapter is to present the results of the thematic data analysis. While analyzing the interview data, several interesting themes emerged. Overall, three themes will be presented with their respective subthemes. The first theme will set the context of the occasions that alcohol consumption takes place in Korean university life. Through that, we will gain a better understanding of where and when drinking activities mostly take place and how the students connect alcohol with student life. The second theme will delve into the motives of alcohol consumption of students and how the motives emerging are connected to the literature. Finally, the theme of social consequences of drinking will be presented. I will present the possible social consequences that a student unable to participate in drinking activities might face as well as the methods that students adapt to these situations.

5.1 Occasions of drinking

Before delving further into the results of the data analysis, it was deemed necessary to set a context of occasions and circumstances under which alcohol consumption takes place in the university environment as mentioned by the students themselves. By understanding the environment and the circumstances in which alcohol is consumed in the students' culture, we can further understand how the drinking motives are connected to it.

Alcohol is consumed in events and occasions that have bonding as their main aim. These events can be casual outings between friends, but also official events organized by each major's student council in order to welcome the freshmen in the beginning of each school year, or ceremonial events at the beginning and the end of every semester. The most frequently mentioned event was Membership Training (MT). MTs are events organized in the beginning of the school year by the

student body, and they can last from one day to several days. They play an important role in socializing and enhancing the bond of the freshmen cohort. As mentioned by nearly every interviewee, alcohol is heavily involved in Membership Training events.

> *"[…] In Korea we always go to MT uh.[…] So MT is like we go to the beach, so we stay there for one night and two days so what we do is to drink. Only drink (laughs) we play games drink while we, while we play games with drink. Yeah so during the freshman year we drink a lot we drink a lot. Especially in MT or there is kind of kejong and chongchong. So kejong means kegangchonge, so the start of the semester, and chongchong means the end of the semester. So we drink at the start of the semester and the end of the semester. Yeah that is the two biggest drinking season of university life" (Interview 5)*

These organized events appear to be something normative as they hold the role of a tradition in student life. The nature of alcohol consumption as a tradition can also be assumed as the students refer to drinking seasons. Other events mentioned were in-campus festivals that at occasions are even sponsored by alcohol production companies, and celebratory events in the beginning and the end of the semester. Advertisements of alcoholic beverages were described to be seen in the student campus during festivals. By having festivals sponsored by alcohol production companies in the university environment, we can see that alcohol is deeply engraved in the university environment not only unofficially but also under the surveillance of the institution, thus making it normative. The events mentioned above were reckoned as an important part of socializing and bonding with the rest of the student body.

> *"[…] At first I entered university I went to the freshmen camp before March, in February and we, we met all of sophomore or third grade and fourth grade students in our major and communicated with each other and with alcohol, some people. […] And freshmen camp or any, any like before the start of the semester, the first semester and the second semester we have uh regular meetings. At one semester one meeting" (Interview 1)*

Since it appears that alcohol is closely related with the university bonding culture we could say that through these events, the newcomers of the student body are introduced to the acceptable group norms and are guided to the acceptable ways to act as a member of the group. The role of the student is bestowed up on the freshmen, who through alcohol consumption activities, accept the newly introduced group norms (Becher, 1989; Ylijoki, 1998).

5.2 Drinking motives

On to motives for drinking, four main themes emerged from the data analysis (figure 1). These four themes consist of drinking for bonding purposes, forced drinking, drinking as a stress reliever and finally, drinking to overcome social awkwardness.

Bonding	Forced drinking	Stress Relief	Overcoming social awkwardness
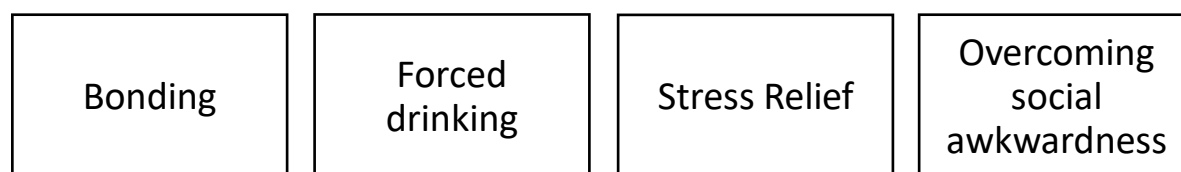
Figure 1. The four emerging drinking motives

5.2.1 Bonding

The first theme that emerged was that of drinking for bonding purposes. Drinking to form social connections or bonding with fellow students was mentioned in the responses of the interviewees. From the data analysis it occurs that alcohol is used as a medium of bonding between the members of student groups, or as a way to establish social connections in a new environment. It has been especially prominent in the case of first year students.

"[…] But if there any gatherings for the sake of making friends or for fun or social connections or networks or social networks then chances are high that, that kind of gathering always has beer and alcohol" (Interview 5)

As mentioned in several cases by the interviewees, the bonding gatherings are important to establish new social connections with classmates and older members of the student body, which is important later on in the academic career of a student.

"[…] Because when you go to university, you meet so many new people who are like from new regions new people new sexes or new diversities so people want to get along as I already said the bonding. […] Like there is as you know bonding. And it's easy to say like let's go get some beer that really makes people easy to talk about things, so If you don't know someone but you want to be their friend. We don't usually say let's go to café or let's go for coffee but usually they say let's go for beer or let's go for soju" (Interview 4)

Alcohol was also described as a medium to bond and get closer to colleagues and people one is not close with. Whether the relationships formed through drinking are genuine was doubted in some cases, however participating in these bonding events was considered to be important by the interviewees. It has been described that consuming alcohol with fellow students helps establishing deeper relationships, as with alcohol, people tend to open up and talk about things that in turn help bonding.

5.2.2 Forced drinking

The second drinking motive that emerged is that of forced drinking. The term forced drinking was chosen to depict situations that the students described as situations where drinking cannot be avoided if the individual wants to maintain good social relationships. Being forced to drink or being unable to refuse to drink has been a frequent motive throughout the interviewees' responses. Some interviewees directly connected this phenomenon to hierarchy being prominent in the Korean society that can also be seen in the university environment, while others explained it as a practice closely connected to student culture.

"B: [...] Yeah. I think it's good to drink a lot with clear mind, cause there are many situations where you should have to drink a lot not and not by my own decision (laughs) [...] when we first get in college and first get in university, there are some situations that upper graders give glasses keep giving glasses and just drink lot
A: And you cannot refuse?
B: It can but these situations are a bit mmh not be well to refuse" (Interview 3)

In forced drinking, the older students virtually force the younger students to partake in alcohol consumption as a part of the freshmen's initiation process to the student body. From the quoted text above we can see that refusing to drink is not advised, thus making complying with the requests of senior colleagues important.

"[...]So university and alcohol always go together so when you, as soon as you enter the university you are asked to and required to drink. Especially ah when you are a freshman. When you're a freshman uh (laughs) you have to drink because seniors and sophomores ask you to drink. We don't know why but it's kind of for fun. So we see freshmen drink (laughs) and we kind of have some fun watching them drink. Uh when they hate but (laughs) when we see them struggling (laughs). So it is kinda for fun. So it's kind of culture" (Interview 5)

One could say that through forcing freshmen to drink, senior students enforce the image of hierarchy and ranking in the social group. Forcing new students to drink seems to be interpreted as something harmless and as part of the student life tradition. Maintaining and respecting the hierarchical culture that is also prominent in the university environment is important in order to remain on the good side of the seniors.

"[...]And I think some years before there were serious problems of drinking alcohol that led to some deaths in MT because they were asked to drink too much and they can't really refuse because the, I guess they fell a little bit of hierarchy having an older person saying like "you should drink" or something like that. [...] I guess because of Korea's long tradition of having Confucianism in the society is kind of brought in the culture sometimes. Uh I guess because as you could see we already call (each other) not by names in a normal situation we call by their ranks. Like Sunbae means somebody who already came in to the college and hoobae means somebody who is coming, who is under people that are already

came, they just came in. And normally that means there is an age difference. I don't, I think there we see, there is a lot of uhm something that is culture in enforced that we call age in Korea [...] I guess we put a lot of emphasis on age still" (Interview 7)

The reasons for forced drinking were not clearly described by the interviewees, however hierarchy was described as an accepted part of the student culture. Furthermore, strong hierarchical relationships in the university environment have been described as a part of the general Korean culture. Even though social events are aimed at socializing and bonding between new students and their senior colleagues, we can see that hierarchal relationships are not abandoned even when drinking. Alcohol is being used as a tool to for the senior students to impose their authority to the group and ensure homogeneity. Finally, the forced aspect of drinking has been described as a negative but somewhat prominent aspect of the student drinking culture.

5.2.3 Stress relief

The third theme that emerged from the data was that of stress relief. By grouping the instances where the interviewees talked about either academic stress or stress in general, it became apparent that stress and the attempt to remove it can also be a motive for drinking. Alcohol consumption was described as a method to break free from stress caused by various factors. The theme of alcohol as a stress reliever occurred mostly connected with academic performance pressure or stress related to societal expectations. Alcohol consumption was also mentioned as a way to collectively to release stress in a major-specific environment after finishing an important academic task.

"[...] and as you listened my major is art culture and image and that is the major who take films and well, it's very harsh to make films with students' power. Like we have to borrow places, we have to get actors, we have to write scenarios, but we don't have money. And while filming the movie, it takes so many harsh things or so many struggles and after filming they just drink over, and yeah to get over their stresses so especially my major it's really really connected because it's a really really alcoholic thing. When we screen our movies after one year like December 22nd or 23rd we have their screening. And after that they drink like all day, like till tomorrow. And they are all like alcoholic and being jerks.

And they someone cries someone laughs someone fights, you know. So major, yeah my major is connected with alcohol" (Interview 4)

When talking about stress, the interviewees mentioned academic performance stress accumulated throughout the years. It was stated that Korean students are under pressure to perform well academically since middle school in order to achieve the best results in their Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) and get a position in a prestigious university. Moreover even after entering university, students mentioned that the pressure to achieve good academic scores is still high, in order to get good job opportunities after graduation.

"[…] yes to summarize everything (it's) because Korean university students have a lot of stress about their future because they study, they always study for SAT in every middle school, high school for the SAT but entering the university there is no hope for future and no one tells them "you just go there" or "you can do it you can do all of it", only just say "study for the officer government" (Korean word) you know?[…] public service and every family or every society said this because this is uhm this is not dangerous for their future so… but we don't want this situation, we want more freedom, we want to study more for what our dream is, our own dream, our own future but this society or family or every circumstance is not fit? so… students have stress and this point so to remove this stress they drink alcohol" (Interview 1)

The Korean educational system was described as highly competitive and the students described themselves to be suppressed in order to perform well. University life was also seen as an opportunity to release the accumulated stress before re-entering the competitive cycle of job seeking after graduation.

5.2.4 Overcoming social awkwardness

The last theme emerging from the data was that of drinking to overcome social awkwardness in situations where good social skills were required and socializing is crucial. Anxiety and stress induced by the pressure to make social connections seemed to be tackled with the use of alcohol in big social events. Students mentioned that while being shy, participating in the student

gatherings involving alcohol helped them be active and participate in bonding activities, thus overcoming possible social awkwardness. By overcoming shyness and being able to socialize the students are able to ensure their position in the group and participate in activities actively.

> *"Yeah actually, in my case I usually like I'm shy person internal person how can I say introvert. Yeah introvert, so I do not like, talk more comfortably to seniors without alcohol yeah. But after drinking I can say what what I want to say like in a normal way. Yeah so it is the alcohol makes people more like extroverted and it is not too bad, it is really good for shy people for making good relationships" (Interview 2)*

As in the theme of bonding, drinking was mentioned to be a tool to help the students form deeper and more meaningful relationships, which would be difficult without alcohol when the individuals are not familiar with each other. By getting familiar with fellow students, the individual can gain more options for socializing and integrate in the new social group when entering the new university environment.

> *"[...] and if you are asking why all students' events contain involve alcohol thing, I think people think University students here, uh... we are shy actually. We are shy. So if with beer I think people are less shy and they are starting to have a conversation with other people that they don't know. So beer itself is kind of catalyst, a fuel for the atmosphere to be brighter and enjoyable. Mhm so I think that is a role of the beer and alcohol" (Interview 5)*

Alcohol was described as a tool to overcome initial anxiety and awkwardness and as a fuel to kick off bonding in formal settings, and more particularly between individuals who are not familiar with each other. Interviewees described alcohol consumption between individuals with low levels of familiarity as being helpful. Despite that, it was also described that, once the initial awkwardness is surpassed and familiarity is achieved, alcohol is not as important in building relationships, even among shy students. Some participants questioned the genuineness of relationships formed through drinking between two individuals, as well as the effectiveness of drinking to overcoming social awkwardness. Alcohol consumption helps the individuals to overcome the initial social awkwardness but, however, the effects are mentioned not to be permanent. The process of drinking

was mentioned to be something that has to be repeated several times in order to permanently overcome social awkwardness between two people.

> "*Well, I think that's because it's easy to forget about their mistakes or awkward things with alcohol because I know you are drunk and I am drunk and we can say all about our things. It's it can be happening in a café or coffees but, you know it's like more easy. People, I think nowadays Korean people do not want to be stressed out because of people relationships, so I think that's an easy thing. But of course […] it's not good because they get to be really really best friends forever in that alcohol place but tomorrow they will be awkward relationship again. But they know they feel awkward together so they drink again and they become friends and they get awkward and they, and finally they will be friends after a few times of that places […]" (Interview 4)*

Overall, we can see that in the theme of drinking to overcome social awkwardness, alcohol is perceived as a useful tool that brings positive consequences for the individual's personal motives and enhances the mood of the group.

5.2.5 The four-factor drinking motives

From all of the above, we can see that naming one single pattern of drinking motive is not possible. The four-factor drinking motive model (Cooper, 1994; Cox & Klinger, 1988) can describe the themes that emerged from the discussion with the students. The motives that emerged were both internal and external motives that help the students achieve personal positive rewards as well as avoid social sanctions as Cox and Klinger (1988) mention. By examining the internal motives that include consuming alcohol for enhancement and coping reasons, we can include two of the main patterns that emerged in this study (figure 2).
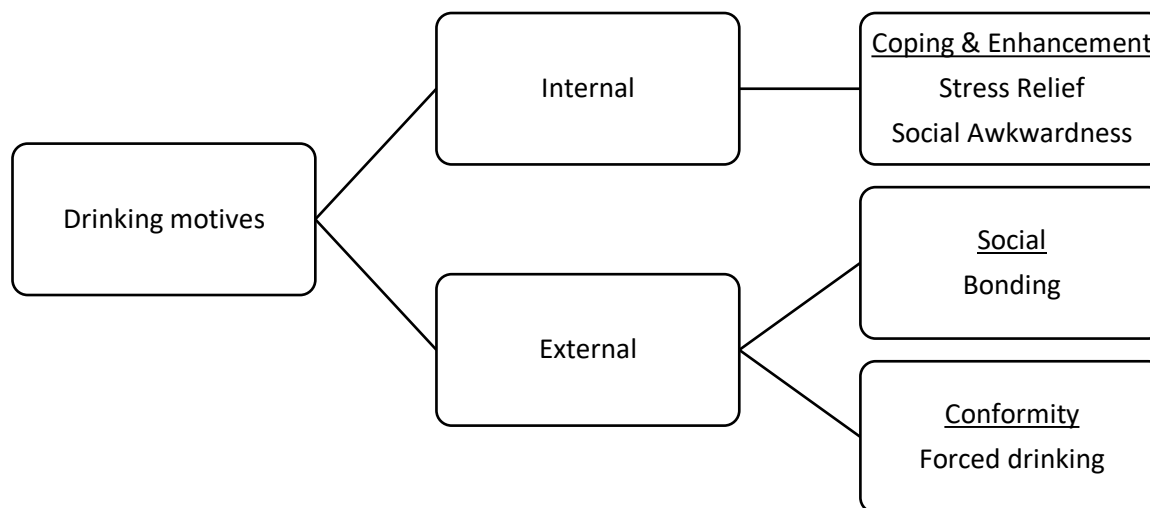
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┌─────────────────────┐                    ┌──────────────────────────┐
│                     │     ┌──────────┐    │  Coping & Enhancement    │
│                     │─────│ Internal │────│      Stress Relief       │
│  Drinking motives   │     └──────────┘    │    Social Awkwardness    │
│                     │                     └──────────────────────────┘
│                     │     ┌──────────┐    ┌──────────────────────────┐
│                     │─────│ External │────│          Social          │
└─────────────────────┘     └──────────┘    │         Bonding          │
                                            └──────────────────────────┘
                                            ┌──────────────────────────┐
                                            │        Conformity        │
                                            │      Forced drinking     │
                                            └──────────────────────────┘
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Figure 2. The four drinking motive themes categorized to an internal and external factor model

The theme of alcohol consumption for stress relieving purposes can be seen as a coping motive, since the students see alcohol as a tool to help them cope with the stress of academic success and stress generated by the high societal expectations. In the same category of internal drinking motives, we find the theme of drinking to overcome shyness and social awkwardness. Students claimed that consuming alcohol can resolve the feeling of shyness and social awkwardness. In other words, in an environment with new people alcohol can help the individual to cope with the feeling of awkwardness and shyness. The effects of alcohol use benefit the individual by concealing these feelings and enhancing their mood. On to external motives, which consist of social and conformity motives, the themes found in the data were consistent for the two models. The theme of bonding fits the description that is given for the pattern of social drinking motives. Through alcohol consumption, the students seek to attain the positive social rewards of being a part of the group and integrating to the social group of students. In the case of freshmen, to whom the most frequently bonding mentioned events are aimed at, consuming alcohol is a way to integrate in the university social environment. Lastly, the theme of hierarchal drinking fits in the

conformity motive model. In the case of forced and hierarchal drinking, the individuals consume alcohol to avoid social rejection of their peers and seniors. Active participation in events that include alcohol consumption shows that the individual is willing to comply with the group norms. Avoiding social sanctions is crucial. (Cooper, 1994; Cox & Klinger, 1988.)

5.3 Social consequences

As we can see from the drinking motives presented above, alcohol consumption plays an important role in the university life of students, and it is used as a tool for socializing and bonding with their peers. However, in the case of students not participating in activities involving alcohol consumption some interesting themes emerged. There were some students who did not participate in drinking habits either currently or in the past for various reasons. Some students mentioned that they did not consume alcohol for religious reasons, which for some cases had currently changed. Others claimed to be unable to handle alcohol consumption well. Lastly, some students claimed to be unable to participate in socializing events involving drinking for practical reasons. While most students said that how not drinking is perceived among drinkers depends on the case, there were some certain patterns and themes that repeated themselves. Alcohol was deemed an important part of social relationship building between students. However, since various reasons explained above apply and some students cannot participate in the events evolving alcohol consumption, there are some consequences.

5.3.1 Weakening of social relations

The first theme that emerged after the data analysis was that of weakening of social relations. It is a theme that contains various levels of severity and its subthemes will be elaborated later on (figure 3).
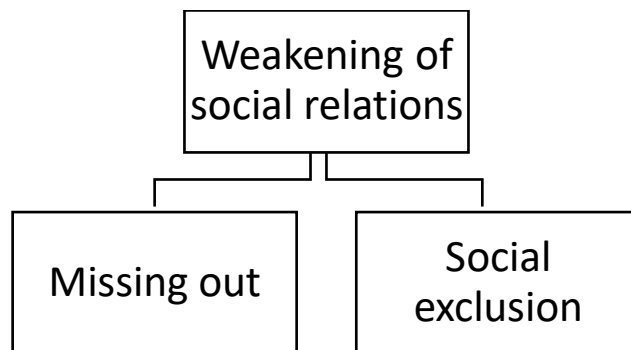
Figure 3. Weakening of social relations and its sub-themes (missing out and social exclusion)

As the interviewees mentioned, several non-academic socializing events involve alcohol consumption, therefore making it harder for non-drinkers to fully participate in those events. Some of the interviewees claimed that it is possible for non-drinkers to participate in drinking events. However, with alcohol being a crucial tool in socializing, it is harder for non-drinkers to approach people as most socializing events evolve around drinking.

> *"[…] but like normally it's hard to get along if you don't drink. But like if you don't really drink you can't really ask them like let's hang out at night or something like that or let's go out somewhere, because it normally involves like if it's over I think normally like dinner promises they normally include drinking. So if you don't drink it's like I guess hard to get along with people other than you know just doing academic work." (Interview 7)*

The students also mentioned that refusing to drink can be interpreted as a sign of not wanting to socialize with peers or wanting to cut-off friendly relationships, as drinking together seems to be a way of expressing comradery and a good friendly relationship. A consequence of refusing to drink or not participating in socializing events involving drinking is social exclusion. In some cases, non-drinker students were mentioned to be socially excluded by their fellow students.

> *"[…] So my freshman year I was like an outsider yeah. So now I'm really fine but during the freshman year I was kind of outsider because I didn't drink." (Interview 5)*

The two subthemes of this overall theme of weakening of social relations will be further elaborated in the following paragraphs.

5.3.2 Missing out

The first subtheme of social consequences is that of missing out. In the case of missing out, not engaging in drinking activities was not claimed to be serious, however there were themes of weakening of social relations mentioned. The students who were unable to participate in the socializing events that contained alcohol use, either because they did not drink or due to practical reasons, expressed that not participating in said events could cause the feeling of being left out. Students not engaging in drinking activities mentioned that these gatherings contain decision-making and meaningful bonding time, and being unable to participate in those events was mentioned as something unfortunate.

> *"uhh yeah maybe that usually occurs because in drinking time people say very honestly because yes. They emotionally don't release and so they talk a lot at that time but if someone don't drink alcohol and they don't come to that meeting they can't hear the story or these thing. So, that part of some left (out) I think" (Interview 1)*

The meetings were described as events where students talk honestly about deeper feelings, which normally does not occur when being sober and when formalities take over. In some cases not participating in drinking events was due to practical reasons as, for example, students not living in the campus area have to commute every day. Considering that socializing events take place in the area around the campus, some students unavoidably cannot participate in the bonding activities until the early morning hours. Not participating in this emotionally intense procedure was said to increase the feeling of being left out for some students.

> *"[…]So in that way I have to leave earlier than other people and it means that I don't have time to like getting more familiar with other classmates so. I really like I always like heard about the time when I had to leave and so I couldn't enjoy that mood well, but unlike me*

other like other classmates said that through drinking once they had drinking time with other people it makes more people deeper relationship" (Interview 2)

"Yes. I'm living in (the city) and I don't live in the dormitory and I should go home earlier than them. I don't know what happened after I leave so I feel excluded." (Interview 6)

As bonding with peers and other members of the student body was expressed to be a significant aspect of student life, students who were unable to participate in meetings expressed some level of regret and feeling that an opportunity of bonding was missed. As most non-academic socializing events involve alcohol, mingling with senior students that will provide students with opportunities both in academic and socializing aspects was described as something difficult.

5.3.3 Exclusion

The most intense negative social consequence of not participating in drinking activities is that of social exclusion. As through alcohol consumption the sense of group bonding is enhanced and acceptable group behavior is established, individuals who do not follow this norm seem to be excluded. Cases of social exclusion were mentioned by both drinkers and non-drinkers. In the case of drinkers, or of students who participate in drinking activities, it was mentioned that there are instances in which the group excludes individuals who do not drink. Non-drinkers can be seen as an ill fit to the group and as individuals who do not share common lifestyles, therefore making it impossible for drinkers to see them as members of the group. Being a good fit for the group seemed a pattern that related to the social exclusion of non-drinkers.

"not all people think that "you don't drink alcohol you can't be our friend" not all but some but some weird person think that, and judge "oh you don't want to come in our group oh ok go"" (Interview 1)

"[…]but they kind of say "you're not the people who can be so good in this group". There are so many people who are older and jerks so I think there is some connections with Korean culture and alcohol" (Interview 4)

In some cases, excluding a person from the group drinking activities was seen as something with no malicious intentions. Students expressed that intoxicated behavior can be burdensome for someone who does not drink, therefore excluding them from group activities that involve alcohol consumption was seen as considerate behavior. However, these practices lead to the person in question feeling left out and excluded from the group. Being in a sober state while peers are intoxicated did not seem as something desirable for the group.

> *"[...] Because one of my friends who really likes alcohol place but who can't drink he wants to go to the places but people think that he can't drink so why would he be fun at this place so. They think it would be rude to call him because he can't drink and we all drunk and we become jerks all but he's the only one who is normal at that place. And these people think he would feel bad about this situation, but he thinks "I'm excluded""* *(Interview 4)*

On the most severe level of this theme of exclusion, we find the case of intentional social exclusion of non-drinkers from the group. That is the case of actively and intentionally separating non-drinkers from the drinkers and having a definite distance between the two. Students who had to firsthand experience this behavior mentioned that they felt hurt at the time and were treated as outsiders. The relationship between students who drink and non-drinkers was described as completely broken. In these cases of complete separation, the socializing between the two groups was described to be minimal.

> *"So there were (in MT training) several students who didn't drink and we were together in the room we were kind of having fun. [...] and then a girl that is my colleague, a colleague opened the door and watched us and told outside like "hey here are outsiders! Hey come on you guys are outsiders! Hey come and have a beer". And then our relationship was just broken. So the drinking students and students who don't drink we were completely separated."(Interview 5)*

5.3.4 Adaptivity

From the above themes we can see that alcohol consumption is connected not only to positive but to negative social consequences as well. While analyzing the data on social consequences for those not drinking, one more theme emerged, that of adaptivity. The theme of adaptivity emerged from the responses and suggestions that students gave as alternative solutions for students who do not drink but wish to stay as a part of the group. It also emerged in responses that not drinking should not be an obstacle to socializing. Since being a part of the group is important in student life, adaptivity to the group seemed to be important. However, the adaptivity usually referred to non-drinkers adapting to the drinkers' habits and not the other way around. Adaptivity can also be seen as a way of compromise between drinkers and non-drinkers. Alcohol consumption was still deemed to be a necessary part of socializing, however it became apparent that those events can be sometimes inclusive to non-drinkers, provided they actively participate and stay until the end of those meetings. Students mentioned that there are some students who adapt to the larger group of drinkers and socialize.

> *"[…]'Cause my friends in here she is not a very good drinker but she just stays she did not drink much but just stays there and keeps her seat and talk a lot with us so when you act like that it is not pretty hard to get in some groups" (Interview 3)*

> *"yes anyone can participate in this meeting just drink any soda or any juice yes but yeah. If someone uh be there, if someone could be there at the end of the meeting can easily uh (jinejidaga) get closer together" (Interview 1)*

In some cases adapting to the norm of drinking was expressed as a way to have more options for socializing. Even drinking a little bit was mentioned to help the individual participate in the group activities.

"[…]I mean it doesn't matter if you drink, if you can only drink a little bit or a lot unless you cannot drink it's actually you can go into this group and have more, I guess more options to and more time that you could actually share with the people more" (Interview 6)

Through the theme of adaptivity it became apparent that the negative social consequences of not consuming alcohol, while seeking to still be a part of the group, can be tackled if non-drinkers are willing to adapt to the group norms. The last form of adaptivity emerging was that of non-drinkers forming their own social groups with fellow students who do not drink and engaging in other socializing activities. Separate socializing groups appeared as something that is usual later on in a student's life, after the initiation to the norms of student life. The larger events in the beginning of one's university life that contain alcohol, aiming at socializing and bonding of freshmen, seem to become less significant later on. After the initial integration to student life, interviewees mentioned they were forming smaller friend groups where alcohol did not have such a significant role. Forming these smaller groups in the beginning of one's student life may, however, intensify the feeling of separation from the larger group and the feeling of being outsiders.

5.3.5 Consequences and adaptivity as group behavior

From the emerging themes we can see that the impact of alcohol consumption is quite significant even among those students who do not participate in alcohol consumption activities. Both drinkers and non-drinkers interviewed agreed on the importance of alcohol in socializing. The themes that

emerged, concerning students who do not participate in drinking activities, are interesting and could be explained through the following perspectives (figure 4).
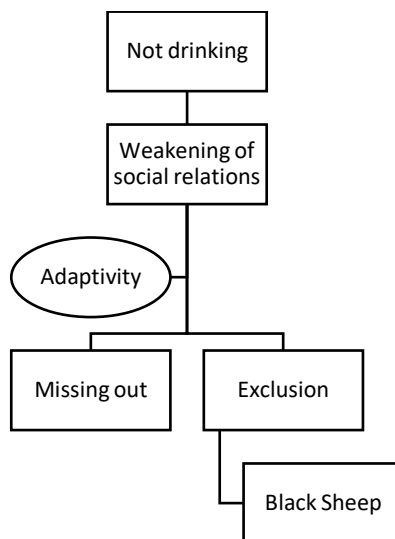
```
        ┌──────────────┐
        │ Not drinking │
        └──────┬───────┘
        ┌──────┴───────┐
        │  Weakening of│
        │social relations│
        └──────┬───────┘
  ╭─────────╮  │
  │Adaptivity├──┤
  ╰─────────╯  │
        ┌──────┴──────────┐
   ┌────┴─────┐    ┌──────┴────┐
   │Missing out│   │ Exclusion │
   └──────────┘    └─────┬─────┘
                    ┌─────┴──────┐
                    │ Black Sheep│
                    └────────────┘
```

Figure 4. Social consequences of not drinking

The weakening of social relations and most importantly social exclusion, due to not drinking, can be interpreted as a consequence of defying group beliefs. Since group beliefs guide the code of conduct for the members of a group, defying these beliefs and norms by not drinking can be seen as a damaging factor to the group's stability. Alcohol consumption is a mechanism of maintaining confidence in group beliefs and high group homogeneity, and displaying deviant behavior can be seen as posing this homogeneity and strong sense of bond under a risk. (Bar-Tal, 1998.) Consequently, one could say that the students not participating in activities involving drinking and facing social exclusion are experiencing the Black Sheep Effect (Marques & Paez, 1994). The non-drinking students are seen as deviant ingroup members who distort the dominant group beliefs and are therefore categorized as the black sheep of the social group and thus face social exclusion.

To avoid these social consequences and the status of a group's black sheep, various forms of adaptivity are taken. By implementing methods of adaptivity, students were said to attempt to

avoid social exclusion and keep their status of a group member. Through adaptivity, group homogeneity remains undistorted, while the individual achieves positive social identity and self-concept through participation to group activities (Deschamps & Devos, 1998).

The results of the data analysis indicate that alcohol consumption in the Korean university environment is a complex issue that can go beyond the simple notions of enjoyment. The motives as well as the social consequences that emerged from the interviews with the participants indicate that alcohol is strongly connected with student life and socializing. The findings of the analysis, their connection to the overall purpose of this study and how they can be implicated in further research and policies will be discussed in the following chapter.

6. DISCUSSION

From the results analyzed above, we can see that alcohol consumption in the university environment is not a one-dimensional matter. In this section I will further discuss the findings of the data analysis, their connection to the literature and how we can apply these results in practice.
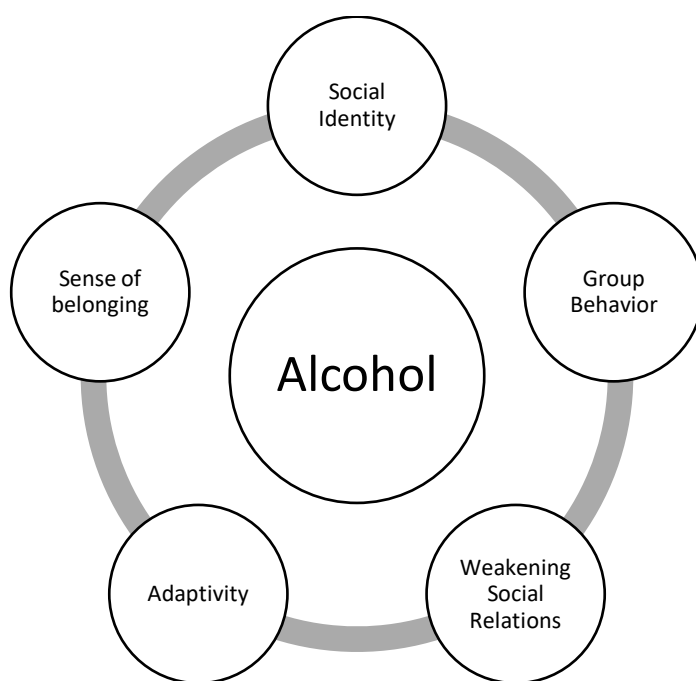

Figure 5. Social relations and alcohol consumption in Korean student life

6.1 Drinking motives

The drinking motives that emerged in the analysis give an insight on the possible reasons that prompt alcohol consumption in the university environment. All four motives that emerged are related to social factors on various levels of intensity. First, the case of the internal drinking motives of stress relief and overcoming social awkwardness certainly include social factors.

Consuming alcohol for stress relieving purposes was linked to the societal pressure of high academic achievements throughout one's education. Students claimed to feel pressured under a large workload in their current academic state, or feel pressured because of the expectations imposed by the society concerning academic performance and, later on, securing a good position in the work force. This finding is in accordance with the findings of Jang et al. (2018) correlating alcohol consumption with stress. The accumulated stress of studying throughout the years was also mentioned as one of the reasons alcohol is being consumed. The theme of drinking to overcome social awkwardness can be classified both as a coping and an enhancement drinking motive. It can be named a coping motive since awkwardness for something might get in the way of one's socializing opportunities and capabilities. As an enhancement motive, the students drink to enhance the mood and relieve the awkwardness in the bonding activity events that in turn can enhance the overall mood of the group.

The external motives that emerged were divided to social and conformity motives (Cox & Klinger, 1988). Drinking to attain positive social rewards is a theme that is prevalent throughout the students' answers. Through participating in drinking activities, the students seem to achieve the sense of belonging in the group of their peers as well as integration to the academic environment. Bonding with their peers and forming new social connections seems to be important for the students, as bonding activities of non-academic context that do not involve alcohol are said to be rare. Lastly, the conformity drinking motive of forced drinking is an interesting finding. The termed forced drinking was used to emphasize the intensity of the matter. While in this study students did not mention being physically forced to drink, social sanctions were implied. Drinking to avoid these social sanctions falls into the category of conformity drinking motives. By conforming to the group belief implying that consuming alcohol is the socially accepted norm and requirement, the students secure their access to the group. Forced drinking was mentioned as something related to hierarchy and respecting senior students. The case of senior students fits in the group prototype notion. By taking the role of a group prototype, senior students upkeep the values and codes of conduct that preserve group cohesion that will make the group distinctive in

intergroup comparison. (Bar-Tal, 1998; Marquez, Paez & Abrams, 1998.) The consequences of not conforming to the normative behavior of drinking will be elaborated next.

6.2 Social consequences

As mentioned above, students tend to participate in alcohol consumption activities for various reasons. The external drinking motives are connected to the social consequences that are imposed up on students who do not drink. Not drinking or participating in alcohol related activities is something that appears to happen for various reasons; it can be a matter of religion or not being able to handle alcohol well, or simply for technical restrictions such as living off campus and commuting to school. Regardless of the reasons why one does not participate in drinking activities, the social consequences appeared to be there for all students. The least severe consequence was that of missing out on socializing opportunities. As alcohol was mentioned to be a tool of socializing and an aid for students to let loose, students who were unable to partake in discussions and events claimed to feel being left out. Feeling left out can endanger the sense of belonging to the group that is important for one's positive social identity (Dechamps & Devos, 1998).

On to the more severe level of social consequences, it was mentioned by both drinkers and non-drinkers that, in some cases, not drinking leads to social exclusion. Non-drinkers seem to be intentionally or unintentionally excluded by their peers from social activities. Although not often mentioned, social exclusion of non-drinkers can take place with non-malicious intentions, as a way to spare the non-drinkers of the burden of socializing with intoxicated fellow students. Social exclusion also appeared to take place intentionally as the group sees non-drinkers as an ill fit or as outsiders. Group members can classify not drinking as deviant behavior that endangers and imbalances in-group cohesion resulting to non-drinkers experiencing the black sheep effect (Marques & Paez, 1994). By being the black sheep, the individual endangers their position as a

group member, since behavior that disrupts group homogeneity is harmful for group cohesion. To prevent that, the group socially excludes the black sheep of the group.

Overcoming these possible negative social consequences and the subsequent social exclusion from the group, various methods of adaptivity were mentioned. With alcohol holding a central role in socializing in the Korean university environment, and adapting to the prevalent group norms being important, the individuals need new ways to find their way into the group. The forms of adaptivity mostly mentioned were of non-drinkers adapting to drinkers' requirements. By adapting to the group's normative drinking behavior, the students who do not drink can secure more options for socializing as opposed to their fellow students who do not adapt to the group's drinking. In larger socializing events such as Membership Training excursions, forming separate groups of non-drinkers can also be considered as a way of adaptivity without sacrificing the opportunity to socializing. As mentioned by the interviewees, forming smaller groups later on during the student life is not something unusual. One could say that once group membership is achieved, the individual does not need to prove their loyalty to the group through drinking activities. These methods of adaptivity can be seen as a coping mechanism against social exclusion or to prevent the possible negative social consequences.

6.3 Gender in alcohol consumption

The sample of the participants for this study was specifically limited to female students, in the hopes of discovering possible gendered patterns of alcohol consumption. Precious studies have showed that alcohol consumption for female students has specific patterns as well as consequences (Armstrong, Watling, Davey & Darvell, 2013; Kang, Kim, Cho & Park, 2014; Kendall, 2002) The results of the current study, however, do not implicate any gender specific patterns. In the data portions analyzed, the participants did not mention any circumstances or behaviors of alcohol consumption that could be categorized as specific to only female students. The socializing events including alcohol consumption seem to be inclusive for both male and female students.

6.4 Alcohol enhancing group behavior

Alcohol consumption seems to be closely connected with aspects of socializing in the Korean tertiary education. Drinking was not solely limited to being an activity between groups of friends but it was also mentioned as the focal activity of several larger socializing events. Even in official faculty related extracurricular bonding activities alcohol seems to hold a central role. Membership Training events, which aim at integrating freshmen in the student body and tightening their bond with their senior colleagues were the most frequently mentioned occasions of drinking. Alcohol was said to be prevalent in those events with senior students often leading these events and evaluating the freshmen's eagerness to participate. These socializing events were mentioned as long lasting traditions that enhance team morale and help students adapt to the new student culture. These events are also used as a way to ensure that the newcomers are introduced to the unofficial values and norms of their new social group. Codes of conduct are passed on and senior students evaluate freshmen's willingness to integrate, through participating in drinking activities. Through these drinking activities, the new students shape their student identity and accept the new values attached to it. These findings are in accordance with Ylijoki's (1998) concept of integration of novices to the academic tribes. Through drinking, freshmen, the novices, seek to be accepted as proper members of the new social group, the academic tribe. In accordance with the Harrérian social identity project, the new students are invited to accept the new traditions through appropriating the new values. Since alcohol consumption appears to be one of the group norms prevalent in these socializing events, the group members' loyalty is tested (Becher 1989).

The context and occasions of drinking are in accordance with previous research claiming that alcohol is prevalent in the Korean student life (Chun, 2002; Chung, 2007). The high importance of participation in the socializing activities can also be explained through the notion of collectivism that appears to be dominant in the Korean university environment. As collectivism is an attribute of the modern Korean society based on the Confucian values of brotherhood and participation, it is important for the students to overcome their individualistic values and actively participate and

behave as members of the larger social group. Accepting the group norms and acting guided by them is essential to upkeep strong in-group values. (Lee, Bell & Watson, 2007; Lowy, 2007.)

The sense of collectivity is also enhanced by the students' personal interests and social identity. As explained by social identity theory, the students seek to achieve a positive self-esteem by belonging to the prevalent social group. Being part of the group enhances one's positive self-concept. To achieve this sense of belonging, the students ought to participate in activities that fall under the category of normative behavior and accept social features that are common for all the in-group members. In this case, alcohol consumption is seen as a normative behavior, and through participation in drinking activities, the individual enhances their social identity and sense of belonging. Intergroup comparisons are focal for one's social identity and the positive self-concept is achieved through accepting the norms that guide the group's behavior, which in turn define the group from the others. (Dechamps & Devos, 1998.)

Consuming alcohol while participating in group bonding activities appears to be a normative behavior as group norms dictate how in-group members ought to behave, thus achieving group superiority (Bar-Tal, 1998; Marques, Paez & Abrams, 1998). Since, as mentioned above, collectivity is important in the Korean university life, even among faculties or groups of colleagues, the norm of drinking ensures homogeneity of the group. In accordance with Becher (1989), members of the group appear to use participation in drinking activities as a guide to judge fellow in-group members' loyalty. Since loyalty to the group is proved by abiding to group norms and values, defying these norms and rules can risk the student's position in the group, leading to social exclusion.

One could say that injunctive norms on drinking appear to be central in alcohol consumption in the Korean university life. As Pearson and Hustadt (2014) mention, injunctive drinking norms describe the approval and disapproval of one's drinking habits and capabilities. The results of this study indicate that injunctive norms seem to guide the students' drinking. In the case of drinking motive patterns that emerged, social and conformity motives can be connected with injunctive

drinking norms. Forced drinking for hierarchal reasons was one aspect that emerged through the drinking motives. This conformity drinking motive can be connected to injunctive drinking norms, seeing that students consume alcohol in order to fit in to the group and avoid social sanctions imposed by their seniors and their peers. In this case, alcohol consumption is strongly connected with the assumption the individual has on the accepted amount of drinking.

Overall, drinking in the Korean tertiary educational environment seems to enhance group behavior and sense of belonging. Conforming to group beliefs that enhance the sense of togetherness is important in a student's life, particularly during their early studying years. The sense of togetherness that is enhanced by values and beliefs that are common for the members of a social group is a phenomenon deeply engraved in the Korean society, thus being a vital part of one's social identity. The Confucian values of collectivism that guide an individual's code of conduct in the society and the goals that have to be achieved appear to be guiding also the socializing activities in the Korean university environment. The findings of this study indicate that the motives and the social consequences of alcohol consumption are strongly connected to group behavior and sense of belonging.

All drinking motives discovered seem to lead to the indication that students drink to achieve in-group membership and favorable handling by their peers. Not drinking or not participating in socializing events involving drinking seems to bring some negative social consequences, which in turn can confirm that group behavior and ensuring that group beliefs, values and codes of conduct are kept intact. Moreover, personal drinking motives linked to personal benefits are connected to group behavior and sense of belonging. By overcoming social awkwardness through alcohol consumption, students can engage in socializing activities more freely. By this social interaction, the students adapt these cognitive representations of group membership, in this case alcohol consumption, and consequently achieve a positive self-image. Positive self-image, which is important for an individual's identity, is achieved through socializing and conforming to group norms and values. Seeing that alcohol is an important part of socializing, we can say that alcohol

consumption in the Korean university environment is connected to both personal and group beneficial behavior.

6.5 Implications of study

The findings of this study are important for various reasons. By understanding in which ways alcohol is consumed in the tertiary education environment, we can get a better understanding of how the student culture is shaped. Alcohol seems to hold a central point of student socializing in the Korean university environment. Drinking seems to be a way of ensuring group homogeneity and a tool to impose the unwritten rules and social values and codes of conduct of the student life. However, the negative aspects of excessive alcohol consumption that can be linked to this normative behavior of alcohol consumption can be damaging to the valuable experience of being a student. Moreover, the negative consequences for students not participating in socializing events involving alcohol are thought-provoking. Since the feeling of being left out and social exclusion can be considered harmful for a student's wellbeing, it is important to tackle this issue. The results of this study shed more light in the ways alcohol appears in the Korean university environment as an attempt to gain a better understanding of the ways problem drinking and social exclusion are related to the use of alcohol. Interventions and programs imposed by the university or the government towards these alcohol related problems are advised to take the emerging drinking motives into consideration. Seeing that alcohol consumption is normative behavior that is considered a long lasting tradition throughout the years, it can be difficult to intervene.

One more factor that will make intervention difficult is that the general Korean society seems to be permissive of alcohol consumption. Nevertheless, there are a few suggestions emerging through the results of this study. Firstly, more non-academic socializing events not involving alcohol should be organized by the university and the faculties. Seeing that socializing is an important aspect of a freshman's life, it is crucial to create opportunities for students to socialize in events not involving alcohol. While eliminating alcohol consumption from all socializing events is not a

viable option, offering more options for students to integrate into student life without its presence would be advisable. Seeing that Membership Training events hold a long tradition of bringing members of the faculty together, modifying the contents of this event could be an option. Separating these events from the notions that drinking is the normative behavior, or that socializing can be only achieved through drinking, can bring some positive results. Separating alcohol consumption from any event officially organized by the university, such as festivals, can further help enforce the image of university life being separated from drinking.

6.6 Limitations of study

During the process of this study, some limitations became apparent that have to be taken under consideration. Firstly, due to the qualitative nature of this study, the results emerging cannot be considered as a representative of a general truth of a phenomenon. Since the aim of this study is not to form a generally accepted fact on the amounts of alcohol consumed among the general population or the whole student body, we cannot make generalized assumptions on the matter. Connected to the limitation above, the small sample of participants is not permitting generalized assumptions based on frequencies of the appearing themes. Due to the sample of the interviewees being solely female students, limitations on gendered drinking among male students can be found. Furthermore, the role of the researcher can impose a limitation, seeing that the cultural context of origin is different of that of Korea. Despite the thorough preparation of the researcher, some culture specific contexts in the speech of the participants may have been overlooked. Lastly, the limitation of language has to be taken under consideration. Due to the lack of fluency of the researcher in the Korean language, the interviews were conducted in English as it was deemed a common language for both the participants and the researcher. However, neither the researcher nor the participants are native English speakers thus limiting in some cases full communication or elaboration on the matters discussed. The researcher proceeded to tackle this limitation when possible by making clarifications and additional questions during the interviews.

On to research approach limitations, the specific theoretical approaches can be said to guide the results of this study. By choosing certain theoretical frameworks for the analysis of the data of this study, unavoidably a specific point of view is brought out which can be limiting the possibilities of different findings. Moreover, the social identity theory used in this study explains how the individual seeks for a positive self-image through the sense of belonging in a group and group behavior. However, an important part of the social identity theory is that of intergroup behavior. The aspect of intergroup behavior that was not utilized in this study is an important part of social identity theory. However, given the nature and the size of the data collected, intergroup behavior was not possible to be researched.

6.7 Future research

Due to the nature of this qualitative study, there are several research topics that can be implemented in future studies. Firstly, the same qualitative approach with a larger sample can shed new light in the issues discussed seeing that a larger amount of participants might bring in new points of view. Moreover, a qualitative study on collegial drinking motives and social consequences including both male and female students will shed more light in possible gendered patterns of alcohol consumption. By finding out possible differences in alcohol consumption and gender, more gender specific interventions will be useful and effective. Considering the theories used in this current study, a research utilizing the intergroup aspect of social identity theory would also shed more light in the connection between social identity, group behavior and negative consequences such as social exclusion.

An international comparative study including Korean and other university students would be interesting. By researching the connection of alcohol and student life in different cultural contexts, we can find out new aspects of alcohol consumption. Seeing that alcohol consumption is strongly linked with the Korean culture overall, it would be useful to conduct a research in a culture where

alcohol consumption is not prevalent, or in a culture where alcohol is consumed in different contexts and patterns.

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