

Drinking stories of emerging adults

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The period of emerging adulthood is seen as a period of transition from adolescence to adulthood and is associated with increased alcohol consumption. The aim of the study is to understand the meaning of alcohol for emerging adults through stories about alcohol intoxication. Eighty-two drinking stories written by emerging adults were analysed using the narrative oriented inquiry (NOI) method. The results are divided into three layers: (1) contents of the drinking stories, (2) discourses of drinking stories, (3) (re)construction of the identity of emerging adults in drinking stories. I sought to extend the current knowledge on drinking stories in two ways: (a) localization within emerging adulthood, (b) by using NOI methodology. Results show the importance of drinking stories for identity construction of emerging adults and as markers of the beginning and the end of emerging adulthood, albeit not a linear one.

Keywords: alcohol consumption, drinking stories, emerging adulthood, identity, narrative analysis

Introduction

Alcohol drinking is a part of the path to adulthood for young people in many European countries. The consumption of alcoholic beverages is part of adolescence, not only from a statistical point of view. “Intoxication seem to be an inseparable aspect of youth culture” (Tutenges & Rod, 2009, p.355) as along with its narrative construction in drinking stories (Stewart & Power, 2002; Järvinen & Gundelach, 2007; Järvinen & Room, 2007).

Tutenges and Rod (2009, p.357) defined a drinking story as “an account of specific past drinking episodes”. We can add that these stories are retrospectively constructed by the narrators, which means that they do not represent reality, but its construction. Unlike the constructions generated by scientific procedures that can be weeded out by falsification, “narratives are versions of reality where acceptability is governed by convention rather than by empirical verification

although we have no compunction about calling stories true or false” (Bruner, 1991, p. 4). The drinking stories are “generally based on chaotic events seemingly without direction or purpose, and yet the stories themselves are far from chaotic because they involve the same cluster of themes and follow a similar sequencing of events” (Tutenges & Sandberg, 2013, p. 540). Stories organize our experiences, give them meaning and reflect the identity of the narrator. Positioning in stories brings to the fore the need for attention to what these stories implicate for the tellers’ self-projects: what kinds of self-projects are engendered, necessitated or constrained for which tellers (Georgakopoulou, 2013). In the tradition of symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934), one’s self-perception is achieved in the mirror of ‘significant others’, that is, orientated towards the expectations and demands of others. Self-projects consist of a whole repertoire of embodied and semiotic resources (habitual practices, desires, fears, commitments, social status, memberships) in which tellers see themselves over time through the stories they tell (Georgakopoulou, 2013). Self-projects are being worked out both retrospectively (the actor traces back his/her actual self to early events, to link up with this foundation, to anchor decisions within his/her unique life history) and prospectively (trace out a biographical project, to get an idea what an actor will become later) (Bühler-Niederberger & König, 2011). This is also why self-project in drinking stories can be effectively used in social science research.

Existing research into alcohol consumption has focused, in particular, on the *content* of drinking stories: themes of nakedness and exposure, urinating, vomiting, and/or sexual activity in the context of competitive drinking games (Workman, 2001) or drinking at festivals, dance parties and holidays (Fjær & Tutenges, 2017; Tutenges & Sandberg, 2013). In terms of *discourse*, in Workman’s (2001) ethnographic study of fraternity drinking stories amongst US college students, drunkenness was narratively constituted as a form of risk-taking in adventure stories; as entertainment (for others) in comic stories; and as a means of exploring physical limits. Drinking *identity* was explored in relation to gender (Cullen, 2010, 2011; Delucchi, Matzger, & Weisner, 2008; Griffin et al., 2013; Hensing & Spak, 2009), minorities (Allem et al., 2016), college students’ identity (Vander Ven, 2011; Workman, 2001; Tan, 2012; Radomski, Read, & Bowker, 2015), online identities (Rodriguez, Litt, & Neighbors, 2016), or as a marker of age identity (Bakken, Sandøy, & Sandberg, 2017), e. g. to destroy former identity as children (Tutenges & Rod, 2009).

Previous research shows alcohol consumption as highly classed, racialized and gendered (cf. Griffin et al., 2013). While the researched participants in this article are homogenous in terms of class and race, I will mention gender differences in alcohol drinking and drinking identity, also to avoid being gender blind. Gender blindness was part of the criticism of Tutenges and Sandberg’s (2013)

research on drinking stories by Bogren (2014) and Radcliffe and Measham (2014), who asked whether we may need to ask young women different sorts of questions and whether gender of the researcher matters. A novel approach of this study is in using written narrative, as most designs mentioned above involve interviews about drinking stories.

Why gender matters?

Firstly, alcohol consumption can be seen as gendered. “Traditionally, young men tend to consume more alcohol (and different drinks) compared to their female peers” (Griffin et al., 2013, p.186). However, recent studies have also documented increased binge drinking among young women (Delucchi, Matzger, & Weisner, 2008). Secondly, the meaning of alcohol consumption is gendered. Wilsnack and Wilsnack (1997) have stressed that alcohol is involved in the process of constructing gendered identities, since alcohol is an important part of the social interactions between women and men. Thus, while gender may influence alcohol consumption, drinking alcohol may also be seen as a way of “doing gender” and accomplishing both traditional and non-traditional gender identities (Lyons & Willott, 2008).

Compared to previous studies, this study links *content, discourse and identity* based on narrative oriented inquiry (NOI) methodology and links drinking stories with emerging adulthood.

Emerging adulthood

Emerging adulthood (ages 18 to 25) is characterized by changes in relationships, education, work, and viewpoints on life (Arnett, 2004). It is a period in which social milestones are reached and credentials attained in sequential order starting with the acquisition of formal qualifications at school, followed by entrance into waged labour markets, leaving the parental home, entering into marriage and starting a family (Harnett et al., 2000). Many emerging adults say they are taking responsibility for themselves, but still do not feel completely like an adult. They are exploring their identity and deciding what they want (Arnett, 2004). Emerging adulthood is associated with elevated substance use (Huh et al., 2013; White & Jackson, 2004). According to Cance et al. (2017) it is known that alcohol use correlates strongly with emerging adulthood, but there is significant individual variability in use: male gender, white race, fraternity/sorority affiliation, and higher family income is significantly associated with riskier conjoint trajectory patterns. Increased binge drinking was found in college students (Reckdenwald et al.,

2016). The non-student population of emerging adults is at risk from heavy drinking as well because people in this segment of the population may be less likely to mature out of heavy drinking patterns established during adolescence (White & Jackson, 2004). The aim of this study is to understand the meaning of alcohol for emerging adults in the Czech Republic through stories about alcohol intoxication, therefore the cultural context is needed.

Context: The Czech drinking culture

The Czech Republic represents an under-researched population with high-risk alcohol consumption grounded in early alcohol consumption and its amount throughout people's lives. According to ESPAD (2015) nearly half of students (47%) reported alcohol use at the age of 13 or younger. "Pure alcohol consumption in litres per person aged 15 years and older is 11.7 in the Czech Republic (third out of the OECD countries, after Lithuania and France)... The WHO gives the consumption separately by gender per year: for men it is 18.6 litres (9th in the world) and for women 7.8 litres (6th in the world)... There are also differences in the structure of beverages. According to data from the Czech Statistical Office, the percentage of beer-wine-spirits is 51.0 : 22.4 : 26.3 (calculated according to the content of pure ethanol)" (Fiala et al., 2017 p.198). Czech people are also at higher risk of binge drinking (Plant et al., 2009). The drinking culture in the Czech Republic is also characterised by cheap alcohol as shown by a comparison of alcohol prices in the EU in 2012, with beer prices among the cheapest (Hnilicová et al., 2017). It is legally permitted to buy alcoholic drinks at the age of eighteen. Generally, the alcohol policy is characterised by a liberal approach and alcohol consumption practice could be labelled as liberal as well.

Methodology

This study addresses the following research questions: (1) What are the contents of the drinking stories of emerging adults? (2) How is the meaning of alcohol consumption in emerging adulthood (re)constructed in narrative statements? (3) What do drinking stories say about their narrators?

The research sample consisted of drinking stories of emerging adults employed by snowball sampling, commonly used in qualitative research (cf. Flick, 2013). Students in their third year of post-secondary studies (average age 22 years) were approached with a request that each write their own drinking story (personal stories where they took part as drinkers or beholders) and to contact three

friends aged 18–25 and ask each of them to write a drinking story. The drinking stories were anonymous; neither the students nor their friends signed them and they also avoided including any information that could lead to their identification. In this way, 85 drinking stories by emerging adults were collected. 82 stories were included in the research sample, which conformed to the basic structure of a narrative by sequencing the drinking events and the subsequent transgressions into a cause-and-effect relationship. 55 stories were written by women. The reason for the large number of women is the snowball technique, which started at post-secondary studies in social science, where the majority of students were female. No issues of race and class appeared in stories. The research sample was homogeneous in terms of race (which corresponds with race homogeneity in the Czech Republic) and class.¹

The methodological approach was a narrative analysis which takes as its object of investigation the story itself (Riessman, 1993). As Riessman (2008) mentions, this term encompasses a wide range of approaches that differ in data types, theoretical perspectives, epistemological positions, research questions, and even definitions of narrative. Narrative oriented inquiry (NOI) according to Hiles and Čermák (2008) was selected as the methodological approach. At the heart of this approach lies the relationship between the story that is being told (fabula), the retelling (sjuzet) of that story, and an inevitably obscured person who is the teller (identity position). Story (as fabula) is the *what* in a narrative that is depicted, and discourse (as sjuzet) is the *how* (Chatman, 1978, p.19), see research questions 1 and 2. Figure 1 shows the relationship of the research questions to the individual areas of NOI.

NOI firstly requires a basic coding stage of data analysis, followed by a wide selection of further data analysis perspectives (Hiles & Čermák, 2008). It is abductive, which means that in coding narrative data a wide range of existing psychological, linguistic, discursive, and narrative constructs are drawn into the analysis (Reichert, 2007). The process of analysis in narrative-oriented research starts with a rereading of the text analysed with the aim to create an initial idea about the story being analysed. The first stage included open coding focused on segments in the stories and the second stage of open coding focused on stories as units (cf. Charmaz, 2014). A preliminary analysis of fabula and sjuzet was conducted (Hiles, Čermák & Chrz, 2009; Hiles & Čermák, 2008). Furthermore, similarities and

1. The research sample consisted of a student and a non-student population in emerging adulthood, but due to the anonymization it is not possible to give exact numbers. We know that most of the story-tellers are still studying (see snowball sampling), they live at home with their parents, with only a few of them living in dorms or on their own.

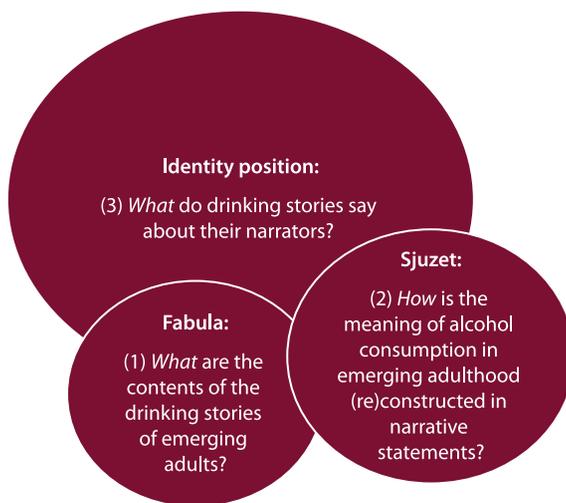


Figure 1. Relationship of research questions to the individual areas of NOI

differences among the analysed stories in terms of general structure, content and discourse were repeatedly found.

This approach represents narrative analysis as a significant shift from a text-oriented to practice oriented paradigm (towards social functions that they accomplish and the variety of social practices in which they are embedded) (De Fina & Perrino, 2017). Inspired by Bamberg (1997), Georgakopoulou (2013) and Deppermann (2013), this analysis is mainly interested in how people collaboratively and performatively construct positions in interaction in emerging adulthood through drinking stories.

The research conducted has a number of limits in the method of assignment (write a drinking story of yours), gradual construction of the research sample (self-selection) and the researcher, who was a teacher in relation to part of the participants. Participants may sometimes choose to display identity relevance and sometimes not (Deppermann, 2013), narrative identity is not much more than a postulate, which is hard to relate to any specific discursive activity of a person said to have this identity (Deppermann, 2013b). Being aware of these limits, in-depth qualitative data suitable for NOI was collected. The results of the research are presented in three sections corresponding to three components of NOI: fabula (Content: Drinking events), sjuzet (Discourses of drinking stories), and identity position (Stories of drinking identity).

Results

Content: Drinking events

It can be said that alcohol consumption represents a social norm in the culture of the sample in question. This norm of drinking applies to individuals and their life paths as well as recurrent periods in calendar years. Therefore in terms of the content of drinking stories, we can talk about *linear* and *cyclical alcohol social events* described in drinking stories. Linear alcohol social events mainly include the *life transitions of individuals*. Typically, alcohol consumption is associated with birthday celebrations. There are numerous stories about eighteenth birthday celebrations, which represents reaching the age of maturity and the legal consumption of alcohol: ‘We had all just recently turned eighteen but the youngest of us, Petra, had only celebrated it the week before and she was adamant she wanted to drink to it.’ (19) In Arnett’s (2000) view, the eighteenth year of life as the moment of reaching the age of maturity is associated with acquiring a number of rights, namely the right to vote or get married or, in the Czech Republic, to consume alcohol. The celebration of the acquisition of such rights is commonly associated with alcohol consumption in the culture in question. The data also shows the transitions in an individual’s educational path: completion of a certain level of education or various kinds of parties in the last year of secondary education. As Smith (2015) shows, young people may drink to excess at events such as school formals (balls or proms) and associated after parties. Furthermore, these stories include events or transitions in the career path and in the work process (company parties, change of jobs), cf. transition “got a new job” (Allem et al., 2016).

While the first type of alcohol consumption was linked to a person’s individual life path, where alcohol mainly emphasized the role transitions of an emerging adult, the second type of social event is related to *alcohol consumption in connection with various cyclical social events*, most often within a calendar year. We can therefore talk about *cyclical alcohol social events* described in drinking stories. These include, for example, holidays, summer school holidays or the end of summer school holidays, festivities, music nights, Christmas parties, New Year’s Eve, music festivals, sports matches, school reunions, etc. These cyclical events are, in the participants’ eyes, often associated not only with alcohol consumption but also with the drinking stories that take place there: ‘Typical rock music nights are held there, and there is a lot of alcohol. Every such event usually begins and ends the same way, sometimes there is a fun story and sometimes there is a less fun story.’ (13)

Drinking stories are thus connected with linear events (transitions in individual life paths) as well as circular events (recurring during the year). Individuals

use them to highlight events of their personal life paths as well as various times of the year. These stories convey varied meanings constructed by their narrators. The following chapter will describe these stories in terms of discourse.

Discourse of drinking stories

The second part of the analysis will focus on how the meaning of alcohol consumption in emerging adulthood is (re)constructed in narrative statements. Drinking stories conveying varied meanings take place in relation to the aforementioned *linear* and *cyclical social events*. I introduce specific discourses of drinking stories: *nonconformity stories*, *friendship stories*, and *fun stories*. Although these are described separately, they overlap at various levels.

Nonconformity stories

The first discourse identified in drinking stories is *nonconformity stories*. The narrators present drinking stories as stories of violations of norms. In terms of the violation of moral and legal norms, the narrators describe drinking stories as stories of inappropriate behaviour in public or disorderly conduct.

We drank more and more and already by five in the afternoon we were lying down by the church and fooling around. Since I live in a small town, a lot of people who know us saw us, so it should have been clear to us our parents would soon get to know. We had been “resting” like that for not even ten minutes when my mother called me to go home immediately, that I was just embarrassing them. (26)

Although violation of norms is described in the stories, their tone is mostly positive (heroization of norm violation) or ambivalent: ‘Shame, shame really, but we enjoyed it.’ (39) The stories also include instances where the consequences were unpleasant: ‘I was fooling around and broke my leg.’ (44), or even fatal:

People started leaving after midnight except one group, who decided to go to the pool to go swimming. They all were under the influence of alcohol, so the idea seemed like great fun to them and they didn’t realize the imminent danger... The body of a drowned man was found in the morning. (42)

The discourse of nonconformity stories captures stepping out of normality, a social experience beyond the commonly respected norms. The meaning of alcohol consumption in these stories, therefore, lies in the violation of social norms, nonconformity, and the risk borne by the story character.

Friendship stories

Another discourse of drinking stories found in the analysis is *friendship stories*. Emerging adults construct the way of making friends with someone or initiating sexual or partner relationships through drinking episodes.

We drank the whole bottle together. Full of alcohol, we set off for the next journey. We met other people at a bus stop who were heading to the same event as we were. We had no inhibitions thanks to the alcohol and started chatting immediately, helping them finish their bottle of spirit. (17)

Friendship stories carry the meaning that a bottle in one's hand makes it easy and quick to make the acquaintance of someone. In these stories, alcohol breaks down barriers, for example, language: 'Considerably drunk, we continued to a club to an Erasmus party. When we entered the club, one lady started talking English to us, another one Russian, another one Spanish, and another one French. It was interesting that we all understood each other.' (3)

Friendship stories say that alcohol connects and supports sharing. Establishing relationships as described in drinking stories may be a significant segment of the culture of emerging adults, for which this topic is important. This social meaning of alcohol consumption symbolically connects alcohol with communality and togetherness.

The term *drinking fellowship* appears in some narratives, which refers to the fact that friendship is based, in particular, on the joint consumption of alcohol. Such fellowships appear in stories by women as well as men: 'When we are drunk, we act like best girlfriends. We help each other, hate the same people, pay for each other's drinks, keep an eye on each other's things and places, go to the bathroom together, dance together.' (46) Some narratives, however, reflect that this is really only a drinking fellowship, not a true friendship: 'We are best friends in terms of drinking.' (51)

Stories also carry messages about the strengthening of friendship in alcohol episodes. In other words, those who are less drunk take care of their friends and, in turn, expect their friends will return the favour. Stories of care are thus handed down that may enhance the sense of security in alcohol consumption (cf. Niland et al., 2013).

According to the stories handed down, alcohol provides the means to attain social objectives. In addition to friendships, these objectives are, of course, also sexual relationships and partnerships. In their stories, the emerging adults portrayed alcohol as a way to have a one-night stand as well as to establish a partner relationship. Sex is often described in the stories as easily available, thanks to alcohol. The other side of the coin is the awkwardness or inappropriateness of the

sexual activities described in a story, which, however, is mentioned *ex post*, when the story is narrated as an evaluation, i.e., part of the narrative which expresses the narrator's attitude towards his/her story (Labov, 1972). Sex stories and love stories might be considered as a specific discourse of drinking stories.

A number of stories carry prosocial meanings of friendship and care. It thus begs the question whether there are also stories about antisocial behaviour under the influence of alcohol. These appear only rarely in the research sample, which may be related to the fact that emerging adults do not like to construct their identities in such a light and (deliberately) filter out such stories from the discourse of drinking stories. The discourse of drinking stories may thus be connected with a rather positive experience than a negative experience. This also corresponds to the findings by Niland et al. (2013), who use the term a "bad but good overall" discourse. This means that in narratives about alcohol excesses, good experiences always outweigh bad experiences. Where negative phenomena occurred in our sample, they were more often connected with someone else rather than the storyteller: 'He threw a tantrum, which was very uncontrolled. He destroyed his computer, wardrobe, and ran out into the street. We all rushed outside after him. He was waving his hands around him aggressively to chase away the people who were trying to calm him down.' (2)

Whether the "hero" is the narrator themselves or whether they are telling the story of another person is significant. The third-person perspective is common in anti-social stories such as property destruction and physical assault. While friendship stories in the first person carry an aspect of heroization, anti-social stories in the third person carry an aspect of stigmatization: 'Nikola was terribly embarrassed in the whole town because everyone saw how she behaved at the disco. When they met her in the street, they shouted at her. Her parents were ashamed of their daughter.' (31)

Fun stories

Fun stories refer to a discourse of drinking stories that primarily bear the meaning of games and fun. The focus of these stories refers to amusing episodes with drinking. Research on the meaning of alcohol use for young people shows that their drinking is fundamentally about pleasure, which involves fun, enjoyment, feeling good, relaxing, having a good time, a good laugh, and being sociable (Allem et al., 2016). Taking place in social groups, these stories overlap with friendship stories. In contrast to friendship stories, they emphasise aspects of fun instead of aspects of friendship. Fun stories included stories of playing conventional board games, cards, or PlayStation games innovated by alcohol consumption and games based on the principle of alcohol consumption (consumption

games). The essence of consumption games is alcohol consumption itself based on competition, which is associated with the degree of alcohol consumption:

So we made a deal that he would drink one beer straight down for every shot I drink. I told him it would be a clear win for me, but I had no idea how much the guy could drink. He drank three beers like that, and since I thought he wouldn't be able to manage any more, I put 1,000 crowns on the table and made a bet he couldn't drink a fourth. But I lost. I wanted to win that money back and I bet my shoe, which I put on the bar. (9)

Games based on alcohol consumption may include a drinking contest or be supplemented by money betting on alcohol consumption, often by the person themselves. Games based on alcohol consumption convey the meaning of the heroization of characters, who managed to consume a certain amount of alcohol, thus becoming modern day alcohol gladiators. They are narratively represented as having fun.

Fun stories are a construction and reconstruction of activities under the influence of alcohol that convey fun. These include activities (performative, conversational, sexual, etc.) that are not common for emerging adults who do not drink alcohol. Another meaning conveyed in drinking stories is, therefore, the message that under the influence of alcohol one can have a lot of fun and play games they would not otherwise play.

Stories of drinking identity

The third research question focused on the construction of the identity of emerging adults in drinking stories. We can also talk about drinking identity. Drinking identity is the extent to which a person views alcohol use as a defining characteristic of their self-identity and is an important precursor to risky drinking behaviour (Foster, Young, & Bärnighausen, 2014). Alcohol is also often described as a means to change one's identity: 'I, usually rather shy, was suddenly dancing and entertaining everyone around.' (24) Drinking identity is often captured in the stories as becoming a king/queen (entertainer and a favourite in society) and clown (cf. Hackley et al., 2013). This identity is, of course, temporary, which also makes it exceptional. In more detail, identity in drinking stories is constructed mainly in relation to gender and age. In terms of gender identity, stories include both confirmation of gender stereotypes and efforts to break them. Traditional gender identity is associated with the expectations of what a man or a woman drinks or with construction of traditional masculine and feminine identities.

Women's stories typically depict alcohol as a means to break gender stereotypes and emancipation in the culture of alcohol consumption with men, while

in the most of men's stories we can see corroboration of gender stereotypes about male drinking patterns. The female participant of one of the stories describes her drinking story from when she was younger and able to be on a par with men at drinking. 'I don't want to brag but at that time I was able to keep up with grown men at drinking.' (36). The drinking identity of some women is described as emancipated, and in the case of this sample, the gender aspect is also emphasized by age. The participant places herself in the role of a heroine who emancipates herself from gender and the age norms for alcohol consumption (cf. Cullen, 2011). This corresponds with (Griffin et al., 2013) saying that males drink more than females. Emancipation from the limited amount of female alcohol consumption in comparison to men is constructed in some of women's stories. However, confirmation of gender stereotypes is also present in women's stories. For example, one of the women writes in her story about what is expected from women to drink: 'We started with wine. We are ladies!' (30). In women's stories, confirmation of gender stereotypes is connected with the structure of the alcoholic beverages where stories serve to accomplish traditional gender identities. However, women's stories of amount of alcohol consumption serve more often to break gender stereotypes and accomplish non-traditional gender identities. Comparing women's and men's drinking stories, stories told by men are less ambiguous in construction of gender identity. These stories do not differ in alcohol beverages in relation to gender identity. Drinking beer, wine or shots is usually portrayed in the same light in men's stories. However, the amount of alcohol matters. Men's stories may consist of goading somebody into drinking, which becomes a part of a male drinking culture. Overall, men's stories represent mostly traditional gender identities. Contrary to women, some of the male participants place themselves in the role of a heroine by confirmation of gender stereotypes. Age is considered to be a part of the definition of emerging adulthood, but not the exceptional one. In drinking stories, alcohol consumption is depicted inconsistently, as an entrance gate into the adulthood and as a sign of premature period at the same time.

Alcohol consumption is depicted in the stories as a marker of life periods. We have described *linear alcohol events* to which alcohol consumption is related and age is the most important of them. Alcohol consumption can be a particular symbol of adulthood. 'We have actually been drinking this combination (vodka with an energy drink) every Friday since we were 15–16. They even sold it to me back then, which is something I was extremely proud of although my boyfriend who was four years older would usually buy it for me.' (47)

The participant's pride is based on the fact that alcohol was sold to a person under 18 years of age, that is, that she may look older and also that she crossed the norms and outsmarted the measures to regulate alcohol consumption. She was thus admitted to the practices of the world of adults, which include alcohol

consumption. But perception of adulthood brings stories about a reduction in alcohol consumption as well. Alcohol excesses are then associated with the participant's previous developmental stages. A retrospective view of heavy drinking episodes was associated by the participants, for example, with periods: 'when I was living with my parents' (21), 'the first year in college' (40), 'when I went to LARP and RPG events' (49). Alcohol consumption is depicted in the stories as an integral part of a particular life period, which, however, has passed, and the participant also abandoned patterns of heavy drinking behaviour with the end of this period. Alcohol is thus inconsistently depicted as an element of adult identity through heavy drinking episodes in the period of entry into legal adulthood and through the abandonment of such patterns of behaviour in connection with life transition to another role. This period from heavy drinking to leaving heavy drinking patterns can make borders of emerging adulthood. However, this transition might not be linear, but cyclical, which means that a young adult can cross the boundaries into and out of emerging adulthood several times, end heavy drinking practices and reject them as premature and return back to these practices again. This corresponds with more qualitative demarcation of emerging adulthood (drinking practices) than quantitative (age).

Discussion: Drinking stories are told, so what?

This study extends the knowledge of alcohol consumption in emerging adults with an overview of the events associated with alcohol consumption in this developmental stage; about the way emerging adults talk about alcohol consumption and the meaning they attribute to it by doing so; and, finally, about identity formation in drinking stories.

The drinking stories examined are related not only to *cyclical social events* as Goldman et al. describes (2011), but also to *linear ones* connected with individual life transitions. Emerging adults use them to highlight events of their role transition. How the drinking stories are told is represented in the discourse of drinking stories. We have described *nonconformity stories*, *friendship stories*, and *fun stories*, which overlap to some extent. Creation of a positive discourse prevails in all stories. This means that nonconformity connected with alcohol consumption is depicted positively, as an adventure, bravery or pastime. Unlike Niland et al. (2013), we found that prosocial behaviour prevails when the narrator talks about themselves. Where a narrator mentions the drinking stories of others, antisocial behaviour also appears. Alcohol consumption in these stories helps social objectives relevant to emerging adults, mainly establishing and maintaining friendly relationships and acquiring romantic partners. Thus, drinking in these stories

is an essential social lubricant (Tan, 2012) and friendship practice (Vander Ven, 2011). Drinking stories reproduce the normativity of alcohol consumption, in particular, in relation to social interactions, entertainment and gender.

Finally, drinking stories can be understood as a means of the (re)construction of emerging adults' identity. As research shows, drinking stories are mainly associated with gender and age identities. Drinking identity is based on the drinking culture of peer groups (Teunissen et al., 2012), e.g. drinking fellows. While men use drinking stories to strengthen gender stereotypes, women understand alcohol as a form of emancipation, especially in terms of amount of consumed alcohol. These stories capture the honour of being able to drink "like a guy" as well as receiving positive attention from male peers (Delucchi, Matzger, & Weisner, 2008). Besides gendered identity, consumption, pleasure, choice, and self-indulgence are integrated at the same time (Bogren, 2014). It may be that young Czech women drinking practices converge with the drinking practices of young men and therefore are closer to northern European drinking culture than southern European (where women are sometimes portrayed as whores without voice) (cf. Radcliffe & Measham, 2014). Drinking stories may bring a new insight into the theory of emerging adulthood. We can describe the ambivalent function of drinking in emerging adulthood in terms of age. Alcohol consumption can be the way to claim adulthood; however, maturity can be gained by distancing themselves from drunk adolescents (Bakken, Sandøy, & Sandberg, 2017). Drinking stories represent "a period in-between" adolescence and adulthood. Emerging adults represent themselves as adults in drinking stories according to some criteria of adulthood by Arnett (1997, 2000): independence (e.g., being financially independent including being able to afford drinking); interdependence (e.g. committed to a long-term love relationship, sometimes with alcohol); role transitions (e.g. college sometimes connected with drinking); biological transitions (e.g. being able to drink biologically); chronological transitions (e.g., celebrating the age of eighteen with alcohol). On the other hand, norm compliance and family capacities as criteria of adulthood by Arnett (1997, 2000) are not represented in drinking stories. Breaking norm compliance (see nonconformity stories), which consists of avoiding getting drunk, avoiding illegal drugs, avoiding drunk driving etc. is the core of drinking stories. Adolescents' claims for independence from adults often involve a departure from mainstream norms and values (Archakis & Tzanne, 2005). From this point of view, emerging adults remain in adolescence through narration of drinking stories as freedom without responsibility. Gates et al. (2016) state that alcohol use generally peaks during the early 20s and declines with age, with the "maturing out" connected with the acquisition of adult roles. However, this analysis shows that development is not always linear and people in emerging adulthood use alcohol during this period based on linear and cyclical social

events. The identity position of the drinker might be more important than his/her exact age. Drinking stories correspond with emerging adulthood in terms of fluidity, as they mark the entrance and leaving periods of emerging adulthood, which can take place in their life paths repeatedly with different events.

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