

“If you will not drink with me, you must fight with me”: The Sociology of Drinking in the Middle Colonies

Jessica Kross

University of South Carolina

In the Albany of 1680 Dirk Albertse Bratt was again before the court. Already bound over for £20 on good behavior, he just could not stay away from Jan Gow. Now, running into him at the alehouse of Jurian Teunise, they had exchanged harsh words about some wine. But why should there be harsh feelings? “Afterwards Dirk wanted to drink with Jan Gow, but the latter would not, whereupon Dirk said: ‘If you will not drink with me, you must fight with me. You are not going to get me as you did the last time. I shall face you squarely.’”¹ What is going on here? Drinking is sociable, done with friends; fighting is hostile, done with enemies. That the activity itself would determine friend from foe gives drinking a meaning not readily apparent to the outside.

Social scientists have clearly recognized the importance of understanding drinking behavior. Cultural anthropologists especially have alerted us that drinkers are embedded in cultures which provide comprehensive rules about drinking. “These rules, beliefs and plans quite clearly state who may drink and who may not, the kinds of people who may drink together, [and] the motives for drinking. . . .”² Who drank with whom mattered. Drinking served a function beyond that of quenching thirst. And the fact that drinking meant alcohol, a drug believed by colonists to break down inhibitions thus lending itself to abuse, gave colonial drinking an edge. Alcohol could help bind or rend the social order.

None of this might matter if people drank sparingly, but such was not the case. While it is impossible to know exactly how much alcohol people consumed, estimates of per capita consumption are staggering. In 1770 New York retained 544,000 gallons of overseas rum and 575,000 gallons of North American rum.³ Pennsylvania retained 945,000 gallons of imported rum and 645,000 gallons of North American rum.⁴ This was the legal rum. And then there were beer, which in the middle colonies was a popular drink, and wine. Yet given all of this, colonial Americans received most of their alcohol not from any of these, if W. J. Rorabaugh is correct, but from hard cider.⁵ Rorabaugh estimates that in 1770 Americans drank 3.5 gallons of absolute alcohol per person or 6.6 absolute gallons for each adult fifteen and over.⁶ This would roughly translate to 5.8 shot glasses of 80 proof whiskey a day. However, this figure might well understate beer consumption, and inaccurately assumes that women drank as much as men. It is unclear how much of this alcohol was consumed at home. Some of it clearly was drunk in others’ homes, like Jurian Teunise’s.⁷

The question of who drank with whom in the Middle Colonies is closely bound up with the kinds of drinking establishments available, and since the establishments rather than the drinkers left behind records, they must in some ways serve as surrogates in the discussion for the drinkers themselves. New Netherlanders, Swedes and Finns on the Delaware, and the English tried to replicate what had been available in Europe. By the seventeenth century, this pattern was, with some clear-cut exceptions, class and gender specific. Only the slaves, cut off from village life, had to adjust to a different kind of drinking place. Even they, however, would drink with other males as they had in Africa.

Social drinking, especially for ordinary Europeans, most often occurred in specialized drinking establishments. If by the seventeenth century the wealthy had separate rooms in which varied activities could go on simultaneously, common folk still had little room and less physical privacy. The high population densities of the Netherlands gave it an urban culture. By 1622 a good one-half of the population lived in towns of over 10,000.⁸ The largest cities, like Amsterdam, relegated their poor to "tiny dwellings (*achterhuizen*) built behind the big houses on the canals or rented a single room, often in the cellar."⁹ Given these confined spaces, socializing had to take place elsewhere.

The same could also be true of the countryside. Dutch genre painting is filled with peasants cavorting around taverns, which "provided an important focus for social life among the lower classes in the north Netherlands. . ."¹⁰ Communal rituals such as *kermis*, a village celebration honoring a patron saint, and family rituals like weddings, as well as the debauchery and idleness so complained about by officials everywhere, took place in and surrounding these drinking houses.¹¹

England, on the eve of colonization offered a hierarchy of drinking establishments which went from the larger and fashionable inns, including housing for humans and their beasts, to taverns, which sold wine to the better off but had fewer accommodations for travelers, to the smaller alehouses whose fare consisted of ale, beer, and later spirits, and whose provisions were basic food and lodging for the poorer sort. From the sixteenth century England saw an increase in the number of these alehouses, some of which were little more than a room dispensing drink. Whatever form these premises took, "the drinking house was at the heart of the social world of pre-modern Europe."¹² For England specifically, Robert W. Malcolmson has argued, "the public house was the foremost everyday meeting place for off-work social gatherings; it was one of the fundamental social centres of the community. . ."¹³

All Europeans who settled the Middle Colonies expected alcohol and recreated drinking places as part of their new cultural landscape. The impetus for the first inn in New Amsterdam, built by the West India Company in 1641 or 1642 and leased to Philip Gerardus, came less from the need for a place to drink than for an overnight boarding house for Englishmen sailing

between Virginia and New England.¹⁴ The locals meanwhile used other quarters. For the elite, like Governor William Kieft, his cronies, and his visitors, the Fort sufficed as did private houses, such as Jan Claesz's. Visitors entertained on their ships. In 1633 the Englishman Jacob Eelkes invited Governor Wouter Van Twiller, David de Vries, and a number of others to visit him there. Lower down the social scale, when the gunner of the fort gave a parting feast in August of 1636, "he had a tent erected on one bastion of the fort, where a table and benches were set and many people bidden."¹⁵ In other words, people made do, but they would not have to "make do" for very long.

The growth of New Amsterdam's retail liquor trade was directly abetted by the West India Company's need for revenue. One of Manhattan's first structures was the company's brewery. The fort's store sold this beer wholesale to locals who retailed it from their homes. Augmented by wine and brandy which the Company imported, the alcohol trade proved, after furs, to be the Company's most lucrative. As early as 1637 Governor Kieft estimated that one quarter of all homes sold tobacco and beer.¹⁶ Ten years later Governor Stuyvesant repeated this assessment. In 1648 Domine Backer wrote to the Classis of Amsterdam that the city, boasted seventeen tap houses.¹⁷ If in 1648 there were only 100 men left around Manhattan, they would have genuine choices of drinking establishment.¹⁸ It is tempting to see such figures as a sign of cultural pathology, however, it might be anachronistic to see this pattern of numerous outlets divided into different kinds of retailers as unusual. In 1613 Amsterdam had as many as 518 alehouses, or one for every 200 inhabitants.¹⁹ Pre-1690 England had 89-104 persons for each tavern and late seventeenth century Essex County, Massachusetts, 66 person for each legal drinking house. Plymouth had a ratio of 110 adult males per tavern.²⁰ In 1693 Philadelphia had somewhere between twelve and twenty drinking houses for a ratio to population of 102-170.²¹ That New Amsterdam, later New York, and Philadelphia were ports with transient populations of seamen, made the need and the likelihood of pothouses even greater.

Not only were there low ratios of people to taverns in Europe and various places in America, but there was also specialization, perhaps in function, but certainly in clientele.²² Seventeenth-century Dutchmen had various kinds of drinking establishments ranging from upper-class to the "fetid and often violent pubs (*herbergen*) of the peasantry and urban proletariat."²³ In pre-Revolutionary England, Peter Clark noted "it is probably best to think of the popular drink trade less in terms of established ale houses and more in terms of the men and women who actually victualed."²⁴ This might have been a more generalized European pattern as well which made its way to the colonies. By 1680 the Massachusetts General Court differentiated between wine taverns, inns, and retailers. There were also unlicensed pot houses.²⁵ In New Netherland, these places probably served a varied clientele, but they would certainly have serviced

the lower orders in ways the Company's tavern would not. The statutes of 1647, although mainly concerned with preserving the Sabbath, distinguished among "innkeepers, landlords and tapsters," the latter being those who sold alcohol.²⁶ Class divisions among drinking establishments therefore appeared, in however rudimentary form, very early.

Whatever purveyors were called, it is difficult to sort out how many places sold liquor. In England, houses tapped depending on the economic needs of the householder and the availability of drink.²⁷ In New Netherland the same conditions operated making it impossible to know how many houses sold drink at any given time. When Seeger Cornelisz decided he was thirsty in 1654 he logically sought out the house of Merten the brewer. When his knock received no answer he kicked down the door "in such a way that the hinges sprang out of the posts and casings."²⁸ As it turned out, there was no liquor there. Even after the state began registering tapsters in 1656, illegal lower class houses made it difficult for contemporaries to know what was and what was not a tap house. In 1663, Jasper Abrahamzen, sailmaker, native of Amsterdam but loose in the port of New Amsterdam, "Committed great violence and opposition at Rendel Huit's house in the evening about nine o'clock, coming into the house against the will of the above named Rendel's wife, demanding drink from her, and insisting on having tap, and forcing her to serve up food; although she said she had neither tapping nor drink in the house, yet insisted on drink" ²⁹

Other Dutch settlements up the Hudson and on the Delaware also saw private homes acting as ale-houses in much the same way as in England. Before 1656 the Fort Orange magistracy taxed alcohol rather than license drinking houses opening the way for numbers of people to retail liquor. Smuggling undoubtedly made clandestine selling even easier.³⁰ The court records show that some like Pieter Adriaensen and Pieter Bronck were labeled innkeepers. Jurian Teunise, in whose house a number of years later Dirk Albertse Bratt would challenge Jan Gow to either drink with him or fight, was listed as both glazier and innkeeper.³¹

New Sweden never had the population of New Netherland, yet the Swedes recognized the need for and profitability of breweries, distilleries, "alehouses and well-fitted inns."³² And they distinguished among them. In 1648 the company sent out a large brewing kettle although beer in smaller quantities was brewed earlier.³³ Larger quantities meant that more people could buy at wholesale and sell at retail. Apparently there was at least an alehouse at Tinicum just below what would be Philadelphia which was dismantled in 1654 and brought to Fort Christina as an inn outside the fort.³⁴

Like New Amsterdam and Fort Orange, Christina was a garrison town with the needs and dislocations that such a population brought. The Dutch conquest of 1655 seems to have made little difference to the lower social orders. Private

homes, like Constantinus Groenenborch's sold liquor to Jan Eeckhoff and corporal Heyndrick van Bylvelt who drank it on the premises.³⁵ Private individuals upon paying the excise were granted permission to tap liquor. In 1657 Cornelis Mauritsen asked the authorities for liberty to tap again, he having no other trade. He had lost his original permission for selling to the Indians.³⁶ Harman Janssen had not even bothered to pay the excise which would let him tap, he offering "no defense except that he had brewed a half-barrel of beer, and because it was not very good he sought to sell it"³⁷ While hardly flattering to his clientele, Janssen's off-hand comment shows how easy he thought it would be to turn this small liability into an asset.

The English conquest brought little change in either the availability of drink or the class structure of drinking establishments. Jan Gow and Dirk Albertse Bratt were both somewhere in the middle of Albany's social structure. Gow had lived in Albany as early as 1653 when he was indicted for wounding Jan Smit, a charge Gow acknowledged claiming, however, he had been provoked.³⁸ Three years later he was presented for inhabiting taverns after curfew.³⁹ A mason and owner of a saw mill, by 1680 he would have been at least in his late forties and his more recent appearances in court involved financial disputes, not law-breaking. In 1684 he was chosen for office for the first time and became a road master, weighmaster, and juror.⁴⁰ He apparently liked to patronize Jurian Teunise's and had done so for years, in 1669 running up the considerable bill of almost 255 florins for wine and beer.⁴¹

Dirk Albertse Bratt first appeared in the Albany court records in 1673 where he was also called Dirk the Noorman. Bratt was an Indian trader who might, like so many of the traders, skirt the edges of legality especially when it came to entertaining Indians.⁴² In 1676 he was accused of fighting and in 1680 of abusing an Indian.⁴³ His most notorious brush with the law came when he and his business partner and presumed friend Jan Conell dressed a soldier up as the English Captain Mosely with whom they said were 300 men lying in wait at Westerhoeck to drive away and kill the river Indians. The Indians heard of this and fled. The magistrates, horrified at the thought of Indian problems, looked askance at Bratt's and Conell's claim "they were acting only in fun and by way of farce." Both were put in the stocks and fined.⁴⁴ Bratt had yet to achieve the social recognition accorded Gow by the time the records end in 1685.

It is impossible to really know what the house of Jurian Teunise's was like aside from these few members of its clientele, or what its competitors were. In the New York of 1679, however, the Labadist Jasper Danckaerts, looking for a home for his coreligionists, found no lack of liquor dealers as earlier patterns of casual liquor retailing remained. He noted of one of the merchants, "His house was not far from our lodgings on the front of the city. He had a small shop, as almost all the people here have, who gain their living by trade, namely,

in tobacco and liquors, thread and pins and other knick-knacks.”⁴⁵ The next year Governor Edmund Andros estimated that just as almost fifty years earlier, one-quarter of the houses “turned into taverns for the sale of brandy, tobacco and beer.”⁴⁶ Of those, twenty-four were actually licensed.⁴⁷

Some of these establishments could have been tipping joints, but some of them catered to those who if not wealthy were solid, like Jan Gow and possibly Dirk Albertse Bratt. Jasper Danckaerts disapproved of the tavern with its little garden located on the Fresh Water Pond to which Sunday drinkers came, but the description given by its owner’s mother probably was more accurate than his dismissive “low pot house.” She called it “a delightful place, . . . where we would be able to taste the beer of New Netherland, inasmuch as it was also a brewery. . . . On account of its being to some extent a pleasant spot, it was resorted to on Sundays by all sorts of revelers. . . . Our company immediately found acquaintances there and joined them.”⁴⁸ This company was of some social standing since Danckaerts would never have accompanied anyone of truly low status.

While New Netherlanders had to recreate their European culture from the forests, the founders of Philadelphia reaped the benefit of many years of settlement. William Penn alighted in 1683 to find the Blue Anchor Inn already there.⁴⁹ In 1685 William Frampton opened a good tavern and William Penn reported seven ordinaries “for the entertainment of strangers and workmen, that are not housekeepers.”⁵⁰ For those lower down the social order the caves along the banks of the Delaware offered cheap grogeries.⁵¹ This diversity again found itself reflected in the laws. Among the first statutes passed, albeit disallowed and later repassed, was a licensing law which distinguished among public inns, taverns, ale houses, tipping houses, and dram shops.⁵² Instead of a howling wilderness, even the earliest Philadelphians found sociable bars which catered to the social class of the drinker.

So far the discussion has centered on Europeans, but Blacks also made up part of the colonial population and brought with them a drinking culture. Both Biblical and archaeological evidence show fermented and brewed spirits made from honey, fruits and juices, palm and bamboo sap, and milk and grains in Palestine, Egypt, and Ethiopia. Valentim Fernandes, an early sixteenth century Portuguese voyager to West Africa, specifically mentioned a fermented honey drink, as does a seventeenth century account from Ethiopia.⁵³ In the sixteenth century Congo, natives drank a palm wine. An early eighteenth-century work published in Venice noted both palm wine and a grain beer.⁵⁴ Warlike tribesmen of sixteenth-century Angola cut down palms for wine, while more sedentary seventeenth-century Angolans brewed an alcoholic beverage of maize, brought from the New World by the Portuguese.⁵⁵

As in Europe, alcoholic beverages were part of the economy, were bought and sold, and drunk either in places outside the home or taken back to the

house. When palm wine was available in the markets of the Guinea Coast, men would gather, "where they sit down and drink very sociably; every one that pleases, bringing his own Stool, adds himself to the Croud [sic]"⁵⁶ Men also drank in more private settings. On the Gold Coast palm wine reached market only in the afternoon and then had to be drunk right away since it soured if left overnight. When word came in that wine had arrived five or six men would join together, purchase a large pot and sit around drinking it. Before they began, each sent home a small amount for his favorite wife, and before they finished, each would spill a little on the ground as an offering, and also present some to any fetish he was wearing.⁵⁷ Even more than Europeans, male Africans interacted with other males.

Given the role of alcohol in their traditional societies, it would be surprising not to find Blacks drinking in America. In 1683 Albany, Gerrit Banker accused Dowe Aukus of "trading with his Negro." Aukus was fined 150 guilders and a half-barrel of beer, further promising "he will never have any intercourse with Gert. Banker's Negro and never allow him to come into his house, nor sell him any drink, directly or indirectly."⁵⁸ This case is unusual. More often, Blacks, like subatomic particles, can be seen by the indirect trail they leave through the statutes. In 1684 New York City's common council forbid gatherings of more than four slaves and prohibited various kinds of arms. It was not until 1691, however, that the law forbid anyone to "sell or deliver to them any wine rum or other strong liquor without leave."⁵⁹ Beer might not have been considered strong liquor, however. Outside the city, a statute against profanation of the Sabbath passed in 1695 tried to prevent various leisure time activities including "frequenting of tippling houses." Specifically mentioned were Indian and Negro slaves and servants.⁶⁰ An act of 1702 regulating slaves limited congregations to three people but failed to mention drinking.⁶¹ It was not until 1709 that the law specifically enjoined retailers from selling strong drink to "any Negro, or Indian slave."⁶² In the wake of 1712 and 1741 slave threats, New York repeated injunctions against entertaining and selling liquor to slaves.⁶³ Slave frequenting of taverns was not a seventeenth century but an eighteenth century concern. And this was also true elsewhere.

Philadelphia's common council begin debating an ordinance regulating taverns and public houses in 1705, but their minutes fail to record any such.⁶⁴ In 1732, feeling threatened by "the frequent and tumultuous Meetings of the Negro Slaves, especially on Sundays" the council called for an ordinance to restrain them and also children and white servants.⁶⁵ Drunkenness and drinking establishments were not mentioned, however, and the councilmen, still debating the ordinance in 1738, had yet to pass it.⁶⁶ Three years later the board noted complaints about disorderly persons including "great numbers of Negroes" gathering around the court house "with milk pails and other things late at

night” but again the record is silent about selling liquor.⁶⁷ In the end the common council seems to have taken no action about slave drinking.

Provincial law did more. Many of Pennsylvania’s earliest statutes, including acts punishing drunkenness and regulating slaves, ran afoul of the British Privy Council and were disallowed. By 1705, however, slaves were seen as threatening in large numbers and therefore limited to groups of four.⁶⁸ It was only in 1720 that as a supplement to the laws licensing public houses they were forbidden to “furnish, supply or sell to any Negroe or Indian Servants any Rum, Brandy, Spirits, or any other strong Liquors whatsoever, mixed or unmixed, either within or without Doors . . .” without special license from their masters.⁶⁹ Five years later an act for regulating Negroes ordered that slaves found “tippling or drinking in or near any House or shop where strong Liquors are sold” without permission would be whipped.⁷⁰

The earliest New Jersey laws from both East and West Jersey address keeping liquor away from the Indians and the disorderly with no mention of slaves.⁷¹ After New Jersey became a unified royal colony in 1702 concern remained focussed on Sabbath laws. It was not until 1739 that a “Tavern keeper, Inn-keeper, or Keeper of an Ordinary” was forbidden to sell drink to any “Apprentice, White Servant, Indian, Molotto [sic] or Negro Servant or Slave” without the master’s or mistress’s permission.⁷² Before 1741 Delaware seems to have passed no act specifically forbidding sale of alcohol to slaves although it published laws prohibiting drunkenness and breaching the Sabbath, and regulating slaves.⁷³ New Jersey’s and Delaware’s lack of cities probably meant that slave drinking was not regarded as specifically problematic.

By the end of the seventeenth century, the range of drinking establishments in the larger cities had been augmented by the English coffee house. About 1697 John Hutchins opened a coffee house in New York City. He also provided rooms upstairs where groups of men could meet in clubs. At least two more coffee houses served customers by 1710.⁷⁴ By 1703, Samuel Carpenter had opened a coffeehouse in Philadelphia. After 1703, however, it only served non-alcoholic beverages.⁷⁵ These were upper order establishments, patronized by travelers and the local elites.

As in the time of Jasper Danckaerts, taverns just outside New York City also catered to both an elite and middle order clientele. In 1697 Dr. Benjamin Bullivant, traveling in New York, was taken by the Governor to “Clapps, where with other company dined” and then drank healths. John Clap’s tavern was two miles from town at the Bowery.⁷⁶ In 1704 Madam Sarah Kemble Knight noted “Houses of entertainment” three or four miles outside of town at the Bowery, where in winter people went by sleigh as a diversion.⁷⁷

By the 1740’s, when Dr. Alexander Hamilton traveled on his famous journey from Annapolis, the northern cities offered almost everything that English metropolises could in the way of drinking establishments. Like England, they

Courtesy of the Maryland Historical Society



Colonial drinking as sketched by Dr. Alexander Hamilton

also provided not just for the elite and the impoverished but for a wide and varied middle strata.⁷⁸ In Philadelphia Hamilton found coffee houses, as well as taverns which served ordinary folks, "Scots, English, Dutch, Germans, and Irish; there were Roman Catholicks, Church men, Presbyterians, Quakers, Newlightmen, Methodists, Seventh day men, Moravians, Anabaptists, and one Jew. The whole company consisted of 25 planted around an oblong table in a great hall well stoked with flies."⁷⁹ He also found taverns which mainly served the elite and where "the Governor's Club, a society of gentlemen that met at a taveren [sic] every night and converse on various subjects. The Governour gives them his presence once a week."⁸⁰ New York also had its elite taverns and gentlemen's clubs, like Todds where the Hungarian Club drank.⁸¹ Hamilton enjoyed the coffee house where gentlemen played backgammon and chess.⁸² At the tavern fronting the Albany coffee house he heard a concert and was much impressed by the violinist.⁸³

Traveling in smaller cities meant less choice and perhaps greater mingling of social classes. In Albany Hamilton went to the tavern with Philip Livingston, one of the Hudson River aristocrats.⁸⁴ But Albany had far less to offer in the way of genteel establishments, although it undoubtedly had any number of places for the middling Dutch speakers and lowest classes, and even Albany's Blacks. At the Sign of the Wheat Sheaf in Trenton, New Jersey, Hamilton encountered the European-educated Dr. Thomas Cadwalader, one of those iconoclastic thinkers that the Enlightenment threw up in unlikely places.⁸⁵ The smaller towns further off the major roads offered fewer choices. At Southold on Long Island, Hamilton shared the tavern with "a Company of patchd [sic] coats and tattered jackets," joined later by a peddler and Doctor Hull, "a practitioner of physick in the town."⁸⁶ But if Hamilton shared a roof with those beneath him, he did not necessarily share a room if the tavern were large enough, or a table if it were not. Even so, Hamilton was glad to get back to the larger cities.

Eighteenth-century middle colony drinking establishments had much to offer the elite, but they also catered to those with whom Alexander Hamilton would never drink. Many of these places, although not all, were still run by poorer individuals keeping tap as well as having other employment. As early as 1707 the Burlington, New Jersey grand jury charged William Cale, laborer, with keeping a "common house of drinking . . . and there received harbored and supported diverse vagabond and other idle and suspected persons of evil conversation as well as diverse servants and Negroes of the inhabitants of the town."⁸⁷

In the New York of the 1741 "great conspiracy," an alleged slave plot to burn the city and murder the whites, the authorities almost winked at some of this activity, noting a large number of places sold quarts or gallons of rum "under pretence of selling what they call a penny dram to a negro."⁸⁸ That

such places flourished became well documented as the slave trials progressed. Will asked Jack to "drink a dram with him at Mrs. Wendall's."⁸⁹ Elizabeth Romme, wife of shoemaker John Romme, denied more serious charges against her, but reluctantly confessed that "negroes used to come to their house to drink drams," and went on to note that she never saw more than three at a time.⁹⁰ Another seven men and three women were also indicted and fined for keeping disorderly houses which catered to Blacks.⁹¹

The center for the conspiracy was the complex establishment run by John Hughson. Not just a room where Blacks could drink a penny's worth, Hughson's home of at least two stories rented out chambers, and perhaps abetted prostitution.⁹² One upstairs apartment was used to swear in the plotters.⁹³ Perhaps it was this same room in which the slaves danced.⁹⁴ Hughson provided Blacks with many of the services respectable taverns offered whites. He not only served drink there but sold it to be carried away. He supplied penny drams of rum, cider, and beer but also more complicated punches.⁹⁵ During various holidays and Sundays his bottom rooms served Blacks feasts.⁹⁶ Indeed, slaves at Hughson's mimicked white gentility as "they sat all round the table, and had a goose, a quarter of mutton, a fowl, and two loaves of bread: Hughson took a flask of rum out of a case and set it on the table, and two bowls of punch were made; some drink drams; a cloth was laid."⁹⁷

The elegant spread at Hughson's would have seemed familiar to whites not only for its rhythms but also because those partaking were male. When the sheriff prosecuted Dirk Albertse Bratt for challenging Jan Gow at the house of Jurian Teunise his witnesses were male.⁹⁸ The dram shops, coffee houses, and clubs which marked the eighteenth century catered to men. Only under certain narrow conditions did taverns host women.

Just as colonial class-segregated drinking was part of a larger cultural pattern, so was gender-segregated drinking. A study of 113 societies world-wide found that while in 109 of those societies both men and women drank, in 56 there were marked sexual differences, while only 36 had no sexual differences. In no society did women drink when men did not and in most western societies, women tended to drink less than men.⁹⁹ Seventeenth-century Dutch genre painting shows men and women drinking together. However, a closer look points toward restrictive patterns that were also prevalent in England and are in different forms seen world wide. The women in many of the Dutch paintings are part of a family, with young children as in Adriaen van Ostade's "Tavern Interior," part of a group of young men and women as portrayed in scenes known as "Merry Companies," part of a larger festivity such as a wedding or village celebration; or openly whores, as in Henrick Sorgh, "A Man and a Woman at a Table."¹⁰⁰ None of these women are there by themselves casually, or as a group of women out with friends for an evening.

In pre-colonial England, the alehouses were "male clubs closely akin to the

working-class pubs of the later industrial towns and mining villages."¹⁰¹ In the early seventeenth century few customers, less than 7 per cent in Kent and Dorchester, were women. Like their Northern European counterparts, English women's use of drinking houses was culturally narrow: with their husbands on a journey, in groups of married women, at family festivities, and as young couples. As the seventeenth century progressed women possibly became even less evident as Puritanism attacked alehouse culture.¹⁰² Peter Clark suggests that "in the ambit of the alehouse traditional constraints of behavior had less force: respectable women, kinfolk and substantial masters were usually absent and the customer was likely to mix with neighbours, members of his own age-group and strangers."¹⁰³

While the evidence for mixed gender drinking in the Middle Colonies is episodic, it suggests this European pattern both in taverns and elsewhere. Few of the court records show other than women proprietors or serving women inhabiting alehouses. In one of the more bizarre early cases, Hillette Jans accused the wife of Christiaan Anthony of coming to Jans' house "clad in man's clothes, having a pair of whiskers painted black, [and] asked for a pint of beer. . . ." ¹⁰⁴ Perhaps to drink like a man one had to look like a man.

Women did travel, sometimes with male kin or husbands, sometimes without although rarely alone, and when they did they drank. On a cold November in 1680, three traveling Quakers, including the "prophetess" Alice Gray, stopped to rest at the home of Justice Otto Ernst Koch, on Tinicum Island below what is now Philadelphia. "They sat by the fire, and drank a dram of rum with each other, and in a short time afterwards began to shake and groan so, that we did not know what had happened and supposed they were going to preach, but nothing came out of it."¹⁰⁵

Madame Sarah Kemble Knight travelled in 1704 with a kinsman to New York on business. While there she was shown many kindnesses by "the good women of the town, who curteously [sic] invited me to their houses and generously entertained me."¹⁰⁶ But none of this all-female entertaining took place at even an elite inn. As recreation she was escorted by a Mr. Burroughs, his wife and daughter to "one Madame Dowes, a Gentlewoman that lived at a farm House, who gave us a handsome Entertainment of five or six Dishes and choice Beer and metheglin, Cyder, &c. all which she said was the produce of her farm."¹⁰⁷

By the last half of the eighteenth century, the more genteel public houses self-consciously catered to mixed company. Hannah Callender, a young Quaker visiting New York for pleasure in 1759, noted, "We went to the Mead Houses. [Mead is] a sort of liquor made of honey which is weak and has a pleasant taste. There is a row of neat wooden houses a little within the palisadoes called the Mead houses, where it is customary to drink this liquor and eat cakes."¹⁰⁸ She also "sat in a bower and drank some sangaree in a house along

the Hudson within walking distance of the city.”¹⁰⁹ Philadelphia’s elite taverns actively recruited the genteel male and female traveler.¹¹⁰

Weddings and funerals called for alcoholic beverages. Both men and women attended but it is not clear that women drank. At a wedding in New Amsterdam in 1650 the director, after the fourth or fifth round of drinking, persuaded everyone there to contribute to a new church.¹¹¹ Funerals also called for refreshment. After the extravagant interment of William Lovelace, nephew of New York Governor Francis Lovelace, in which men and women, young and old, Dutch and English marched, mourners feasted on “wines, sweet meats and bisketts and such services till 10. at night.”¹¹² The Dutch were seen as more festive at funerals than the English. Charles Wolley, living in New York about 1700, said, “They have another custom different from other nations. They feast freely and merrily at the funeral of any friend, to which I have been often invited and sometimes a guest The Dutch eat and drink very plentifully at these feasts . . . [and] I observed they sit men and women intermixt, and not as our English do women and men by themselves apart.”¹¹³

Family celebrations provided an excuse to socialize but the urge to get together in small groups or even as couples found men and women together with a friendly bottle. Daniel Denton, arriving in New York shortly after it became an English colony wrote charmingly that

Strawberries, of which last is such abundance in June, that the Fields and Woods are died [sic] red: Which the Country-people perceiving, instantly arm themselves with bottles of Wine, Cream, and Sugar and in stead of a Coat of Male, every one takes a Female upon his Horse behind him, and so rushing violently into the fields, never leave till they have disrob’d them of their red colours, and turned them into the old habit.¹¹⁴

The desire to meet with others of like mind also manifested itself in evening entertainments. In 1668, New York’s Governor Francis Lovelace convened six English and ten Dutch and French families who met at their homes twice a week in winter and once in summer where they ate, drank wine, and conversed in three languages.¹¹⁵ The young Scotsman, William Black, traveling to Philadelphia in 1744 as secretary to a commission from Virginia discussing Indian problems, had entry into the elite homes of the city. He describes a “party of pleasure,” which consisted of five women and two men, who discussed current literature and drank madeira.¹¹⁶ In 1763 Edmund Conyngham of Philadelphia wrote to Colonel Joseph Burd at Fort Juniata, “the *Lunarians* met in the evening at the corner of Walnut and Water streets most of the officers, and their wives were present. We drank your health and experienced the want of your many Indian anecdotes.”¹¹⁷

At the end of the colonial period Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur wrote his

bittersweet reminiscences. Crèvecoeur must be used carefully for his hidden agenda was to criticize the class structure of Europe. His America is the romanticized world of generous and satisfied yeomen, working hard but enjoying the fruits of their labor. For drying apples, "the neighbouring women are invited to spend the evening at our house." After the work is done, "convivial merriment, cheerfulness, and song never fail to enliven these evenings, and though our bowls contain neither the delicate punch of the West Indies, nor the rich wines of Europe, nevertheless our cider affords us that simpler degree of exhilaration with which we are satisfied."¹¹⁸

Just as white males were most comfortable with males, Black males felt most comfortable drinking with other Black males, although there is some evidence for them drinking in the same establishments with lower-class whites. John Hughson's house provided rich and varied recreational opportunities not only for a large number of New York City's slaves but also white civilians and soldiers.¹¹⁹ The whites, aside from Hughson and his family, and maybe one or two more, seemed to drink with each other and not with the Blacks.

Blacks also found the time and space to entertain one another at private homes. The evidence gathered in the 1741 trials makes it clear that Blacks had a hidden social life of their own. One place Blacks felt free to gather was at Gerardus Comfort's. Sandy, owned by Thomas Niblet, testified to a number of meetings there, often attended by a large number of slaves. "That going by Comfort's one Sunday evening, about a month before the fort was set on fire, Jack called him in, where were about twenty negroes That upon his coming into the room, they gave him drink, and then asked him to burn houses. . . ."¹²⁰ Later he noted, "that the third time, at Comfort's house, one Sunday, when Comfort's Jack called to him to come to him, and he went in, Sarah (Burk's negro wench) d_____d him, and bid him drink, having before refused."¹²¹ Sarah, however, was the only woman mentioned in the proceedings as part of a larger social group. All the rest were men. Serious drinking, regardless of race, was done by men.

The overwhelming pattern of drinking with others like oneself reinforced the drinker's sense not only of who he was but whom he trusted, whom he could call a friend and with whom, by implication, he felt safe. As the anthropologist Paul L. Doughty notes, "the ritual of drinking is a kind of special contract between two or more people, which legitimizes social relationships. . . . To drink with a person is to recognize his dignity as an individual and, through the ritual, to interact with him on the basis of respect and relative equality."¹²² In this article's opening anecdote, Dirk Albertse Bratt gave Jan Gow two behavioral choices, drinking together or fighting. One choice led to friendship and safety, the other to violence. This integrative function of drinking was not restricted to seventeenth-century Albany. In 1700 the Anglican clergyman Charles Wolley tried to reconcile two of the

Dutch *domines* by inviting them and their wives to dinner where they could only speak Latin. "Dinner had a bottle of wine of which the Calvinist Domine was a true carouzer."¹²³ Some sixty or so years later Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur attempted to reunite two former companions separated by religious zeal. When all else failed, "I attempted to reunite them . . . by means of that communion often practised, by drinking out of the same bowl."¹²⁴

The clearest example of the ceremonial use of drink to bind people together was the ritual surrounding induction into the New York slave conspiracy of 1741, held at Hughson's tavern.

There was a black ring made on the floor about two feet and a half diameter, and Hughson bid every one pull off the left shoe and put their toes within the ring, and Mrs. Hughson held a bowl of punch over their heads as the negroes stood round the circle, and Hughson pronounced the oath above mentioned, and every negro severally repeated the words after him, and then Hughson's wife fed them with a draught out of the bowl.¹²⁵

Where John Hughson came up with such a rite is unclear but it looks remarkably like the Gold Coast oath-draught in which "Every person entring [sic] into any Obligation is obliged to drink the Swearing Liquor."¹²⁶ Perhaps some of the slaves had knowledge of rituals which combined magical symbolism with the sharing of a common drinking vessel.

Colonists could imagine the risks involved in communal drinking. This is clearly illustrated in the anxiety that some exhibited when the social boundaries were crossed. In the Philadelphia election of 1742 fears of violence ran high. Israel Pemberton, Jr., one of the Quaker aristocrats and a partisan, was already feeling threatened when Captain Mitchell brought his men into the elite, and hitherto off-limits tavern, the Indian King. This was too much and Pemberton tried unsuccessfully to get either the inn-keeper or the Captain to force the men out. A few, or even a number of sailors were no real threat to Pemberton. His exaggerated reaction stemmed from his feeling that his safety—his safe place—had been violated.¹²⁷

That safety and legitimization of dignity should be reinforced by social interaction is hardly surprising. That this particular behavior should center around a substance as tricky as alcohol requires more explanation. It does not take long to discover that the literature on alcohol is voluminous, bewildering, and contradictory. The major problem lies in separating the physical effects inherent in ethanol, alcohol's major ingredient, from the attitudes and expectations that drinkers bring with them. Recent research suggests that alcohol "detrimentally affects a number of functions associated with the prefrontal and temporal lobes, including planning, verbal fluency, memory

and complex motor control.”¹²⁸ Alcohol is a depressant. Anybody who drinks enough will eventually experience an inability to think clearly, to remember, to speak clearly, and to physically coordinate. Eventually the drinker will pass out. Beyond this, culture, not alcohol, seems to determine how the inebriate behaves.

Colonial attitudes toward drinking characterized alcohol as a substance that treated with respect was useful and pleasant. Going further, the intrinsic relaxing properties of alcohol made social intercourse and a sense of belonging easier. Alcohol broke down the barriers separating people. Dirk Albertse Bratt recognized this when he invited Jan Gow to drink with him. Israel Pemberton, Jr., did so also when he recoiled at the thought of sailors in the *Indian King*.

Neither of the two seventeenth-century groups most concerned with controlling behavior, the Puritans and the Quakers, even advised, much less required abstinence. While Massachusetts passed “forty-odd separate series of laws” trying to regulate the use of taverns, none of these laws forbade drinking.¹²⁹ Cotton Mather’s oft-cited characterization of alcohol was as the “good creature of God.”¹³⁰ Philadelphia’s Quakers dismissed almost nobody from the Meeting for drinking before 1700.¹³¹ As late as 1787 Quaker Thomas Baldwin observed in his essay, “On Drinking to Excess,” that “he that takes our heed thereto will find it needful to be moderate in the use of Intoxicating Liquor.”¹³²

But if alcohol was good used in moderation it could also be something else when abused. Alcohol reduced inhibitions, thereby unleashing behavior that could be violent. People fought one another. The colonial court records are filled with drunken brawls. Even so, for most of the male population, the free male population, this behavior remained personal, neither directed against other social classes nor against property. As such it was only a minor cause of concern as shown by the lack of statutes regulating it. Drunkenness was illegal; drinking was not—for free men. Slaves, servants, and apprentices could drink also but only with the permission of their masters and mistresses. Daniel Horsmanden, frightened and indignant over slave perfidy, implicitly recognized owners’ responsibilities: “How this notion of its being lawful to sell a penny dram, or a pennyworth of rum to a slave, without the consent or direction of his master, has prevailed, I know not; . . . there is not only no such law, but [it is] . . . directly contrary to an act of the assembly now in force.”¹³³ Masters, as part of their duty to the community, were supposed to know who was a threat when inebriated and who was not.

While colonial society recognized alcohol’s dual nature, and in the eighteenth-century some groups began to show concern, colonists’ toleration was rooted in an appreciation that nothing terrible was going to happen if people got drunk. Colonial culture, like any culture, determined “the types of behavior that are appropriate to specific levels of intoxication in specific drinking environments,” and socialized colonists, from childhood on, with the series of

expectations that society had about drunken behavior.¹³⁴ According to Craig MacAndrew and Robert B. Edgerton, “however great the difference may be between persons’ sober and drunken comportment—and there can be no doubt that these differences are often very great, indeed—it is evident that both states are characterized by a healthy respect for certain socially sanctioned limits.”¹³⁵ These limits, include “times out,” when the rules can seemingly be broken.¹³⁶

Two kinds of “time out” appeared in American colonial society. The first occurred during ritualized recurrent male social gatherings, the second when, under more ordinary circumstances, people were perceived to act in ways that would have been unacceptable otherwise. Alcohol provided a defense which sometimes saved them from punishments they might otherwise have received. At the very least, the fact that people claimed drunkenness as an excuse shows that they and their audience understood that drunks were “not themselves” when under the influence.

The all-male drinking clubs, so vividly characterized and drawn by Alexander Hamilton, provide a wonderful and rare example of elite “time out” behavior. The three sketches included here show the somewhat sophomoric rituals, the ostentatious overindulgence, and then the fighting: gentlemen, both bewigged and unwigged went at each other with wine bottles, swords, and chairs.¹³⁷

Fighting, physical and verbal abuse, and other forms of problematic behavior were laid at the door of drink. Jacob the carpenter and Willem Jansz Prins, “bravely fought” in 1652 at the home of Pieter Bronck near Albany. Indeed, Bronck, realizing what was happening, had the foresight to break both of their pocket knives “in order that they should not injure each other with knives.” But when the case reached court, Prins declared “he does not know much about having been fighting, as he was dead drunk.” The court apparently dropped the case.¹³⁸

In the New Amsterdam of 1655, Jan van Leyden was accused of striking Francois Fyn on the face, laying his hand on the hilt of his sword, and threatening Fyn with harsh words. He then arrived at Wolpher Webber’s house, abused Webber’s wife and bruised her cheek. Leyden was drunk at the time. The sheriff asked the court both to fine and banish van Leyden, “a troublesome and quarrelsome person,” but the court refused, instead sentencing him to “appear in Court and there, with uncovered head, beg of God and Justice pardon” and promise to behave himself.¹³⁹ In 1657, the court officer at Fort Orange accused Pieter Bronck of pulling a knife on Herman, servant of Jan Tomassen. The defendant stated “he was quite drunk and therefore can neither admit nor deny the fact.” Since others saw him he was fined a substantial 100 florins.¹⁴⁰ In 1695 Charles Goss was hauled before the Philadelphia County Court for “abusing John Wilkeson both by words and blows.” He alleged “that he was much in drink and was not sensible of what he did.” The court

fined him maybe a day and a half's wages—five shillings and fees.¹⁴¹

Abusing others was not the only behavior committed then excused while drunk. In 1678 Jan Conell bought Harme Gansevoort's farm. Gansevoort's wife, however, requested the court annul the sale "because it was made at a tavern when he was drunk and full of wine and then incompetent to transact any such business." The ensuing inquiry revolved around Gansevoort's sobriety. Some witnesses said he was sober, others said he was drunk. In the end the jury decided the contract was legal.¹⁴² Presumably, if the witnesses had agreed that Gansevoort was too drunk to know what he was doing, it would have voided the sale.

Drunkenness could be an excuse for destroying property. In 1755 Esther Edwards Burr, daughter of the renowned minister Jonathan Edwards and wife of the Reverend Aaron Burr, wrote in her journal, "Never did our young people get to such a height of wickedness as now. They are come to that, to go to pulling down buildings in the day time and then so daring as to say in excuse for themselves, 'O we were drunk'. . . ." ¹⁴³

Drunkenness allowed people to give vent to frustrations, anger, and perhaps boredom. It also allowed them to say things they might not have said sober. In some cultures, "the licensed drunk pierces the elaborate information control devices of the community and provides the barefaced facts and opinion which normally go unspoken."¹⁴⁴ Colonists, unsure about status and recognizing that one's good name was the basis for economic credit as well as reputation, were exceptionally sensitive to slander, defamation and innuendo.¹⁴⁵ When Dirk Albertse Bratt challenged Jan Gow to drink with him or fight, the two of them already had an uneasy relationship marked by violence probably lubricated with drink. On the previous November 6, Bratt and Gow had gone to the house of Jurian Teunise. While playing cards they fell into a "great dispute with each other, whereupon Jan Gow, having fetched a full tankard of wine in the front room, went into the chamber." Bratt followed him "and again took up the quarrel, snapping his finger at him and challenging Jan Gow to come outside." Gow obliged, and although it is unclear exactly what happened next, Bratt came into the house stabbed in the back. Bratt then sued Gow. While nobody disputed Bratt's injury, the suit went against him. Instead, witnesses testified that Bratt, "by teasing, and many spiteful words and challenging the aforesaid Jan Gow" was the cause of the problem. He was not allowed compensation, "but on the contrary warned to refrain hereafter from committing such actions." He was also ordered to pay the cost of the trial.¹⁴⁶ When John Larison stole some brandy from Ellen Wall and treated his friends, Ellen Wall chose to express her dismay to Mary Larison and anybody else who would listen. She ended up in court accused of slandering Mary, but the justices found both women guilty of disorderly behavior, fined them six guilders each, and enjoined them "for future time to refrain from such drunken bouts

upon penalty of further punishment.”¹⁴⁷

Given the colonials' concern for reputation and the quick-tempered reactions to slights, slanders, and insufficient respect, the drunk walked a fine line between playing the somewhat protected truth-telling fool, and opening himself—or in rare cases herself—up to a violent response. When he abused authority, he was liable to arrest and fine. Many of the cases of slander in which drunkenness was used as an excuse were also assaults on authority. In 1663, Eghbert Meinersen abused the sheriff of New Amsterdam, Jacob Strycker, because he felt that a judgment had unfairly gone against him. “The abusive words being read to Eghbert, he says he does not know that he uttered them, and if it were so, it must have been through the drink.”¹⁴⁸ In 1680, Moens Petersen Staeket apparently called Justice Otto Ernest Koch a hog thief. His excuse in court was that if he said it, a fact he did not quite admit, “that it must have been in his drink.” He desired forgiveness.¹⁴⁹ In 1703, Henry Barns swore four oaths and “then and there did by diverse scandalous expressions abuse and asperse Thomas Story, Esquire, one of the council and Master of the Rolls of the Province and Territories of Pennsylvania.” Barns was drunk. He was fined five shillings for swearing, five shillings for drunkenness, and five shillings for abusing Thomas Story, plus fees.¹⁵⁰

Henry Barns used words, but others acted out their disrespect, which likewise was attributed to alcohol. In 1694, Peter Groome stood before the court of sessions with his hat on and “with other contemptuous behavior.” He was ordered fined for contempt, but upon his appearing contrite before the court, “acknowledging he had got over much strong drink,” the court remitted that fee but fined him for appearing before them drunk.¹⁵¹

Drunken “time out” behaviors and drunken fools both served in some ways as safety valves. People who acted that way were not themselves and not responsible. They were rarely seen as major threats to society although the actions taken against them served to remind everybody that they lived in a society, not the wilderness. There were limits. Drinking could result in violence, but that threat was acceptable, possibly because it rarely crossed class lines.

While colonists seemed to excuse men getting drunk, their attitude toward habitual drunkards, women, and dependents was different. They clearly understood that for some, drinking went beyond the occasional glass-too-many, wrecking their lives and the lives around them. When the Dutch ministers Megapolensis and Drisius wrote to the Classis of Amsterdam in 1657 complaining about the Lutheran preacher Lars Lock, they called him “a wild, drunken, unmannerly clown.” Drink cost him his ministry.¹⁵² Sadder was the case thirty years later of Captain James Carteret, son of Sir George Carteret, the proprietor of New Jersey, who “runs about among the farmers, and stays where he can find most to drink, and sleeps in barns on the straw.” Carteret's wife had already gone back to her father.¹⁵³ Eighteenth-century Quakers often

saw drink as just part of the larger problem of improper company, inattention to business, debt, and ruin. Some 1,003 people treated for drunkenness committed 809 other offenses.¹⁵⁴

Male problem drinking was often done in public and so more likely to appear in the records. Women's drinking was more private, more shameful, and more hidden. The Lutheran Minister Henry Melchior Muhlenberg often received an angry or shocked response when he addressed a family about some female member's intoxication.¹⁵⁵ Quakers also dealt with inebriated females, recognizing that changing this behavior could be difficult. In 1765 Sarah Allen was finally disowned, the testimony noting, "[she] hath so far deviated [from the dictates of divine grace] as to accustom herself, to the drinking of Spiritous Liquors to excess, for which she hath been often tenderly treated with, in hopes of our being instrumental to reclaim her; but our labour of love not having the desired effect[.]"¹⁵⁶

If Muhlenberg and the Quaker Meeting tried to deal with female drinkers using loving kindness, another attitude was disgust. While male drunks were often tolerated, female drunks might not be. William Black was walking back to his rooming house in Philadelphia in the 1740's when:

In my way I was met by a woman tolerably well dressed, and seemed a good likely person to appearance, but very much in liquor; . . . she asked me where I was going, I answered home; on this I had curiosity enough to turn her round to have a better view; on which I made the discovery of her being in a condition, which of all others, least becomes the sex.¹⁵⁷

That Black's female drunk outwardly seemed respectable only made things worse.

Finally, there was a clear distinction between those who either by law or custom could drink whenever and wherever they wanted and those who needed the permission of someone else. White "free" males were free to drink. Those whom the society labelled as dependent were not. Apprentices, servants, Blacks, and women were legally restricted in any number of ways. All of these persons except women were also legally denied discretionary access to drink. And women were controlled by colonial culture's attitudes toward women who drank too much, especially in public. Perhaps there was an underlying fear that those without a stake in society and thus no vested interest in preserving it, would, under the influence of alcohol, destroy it. Their "time out" might have different boundaries than everyone else's.

It is difficult to know when the tide against drinking turned. In England the end of the eighteenth century saw the upper classes removing themselves from rowdy drinking behavior.¹⁵⁸ Methodism and the needs of the new

industrializing order surely played a part in changing attitudes. The Quakers, who dismissed few for drinking in the seventeenth century, in the 1720's began to pay more attention to a practice that "is an inlet to many other evils." By 1780, drunkenness had become the most common "sectarian" error. Over 1000 people were dealt with through the meeting; 60.9% were disowned.¹⁵⁹ By the 1760's some Friends were encouraging abstinence, and the 1777 Philadelphia Yearly Meeting asked Quakers neither to manufacture nor sell liquor.¹⁶⁰ By the latter part of the eighteenth century Philadelphia's gentry were distancing themselves from previous drinking behavior, if not from drink.¹⁶¹ Even earlier, British expatriates, like Alexander Hamilton in the 1740's, commented on colonial excesses. Twenty some years later the young soldier Alexander Mackraby, who came to Philadelphia in 1767 with the wealth and connections to avail himself of all that the city offered, reported back home "they drink too much," a revealing observation given the large amount of alcohol he reported that he himself consumed.¹⁶²

William Rorabaugh concludes that a complex series of intellectual changes including the spread of enlightenment rationalism, the rise of mercantile capitalism, new medical ideas, and the rejection of custom all conspired to change attitudes about alcohol from one of approval to one of uncertainty about its safety.¹⁶³ Historians Lender and Martin suggest that Independence broke down old patterns of authority and deference thus freeing people from restraint. The elite feared a new republic requiring self-imposed virtue could be jeopardized if people drank and behaved dissolutely.¹⁶⁴ And yet, while Quakers and some of the elite might have been having second thoughts, the country as a whole did not. If colonials drank too much, their children in the new republic drank even more. The first third of the nineteenth century saw the greatest *per capita* consumption of alcohol in American history.¹⁶⁵

When Dirk Albertse Bratt challenged Jan Gow to either drink with him or fight him he intrinsically recognized that sharing alcohol was a symbolically laden act. Nearly all of those who came to America, whether free or slave, drank. This paper argues that colonists recreated Old World drinking patterns right from the beginning. New settlements in the Middle Colonies offered a range of drinking establishments which permitted drinkers to segregate themselves by class. By the eighteenth century the choices and the resulting differentiation was even greater. As in most things, the upper orders had greater ranges of choice. They could more easily cross class lines, "slum" as it were. For the lower orders such integration was more difficult and for the slaves it was almost impossible. Women had limited access to public drinking. Serious social drinking, and the cultural acceptance and trust that it implied, was limited to men.

Choice of drinking companions was a decision based on the human need

Choice of drinking companions was a decision based on the human need for predictability and safety. Anthropologists have suggested that the act of drinking together conveyed an underlying message of trust. Bratt's invitation that Gow drink with him, an act of friendship, or fight him, an act of enmity, recognized this. When the event took place, the drinkers were on the same symbolic level. They could feel safe with one another. Drinking brought people together; failing to drink kept them apart. Class, race, and gender-specific drinking resulted from and reinforced the comfort one felt with those like oneself. The formalized occasions when these lines were crossed only underscores how "special" they were.

The singular place that drinking held in integrating individuals into a social context was maintained by the nature of alcohol as a psychotropic substance. Western society has always recognized that alcohol changes behavior, encourages violence, and lowers people's tolerance of social norms. This paper suggests that in colonial America the very nature of alcohol as a potentially disruptive substance also provided its role as a social binder. Dirk Albertse Bratt did not invite Jan Gow to fish with him; he asked him to drink with him, knowing that the last time the two drank together he had been injured. Real union would take place using the substance that so easily could tear them apart.

The Europeans who settled the Middle Colonies felt safe enough around alcohol to permit all free persons to use it. Those for whom drinking was considered problematic were those outside civil society—slaves, servants, apprentices, and possibly women. Yet even those who were unfree were still permitted to drink with their masters' or mistresses' permission. When mid-eighteenth-century uneasiness about drinking began to surface among the Quakers it was in a group self-consciously withdrawn from mainstream assumptions about social values and behavior. If the upper classes were, in the name of gentility, separating their behavior from the lower orders, they were still drinking among themselves. Temperance would have to wait until after the turn of the century.

In the Albany of 1680, Dirk Albertse Bratt challenged Jan Gow to publicly confirm their relationship. "If you will not drink with me, you must fight with me." Embedded in that invitation were layers of meaning, evident to both participants, who understood that sharing alcohol, like breaking bread, was an act of friendship, equality, and trust. The records remain silent as to which Jan Gow chose.

Notes

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1. *Minutes of the Court of Albany, Rensselaerswyck and Schenectady 1680-1685*, tr. and ed. A. J. F. Van Laer, University of the State of New York, 1932, 3 vols., 3:35.
2. Martin D. Topper, "The Drinker's Story: An Important But Often Forgotten Source of Data," in Dwight B. Heath, Jack O. Waddell and Martin D. Topper, eds., *Journal of Studies on Alcohol: Cultural Factors in Alcohol Research and Treatment of Drinking Problems*, Supplement 9, 1981, 78, 79-80. Cross-cultural studies of drinking also suggest some larger common patterns. Work on colonial Mexico, for instance, identifies most of the cultural patterns found in the Middle Colonies. These were not just European but pre-Columbian. While altered due to the circumstances of conquest, nonetheless they remained recognizable to both Indians and the Spanish. See William B. Taylor, *Drinking, Homicide & Rebellion in Colonial Mexican Villages* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979.
3. John James McCusker, Jr., "The Rum Trade and the Balance of Payments of the Thirteen Continental Colonies, 1650-1775," Ph. D. diss., Univ. of Pittsburgh, 1970, 472, 474.
4. *Ibid.*
5. W. J. Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition* New York: Oxford University Press, 1979, 9.
6. *Ibid.*, Tables A1.1, A1.2.
7. In 1990 United States adults consumed on average an estimated 2.4 gallons of absolute alcohol. This figure also masks the fact that men drink more than women (Dwight B. Heath, *International Handbook on Alcohol and Culture* Westport, Conn. and London: Greenwood Press, 1995, 365).
8. Christopher Brown, *Scenes of Everyday Life: Dutch Genre Painting of the Seventeenth Century* London and Boston: Faber and Faber Ltd, 1984, 54.
9. *Masters of Seventeenth-Century Dutch Genre Painting* organized by Peter C. Sutton, Philadelphia Museum of Art 1984, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984, lxxxii.
10. *Ibid.*, 185.
11. See for example, Adriaen van Ostade, *The Fiddler and the Hurdy-Gurdy Boy*, Jan Steen, *A Wedding Feast*, and Adriaen van Ostade, *Tavern Interior*. Dutch ambivalence is noted by Linda A Stone-Ferrier, *Dutch Prints of Daily Life: Mirrors of Life or Masks of Morals?* Lawrence, Kansas: The Spencer Museum of Art, The University of Kansas, 1983, 138.
12. Peter Clark, *The English Alehouse: A Social History 1200-1830* Longman: London and New York, 1983, 5. The quote is on page 14.
13. Robert W. Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations in English Society 1700-1850* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973, 71-72.
14. I. N. Phelps Stokes, *The Iconography of Manhattan Island 1498-1909* New York: Robert H. Dodd, 1915, 1:22.
15. David Pietersz De Vries, "From the 'Korte Historiae Ende Journaels Aenteyckeninge'," in J. Franklin Jameson, ed., *Narratives of New Netherland 1609-1664* New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1967, reprint of 1909 ed. The quote is on 198; other citations are from 226 and 187.
16. Carl Bridenbaugh, *Cities in the Wilderness: The First Century of Urban Life in America 1625-1742* New York: Capricorn Books, 1964, first published in 1938, 111.
17. Stokes, *Iconography*, vol. I. Both Stuyvesant and Backer's comments are on pp. 27-28.
18. Evarts B. Greene and Virginia D. Harrington, *American Population Before the Federal Census of 1790* New York: Columbia University Press, 1932, 88. Generally one uses a ratio of either four or five, men to total population, but given the nature of the settlement with its soldiers and traders, the ratio at this time must have been lower.

19. Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987, 191. This figure is not as useful as it might be since it doesn't tell us what counts as an alehouse or how the population figure was derived.
20. The English figures are quoted in Richard P. Gildrie, "Taverns and Popular Culture in Essex County, Massachusetts, 1678-1686," *Essex Institute Historical Collections*, 124(1988), 163.
21. Peter Thompson, "A Social History of Philadelphia's Taverns, 1683-1800," Ph. D. diss., Univ. of Pennsylvania, 1989, 209.
22. Peter Thompson's dissertation on Philadelphia taverns states the opposite by suggesting that specialization only took place after the Stamp Act crisis. He notes that many taverns whether large or small, or owned by a wealthy or a poor publican, did the same things. He further argues that at any given time any member of the population could be in any establishment. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to take on what is a complicated and well-researched argument, I cannot agree with his analysis. While the rich could go "slumming," I think evidence can be found that too much of that would cost them respect. The cases where the poor were entertained in more respectable houses were specific and seem to reinforce class differences since they and some of those around them knew they normally would not be there. For this same argument in a different context see Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (New York: New York University Press, 1978, 28.) where he notes that the elite could participate in so-called "little tradition" activities, but the common folk were shut out of the elite "great tradition" activities.
23. *Masters of Seventeenth-Century Dutch Genre Painting* organized by Peter C. Sutton Philadelphia Museum of Art 1984, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984, lxxx.
24. Clark, *English Alehouse*, 73.
25. Gildrie, "Taverns and Popular Culture in Essex County" *Essex Institute Historical Collections*, 124(1988), 161.
26. *Records of the City of New Amsterdam from 1653 to 1674*, ed. Berthold Fernow, New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1897, repr. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1980, 7 vols., 1:2.
27. Clark, *English Alehouse*, 73.
28. *Fort Orange Court Minutes, 1652-1660*, trans. and ed. by Charles T. Gehring, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1990, 145.
29. *Records of New Amsterdam*, 4:232.
30. *Fort Orange Court Minutes*, 109.
31. *Ibid.*, 39, 43, 100.
32. "Report of Governor Jhan Rising, 1654," in Albert Cook Myers, ed., *Narratives of Early Pennsylvania, West New Jersey and New York: Delaware, 1630-1707* New York: Barnes and Noble, 1912, repr., 1967, 141.
33. Amandus Johnson, *The Swedish Settlements on the Delaware: Their History and Relation to the Indians, Dutch and English 1638-1664*, orig. publ. 1911, repr. New York: Burt Franklin, 1970, 2 vols., 1:334, 354.
34. *Ibid.*, 2:521.
35. *New York Historical Manuscripts Dutch: Delaware Papers*, vols. XVIII-XIX, ed. and trans. Charles T. Gehring, Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1981, 72.
36. *Ibid.*, 79.
37. *Ibid.*
38. *Fort Orange Court Minutes, 1652-1660*, 43.
39. *Ibid.*, 267.
40. *Minutes of the Court of Albany, Rensselaerswyck and Schenectady 1680-1685*. 503, 555; Information about Gow also came from *Minutes of the Court of Albany, Rensselaerswyck and Schenectady 1668-1673*, tr. and ed. A. J. F. Van Laer, University of the State of New York, 1926, vol. 1, and *Minutes of the Court of Albany, Rensselaerswyck and Schenectady 1675-1680*, tr. and ed. A. J. F. Van Laer, University of the State of New York, 1928, vol. 2.
41. *Minutes of the Court of Albany, Rensselaerswyck and Schenectady 1668-1673*, 1:110.
42. *Ibid.*, 69, 333, 340
43. *Minutes of the Court of Albany, Rensselaerswyck and Schenectady 1675-1680*, 2:99 475.
44. *Ibid.*, 176-177, 181-182.
45. Danckaerts, Jasper, *Journal of Jasper Danckaerts 1679-1680* ed. Bartlett Burleigh

- James and J. Franklin Jameson, New York: Barnes and Noble, 1913, repr. 1969, 50.
46. Quoted in Bridenbaugh, *Cities in the Wilderness*, 112.
47. *Minutes of the Common Council of the City of New York 1675-1776* New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1905, 1:80-81.
48. *Journal of Jasper Danckaerts*, 47.
49. John Watson, *Annals of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania in the Olden Time*, 2 vols., Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1845, 1:154.
50. Bridenbaugh, *Cities in the Wilderness*, 113; "A Further Account of the Province of Pennsylvania, by William Penn, 1685," in Albert Cook Myers, ed., *Narratives of Early Pennsylvania, West New Jersey and Delaware 1630-1707* New York: Barnes and Noble, 1912, repr., 1967, 260.
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52. *The Laws of the Province of Pennsylvania Collected Into One Volume . . .* Philadelphia: Andr. Bradford, 1714, facs. ed. John D. Cushing, Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1978, 131. These acts are undated and were checked against *The Charters and Acts of Assembly of the Province of Pennsylvania* 2 vols. Philadelphia: Peter Miller and Comp., 1762, 183.
53. B. S. Platt, "Some Traditional Alcoholic Beverages and their Importance in Indigenous African Communities," *Proceedings of the Nutritional Society*, 14(1955), 115, 116.
54. Georges Balandier, *Daily Life in the Kingdom of the Kongo From the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century*, tr. Helen Weaver, New York: Pantheon, 1968, 89, 161.
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56. William Bosman, *A New and Accurate Description of The Coast of Guinea* ed. and intro. John Ralph Willis, London: Frank Cass & Co., Ltd., 1967, 189-190. This cultural pattern was restricted to the non-Islamic societies of West Africa. Muslim cultures still had markets and still had men's groups but they did not drink, contenting themselves with the stimulation afforded by the kola nut.
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62. *Ibid.*, 666.
63. *Ibid.*, 761, 788; 3:154-155.
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65. *Ibid.*, 314.
66. *Ibid.*, 376.
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69. *The Charters and Acts of Assembly of the Province of Pennsylvania* Philadelphia: Peter Miller and Comp, 1762, 1:308.
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91. *Ibid.*, 330.
92. *Ibid.*, 15.
93. *Ibid.*, 131.
94. *Ibid.*, 280, 312.
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Noble, 1967, repr. of 1909 ed., 396.

153. *Journal of Jasper Danckaerts*, 67.

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155. *The Journals of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg*, tr. Theodore G. Tappert and John W. Doberstein, 3 vols., Philadelphia: The Evangelical Lutheran Ministerium of Pennsylvania and Adjacent States and The Muhlenberg Press, 1942, 1:100, 119.

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157. "Journal of William Black, 1744" *PMHB*, 1(1877), 416.

158. Clark, *English Alehouse*, 10.

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Marietta defines a "sectarian" error as one which only Quakers discipline.

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162. Alexander Mackraby, "Philadelphia Society Before the Revolution. Extracts from Letters of Alexander Mackraby to Sir Philip Francis," *PMHB* 11,(1887), 276.

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JESSICA KROSS, Associate Professor of History at the University of South Carolina, is completing a book on leisure in early America. She is the author of *The Evolution of an American Town, Newtown, New York, 1642-1775* (Temple University Press).