

# Bartending and family life might not mix, study says

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If you want to mix drinks for a living, don't expect to have a typical family life.

That was the conclusion of a study by Tulane University sociologists Emily Starr and Alicia McCraw, who interviewed 40 New Orleans area [bartenders](#) for their study, "Barkeepers and Barmaids on the White Picket Fence: Bartenders, Gender, and Performative Adulthood," which they will present at the 111th Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association (ASA).

The study examines the relationship between bartenders and their perceptions of successful adulthood through access to romantic relationships and parenthood. It finds that bartenders perceive their lack of legitimate work to be the main barrier in achieving such normalcy.

"It's about how bartenders in the New Orleans area feel that their jobs preclude them from achieving the 'normal' benchmarks of adult [life](#) like long-term intimate relationships and family life," said Starr, an adjunct professor who herself works as a bartender while completing her doctoral work in sociology at Tulane. "Because bartenders feel like their jobs are not legitimate, they perceive that the other dimensions of normative adult life are not attainable or even desirable."

Participants in the study have worked as bartenders since 2013. They range in age from 23 to 48 and represent a variety of establishments from neighborhood bars and beer gardens to fine dining restaurants and

music clubs. Most were white, with the rest being black, Latino, Asian, and bi-racial.

Much of the study deals with the hardships of working in the bartending field, which offers little job security, low wages, and few, if any, benefits such as health insurance or a retirement plan.

Starr said she was motivated to conduct the study because of the massive disconnect between her two lives—one as bartender, the other as doctoral candidate/adjunct professor. "This got me thinking about how work and occupational roles are incredibly tied up in our sense of self, our identities, and the ways in which we situate ourselves as social agents," she said.

Provided by American Sociological Association

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