


AN EXPLORATION OF THE IMPACT OF GENDERED PERCEPTIONS OF ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION PATTERNS IN YOUNG WOMEN

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23/11/2015



## Background:

- Alcohol consumption is highly prevalent in Australia
- The fifth most common cause of death and disease internationally
- While men consume more than women, recent statistics indicated that women are slowly increasing their drinking behaviour
- Convergence hypothesis
- Implications because of different body composition

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## Background: Social Construction

- More socially appropriate for men to consume alcohol
- Role theory- woman as mother
- Prototypes/Norms
- Lady-like behaviour
- Is this changing and if so how?

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## Study Aim

- The overarching aim of this research is to deconstruct gendered norms surrounding Australian alcohol consumption, including drinking patterns

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## Method

- Introductory questions (e.g., "Why did you decide to participate in this study"),
- Attitudes towards particular behaviours (e.g., "What are the behaviours you may associate with an intoxicated person?")
- Attitudes towards what drink is often consumed by certain sexes (e.g., "What are the typical female drinks?")
- Social norms/Pressure
- Reasons for consuming alcohol
- Concluding questions (e.g., "Is there anything else you would like to add today?").

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## Procedure

- Researchers designed pamphlets and posted these online via social media platforms, as well as on community and campus bulletin boards.
- The advertisements contained researchers contact information for potential participants to express their interest.
- When individuals contacted the researcher via the email address provided, a participant information sheet was sent by return email.

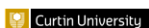
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## Procedure

- Written consent was collected, followed by verbal consent for the interview to be recorded.
- One primary interviewer
- A second researcher who acted as an observer and took notes of the participant's responses.
- At the end the observer followed-up on particular points raised by the participant that were not fully covered.
- Approximately 35 minutes each

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## Analyses

- 27 face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted with women aged 18 to 35 years
- Researchers transcribed the data verbatim in preparation for a thematic analysis
- To ensure a rigor two researchers were present during interviews and cross-coded transcripts to provide accuracy of the data

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## Reasons for consuming alcohol

*"I think, many different reasons, I think, one that I see the most with people my age would probably be a combination of like a cultural bonding sessions, mixed with um, like a social kind of, makes it easier for people to socialise I think, after they have been drinking"*

*"I also think people drink to manage their stress or emotions or problems and it's a way of masking an issue that they've got because they feel numb when they drink"*

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## Pressure to conform

*"I think sometimes people can think you are judging them or think you are better than them because you don't want to drink..."*

*"I think it's very much like peer pressure, because if you go out with a group you'll find that they always be like "why aren't you drinking?" Unless you're pregnant or something like that, there is no excuse to not be drinking."*

*"I think it'd probably be even less acceptable, well like socially, for a man to not drink. Because there's that whole yea...you know being a tough guy and yea...that sort of thing"*

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## Results: Explicit pressure to consume alcohol

### ▪ Strangers

*"have a drink, why aren't you drinking?" and umm...like they were having a toast and stuff, and yea it really like...I felt like you know like they're gonna think I am weird because I am not drinking alcohol.*

### ▪ Males

*"I have experienced lots of guys offering to buy girls drinks and they are like "no I am fine, I have had enough" and they are like, "come on it's just one, like it's free" so yeah... in that situation."*

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## Results: Explicit pressure

### ▪ Less pressure from other females

*"I think females could still, but I don't think they'd really mean it, they'd do it as like a joke. I don't think they'd be too serious about it."*

*"I don't know, it's difficult because I've never experienced that. I've never experienced pressure from other girls and I've certainly never put pressure on any other girl to drink."*

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## Managing pressure

*A direct example, my friend, she puts her drink in an ice-tea bottle and says it's alcohol. So, you can pretend, you can make it easier on yourself, because otherwise you are going to get pressured."*

*"Get apple juice and pour it... I don't know. I think, you could walk around with a glass of wine and just sip it. You don't have to finish it, and that way..."*

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## Results: Implicit pressure

*"More like conformity, as in like conforming to the norm kind of thing, everybody's drinking, so you just, you feel like you have to pick up a drink, in the same way if everyone is sort of facing one way you just feel like you have to do that."*

*"I think it's because it stands out, when you don't drink you stand out from the crowd because you're not doing what everyone else is doing."*

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## Gendered drinks

*"...girls are often like expected to drink cocktails and white wine, um and boys often drink beer and bourbon."*

*"people make assumptions really easily, so I feel like they'd be like oh well where does his sexuality lie, I think that that's another factor that would probably come into play like, why is he drinking like a girly drink, like what does that mean"*

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## Gendered drinks

*"I suppose I personally view them as more stronger, like obviously they have their own taste, but yeah they're just a more masculine type of woman, like, yeah."*

*"people are open minded enough to not judge someone if there's a man drinking a cocktail, or a woman drinking a beer. It doesn't mean that she's a lesbian. It's just not like that, it's common enough."*

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## Acceptable drinks

*"I know that obviously men are expected to be able to handle beer, whereas I know some just hate the taste of beer but they drink it for the fact that they have to learn to like it I suppose"*

*"They'd probably think, "Why are you drinking a girls drink?" something like that. .... yeah, so it's funny how you think, maybe he's gay"*

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## Australian Culture

*It's Australian culture. I don't know, it's always seen that everyone should have something in their hand."*

*"Australian culture there's like a definite drinking culture. Especially on like occasions, like Christmas, Melbourne Cup day and that kind of thing. There's a whole drinking, it's not pressure but you kind of like cop it a little bit if you're not drinking."*

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## Australian Culture

*"So I've been overseas a few times and everyone would look to the Australians and when we go out at night, they're expecting the Australians to go out and get really drunk, which we would do, eventually, because it's like our identity really, so, yeah"*

*"I feel like that's become a norm now, um, like hard day at work, okay go drink, um, going for a party, go drink, like it's like everything is like a drinking sort of scenario"*

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## Other influences

- Media
 

*"I notice more ads for beer and stuff, based for guys. I see more ads for beers than I do for fruity drinks, so I don't know if they're trying to make males drink more, or encouraging females to drink beer, or what."*
- Parents
 

*"Well, everyone knows Australia is a drinking society, it's been that way for generations and it's just a generational thing, it's passed down and down and down, and I don't think it will ever change... If you see your parents doing it, you obviously are going to take that in do it yourself."*

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## Consequences

*"If a guy was to strip off and take his clothes off at a party and run around, he would get chanted and that would be left, if a girl done that she'd, different consequences, you'd be, those photo's would be over Facebook and it would be completely different"*

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## Pressure to behave appropriately

*"They are, they are really, gender plays a big role in the sense that boys are expected to drink and do whatever and it's acceptable whereas girls have to refrain from being too drunk because it's not morally right or you know, their actions are not appropriate and stuff like that"*

*"Because it's kind of still unladylike, and un-girlie to get too drunk. It's not desirable... Because, well they don't like girls that are loud and boisterous. There's a perception that girls who drink in excess are looser. Boys don't like that."*

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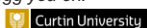
## Pressure to behave appropriately

*"Well, boys are probably just as promiscuous. But it's, less socially acceptable for girls to be promiscuous and wake up with that regret"*

*'if I'm ordering another one then I'm ordering another one for you'. 'If you're not keeping up with me then you're a little girl, and you need to keep drinking'.*

*I think the guys from my experience, the girls, the guys tend to be a little bit more, but there's more of a joking type pressure, where they'll make jokes and then because you want to try and, not fit in but I suppose kind of, the you do because you don't want to look weak when they boys try and egg you on.*

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## Discussion

- Cultural norms
- Pressure to drink
- Reasons for abstinence

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## Future directions and current research

- Replicate with males
- Recruit more widely
- Implications for alcohol reduction

## Thanks and Acknowledgments

- Thanks are due to the health psychology and behavioural medicine research group at Curtin University
- All the participants
- My co-authors

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