

young people
and **alcohol**
the role of cultural influences



NCETA

*Australia's National Research Centre
on AOD Workforce Development*

young people and alcohol

the role of cultural influences

An examination of the cultural drivers of risk-taking behaviour and their effects on 'low risk', 'risky' and 'high risk' use of alcohol among 14-24 year old Australian drinkers

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part one

young people and alcohol

1. Executive Summary

This report was produced by the National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction (NCETA) at Flinders University. It comprises a comprehensive literature review addressing a wide range of social and cultural factors that potentially impact on young Australians aged 14-24 in relation to their use and non-use of alcohol.

The report forms the first stage in a larger, two-stage project examining cultural factors that influence the drinking behaviours of young Australians. The full project research plan comprises two stages, each involving different, but complementary, approaches as described below.

Stage One: A literature review involving a comprehensive search of relevant literature to determine the scope, type and quality of studies (quantitative and/or qualitative) that have addressed the topic. An examination of existing relevant reports and secondary analysis of available datasets provides a synthesis of the most currently available data related to the project aims.

Stage Two: A research phase involving a close examination of the key issues that emerge from the literature review, using a combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques, where appropriate.

This report presents the findings from Stage One and is structured in two parts:

Part One provides the contextual details and background to this literature review, and flags a number of key issues pertaining to alcohol and young people in general. It also includes detail on the demographic and epidemiological profile of young drinkers in Australia (see Chapter 5).

Part Two is presented in 6 chapters (Chapters 6 through 11) and addresses the following issues:

- The Role of Culture (Chapter 6)
- Social Trends and Interpersonal Factors (Chapter 7)
- Leisure and Lifestyle Factors (Chapter 8)
- Market Forces (Chapter 9)
- Structural, Policy and Legislative Factors (Chapter 10)
- Future Directions (Chapter 11).

Each of the above sections and their key findings are described below. First, however, the main points from the chapters detailing the rationale for the study and the patterns and profile of alcohol use among young people are described.

Rationale

This report examines young people and alcohol from a cultural perspective. To do so, it is first necessary to define the term 'culture'. Culture is taken in this report to refer to a set of values, beliefs and norms historically transmitted from generation to generation. It entails a wide range of meaning-making processes and it is therefore all-pervasive. Culture provides the context for our everyday lives and a 'cultural lens' with which to view and hence make sense of our social worlds.

Patterns and prevalence of drinking

Before embarking on the review of literature pertaining to specific cultural change factors, we undertook an examination of the existing data on the patterns and prevalence of alcohol use among 14-24 year old Australians.

Key findings from the 2004 National Drug Strategy Household Survey data include the following:

- Secondary analyses of the National Drug Strategy Household Survey data indicate that the age of initiation of alcohol consumption has been decreasing. For each successive 10-year generation over the past

50 years, initiation into drinking has occurred at earlier and earlier ages. For example, by the age of 14, over twice as many young people in the 20-29 year old cohorts had consumed alcohol compared to the 40-49 and 50-59 year old cohorts.

- By 18 years of age, approximately 50% of both males and females are risky drinkers. But the majority (67%) of young risky drinkers classify themselves as 'social drinkers'.
- Young Australians aged 18-20 and 21-24 years report the highest prevalence of risky alcohol consumption of all age groups.
- Young people are particularly vulnerable to acute harms arising from intoxication, including health, legal and social problems and 264 young people aged 15-24 die each year as a result of risky alcohol consumption.
- The proportion of 21-24 year olds consuming alcohol at risky levels for short-term harm (at least weekly), and the average number of standard drinks usually consumed increased between 2001 and 2004.
- The proportion of 12-15 year olds consuming alcohol at risky levels for short-term harms has approximately doubled from 1990 (approximately 2.5%) to 2005 (approximately 5%). In this same time period, risky drinking among 16-17 year olds increased from approximately 15% to approximately 20%.
- Most young people aged 12-17 had no difficulty obtaining alcohol; they most commonly obtain alcohol from

friends or acquaintances (39%) and their parents (36%).

- The most popular beverage types for 14-24 year olds are bottled spirits, liqueurs and pre-mixes in cans and bottles, and regular-strength beer for males. Older females aged 21-24 also preferred bottled wine. For 12-17 year olds, the most popular types of drinks for both sexes were pre-mixed drinks in a can, bottled spirits and liqueurs.
- Between 2000 and 2004, there has been a three and a half fold increase in the preference of young female risky drinkers aged 15-17 for spirits.

Role of culture

Definitional issues

The terms ‘cultural drivers’ and ‘cultural influence’ are used advisedly, as the way that culture influences the behaviour of young people is more complex than implied by those terms.

- Culture frames young people’s perspective through processes of socialisation.
- Cultural changes have affected traditional ideas around drinking and drinking behaviour.
- The meanings constructed around drinking practices differ from previous generations. This is not a static process but one that constantly changes.

In contrast with previous research that tends to conceptualise young people as passive recipients of consumer culture,

they are viewed here as not only influenced by culture, but as active shapers of culture through their interactions with others.

Defining youth

There is little consensus over how we should define youth. Generally, there are three ways in which this is typically attempted:

1. Biological definitions that define youth according to an arbitrary age range.
2. Youth as a set of traits and behaviours that young people are said to ‘inherently’ display.
3. Youth as a cultural ideal that is attainable through the consumption of ‘youth lifestyles’.

By identifying the cultural, social and historically constructed meanings of drinking, we will be better placed to engage in interventions that transform high risk drinking behaviours.

Consumerism

Consumerism and its attendant values, norms and ideals and the commodification of cultural life were identified as dominating the way young people now search for meaning and happiness. Consumerism influences how young people construct their identity.

- Drinking, as a part of cultural life, acts as an identity resource. It is used by young people to form in-groups and out-groups – to differentiate themselves from their peers according to a symbolic hierarchy.
- Alcohol is culturally significant because it has symbolic value that communicates identity.

- Drinking is also central to new rites of passage that young people employ to navigate the increasingly non-linear transition to adulthood. The commercial market exploits the pathway from youth to adulthood.
- Consumerism creates a constant sense of dissatisfaction. In relation to alcohol products, this entails an emphasis on an ever-increasing range of new products that render past products stylistically and emotionally obsolete.

Technology and social networks

Individuals are no longer just passive consumers of electronic mediums; they can also be the creators and producers. Email and mobile phones and camera phones and videos enable young people to participate in the vision media. Mobile phones and cameras feature heavily in the lives of young people, and are increasingly used as a communication and linking tool. As a result:

- Young people's social networks are more fluid, temporal and complex than ever before.
- Identification with temporal, multiple, overlapping and even conflicting peer groups is now possible.
- Cultural affiliations are dynamic and constantly shifting.

Drinking culture

- A broad definition of culture is needed to better understand the changes and complexity of young people's drinking.

- Culture is not defined as a discrete area of social life, but as a set of meaning-making processes that is a part of the social, political and economic realms.
- Rational choice models of behaviour have been found to be ineffective predictors of young people's drinking behaviours.
- Pleasure and hedonism are among the dominant values shaping drinking behaviours of young people, but constrained by situational, pragmatic and self-regulatory factors.

Social trends and interpersonal factors

A number of major social changes have occurred over recent decades that impact significantly on the social and cultural world of young people and have a powerful influence on a wide range of behaviours including drinking behaviours.

Key changes include the following:

- Family structures have changed significantly over the last century. People marry later in life, have fewer children and there are more marriages with no children and a greater proportion of women who have not borne a child.
- Today's 14-24 year olds were raised by 'baby boomers' (or their children) who hold substantially less rigid and authoritarian views than previous generations.
- Women's roles in society have altered greatly. Women now participate

in the workforce to a much greater extent, marry later, have fewer children, more independence and wider life aspirations than ever before. They also drink more than any previous generation.

- People in Australian society report lower levels of religious affiliation than previously. Religious affiliation is known to be associated with lower levels of drug and alcohol use in general.
- The proportion of single parent families has increased substantially over the past 15 years with the result that family socialisation for young persons living with a sole parent may be significantly altered.
- Young people delay starting their own families, stay living in the family home for longer periods and delay home ownership in order to participate in other activities such as study and travel. Hence, younger people have longer periods of 'independence' often with high levels of expendable income.
- Young people also stay in education longer than previously.
- Delayed entry into traditional markers of adulthood; e.g., jobs, leaving home, marriage and child rearing, has resulted in the emergence of an apparent period of extended adolescence. This is in contrast to the earlier onset of physical maturation noted in Chapter 6.
- Transition to work or higher study is associated with changed patterns of alcohol use. Some workplace

environments, for example the hospitality industry, are particularly conducive to young people adopting risky alcohol use patterns.

- Young people are often introduced to alcohol by their parents. Parental supply of alcohol is associated with lower levels of consumption than supply from other sources.
- Young people's drinking behaviours are substantially influenced by peers. As an adolescent matures, peers become more influential than parents. Young people often drink large amounts to mimic peers. However, often the amount consumed is based on a misperception of their peer's alcohol intake.

Leisure and lifestyle

A range of important lifestyle changes have occurred for young people over the past one to two decades. In particular, greater emphasis is placed on achieving a work/life balance where less emphasis is placed on the role of work in one's life and greater emphasis is placed on leisure and recreation. This major shift was reflected in the diversity of leisure and lifestyle issues explored.

Risky drinking with friends was found to be a common leisure activity among young Australians and an important element of their socialisation. Drinking was a symbolically significant activity, with the ability to create and maintain distinctions or lifestyles within young people's social realm. Young people negotiate the meaning of alcohol in their social group

and use more highly developed experience with alcohol to strengthen their position amongst their peers.

Key findings include:

- When engaged in structured leisure activities, young people are less likely to drink alcohol, or to drink at risky levels.
- The higher a young person's self-determination in leisure activity selection, the lower the amount of alcohol consumed.
- An idealised notion of freedom in leisure exists in Australian culture.
- It is unclear how much access young people, particularly those who are under 18 years of age, have as truly 'free time' spent outside of adult surveillance.
- Varying degrees of free choice are exercised when young people decide how their leisure time will be used.
- Commercialised leisure affects the availability and affordability of activity options open to some young people.
- The increasing construction of public space as a 'commodity' has resulted in young people feeling disenfranchised from public leisure space.
- Young people's selection of drinking venues and alcohol beverage type is often differentiated by social class.
- Lack of appropriate leisure options can result in drinking as relief from 'leisure boredom' – a phenomenon that crosses geographical boundaries.
- Some young people seek out leisure environments where heavy drinking

is facilitated. Features of social settings found to encourage risky drinking include:

1. large group size (important given the continued popularity of home parties and the incidence of gatecrashing)
 2. presence of intoxicated people
 3. illicit drugs
 4. bring-your-own alcohol
 5. drinking games (where the intention is intoxication)
 6. pre-gaming (drinking in order to get 'tipsy' before going to an alcohol-free event or setting where alcohol will be expensive).
- Passive pastimes that are more individualistic and less social, more commonly engaged in by young rural Australians, were linked with higher alcohol consumption.
 - Young people's preconceived ideas about what celebrations should entail and how they should behave influenced harmful alcohol-related behaviours and outcomes.
 - Risk taking during school leaver celebrations was expected as part of young people's rite of passage into adulthood, and, despite an awareness of alcohol-related harms, a sense of dislocation from consequences is common.
 - The impact of Australia's drinking culture on young people's behaviour is reflected in large-scale national events, such as public holidays and music festivals, where nationalism

is often expressed by young people in the form of excessive alcohol consumption.

- There is an intrinsic connection between alcohol and sport in Australia. Aspects of the drinking culture within Australian sport that pose risks to young people include:
 1. underage drinking on club premises.
 2. modelling of intoxication.
 3. drink driving to and from the club.
 4. continued service to intoxicated patrons.
 5. alcohol as a reward for athletic performance in the form of 'shouts' or free drinks.
- The frequency of young people's alcohol consumption increases significantly while travelling or on holidays.
- Access to communication technologies (e.g., mobile phones, the Internet, social networking sites Facebook and MySpace) has created new ways for young people to interact socially, to access broader social networks, and to arrange their leisure time. Communication technologies have been found to impact on young people's drinking decisions:
 1. By facilitating the organisation of 'big nights out'.
 2. Through alcohol marketing (considered further in chapter 9).
- The intensity of access to communication technologies has been positively correlated with heavy use of alcohol.
- Exposure to alcohol and modelling of risky drinking behaviours through entertainment technologies and the media influence young people's drinking behaviours in the following ways:
 1. The depiction of intoxication in popular movies has been linked with alcohol use and early-onset drinking.
 2. Television shows that portray consequence-free drinking and link alcohol with enjoyable social activities was a significant predictor of positive alcohol-related expectancies, intentions to drink and normative beliefs around drinking.
 3. Young people found alcohol-related media portrayals realistic and desirable.
 4. Media exposure has been found to predict actual drinking behaviour.

Young Australians' use of technology is expanding exponentially. The precise impact of new technology on their leisure choices and future drinking behaviours is uncertain and will probably change according to the rapid development and growing popularity of innovative communications.

Market forces

Young people in today's consumer society find meaning in their lives through their patterns of consumption, and alcohol marketing is one factor that can influence the formation of their social identity. In addition, the pervasiveness of alcohol advertising is likely to have a cumulative effect.

Substantial and increasing market forces impact on alcohol at both a national and international level. This occurs at an unprecedented rate. Market forces that operate at a global level include marketing, advertising, promotions, sponsorship, branding and product development.

Young people today are exposed to an extensive array of sophisticated global marketing strategies. Increasingly subtle forms of advertising and marketing are employed, which often 'fly under the radar' of the more traditional, and more closely monitored, forms of advertising and promotions. For instance, there has been an exponential growth in Internet promotions for alcohol; often highly interactive in nature and designed specifically to appeal to young and more technologically savvy audiences.

Alcohol products have also changed substantially over recent years in their content, packaging and mode of delivery to appeal to more differentiated markets, including and especially young drinkers. The introduction of the following types of products and promotions have made alcohol products more appealing to young people:

- 'designer drinks'
- increased alcohol content in products

- re-commodification of alcohol products to mimic psychoactive drugs
- theme pubs and bars
- youth-oriented packaging
- lifestyle and image advertising, including sexualised advertising.

A large advertising budget is spent on alcohol in Australia not only in measured advertising, such as television, magazines, radio and billboards, but also on unmeasured forms of promotion, including branded materials, Point-of-Sale materials, giveaways, sponsorships and special events. The latter strategies have increased and have particular appeal for young people.

Advertising broadly falls into two categories – product and image advertisements. Image advertisements convey idealised images or lifestyles that resonate with the target audience. For young people, this includes fun, relaxation, romance, adventure and sexual or social acceptance. These themes appear prominently in alcohol advertising, particularly in youth-oriented television programs and magazines. Placement of alcohol products is also carefully considered by alcohol companies in order to obtain optimal exposure and gain market share. Alcohol products appear in posters, display bins, price tickets and branded materials, as well as more subtle positioning in movies, on television and in popular song lyrics.

Discounted alcohol in off-premise outlets and special price promotions in on-premise outlets are associated with increased alcohol consumption by young people during the promotion period.

In addition, high alcohol products, such as designer drinks, which are taxed at the same level as lower alcohol products, are attractive to young people who are keen to get the required intoxicating effect for the smallest outlay.

Structural, policy and legislative factors

A range of structural, legislative and regulatory factors impact on the way alcohol is incorporated within various aspects of our day-to-day lives. Such factors form an integral component of the social, economic and cultural fabric of society; and have a strong influence on the way young people view alcohol and how they use it. In broader terms, they also contribute to the drinking culture of Australia.

Licensed premises

Licensed premises are especially important in the lives of young people. Pubs and clubs are the usual place of drinking for 18-24 year olds and the locations that riskier drinkers, compared to low risk level drinkers (for both 12-17 and 18-24 year old age groups), cite as their preferred drinking locations.

Licensed premises are unique settings that convey images and messages about community norms, standards and values in relation to alcohol per se and also in relation to the act of consumption.

Moreover, they offer both symbolic and actual mechanisms to either facilitate and reinforce or curtail a wide range of behaviours, including excessive

consumption, intoxication and associated behaviours. A proportion of outlets facilitate such risky behaviours.

Structural tolerance of intoxication

Factors related to the physical settings in which alcohol is sold or otherwise available for purchase and consumption can impact on levels and patterns of use and negative outcomes.

Deliberately engineered designs and serving practices (such as vertical drinking – see chapter 10.1.2 – and fast drinking strategies), which have emerged in recent times, can contribute to the risky patterns of consumption among young people.

Similarly, attitudes to drinking and intoxication may vary according to geographic location. For example, in some cases, rural pubs become community meeting places for a variety of local activities. The consumption of alcohol during such occasions fosters a culture in which drinking is an inherent part of the activity.

Changing the overall operation of many licensed premises, their style of service and outlet density are highlighted as strategies needed to reduce risky drinking among young people, as are strategies to enforce existing laws in regard to service to intoxicated and underage patrons.

Increased availability

Alcohol is now more readily available in Australia through supermarkets and other outlets, resulting from loosening of trade arrangements stemming from anti-competition policies. Such outlets also

young people and alcohol

engage in the promotion of extremely cheap alcohol that is known to have particular appeal to the price-sensitive youth market.

The recent rapid expansion in sales of pre-mixed drinks (RTDs) to very young people raises concern on several fronts, including the lack of a differential taxation system that would offer some protection to young and vulnerable drinkers.

Australia's alcohol culture is shaped by the regulatory framework that governs it. To-date, the framework does not act to adequately protect young people from risky drinking.

2. Introduction

2.1. Rationale

To date, most research and discussion about alcohol use among young Australians stems from epidemiological and empirical perspectives that focus on the psychosocial influences and adverse consequences associated with excessive drinking. While we know what, when, where and how much people drink, this approach largely overlooks the social, political, economic and, importantly, the cultural contexts in which such behaviour takes place and the interactions between these influences. It is recognised that the behaviour of individuals does not occur in a vacuum. The role of social groups and the social interactions that give meaning to such cultural contexts are the key influences on behaviour. Accordingly, use of alcohol differs across countries, ethnicities and religions, as well as between genders, generations and sub-cultures.

A substantial research tradition exists that has focused attention on alcohol for many decades. However, the bulk of this work has addressed alcohol-related issues largely from the perspective of individualised psychopathology or social deviance. In addition, the dominant

research tradition in relation to alcohol has largely been driven from the health field and it lacks substantial input from other disciplines.

If we want to explain drinking behaviour historically and across cultural contexts, we cannot assume that it has a single meaning that can be captured and even measured by the quantity of alcohol alone (Sulkunen, 1998, p.1309).

The value of the research undertaken to-date is not in question. What is highlighted, however, is the lack of alternative perspectives. The dominant pre-occupation with epidemiological data coupled with overlays of conventional morality, if not moral panic, have resulted in a limited examination of the wider socio-cultural aspects of alcohol.

The role of alcohol in relation to both the construction of culture and the extent to which patterns of use and meaning associated with use are responses to dominant consumer culture has been little explored. Examinations of alcohol-related constructions of cultural, sub-cultural and personal identities and values have been comparatively under-studied and often marginalised.

Sociological theory is relevant when examining young people's drinking practices as it emphasises the need to focus on the immediate social context in which they drink and the way that they organise their practices according to socially constructed differences. If drinking practices are guided by symbolic meanings negotiated through social interactions, then understanding young people's drinking must also be understood at that level.

Culture is a subtle and complex interaction between the individual and their social setting; whereby shared and learned norms, values and practices that distinguish social groups are transferred from one generation to the next. However, cultures do not remain static across time or over generations; they are in a constant state of flux.

Cultures are about how we think the world 'works': the language, the knowledge, beliefs, assumptions and values that shape how we see the world and our place in it; give meaning to our experience; are passed between individuals, groups and generations (Eckersley, 2007, p.54).

The small number and limited diversity of studies on alcohol from a cultural perspective is at odds with the central position that alcohol occupies within all aspects of Australian life. This review of the literature therefore aims to explore the current state of the research literature and assess linkages between alcohol and major cultural drivers and the interaction and consequences of these links for

contemporary Australian society, with specific reference to young people between the ages of 14 and 24 years.

It is envisaged that this examination will help inform development of viable and sustainable frameworks to deal with the potentially harmful consequences of alcohol consumption.

2.2. Background

Alcohol plays a significant part in the social life of Australians today, as it has done since the colony was originally settled. Alcohol is integral to the Australian way of life. It is used to celebrate and commiserate significant life events such as births, deaths, marriage, graduation, promotions and sackings. It is also represented through literature, music and visual arts; and the alcohol industry's sponsorship of major sporting events and music festivals. Alcohol plays a role in many social occasions and is embedded in the Australian vernacular; we routinely 'wet the baby's head' at christenings and 'drown our sorrows' if our sporting team loses. Alcohol is the most popular and widespread psychoactive substance available in Australia. It is legal, socially sanctioned and widely promoted. The consumption of alcohol in Australia is considered a sociable occasion, to be shared with others, with the principles of mateship and reciprocity exercised through buying 'rounds' or 'shouts' (Kirkby, 2003; Midford, 2005).

At different times and contexts, alcoholic beverages have been viewed as nourishment, as a social lubricant and as

a medicament. Physiologically, alcohol is a depressant, which slows the activity of the central nervous system. While small amounts make people feel relaxed and uninhibited with an increased sense of wellbeing, larger doses can impair sensorimotor skills, resulting in lack of coordination, slowed reaction time, slurred speech and disruption to formation of new memories (White & Swartzwelder, 2004). Compared to the adult brain, the adolescent brain is more tolerant¹ of the negative effects of higher levels of alcohol (e.g., drowsiness and lack of coordination) and more sensitive to the positive effects (e.g., increased confidence and sense of pleasure) (Schulenberg & Maggs, nd; Spear, 2000; Spear, 2002; Varlinskaya & Spear, 2007). However, the adolescent brain is also more sensitive to the memory-impairing effects of alcohol compared to the adult brain and just as likely to develop dependence (Spear, 2000; White & Swartzwelder, 2004).

Relative to individuals at other ages, human adolescents as a group exhibit a disproportionate amount of reckless behaviour, sensation seeking and risk taking (Spear, 2000).

From an evolutionary perspective, novelty-seeking and risk-taking behaviours have adaptive benefits for establishing independence, but also expose young people to potential harms. Evidence

from neurobiological research indicates that adolescent risk taking is a product of interaction between two brain networks: 1) the socioemotional network; and 2) the cognitive-control network (Steinberg, 2007). The socioemotional network, which is located in the limbic and paralimbic brain areas², is part of the reward processing pathway and is engaged abruptly during puberty. In contrast, the cognitive-control network, which is located in the prefrontal and parietal cortices, subserves executive functioning, such as planning and self-regulation, and gradually develops across adolescence into adulthood. In particular, the prefrontal cortex plays a key role in attention, decision making, emotional regulation, behavioural inhibition and the ability to assess future outcomes of behaviour (Kelley, Schochet, & Landry, 2004). During early adolescence (11-15 years), the socioemotional network dominates, most notably in conditions of emotional arousal or in the presence of peers, and minimises the regulatory influence of the cognitive-control network (Gardner & Steinberg, 2005).³ As the cognitive-control network matures⁴, however, the propensity for risk taking is modulated, even during high arousal and when peers are present.

While the chemical properties of alcohol contribute to our physiological responses to it, it is our individual heritage and psychological profile that contributes to

1 Tolerance to alcohol consumption = reduced sensitivity to its effects

2 Includes amygdala, ventral striatum, orbitofrontal cortex, medial prefrontal cortex and superior temporal sulcus

3 In a video driving game, the presence of peers more than doubled the number of risks taken by adolescents, increased risk taking by 50% in young adults, and had no effect on adult risk taking.

4 Maturation occurs through synaptic pruning, which involves elimination of weaker synapses and maintenance of stronger ones, and myelination to increase the speed of neuronal transmission (Luna & Sweeney, 2004).

our attitudes, values and beliefs about alcohol. Moreover, it is the socio-cultural aspects of alcohol use that plays a significant role in determining how and why alcohol is consumed. Understanding alcohol as a 'biopsychosocial phenomenon' (Heath, 1995, p.2) is central to understanding how to address the problems associated with alcohol use. However, noticeably absent from the widely accepted biopsychosocial model is the element of 'culture'. This is an important oversight as culture influences what, where, when, how, why, how much and with whom we drink alcohol.

Since the mid 1970s, there has been a steady decline in mean per capita alcohol consumption in Australia from a peak of 12.97 litres of pure alcohol in 1977 to 9.19 litres in 2003 (WHO, 2004). This downward trend is thought to be the result of a complex interaction of social, political and economic influences, including increased health consciousness, an ageing population (who tend to drink less than younger people) and acceptance of drink-driving laws and random breath testing (Midford, 2005).

By age 18 over 90% of young Australians have begun to drink alcohol. But more importantly, by age 18 over 50% of young people are risky drinkers, as detailed in Chapter 5. Drinking then both starts early and escalates quickly to risky drinking for a very large proportion of young Australians. Questions arise

regarding the factors that shape and drive the cultural imperatives and norms surrounding drinking; what factors have the greatest impact on the way young people drink; and what influences might be appropriated to ensure safer drinking patterns are adopted.

Drinking behaviour reflects a complex interplay of inter-personal influences and environmental factors. While motives for drinking may be personal, the act of drinking is primarily social (Heath, 1995) and is shaped by social influences, as well as broader cultural factors. Alcohol is generally perceived by the Australian community as an acceptable and commonplace source of enjoyment. However, socially acceptable consumption levels and patterns are often inconsistent with low risk levels of alcohol use. As such, intoxication (or determined drunkenness)⁵ is part of the socio-cultural milieu in which young people live today (Measham, 2004).

Our drinking behaviours are a product of biological, psychological and environmental factors, as well as social and cultural influences. Drinking is a learned behaviour (Roche, 2001). That is, the way we drink reflects the behaviours, social norms, standards, values, expectations, structures and constraints that operate around us. These are largely created and controlled by the adults of the community and not by young people in isolation.

⁵ The deliberate and active pursuit of getting drunk is captured in the concept 'determined drunkenness'.

Australia, like many countries in the Western developed world, is witnessing an unprecedented emergence of a strong and distinct youth culture. This large group⁶ is educated, affluent and has unique and readily identifiable freedoms. It has also been identified as a key target group for marketers. The unparalleled expansion of a 'global urban youth culture', disseminated by media, marketing and technological networks, is organised around the principles of materialism and instant gratification, which presents a major challenge to effective alcohol prevention in the 21st Century (Casswell, 2007).

Globalisation has also resulted in a homogenised middle class of adolescents from across the world who 'increasingly attend(ing) to the same media sources, buy clothes from the same companies and, possibly, argue with their parents over the same issues' (Larson & Mortimer, 2000, p.11). Product marketers well-understand young people and their celebration of risk, and promote their products accordingly.

Whether defined in terms of chronological age or in terms of the all-pervasive pursuit of youthfulness, there are some features of contemporary youth culture that constitute unique descriptors. Australian social commentator Kate Crawford, in her book *Adult themes: Rewriting the rules of adulthood* (Crawford, 2006), introduces the notion of the 'insufficient adult'. These are individuals who look like and have the legal

standing of an adult, but are perceived to not be 'adult' in the traditional sense of the term. Abandonment of traditional markers of adulthood includes not moving out of home and buying a property, not marrying and having children early enough, loving one's iPod and PlayStation, and enjoying reality TV shows and Harry Potter novels. Similarly disparaging labels of the same phenomenon include 'kidult', 'adultescent', 'Peter Panner' or 'rejuvenile'.

Contemporary young people are also a highly sociable generation (Huntley, 2006) for whom alcohol often plays a significant and symbolic role in social relations. Drinking for young people, as for most adults, seldom occurs in isolation. It is typically integrated with leisure activities that are social in nature, with common motives of enjoyment, relaxation and pleasure (de Crespigny, Vincent, & Ask, 1999; Shanahan, Wilkins, & Hurt, 2002; Tresidder & Toumbourou, 2007). For young people, it is this socially mediated experience of enjoyment that makes drinking meaningful (Kuntsche, Knibbe, Gmel, & Engels, 2005; Pavis, Cunningham-Burley, & Amos, 1997).

Young people also commonly regard getting drunk as indicative of a good time (MacAskill, Cooke, Eadie, & Hastings, 2001). The shared experience of intoxication often holds special significance for young people's interpersonal relationships and they often bond through drinking experiences with 'any harm encountered along the way'

6 This generation has a larger teen population than any other generation before it.

being 'filtered through the "good story" brimming with tales of fun, adventure' (Sheehan & Ridge, 2001, p.125). Drinking is an activity that can foster a sense of social cohesion and solidarity among friends (Kirkby, 2003; Midford, 2005). Alcohol consumption patterns (Shanahan et al., 2002) and the meanings young people ascribe to alcohol (Pavis et al., 1997) are shaped by social influences.

Various investigations have attempted to delineate how social influences affect young people's drinking, particularly the types of social influence that have the greatest impact on drinking behaviour. Some research suggests that when young people engage in risky drinking, they may not be responding to overt pressure to drink, but to the desire to exhibit behaviour that is congruent with the socially accepted norm (Coleman & Cater, 2005b).

Most young people are concerned with the immediate social consequences of drinking and evince little concern for less immediate, non-social consequences. Some young people apply a 'cost-benefit' assessment to risky drinking. However, this stands in contrast to biomedical models of rationality. Likewise, the 'symbolic capital' (Jarvinen & Gundelach, 2007) gained through assuming the dominant social norm may be assessed to be worth risks to physical health or safety. Drinking choices are often mediated by an assessment of whether the positive consequences expected from drinking outweigh those anticipated from not drinking (Wechsler, Davenport, Dowdall, Grossman, & Zanakos, 1997; Wechsler,

Dowdall, Davenport, & Castillo, 1995; Wechsler, Dowdall, Davenport, & Rimm, 1995; Wechsler, Dowdall, Maenner, Hill-Hoyt, & Lee, 1998).

A primary social influence affecting adolescents' alcohol use is the perception or misconception of what constitutes 'normal' drinking behaviour among peers (Read, Wood, Davidoff, McLacken, & Campbell, 2002). Research suggests that young people often misperceive their friends' and peers' drinking behaviour (Borsari & Carey, 2003). That is, adolescents commonly overestimate the amount their peers drink. As a result, they drink in a risky manner in an effort to match their drinking to their perception of drinking norms (Baer et al., 1991 and Lewis & Neighbors, 1994 in (Neighbors, Oster-Aaland, Bergstrom, & Lewis, 2006b). In this way, their (mis)perceived norms correlate with their own drinking habits (Borsari & Carey, 2003).

Risky drinking and being drunk can enhance psychosocial functions (e.g., increased confidence), while simultaneously impeding physiological functions (e.g., balance, coordination). Psychosocial functions are often more salient in social settings. Hence, drinking in social settings has been associated with the improved quantity and quality of friendships (Hoel, Eriksen, Breidablik, & Meland, 2004), increased likelihood of an intimate relationship (Engels, Van Der Vorst, Dekovic, & Meeus, 2007) and enhanced ability to forge closer friendships (Coleman & Cater, 2005a). Improving our understanding of the contextual variables of young people's drinking, including how

young people view their social world and how they use their leisure time, is key to discerning what contributes to their sense of self and meaning in life, and how their behaviours are shaped.

To gain a more complete picture of young people's drinking behaviours and the factors that influence it, it is important that a contextual approach is taken that accounts for shifting cultural dynamics that underlie the fluid experiences of young people and how they construct their identities. Thus, it is through the process of constructing their identities in a cultural context that behaviours such as drinking are made meaningful. What is needed is an approach that does not focus on the cultural environment as the sole determinant of young people's lives, but one where culture frames young people's perspective through the process of socialisation.

2.2.1. Burden of disease

Alcohol is a major contributor to preventable illness and death, and is responsible for over 3,100 deaths and 72,000 hospitalisations per year in Australia (Chikritzhs et al., 2003). The

contribution to Australia's overall burden of disease and injury caused by alcohol in Australia is 5% for males and 2% for females (AIHW, 2006b). This burden of disease and injury drops to 2% overall if the potential health benefits of low to moderate alcohol consumption are included (AIHW, 2006b). However, recent meta-analytical research suggests that there is little epidemiological evidence for the beneficial effects of alcohol (Fillmore, Stockwell, Kerr, Chikritzhs, & Bostrom, 2006). Previous findings may have been due to methodological issues such as including ex-drinkers in the abstainers comparison group (Fillmore et al., 2006), or that the populations that tend to abstain from alcohol also tend to be older and more prone to ill health (Andreasson, 2007). The financial cost of problems arising from alcohol consumption has been estimated at \$5.5 billion per annum (Collins & Lapsley, 2002). A more recent study conducted by Berry et al. (Berry, Pidd, Roche, & Harrison, 2007) estimated absenteeism costs alone associated with alcohol consumption at \$437 million per year in contrast to the previous estimate of \$32.5 million, indicating that the overall estimated financial cost of alcohol consumption may be considerably greater than previously calculated.

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3. Aims and Research Questions

Gaining an understanding of what ‘drives’⁷ young people to engage in any behaviour, but particularly with respect to risky alcohol use, may facilitate the development of strategies aimed at changing drinking cultures and reduce risky drinking behaviours in young people. To do this, we need to identify and describe the key features that shape the drinking culture of young Australians.

The principal aim of this project is:

- To explore the cultural drivers of risk-taking behaviours, or avoidance thereof, that result in ‘low risk’, ‘risky’ and ‘high risk’ alcohol use among 14–24 year old Australians.

The specific research questions are:

- What is the prevalence of drinking among young Australians? And what are the patterns of alcohol consumption? (e.g., age, gender, types of drink, time and place)
- What are the current policies and legislation concerning the supply and consumption of alcohol in Australia?
- How does culture influence young people’s drinking behaviour?

- What role does globalisation, consumerism and individualism play in young people’s drinking behaviour?
- How do advertising, marketing and promotions impact on young Australians’ drinking behaviour? (e.g., taste preference, price, branding, sponsorship)
- How do entertainment and leisure activities influence young people’s drinking behaviour?
- What influence do peers, family and work or study colleagues have on young people’s drinking behaviour?
- What individual characteristics predict young people’s drinking behaviours? (e.g., physiological, psychosocial factors).

⁷ ‘Drivers’ in this context means factors that motivate and shape behaviour.

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4. Methods

This research project comprised two stages: 1) A comprehensive literature review and secondary analysis of relevant datasets; and 2) A qualitative research study, which entails a closer examination of the key issues emerging from Stage One. This report pertains to the results of Stage One, which was conducted in two phases.

- *Phase One Literature review:* A comprehensive literature review to identify and synthesise existing relevant reports and studies that have addressed the research topic.
- *Phase Two Secondary analysis of relevant data:* A secondary analysis of available datasets to examine data relating to risk-taking behaviours and alcohol consumption in young people.

4.1. Approach to literature review

A comprehensive literature review was undertaken to collate and synthesise existing Australian and international literature concerning drinking cultures and the cultural norms and social practices that influence risk-taking behaviour and alcohol use in 14-24 year old Australians.

The scope of this review was limited by the following parameters:

- *Australian and comparable international research.* The main focus of this review was to understand the youth drinking culture in Australia. Therefore, selective research based in countries with similar contexts, such as New Zealand and the United Kingdom, were deemed relevant and included for assessment. In contrast, research that was based in other countries with substantially different cultural, social and political contexts, such as Islamic, Asian and African nations, was excluded.
- *Non-Indigenous research.* Research that was specifically focussed on Indigenous populations (e.g., Indigenous Australians, New Zealand

Maori, North American native Indians) was beyond the scope of this review. Indigenous alcohol issues are multifaceted and require a separate dedicated investigation in order to gain fuller understanding of their complexities.

- *Drinking problems.* The aetiology of drinking problems and individual psychosocial factors were not included in this review, except where they may interrelate with cultural influences.

4.1.2. Search strategy

The evidence base for this review was collected from a wide range of sources including:

- Electronic databases (1995–April 2007; Table 1)

- Peer-reviewed journals (2006–April 2007; Table 1)
- Websites (Table 2)
- Grey literature
- Experts in content area

Bibliographies of included papers were also checked for additional relevant papers that were not included in searches and content experts were consulted to identify relevant unpublished reports, manuscripts or book chapters. Where there was a large amount of literature for some search areas, only more recent research was collected for evaluation due to time constraints. However, earlier research was also examined when it was frequently cited or where the literature was sparse.

Table 1. Electronic databases and peer-reviewed journals

| Electronic databases | Peer-reviewed journals |
|--------------------------|--|
| PubMed | Addictive Behaviors |
| Web of Science | Addiction |
| Current contents | Pediatrics |
| Science Citations | Journal of Adolescent Health |
| Social Science Citations | Contemporary Drug Problems |
| PsycInfo | British Journal of Social Psychology |
| ERIC | Journal of Child Psychology & Psychiatry |
| CINAHL | Clinical Psychology Review |
| Cochrane Library | Journal of American College Health |
| | Adolescence |
| | Journal of School Health |
| | Alcohol and Alcoholism |
| | Journal of Studies on Alcohol |
| | College Student Journal |
| | Journal of Youth and Adolescence |
| | Social Science & Medicine |
| | America |

| Electronic databases | Peer-reviewed journals |
|----------------------|--|
| | Addiction Research & Theory |
| | Youth Studies Australia |
| | Australia and New Zealand Journal of Public Health |
| | Journal of Youth Studies |
| | Journal of Communication |
| | Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media |
| | Youth Studies Australia |

Table 2. Australian and international websites

| Websites | |
|--|---|
| Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth (CAMY) | http://camy.org/ |
| Australian National Council on Drugs | http://www.ancd.org.au/ |
| Australian Centre for Addiction Research | http://www.acar.net.au/ |
| Alcohol & other Drugs Council of Australia | http://www.adca.org.au/ |
| Australian Drug Information network | http://www.adin.com.au/ |
| NSW Government – Alcoholinfo | http://www.alcoholinfo.nsw.gov.au/ |
| Alcohol reports | http://www.alcoholreports.blogspot.com/ |
| Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse | http://www.ccsa.ca/ccsa/ |
| The Marin institute | http://www.marininstitute.org/ |
| Centre for Substance Abuse Treatment | http://csat.samhsa.gov/ |
| Drug & Alcohol Services of South Australia | http://www.dassa.sa.gov.au/ |
| FACE: Resources, Training and Action on Alcohol Issues | http://www.faceproject.org/Resources/ |
| Michigan State University | http://www.msu.edu/ |
| About.com: Alcoholism & Substance Abuse | http://alcoholism.about.com/ |
| University of Otago | http://eprints.otago.ac.nz/ |
| Australian Government Department of Health & Ageing | http://www.alcohol.gov.au/ |
| Boags Beer | http://www.boags.com.au/ |
| Australian Government Department of Health & Ageing | http://www.health.gov.au/ |
| International Center for Alcohol Policies | http://www.icap.org/ |
| New South Wales Association for Adolescent Health (NAAH) | http://www.naah.org.au/ |
| National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre | http://ndarc.med.unsw.edu.au/ |
| National Drug Research Institute | http://db.ndri.curtin.edu.au/ |
| National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) | http://www.nida.nih.gov/ |
| NIDA for Teens | http://teens.drugabuse.gov/ |
| National Treatment Agency for Substance Misuse | http://www.nta.nhs.uk/ |

Websites

| | |
|--|--|
| Of Substance: The National Magazine on Alcohol, Tobacco & Other Drugs | http://www.ofsubstance.org.au/ |
| Register of Australian Drug & Alcohol Research Centre for Youth Drug Studies | http://www.radar.org.au/ |
| Australian Clearinghouse for Youth Studies | http://www.cyds.adf.org.au/ |
| National Institute on Alcohol Abuse & Alcoholism | http://www.niaaa.nih.gov/ |
| Promar International: Strategic Marketing and Business Consulting | http://www.promarinternational.com/ |
| International Federation of Red Cross & Red Crescent Societies | http://www.ifrc.org/ |
| US Department of Health & Human Services: Prevention Communication Research Database | http://www.health.gov/communication/ |
| University of Washington: Teen Health and the Media | http://depts.washington.edu/thmedia/ |
| CASA: The National Centre on Addiction & Substance Use at Columbia University | http://www.casacolumbia.org/ |
| National Documentation Centre on Drug Use Colchester Drug and Alcohol | http://www.ndc.hrb.ie/ http://www.colchester-drug-alcohol.org.uk/ |
| National Institute of Mental Health | http://www.nimh.nih.gov/ |
| Monash University | http://www.arts.monash.edu.au |
| Australian Youth Research Centre | http://www.edfac.unimelb.edu.au/ycr/ |
| RAND Organisation | http://www.rand.org/ |
| Centre for Drug and Alcohol Studies | http://www.udel.edu/cdas/ |
| The Alcohol Education & Research Council | http://www.aerc.org.uk/ |
| Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association | http://www.vaada.org.au/ |
| McCrinkle Research | www.mccrinkle.com.au |
| Prepared Foods | http://www.preparedfoods.com/ |

Combinations of the following MeSH⁸ headings and textwords were used to identify relevant literature in the electronic databases:

- *Alcohol* – alcohol drinking, drinking behaviour/culture, risk-taking, risky drinking, binge drinking, alcoholic beverages, alcohol use/abuse/misuse/consumption, intoxication

- *Young people* – young people, young adults, youths, adolescents, adolescent behaviour, students, juveniles
- *Culture* – culture, cultural characteristics/values/change/identity/maintenance/conflict, ethnology, social change, cross-cultural comparison, social values, youth culture, Y-generation, popular culture, national identity

Potentially relevant articles were collected and sorted into topic areas by a team of reviewers.

4.2. Critical appraisal and analysis

To date, there is no consensus pertaining to use of quality criteria in qualitative research (Dixon-Woods et al., 2006). Between those who oppose any form of quality assessment (Barbour, 2001; Grbich, 1999) and those who propose a small modification of existing quantitative criteria (LeCompte & Preissle Goetz, 1982), lies a suite of diverse views on what, if anything, is appropriate criteria for qualitative research.

‘Quality criteria’ were deemed to represent a means of assessing the validity and reliability (i.e., trustworthiness) of the findings, interpretations and conclusions reported in a paper. They provide a framework for determining whether there is sufficient information to judge whether the study details (context, sample, method, analysis etc) took account of

potential alternative explanations for the results/conclusions. The criteria were not used to establish hierarchical levels of evidence as described by NHMRC for quantitative intervention research, but rather to provide a synthesis of findings with ‘an explicit framework of methodological quality’ by which the reader could ascertain the biases that shaped the findings.

An examination of the suggested criteria in a range of qualitative research texts revealed several common criteria, which were synthesised and included in a cover sheet. The cover sheet contained the study details (reference, aims, study design, setting, population, data collection methods), a summary of the key findings (quantitative and qualitative outcomes) and an assessment of the study’s quality. These criteria were used as a guide, rather than a prescriptive checklist, to assist reviewers in establishing the credibility, dependability, relevance and potential transferability of findings. Since a team of four reviewers examined the literature, the criteria were also a means of maintaining consistency across reviewers.

4.3. Evidence base

Where there were multiple articles pertaining to one set of data by the same author or group of authors, only one article was included. Although search efforts were not exhaustive (i.e., not a systematic literature review), there was sufficient critical mass to provide a comprehensive review of the principal cultural drivers of young Australians' drinking behaviour.

4.4. Approach to secondary analyses of datasets

Several key data sources were accessed to inform this section. The details of these data sets are shown in Table 3. The main source of prevalence data on

alcohol consumption in Australia is the National Drug Strategy Household Survey (NDSHS), conducted approximately every three years since 1985. The most recent NDSHS was conducted in 2004 (AIHW, 2005d). Much of the data presented here is unique and not available elsewhere, as it derived from secondary analyses of the 2001 and 2004 NDSHS data sets undertaken specifically for this project (AIHW, 2002b, 2005a).⁹ All NDSHS secondary analyses presented here were analysed in Stata 9.02. The analyses took into account the complex sampling strategy used by the NDSHS. The data for all analyses were weighted according to age, gender and geographical location. Analyses and 95% confidence intervals were adjusted for clustering effects.

Table 3. Key data sources accessed for this report

| Data source | Sample | N |
|--|--|---------------|
| National Drug Strategy Household Survey (NDSHS) 2004 (AIHW, 2005a) | 12-24 year olds ¹ (household survey) | 5,352 |
| National Drug Strategy Household Survey (NDSHS) 2001 (AIHW, 2002b) | 14-24 year olds ² (household survey) | 4,176 |
| Australian Secondary Students' Alcohol and Drug (ASSAD) Survey 2005 (White & Hayman, 2006) | 12-17 year olds (school students) | 21,805 |
| National Alcohol Campaign Evaluation 2000-2004 (King, Taylor, & Carroll, 2005a) | 15-17 year olds (household survey) | 816 (in 2004) |

- 1 Individuals aged 12 years and over were eligible to participate, but only 12-24 year olds were used in current analyses. N presented here is for the 12-24 year olds.
- 2 Individuals aged 14 years and over were eligible to participate, but only 14-24 year olds were used in current analyses. N presented here is for the 14-24 year olds.

⁹ The researchers who carried out the original analysis and collection of the data bear no responsibility for these further analyses or our interpretation of them.

4.5. Accuracy of NDSHS data

It is important to keep in mind that the NDSHS may underestimate alcohol consumption (Stockwell et al., 2004). Stockwell et al.'s (2004) analysis of the 2001 data found that the graduated frequency method, used to calculate the prevalence of short- and long-term risky alcohol consumption in the 2004 NDSHS, accounted for only 58% of alcohol sales in Australia. Potential reasons for this under-reporting may be under-representation of high risk drinkers, or respondents' poor recall or inaccurate understanding of what constitutes a standard drink. Hence, the prevalence rates for risky consumption presented in this report may be underestimates of actual prevalence in the Australian population.

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5. Patterns and Prevalence of Drinking

Data from the 2001 and 2004 National Drug Strategy Household Survey (NDSHS) (AIHW, 2002b, 2005a), the Australian Secondary Students' Alcohol and Drug Survey (ASSAD) 2005 (White & Hayman, 2006) and the National Alcohol Campaign (NAC) Evaluation 2000-2004 (King et al., 2005a) were analysed to determine the patterns and prevalence of alcohol consumption in 14-24 year old Australians.

5.1. Age of initiation

The percentage of young people who have consumed a full serve of alcohol is shown in Figure 1 by age and gender. Young people were most commonly supplied their first drink of alcohol by a friend or acquaintance (43%), followed by their parents (35%).

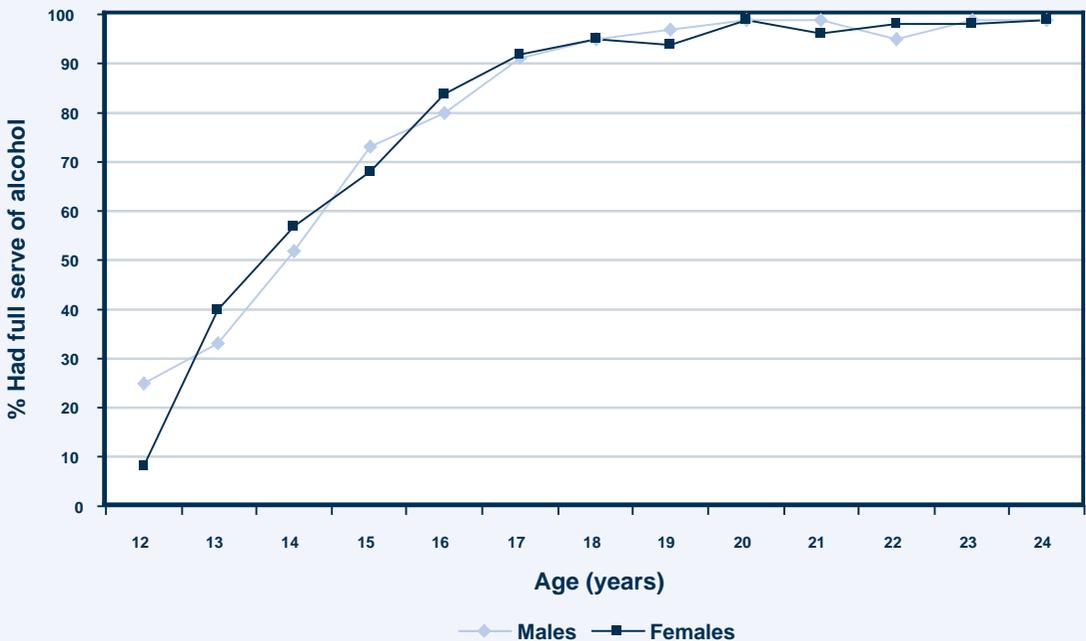


Figure 1. Percentage of young people who have had a full serve of alcohol, by age and gender (data from 2004 NDSHS)

To examine if age of initiation has changed over time, reported age of initiation for different cohorts are shown in Figure 2 below. The graph demonstrates a clear pattern indicating that the age of initiation of alcohol consumption has been decreasing. For each successive generation (defined here in 10-year age-bands) over the past 50 years, initiation into drinking has occurred at earlier and earlier ages. For example, by the age of 14, over twice as many young people in the 20-29 year old cohorts had consumed

alcohol compared to the 40-49 and 50-59 year old cohorts. Less than 20% of today's population aged over 60 had drunk a full glass of alcohol at 16 years of age. This contrasts with nearly 70% of the population currently aged between 20 and 29 years who had drunk a full glass of alcohol by the time they were 16 years old.¹⁰ Figure 2 shows that the age at which at least 50% of survey respondents reported consuming a full serve of alcohol has reduced from approximately 19 years to 15.5 years.

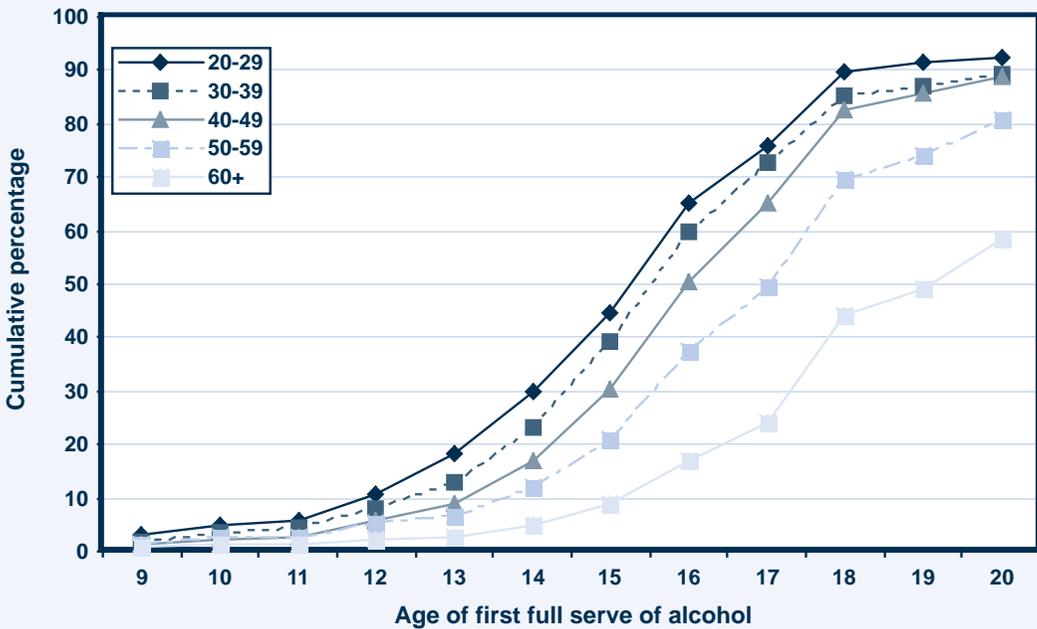


Figure 2. Reported age of first full serve of alcohol, by age cohort (data from 2004 NDSHS)

Note. The 12-19 year old cohort could not be included due to the number of respondents in this age cohort who had not yet had a full serve of alcohol and so did not answer this question.

¹⁰ It should be noted that survey data relies on respondents' recall of past events and the accuracy of recall may be less reliable in older cohorts that attempt to remember events in the more distant past.

5.2. Risky alcohol consumption

The NHMRC Australian Alcohol Guidelines (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2001) for the general population define drinking at risky levels for short-term harm as seven to 10 drinks on any one day for men and five to six drinks on any one day for women, while drinking at high risk for short-term harms is any consumption that exceeds these amounts. Almost two-thirds (61%) of alcohol is estimated to be consumed at risky levels in Australia – that is, during occasions when consumption exceeds these amounts (Stockwell et al., 2004).

While no quantitative guidelines specific to young people are provided, the NHMRC guidelines urge young people,

aged 18-25 especially, not to exceed the guidelines, and recommend that young people under the age of 18 do not drink to intoxication. The guidelines highlight that young people are more susceptible to the effects of alcohol¹¹ and may have less experience of controlling the effects. Hence, although the global quantitative consumption levels for risk of short- and long-term harm are used here, it is acknowledged that applying guidelines developed for healthy adults to younger people is problematic.

Table 4 presents the prevalence of risky alcohol consumption for short-term harm in Australia. As indicated in the table, 18-20 and 21-24 year olds report the highest prevalence of risky alcohol consumption of all age groups.

¹¹ Evidence suggests that the adolescent brain is more susceptible to some of the effects of alcohol (memory-impairment, increased confidence) and less susceptible to others (drowsiness and lack of coordination).

Table 4. Prevalence (and 95% Confidence Intervals) of 'Low Risk' and 'Risky/High Risk' drinking for short-term harm (at least monthly) in the Australian population, by age (data from 2004 NDSHS)

| | 12-13 | 14-17 | 18-20 | 21-24 | 25-29 | 30-39 | 40-49 | 50-59 | 60+ | Total |
|-----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Non-drinkers | 83.2% (79.7, 86.2) | 37.2% (34.4, 40.2) | 11.7% (9.5, 14.3) | 9.7% (7.9, 11.7) | 11.7% (10.1, 13.6) | 11.0% (9.9, 12.2) | 11.2% (10.1, 12.4) | 15.0% (13.7, 16.3) | 25.0% (23.8, 26.2) | 18.6% (18.0, 19.2) |
| Low risk | 16.1% (13.1, 19.6) | 44.9% (42.0, 47.8) | 42.1% (38.6, 45.7) | 45.0% (42.0, 48.0) | 53.4% (50.9, 55.9) | 64.6% (63.1, 66.2) | 69.6% (68.0, 71.1) | 72.3% (70.6, 73.9) | 69.6% (68.2, 71.0) | 61.4% (60.7, 62.1) |
| Risky/High risk | 0.7% (0.3, 1.7) | 17.9% (15.9, 20.0) | 46.2% (42.6, 49.9) | 45.4% (42.4, 48.4) | 34.9% (32.4, 37.4) | 24.4% (23.0, 25.9) | 19.2% (18.0, 20.5) | 12.8% (11.7, 13.9) | 5.4% (4.8, 6.1) | 20.0% (19.5, 20.6) |

Note.

CI = Confidence Interval.

Non-drinkers = have not had a drink of alcohol in the last 12 months.

Low risk = exceeding 2001 NHMRC guidelines for low risk drinking for short-term harm less than monthly.

Risky/High risk = exceeding guidelines for low risk drinking for short-term harm at least monthly.

Shaded area indicates the age range covered by this review.

The prevalence of these drinking patterns is shown in more detail and split by gender for young people in Figure 3. By 18 years

of age, approximately 50% of both males and females are risky drinkers. This tapers off slightly for females aged 21-24 years.

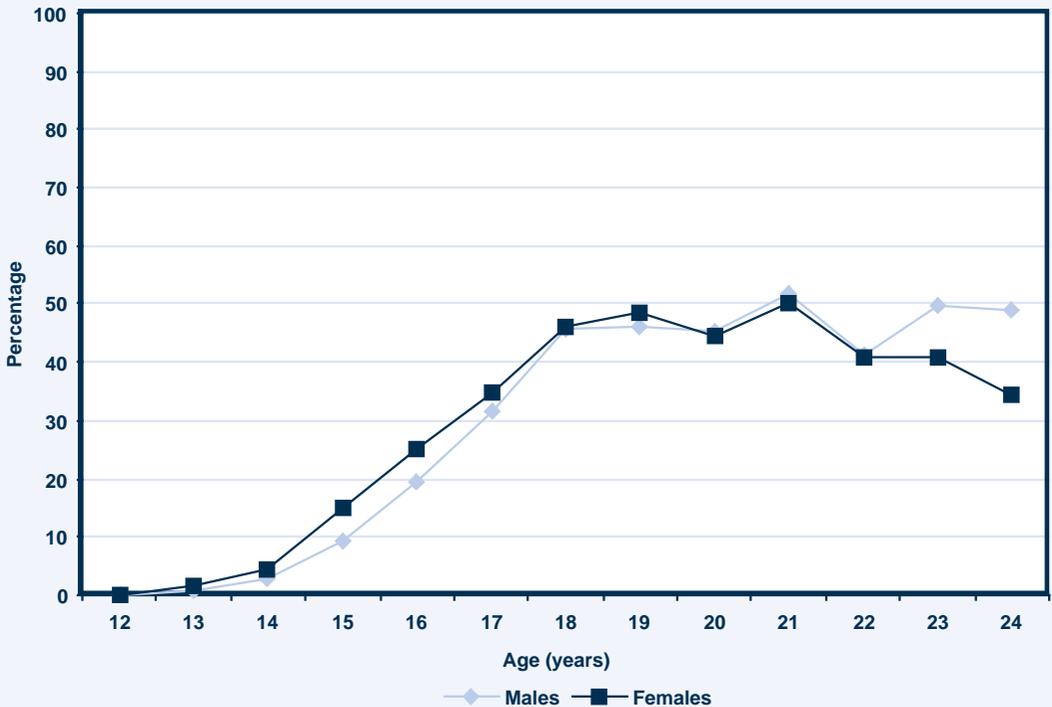


Figure 3. Percentage of young males and females consuming alcohol at risky or high risk levels for short-term harms at least monthly (data from 2004 NDSHS)

Importantly, there is a disconnection between young people’s perceptions of drinking and established views of alcohol-related harms (Figure 4). Despite high rates of risky drinking, most young people who drink at risky levels for short-term harm at least monthly classify themselves

as ‘light’ or ‘social’ drinkers, with only 3% viewing themselves as ‘heavy’ or ‘binge’ drinkers. That is, they do not consider their drinking behaviour to be associated with potentially harmful consequences.

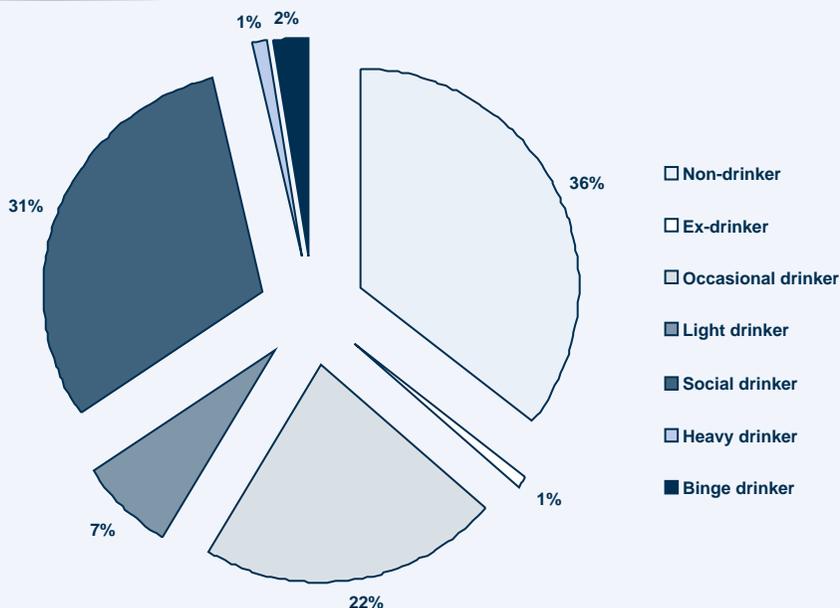


Figure 4. Perceptions of young people aged 12-24 of their own drinking (data from 2004 NDSHS)

5.2.1. Harms associated with risky consumption

Young people are particularly vulnerable to acute harms arising from intoxication, including health, legal and social problems

(Toumbourou et al., 2005). Approximately 264 young people aged 15-24 years die each year as a result of risky consumption (Chikritzhs & Pascal, 2004). The most common alcohol-attributable causes of death are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Causes of alcohol-attributable deaths and hospitalisation (%) for males and females aged 15-24 years (data from 2004 NAIP)

| Deaths | % | Hospitalisations | % |
|------------------------|----|--------------------|----|
| Males | | Males | |
| Road injury | 52 | Assault | 30 |
| Suicide | 19 | Falls | 19 |
| Assault | 7 | Road injury | 17 |
| Pedestrian road injury | 9 | Alcohol abuse | 10 |
| Drowning | 4 | Alcohol dependence | 4 |
| Females | | Females | |
| Road injury | 37 | Assault | 23 |
| Suicide | 22 | Alcohol abuse | 19 |
| Assault | 20 | Suicide | 18 |
| Pedestrian road injury | 5 | Falls | 10 |
| Drowning | 3 | Road injury | 8 |

In addition, rates of alcohol-attributable hospitalisations of young people aged 15-24 years are high, estimated at over 10,000 hospitalisations each year (Chikritzhs & Pascal, 2004). This represents approximately 14% of all alcohol-related hospitalisations. Over one in five (22%) of all hospitalisations of young people are alcohol-attributable (Chikritzhs & Pascal, 2004). The most common causes of alcohol-attributable hospitalisations among young people are given in Table 5 above. Alcohol is also associated with high rates of presentations to the Emergency Department. A Queensland study found that 31% of 15-18 year olds and 32% of 19-24 year olds attending the Emergency Department for an injury, reported consuming alcohol in the six hours preceding their injury. Three in four cases of alcohol-involved injury presentations to the Emergency Department were male (Roche, Watt, McClure, Purdie, & Green, 2001).

Further information on the risks and harms associated with alcohol consumption reported by young people was extracted from the 2004 NDSHS data. The results of this analysis are shown in Table 6. Young males and young females are at risk of different harms arising from alcohol consumption. Approximately 50% of males (18-24 years) and 40% of females (18-24 years) reported being verbally

abused by someone under the influence of alcohol. Furthermore, despite routine warnings about the dangers of drinking and driving, almost 30% of males (21-24 years) and 15% of females (21-24 years) reported driving under the influence of alcohol. While males were more likely to experience physical abuse from someone under the influence of alcohol, drive under the influence of alcohol, or operate heavy machinery under the influence of alcohol, females were almost the sole reporters of sexual abuse from someone under the influence of alcohol. This peaked amongst the 15-20 year old females; 3.7% of whom reported sexual abuse from someone under the influence of alcohol. The most common injuries resulting from physical abuse were bruising (males: 59.9%, females: 72.4%) and minor lacerations (males: 21.1%, females: 18.5%).

Over a third (39%) of young people also reported having drunk alcohol at the time of the incident(s) of verbal or physical abuse (males: 43%, females: 34%) by someone under the influence of alcohol (35% reporting only consuming alcohol; and 4% reporting consuming alcohol and other drugs). Among the females reporting sexual abuse, 54% reported consuming alcohol at the time of the incident (alcohol alone: 40%, alcohol and other drugs: 14%).¹²

12 The way the questions were asked in the NDSHS required participants to respond to subsequent questions for all incidents involving verbal, physical or sexual abuse from someone under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs together. Hence, these findings must be qualified by the researchers' inability to ascertain whether:

- a) the sexual abuse was perpetrated by someone under the influence of alcohol rather than someone under the influence of illicit drugs, and
- b) the incident of sexual abuse and the victim's consumption of alcohol occurred on the same occasion or were related to two separate incidents of physical abuse. The findings surrounding sexual abuse should therefore be taken as a potential indication only.

Table 6. Risks and harms associated with alcohol consumption reported by young people (and 95% Confidence Intervals) (data from 2004 NDSHS)

| | Males | | | | | Females | | | | | Total |
|--|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| | 12-14 | 15-17 | 18-20 | 21-24 | 12-14 | 15-17 | 18-20 | 21-24 | 18-20 | 21-24 | |
| Age | 12-14 | 15-17 | 18-20 | 21-24 | 12-14 | 15-17 | 18-20 | 21-24 | 18-20 | 21-24 | Total |
| Verbally abused ¹ | 8.1% (5.4, 11.9) | 23.0% (18.5, 28.1) | 44.7% (38.3, 51.3) | 50.0% (44.9, 55.1) | 6.5% (4.4, 9.4) | 26.5% (22.5, 31.0) | 39.1% (34.2, 44.2) | 42.4% (38.3, 46.4) | 39.1% (34.2, 44.2) | 42.4% (38.3, 46.4) | 31.9% (30.1, 33.7) |
| Physically abused ¹ | 1.2% (0.4, 3.3) | 6.8% (4.5, 10.3) | 17.5% (12.8, 23.5) | 14.5% (11.1, 18.8) | 1.3% (0.6, 2.8) | 7.0% (4.8, 10.0) | 10.1% (7.5, 13.5) | 6.6% (4.9, 8.7) | 10.1% (7.5, 13.5) | 6.6% (4.9, 8.7) | 8.5% (7.4, 9.7) |
| involving sexual abuse ² | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0.1% (0.0, 0.5) | 0.5% (0.1, 2.8) | 3.7% (2.3, 5.9) | 3.7% (2.3, 5.8) | 1.7% (0.9, 3.2) | 3.7% (2.3, 5.8) | 1.7% (0.9, 3.2) | 1.2% (0.8, 1.6) |
| Alcohol-related absenteeism ³ | 0.2% (0.0, 1.5) | 4.0% (2.2, 7.2) | 10.0% (6.6, 14.9) | 12.2% (9.2, 15.9) | 0.6% (0.2, 2.0) | 5.6% (3.6, 8.6) | 8.1% (5.9, 11.0) | 10.2% (7.6, 13.6) | 8.1% (5.9, 11.0) | 10.2% (7.6, 13.6) | 6.7% (5.8, 7.8) |
| Drove ⁴ | 0.8% (0.3, 2.1) | 4.0% (2.3, 6.8) | 21.4% (16.8, 27.0) | 29.2% (25.6, 33.0) | 0.1% (0.0, 0.7) | 2.8% (1.8, 4.4) | 11.5% (9.0, 14.6) | 15.0% (12.5, 17.8) | 11.5% (9.0, 14.6) | 15.0% (12.5, 17.8) | 11.9% (10.8, 13.1) |
| Operated heavy machinery ⁴ | 0.2% (0.0, 1.2) | 0.3% (0.1, 1.0) | 2.8% (1.4, 5.3) | 2.7% (1.6, 4.5) | 0% | 0.1% (0.0, 0.6) | 0.1% (0.0, 0.8) | 0.1% (0.0, 0.4) | 0.1% (0.0, 0.8) | 0.1% (0.0, 0.4) | 0.8% (0.6, 1.2) |

1 By someone under the influence of alcohol

2 Not asked for 12-13 year olds. Hence, data for the 12-14 year old category indicates prevalence among 14 year olds.

3 Due to alcohol

4 Under the influence of alcohol

5.2.2. Risky alcohol consumption over time

A popular notion in the media is that there has been a recent increase in risky drinking among young people (Marcus & Cuming, 2007; Stark, 2007a, 2007b). A search was conducted of available data to evaluate this hypothesis.

Data from the 2001 and 2004 NDSHS were compared to examine changes in young people's risky alcohol consumption between these two collection years (see Table 7). The 2001 NDSHS did not survey 12-13 year olds; hence this age group was

excluded from the comparisons reported here. Increases are evident from 2001 to 2004 in the proportion of 21-24 year olds consuming alcohol at risky levels for short-term harm at least weekly; and the average quantity of standard drinks this age group usually consumes during a normal drinking occasion. Consuming alcohol at risky levels for short-term harm at least yearly and at least monthly decreased among 14-17 year olds, suggesting a decrease in occasional risky drinkers in this age group, but not a decrease in more regular (at least weekly) risky drinkers among this age group.

Table 7. Comparison of young people's risky alcohol consumption between 2001 and 2004 (and 95% Confidence Intervals) (data from 2001 and 2004 NDSHS)

| | 2001 | | | 2004 | | |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| | 14-17 | 18-20 | 21-24 | 14-17 | 18-20 | 21-24 |
| At short-term risk, yearly | 34.6% (31.2, 38.1) | 62.7% (58.8, 66.6) | 64.8% (61.5, 68.1) | 28.3% (25.7, 31.1) | 62.9% (58.8, 66.8) | 65.0% (62.1, 67.8) |
| At short-term risk, monthly | 22.9% (20.2, 25.9) | 46.3% (42.2, 50.5) | 44.4% (41.2, 47.7) | 17.9% (15.9, 20.0) | 46.2% (42.6, 49.9) | 45.4% (42.4, 48.4) |
| At short-term risk, weekly | 6.6% (5.2, 8.4) | 18.4% (15.5, 21.8) | 13.2% (11.2, 15.4) | 6.2% (5.1, 7.6) | 18.2% (15.5, 21.1) | 17.5% (15.3, 20.1) |
| Usual number of standard drinks consumed ¹ | 4.8 (4.5, 5.1) | 5.6 (5.3, 5.9) | 4.7 (4.5, 4.9) | 4.5 (4.3, 4.8) | 6.0 (5.6, 6.3) | 5.2 (4.9, 5.4) |

¹ Usual level of consumption was calculated by taking the midpoint of the categories (e.g., 5.5 for '5 - 6 drinks')

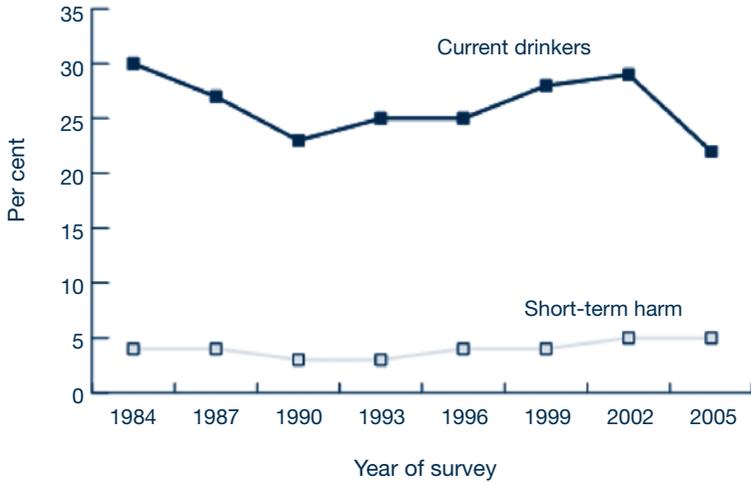
The Australian Secondary Students' Alcohol and Drug Survey (ASSAD) (White & Hayman, 2006) has been conducted every three years since 1984. Figure 5 is a reproduction of two graphs from the 2005 ASSAD alcohol report (White & Hayman, 2006) illustrating changes in proportions of students who consume alcohol at least weekly ('current drinkers') and students who consume alcohol at levels for short-term risk of alcohol-related harm.

Both age groups show risky alcohol consumption declined during the 1980s, increased in the 1990s, and then remained fairly stable in the 2000s. The proportion of 12-15 year olds consuming alcohol at risky levels for short-term

harms has approximately doubled from 1990 (approximately 2.5%) to 2005 (approximately 5%). In this same time period, risky drinking among 16-17 year olds increased from approximately 15% to approximately 20%.

Similarly, both age groups show a decline in the proportion of current drinkers during the 1980s, an increase over the 1990s and then a decrease in the 2000s. For 12-15 year olds, this decrease in the proportion of current drinkers is dramatic: decreasing from almost 30% in 2002 to approximately 22% in 2005.

Proportion of 12–15-year-olds drinking in the week before the (current drinkers) and proportion drinking at levels that could lead to short-term harm (proportions not adjusted for age), 1984–2005



Proportion of 16–17-year-olds drinking in the week before the (current drinkers) and proportion drinking at levels that could lead to short-term harm (proportions not adjusted for age), 1984–2005

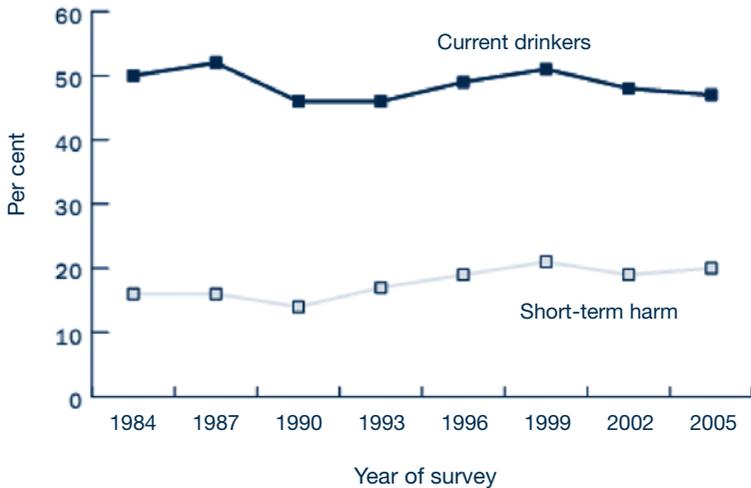


Figure 5. Proportions of 12-15 year old students (top figure) and 16-17 year old students (bottom figure) who are current drinkers or consuming alcohol at risky levels for short-term harm from 1984 to 2005 (data from 2005 ASSAD)

The Salvation Army conducted surveys on alcohol consumption in 1992, 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005 (Salvation Army, 2005). The proportion of young people aged 14-24 years who reported consuming more than six drinks of alcohol in one session appears to have increased from 1992 to 2003, and then decreased from 2003 to 2005 (see Figure 6). The increase in riskier alcohol consumption from 1992 to 2003 parallels the trend evident in the ASSAD data. The proportion of young men reporting that they consumed more than

nine drinks in one session has decreased since 2003, while the proportion of young women consuming more than nine drinks of alcohol decreased from 2003 to 2004, and increased from 2004 to 2005. However, the number of young people who participated in these surveys is small (e.g., in 2005, women aged 14-24: n=134, men aged 14-24: n=138), hence, the sampling error for these estimates is likely to be large and findings should be interpreted with caution.

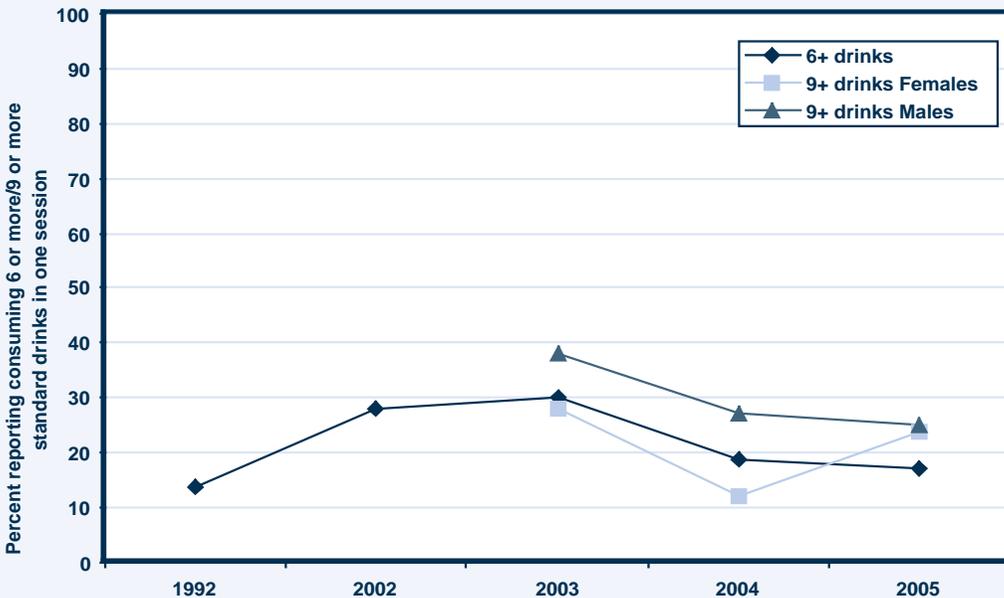


Figure 6. Percentage of young people aged 14-24 reporting consuming 6 or more or 9 or more drinks on one occasion (data from Salvation Army, 2005)

The Victorian Premier's Drug Prevention Council (Premier's Drug Prevention Council) has conducted a series of Victorian surveys of young people aged 16-24 years (2002: n=4509; 2003: n=6052; 2004: n=6005). The surveys suggest that there has been little variation since 2002 or 2003 in prevalence of lifetime use of alcohol, prevalence of consumption in the last month, age of initiation, types of alcohol consumed, or frequency of drinking to get drunk. However, the data indicates an increase in the proportion of young people ever experiencing alcohol-related memory loss, from 36% in 2002 to 55% in 2004. Consuming alcohol at risky levels for short-term harm at least monthly increased over the time period of the surveys, from 44% of males and 40% of females in 2002 to 53% of males and 48% of females in 2004; a large increase in a short timeframe. There was little change in consuming alcohol at risky levels for short-term harm at least yearly or at least weekly.

There is little data available on young people's alcohol consumption prior to 1984. Fisher et al. (Fisher, Cross, Carroll, & Murray, 1987) reported data from a New South Wales survey of school students which indicated a rise in the proportion of Year 10 students aged 15 or 16 years consuming alcohol on a weekly basis from 1971 to 1983 (see Figure 7). According to the survey findings, 22% of Year 10 students aged 15 or 16 years consumed alcohol weekly in 1971, compared to 50% in 1983 (Fisher et al., 1987). Fisher et al. (Fisher et al., 1987) noted that during the same time period, mean population consumption in Australia decreased, suggesting mean consumption is not a good indicator of young people's consumption patterns. By comparison, the 2005 ASSAD survey findings indicated 35% of 15 year olds and 46% of 16 year olds consumed alcohol on a weekly basis.

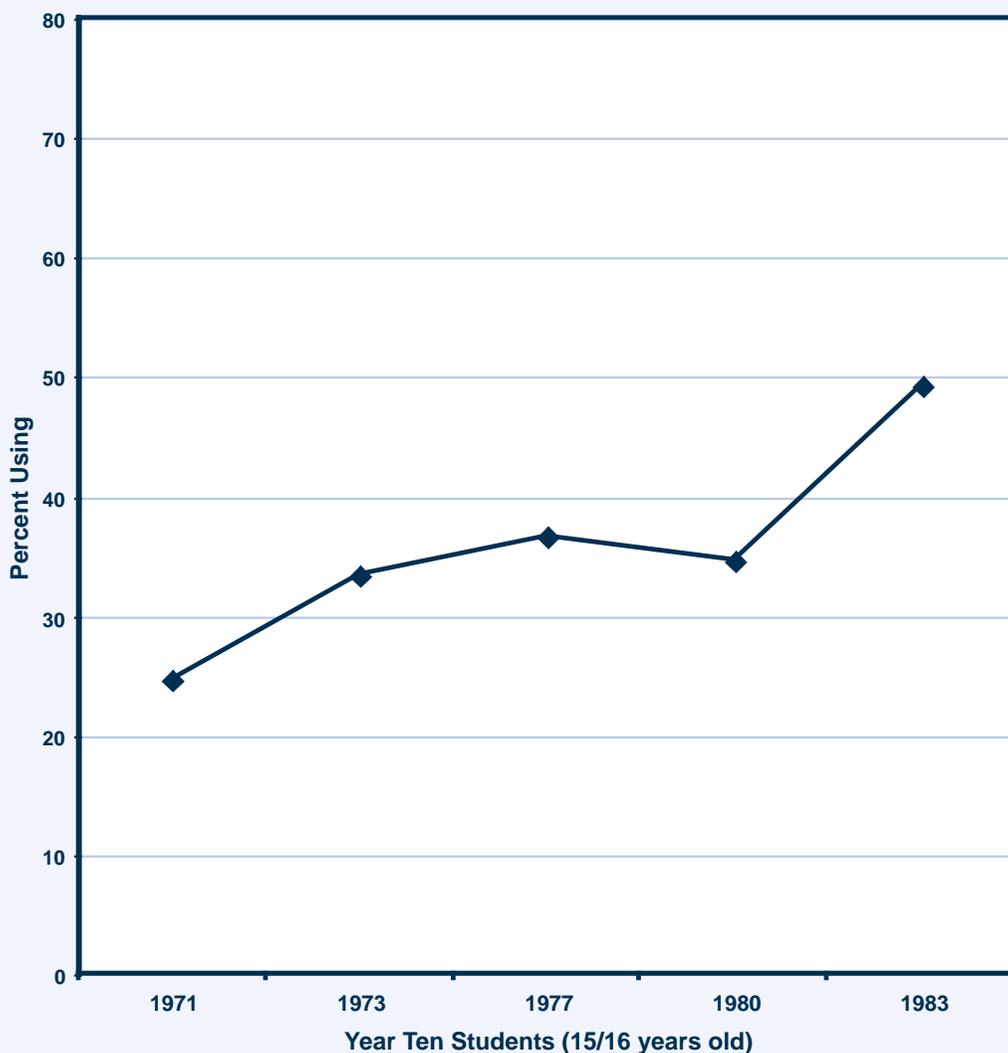


Figure 7. Prevalence of weekly alcohol consumption among 15 or 16 years olds in NSW from 1971 to 1983 (reproduced from Fisher, 1987)

Fisher et al. (Fisher et al., 1987) also reported weekly alcohol consumption by age and gender for 1983, shown in Figure 8, alongside the corresponding graph from the 2005 ASSAD survey (White & Hayman, 2006). These data indicate a similarity between weekly alcohol consumption patterns in 1983 and 2005, with potentially a slight reduction in

prevalence across age and gender from 1983 to 2005. These graphs indicate the proportion of young people who reported consuming alcohol in the last week. Comparable data on prevalence of risky consumption, or amount of alcohol consumed during risky drinking occasions was not available prior to 1984.

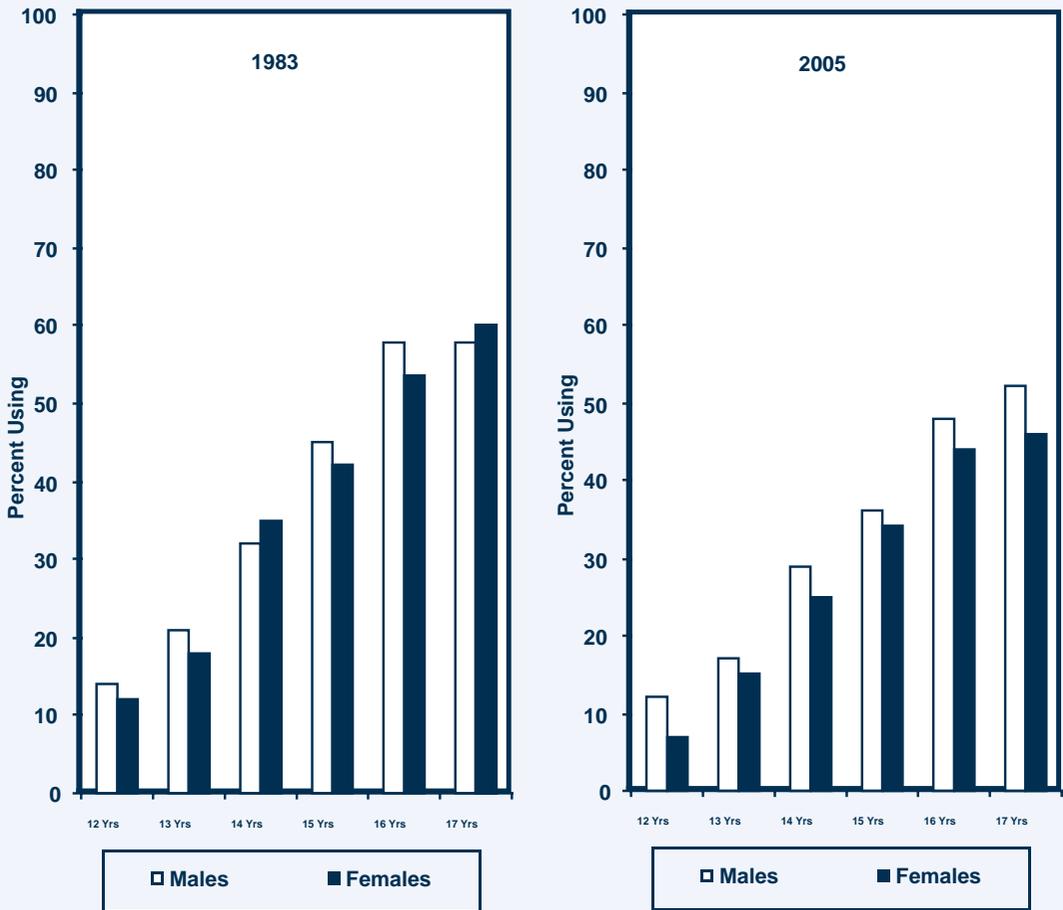


Figure 8. Prevalence of weekly alcohol consumption among 12-17 year olds in 1983 (data from Fisher, 1987, left hand side) and 2005 (data from 2005 ASSAD)

The average number of standard drinks consumed by young people aged 15-17 on one heavy drinking occasion has remained relatively constant over the past five years. However, the types of alcohol beverages consumed have changed considerably. King et al. (2005a) separated respondents into 'low risk' (<7 standard drinks for males; <5 standard drinks for females) and 'high risk' (≥ 7 standard

drinks for males; ≥ 5 standard drinks for females) categories. Males drinking at higher risk levels consumed approximately 12 standard drinks compared to 8 to 9 standard drinks for females (King et al., 2005a). In contrast, those drinking at lower risk levels consumed approximately three standard drinks (3 for males; 2.5 for females).

5.2.3. Prevalence of alcohol dependence among young people

Across all ages, the percentage of clients seeking treatment for alcohol dependence as their main drug of concern has remained stable since 2001 at approximately 37% (AIHW, 2006a). Figure 9 shows the proportions of 10-19 year olds (top) and 20-29 year olds (bottom) seeking treatment for dependence who reported alcohol, heroin, cannabis and amphetamines as their main drug of concern across the five National Minimum Data Set reports from 2000-2001 to 2004-2005 (AIHW, 2002a, 2003, 2004, 2005b, 2006a). The graphs show an increase of approximately 5% in the percentage of 10-19 year olds, and 2% in the percentage of 20-29 year olds, reporting alcohol as their main drug of concern. However, these percentages may reflect changes in treatment-seeking

for other drugs. In the same time period, the percentage reporting heroin as their main drug of concern decreased dramatically, particularly among 10-19 year olds (from 30% in 2000-2001 to 7% in 2004-2005). This decrease reflects the sharp decline in the availability of heroin experienced in Australia in 2001, known as the 'heroin drought' (Longo, Henry-Edwards, Humeniuk, Christie, & Ali, 2004). Hence, the increase in the proportion of treatment seekers reporting alcohol as their main drug of concern may be due to either an increase in alcohol dependence among young people, or a decrease in heroin dependence. It must be noted, however, that these data are for closed treatments only, not individuals. That is, the data are single episodes of care, which may include multiple treatments for single individuals.

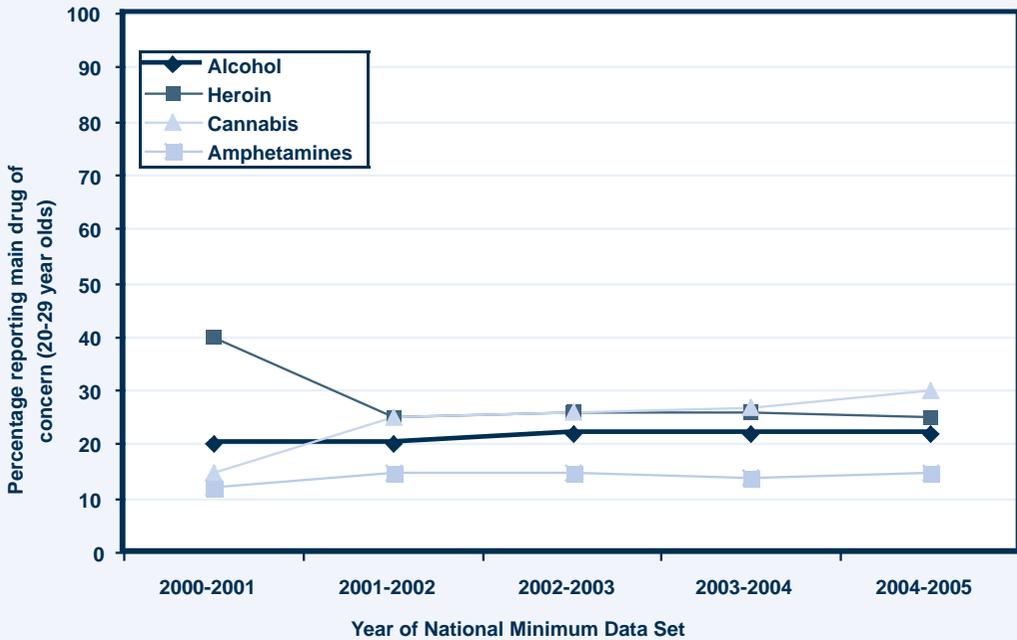
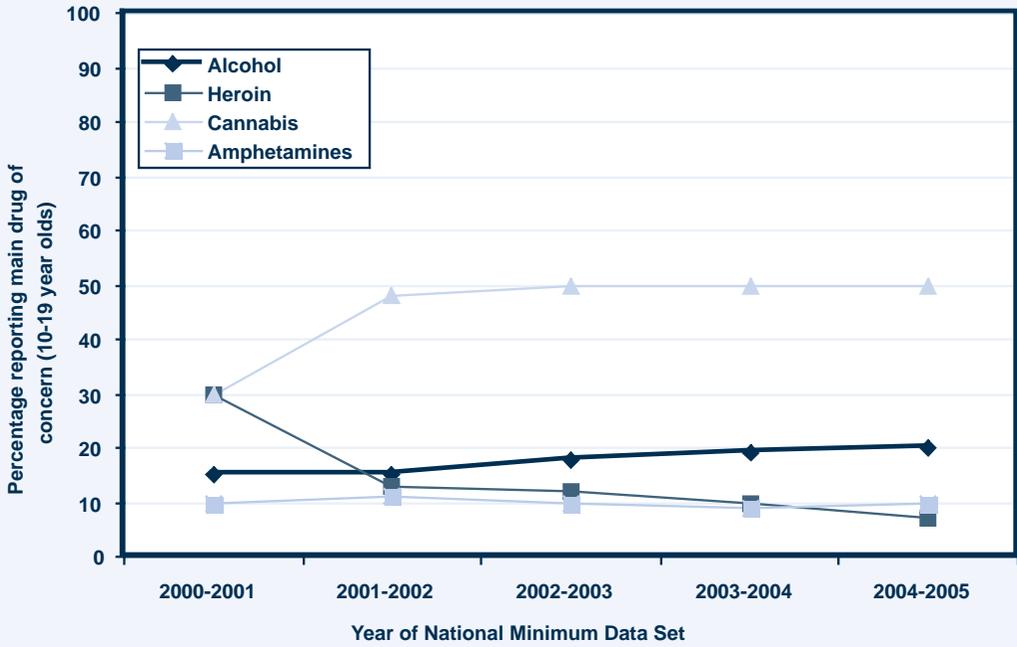
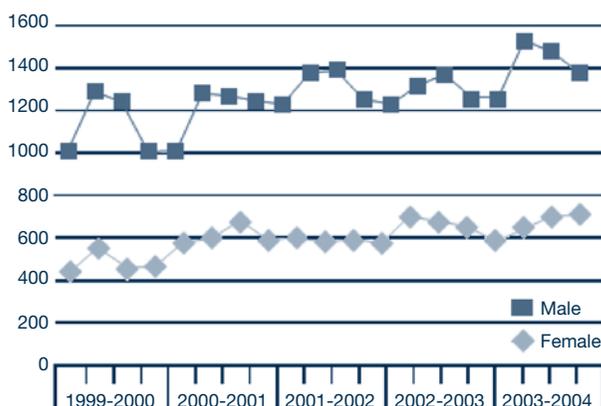


Figure 9. Percentage of 10-19 year olds (top) and 20-29 year olds (bottom) seeking treatment for dependence reporting alcohol, heroin, cannabis or amphetamines as their main drug of concern (data from 2002-2006 NMDS AIHW)

5.2.4. Young people's alcohol-related healthcare utilisation

Alcohol-related healthcare utilisation data can also be an indication of trends in alcohol-related harm. The Victorian Department of Human Services (Victorian Department of Human Services, 2006)

report that the number of alcohol-related Emergency Department presentations has been increasing since 1999 (see Figure 10). However, the data is not age-specific, so whether the number of alcohol-related presentations of young people has increased is not known, but it can be assumed to be likely.



Source: Department of Human Services, Drugs Policy and Services Branch Quarterly Report, June 2005

Figure 10. Alcohol-related Emergency Department presentations in Victoria by gender for 1999 to 2004 (reproduced from Victorian Department of Human Services, 2006)

A similar pattern was found for non-age-specific Victorian hospitalisations (Stoove et al., 2006). With the exception of a small decrease in 1998-1999, the number of alcohol-related hospitalisations has been increasing since 1995-1996 at a rate of between 4% and 12% per year (Stoove et al., 2006). However, only a small proportion of these hospitalisations were of young people aged less than 25 years (Stoove et al., 2006). A clear trend was not as apparent for Victorian data on non age-specific alcohol-related ambulance attendances (Stoove et al.,

2006); for January and February 2005, the number of alcohol-related ambulance attendances was lower than previous years, but for March 2005 the number was higher.

Young people who consume alcohol at risky levels are also over-represented amongst General Practitioner (GP) patients. Although their reason for presenting may not necessarily relate to their alcohol consumption, almost half of males aged 18-24 years and 36% of females aged 18-24 years visiting a GP

report consuming alcohol at risky levels (as defined by the AUDIT screening tool) (Britt et al., 2007). General Practitioner (GP) consultation data on the proportion of patients reporting risky alcohol consumption has been recorded since 2001-2002 (Britt et al., 2007). Compared to the current data (2005-2006), there has been no statistically significant change in the level of risky alcohol consumption for adults over 18 years over time. Although comparative tests were not undertaken for different age ranges, data indicates a slight increase in the percentage of young people aged 18-24 years reporting risky alcohol consumption who are presenting to GPs; from 46% of males and 35% of females in 2001-2002 (Britt et al., 2002) to 49% and 36%, respectively in 2005-2006 (Britt et al., 2007).

In conclusion, from the best available evidence:

- there was an increase in prevalence of weekly alcohol consumption amongst young people in the 1970s, but this has since remained comparatively stable,
- reported age of initiation of alcohol consumption has decreased over the last five decades. The age at which at least 50% of survey respondents reported consuming a full serve of alcohol has reduced from approximately 19 years to 15.5 years,
- prevalence of risky alcohol consumption among young people over the age of 16 years may have increased in the 1990s,
- since 2001, risky alcohol consumption has increased among 21-24 year olds, but decreased slightly among 14-17 year olds,
- the amount of alcohol consumed during risky drinking occasions may have remained stable over the past five years,
- the number of young people seeking treatment for alcohol dependence may have risen, or this apparent trend may be due to a decrease in treatment seeking for heroin dependence,
- data from hospitals and Emergency Departments is currently not detailed enough to examine whether young people's alcohol-related healthcare utilisation has increased,
- GP consultation data indicates there may have been a slight rise in prevalence of risky drinking among young people attending GPs,
- despite more than 50% of young people reporting drinking at risky or high risk levels, young people tend to consider themselves to be social or light drinkers.

5.3. Patterns of consumption

5.3.1. How young people obtain alcohol

The majority of young people aged 12-17 years do not report difficulty obtaining alcohol, with 73% in the 2004 NDSHS responding that it was easy or very easy to get alcohol if they wanted some. Underage young people most commonly obtain alcohol from friends or acquaintances (2004 NDSHS: 39%, 2004 ASSAD: 39%) and their parents (2004 NDSHS: 36%, 2004 ASSAD: 37%) (AIHW, 2005a; King et al., 2005a). In the 2005 ASSAD survey, 2% of 12-15 year olds and 10% of 16-17 year olds reported purchasing their last drink themselves. Underage young people were most likely to purchase their alcohol from liquor stores or drive in bottle shops. Eight percent of 15-17 year olds reported purchasing alcohol themselves on their last drinking occasion (King et al., 2005a). Similarly, 8% of 12-17 year old respondents in the 2004 NDSHS reported usually purchasing their own alcohol.

Underage young people who obtained alcohol from their parents may be less likely to drink at risky levels than those who obtained alcohol from other sources (King et al., 2005a). When alcohol was supplied by a parent at a party, young people aged 12-15 years consumed approximately the same amount of alcohol as when alcohol was supplied by a friend, but less than when alcohol was bought by someone else (White & Hayman, 2006). In contrast, the amount of alcohol consumed at a party by 16-17 year olds when the alcohol was supplied by a parent was higher than when alcohol was supplied by a friend, but still less than when alcohol was bought by someone else¹³.

5.3.2. Types of alcohol consumed by young people

The types of alcohol usually consumed by young people by age and gender in 2004 are shown in Figure 11 and Figure 12. The most popular beverage types for all age groups are bottled spirits, liqueurs and pre-mixes in cans and bottles, and regular-strength beer for males. Older females aged 21-24 also preferred bottled wine.

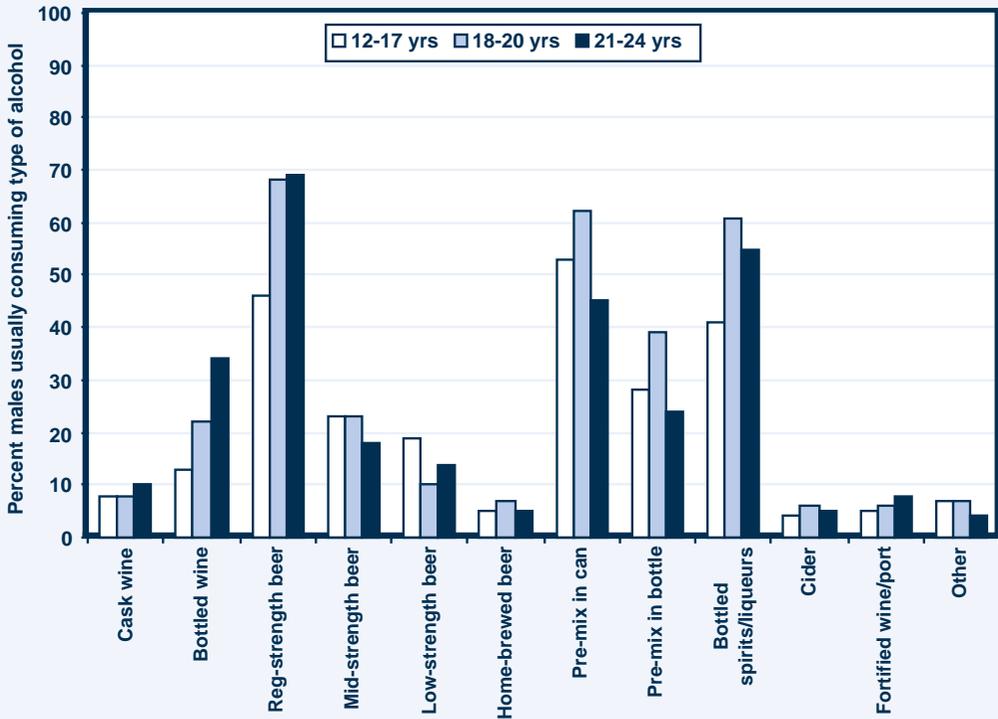


Figure 11. Types of alcohol consumed by young males (data from 2004 NDSHS)

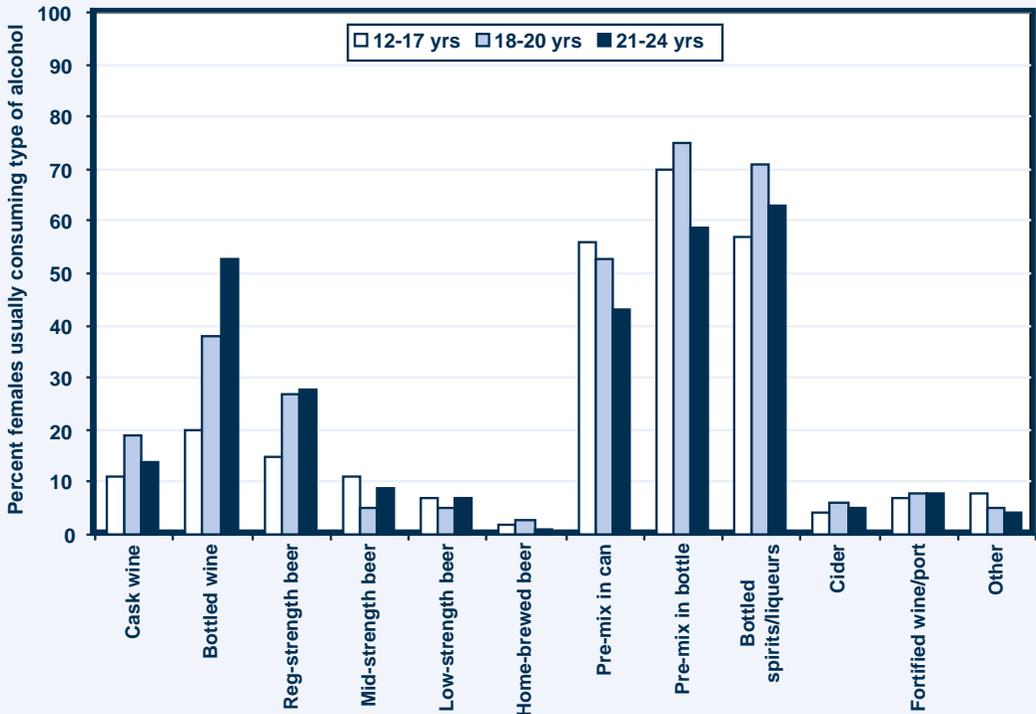


Figure 12. Types of alcohol consumed by young females (data from 2004 NDSHS)

Clear changes over the past five years are evident in the types of alcohol beverages consumed by young people (King et al., 2005a). Consumption of spirits has

increased amongst both males and females, taking the place of beer for males and wine, sodas, ciders or coolers for females (see Figure 13).

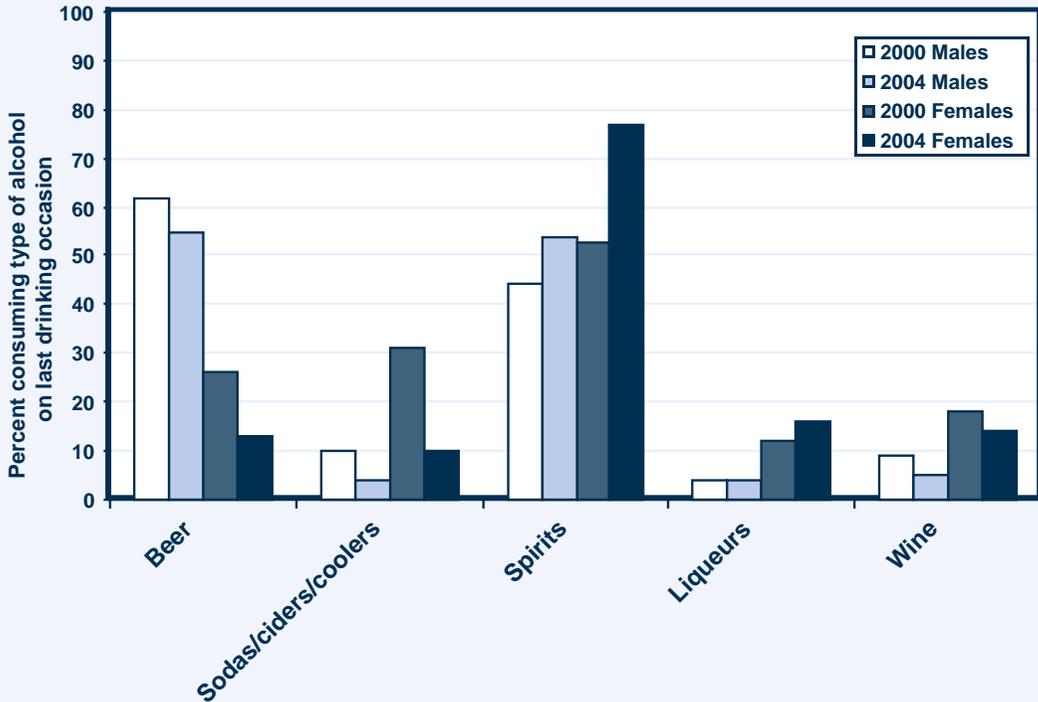


Figure 13. Changes in types of alcohol consumed by young people aged 15-17 from 2000 to 2004 (data from 2000-2004 NAC)

The increase in consumption of spirits can be attributed to 'Ready-to-Drink' (RTD) pre-mixed spirits. While there was an overall increase of 1.7% in the amount of alcohol available for consumption in Australia from 2004-2005 to 2005-2006, there was an increase of 9% in the amount of pre-mixed spirits available for consumption, and a 1.5% decrease in other forms of spirits (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007b).

Changes in types of alcohol consumed have been particularly dramatic amongst

15-17 year olds drinking alcohol at risky levels (King et al., 2005a) (see Figure 14). It should be noted that some data on liqueurs may be misclassified and may include some RTDs containing liqueurs as the alcohol base (e.g., Cointreau, lime and soda). However, the rise in popularity of some liqueur-based drinks and cocktails, such as 'Jäger Bombs' (a shot of Jägermeister in a short glass of Red Bull energy drink), may also contribute to the high consumption of liqueurs among risky drinkers.

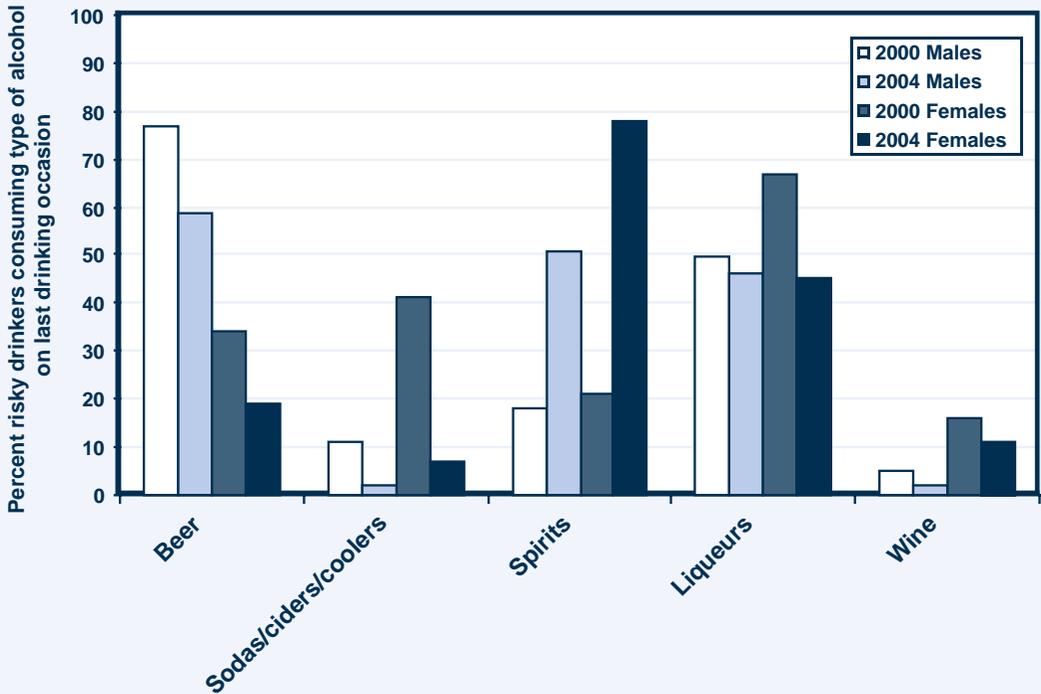


Figure 14. Changes in types of alcohol consumed by risky drinkers aged 15-17 from 2001 to 2004 (data from 2000-2004 NAC)

5.3.3. Places where alcohol is consumed by young people

Young people under 18 years of age most commonly report consuming alcohol:

- at home (ASSAD: 30%),
- at parties (33%), and
- at friends' houses (15%) (King et al., 2005a; White & Hayman, 2006).

Locations where alcohol is usually consumed are shown in Figure 15. Note that while White and Hayman (2006) and King et al. (2005a) asked about location of the last drink of alcohol consumed, the NDSHS asked about locations of usual

consumption, allowing respondents to choose more than one option.

Similar to White and Hayman (2006) and King et al.'s (2005a) findings, underage young people (12-17 year olds) were much less likely to consume alcohol in pubs, clubs, restaurants or dance parties, and were more likely to consume alcohol at home, at a friends' house, or at a party at someone's house. Underage young people were also significantly more likely than young people over 18 to consume alcohol in a public place such as a park (8.9% vs 5.5%, $p < 0.01$), which may have implications for their visibility and interaction with police or other authorities.

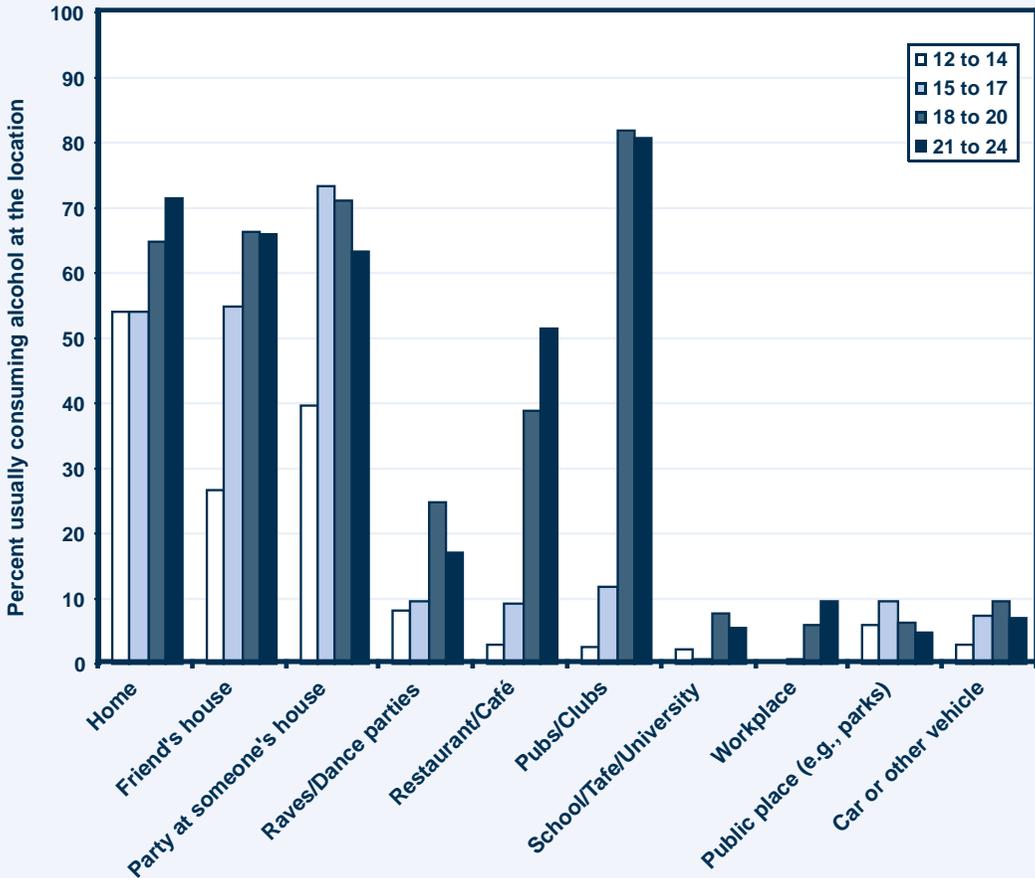


Figure 15. Locations where young people usually consume alcohol (data from 2004 NDSHS)

Usual locations of alcohol consumption for young people who drink alcohol at risky levels for short-term harms at least weekly compared to low risk drinkers is shown in Figure 16. High risk drinkers were more likely to usually consume alcohol at all locations, and indicated a wider array of drinking locations than low risk drinkers. Consuming alcohol in public places or cars or other vehicles was particularly

associated with riskier drinking for both underage and 18-24 year old drinkers. For 12-17 and 18-24 year olds, riskier drinkers more commonly consumed alcohol at pubs, clubs, restaurants, cafes, raves and dance parties, while the lower risk drinkers were more likely to confine their drinking to their home, friends' houses, and parties at someone's house.

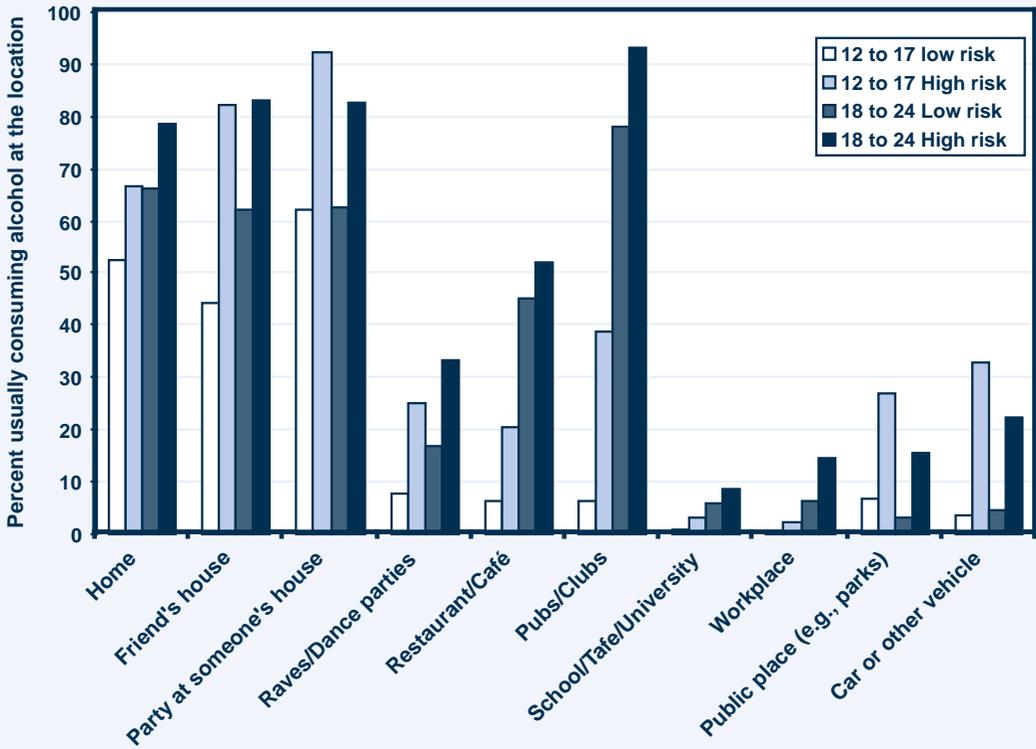


Figure 16. Usual locations of alcohol consumption for young people who consume alcohol at risky levels for short-term harms at least weekly, versus lower risk drinkers (data from 2004 NDSHS)

Young people consume more alcohol at friends' houses and parties at someone's house compared to the amount consumed when drinking at home (see Figure 17) (White & Hayman, 2006). King et al.

(2005a) also found that young people consumed alcohol at riskier levels when drinking at friends' houses and parties at someone's house compared to at home.

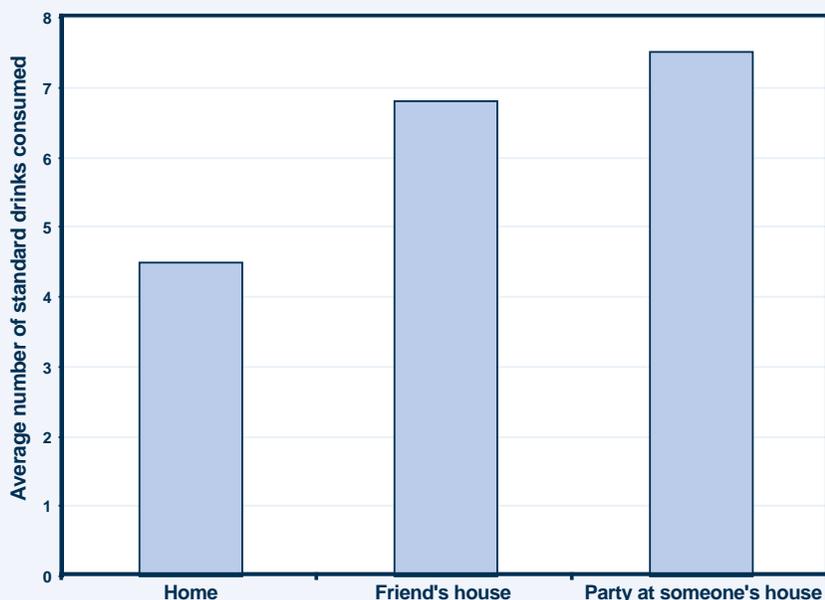


Figure 17. Average number of standard drinks consumed at different locations (data from 2005 ASSAD)

Overall, Australians living in rural areas drink alcohol at higher levels compared to their metropolitan counterparts. In 2001, males in regional areas were about 30% more likely to engage in risky or high risk alcohol consumption than males in major cities (AIHW, 2005e). Females in regional areas were about 1.25 and 1.15 times as likely as those in major cities to drink alcohol in quantities sufficient to risk short- and long-term harm, respectively (AIHW, 2005e). Higher levels of consumption in rural areas are often associated with self-reliance, hardiness and mateship (Williams, 1999).

In many instances, local rural or remote hotels play a vital role in the culture of the community. Pubs are also often the main source of entertainment and social interaction, and are frequently well-embedded within the community through activities such as sponsoring local sporting teams and community groups (Williams, 1999). Due to the local pub's pivotal role in rural or remote communities, younger Australians in these areas often adopt drinking patterns that reflect local drinking cultures that in turn facilitate a sense of belonging to the community. Excessive alcohol consumption is tolerated in many rural pubs and clubs (Williams, 1999)

which may result in youth drinking more to mimic local norms.

In rural communities, attitudes are commonly held which do not promote preventive health behaviours. Such attitudes often emphasise the need to maintain the ability to perform one's role and stoicism toward adversity are often encouraged (Dixon & Welch, 2000). A New Zealand ethnographic study of men's drinking in rural pubs found that pub drinking by men was used to project dominant masculinity and contributed to the creation and maintenance of male power in the local community (Campbell, 2000; Lindsay, 2006). Attitudes such as self-reliance, independence and a reluctance to seek help, are often displayed by residents of rural communities (Elliott-Schmidt

& Strong, 1997). Young people in rural areas will often mimic these attitudes to gain acceptance in the community (Williams, 1999). Attitudes which fail to include the need for a healthy lifestyle may encourage risk-taking behaviour.

5.3.4. Times when alcohol is consumed by young people

Alcohol consumption varied significantly by the day of the week (see Table 8). Young people most commonly consume alcohol on the weekend, although the percentage of young people consuming alcohol starts to rise substantially from Thursday. Young drinkers also drank more on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays compared to the rest of the week.

Table 8. When young people consume alcohol (data from 2004 NDSHS)

| | Mon | Tues | Wed | Thurs | Fri | Sat | Sun |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Percent who drank | 13.6% | 13.6% | 14.2% | 22.5% | 29.5% | 41.3% | 27.2% |
| Average number of standard drinks ¹ | 5.0 | 3.5 | 4.3 | 5.8 | 5.8 | 6.4 | 4.6 |

¹ For those who drank

5.3.5. Adult supervision

Different rates of adult supervision of young people's drinking have been reported (King et al., 2005a; White & Hayman, 2006). King et al. (2005a), who surveyed 15-17 year olds, found approximately a quarter of drinking occasions were supervised by an adult. While adult supervision at home was associated with less likelihood of drinking at high risk levels, adult supervision at parties or friends' houses appeared to be

associated with greater likelihood of high risk drinking. White and Hayman (2006) found that 59% of 12-17 year olds' last drinking occasion had been supervised by an adult – 74% of occasions at home, 53% of parties, and 46% of occasions at friends' houses. Adult supervision at home and at a friend's house decreased with age, from 84% of occasions at home and 68% of occasions at a friend's house for 12 year olds, to 68% of occasions at home and 45% of occasions at a friend's house respectively for 17 year olds, but

remained substantially higher than rates reported by King et al. (2005a). Since ASSAD data was collected during the week at school, the higher rates may be due to mid-week drinking being more likely to be under adult supervision (such as having a glass of alcohol with dinner) compared to drinking on the weekend (such as drinking while socialising with peers). The participants in King et al.'s (2005a) survey may potentially have been recalling this second type of drinking, which may be less likely to be supervised by an adult.

5.3.6. Young people's understanding of standard drinks

Table 9 below shows young people's knowledge of the Australian Alcohol Guidelines and standard drinks. While knowledge of the Australian Alcohol Guidelines was low, most young people had heard of a standard drink, and many were aware they were printed on drink labels. The data indicates awareness of standard drinks has increased since 1998, when 11% of 14-19 year olds and 15% of 20-29 year olds were aware that standard drinks were printed on drink labels (AIHW, 2000).

Table 9. Young people's knowledge of the Australian Alcohol Guidelines and standard drinks (data from 2004 NDSHS)

| | Males | | | | Females | | | |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| | 12 to 14 | 15 to 17 | 18 to 20 | 21 to 24 | 12 to 14 | 15 to 17 | 18 to 20 | 21 to 24 |
| Heard of a 'standard drink' | 60.5% | 87.2% | 92.1% | 93.9% | 60.7% | 89.0% | 96.2% | 94.8% |
| Aware that standard drinks were printed on drink labels | 33.1% | 60.1% | 75.0% | 76.7% | 27.8% | 46.4% | 65.7% | 70.9% |
| Heard of the alcohol guidelines | 19.3% | 35.4% | 35.9% | 38.6% | 22.7% | 36.5% | 44.0% | 49.0% |

5.4. At-risk groups

5.4.1. Homeless young people

Being a household survey, the NDSHS excludes homeless people. ASSAD is also likely to exclude young homeless people if their rate of attendance at school is lower than non-homeless young people. In 2001, there were an estimated 46,114 homeless people under the age of 25, with approximately even numbers of males (49%) and females (51%) (Chamberlain & MacKenzie, 2003). These young people comprised 46% of all homeless people (Chamberlain & MacKenzie, 2003). While the large majority of homeless young people aged 12 to 20 use alcohol (82%), just over half of those consuming alcohol did so more than one in three days, and only 5% did so on two in three days or more (Mallett, Edwards, Keys, Myers, & Rosenthal, 2003). No data on levels of risky consumption could be found for young homeless people.

5.4.2. Indigenous young people

The current review does not specifically include Indigenous issues within its scope. However, it is noted that Indigenous young people are an at-risk population for alcohol-related harm. Approximately 20% of Indigenous males aged 18-24 and 14% of Indigenous females aged 18-24 consume alcohol at risky or high risk levels, compared to 16% and 12% respectively for non-Indigenous Australians (Trewin, 2006b). Indigenous young people are 2.3 times more likely to die from an alcohol-attributable cause than non-Indigenous

young people (Chikritzhs & Pascal, 2004). Chikritzhs and Pascal (2004) note that while the rate of alcohol-attributable deaths has steadily decreased in non-Indigenous young people since 1994, there has been little decrease in the rate of alcohol-attributable deaths among Indigenous young people.

5.4.3. Young people in rural or remote areas

In contrast to data indicating higher alcohol consumption among adults living in regional areas compared to their metropolitan peers (AIHW, 2005e), data from the 2004 NDSHS showed that young people in inner regional, rural or remote areas were no more likely to consume alcohol at levels for short-term harm or long-term harm than young people in metropolitan areas ($p > 0.05$).

Young people in inner regional, rural or remote areas were also no more likely to drive or operate heavy machinery under the influence of alcohol than young people in metropolitan areas ($p > 0.05$). However, young people in inner regional, rural or remote areas were more likely to experience physical abuse from someone under the influence of alcohol than young people in metropolitan areas ($p < 0.05$).

Despite the lack of differences found in risky consumption and risky behaviours, other data indicates that young people in non-metropolitan areas are at greater risk of alcohol-related harms. Prevalence of risky alcohol consumption for short-term harms is more common among the working population in non-metropolitan

areas compared to the working population in metropolitan areas (Berry et al., 2007). The Australian Alcohol Indicators Project found that young people living in non-metropolitan areas were 1.7 times more likely to die from an alcohol-attributable cause than young people in metropolitan areas (Chikritzhs & Pascal, 2004). Non-age specific data also indicates that metropolitan areas have higher rates of alcohol-related hospitalisations than metropolitan areas (48.4 per 10,000 compared to 37.0 per 10,000) (Chikritzhs et al., 2003).

Data from Victoria (Laslett, Matthews, & Dietze, 2006) indicates that young people aged 0-24 years in rural areas were more likely than metropolitan young people to be involved in an 'alcohol-related family incident.' In some rural areas, rates of risky drinking for short-term harm were greater than the average rate in Victoria, while in other rural areas, there was no difference from the state average. Across all rural areas, the number of licensed premises per 10,000 people was higher than metropolitan areas.

part two

6. Role of Culture

This section outlines the broader cultural context within which young people's drinking behaviours occur. We examine how cultural changes have affected traditional ideas around drinking and drinking behaviour. It is argued that we need to uncover the meanings constructed around drinking practices and how these differ from previous generations. Specifically, we focus on the dominance of consumerism and its attendant values, norms and ideals. The commodification of cultural life has altered the way in which people search for meaning and happiness. As the idealised model and target of marketing strategies, young people are particularly exposed to the imperatives of consumer culture. This is not to say, however, that they are simply shaped by their environment as they must engage their agency¹⁴ to negotiate and incorporate these messages and ideals into their everyday practices. To better understand how young people do this in relation to their drinking behaviours, we draw on social identity theory to explain how consumerism works as a basis for young people's identity construction.

6.1. Culture

6.1.1. What is 'culture'?

Typically, we understand culture to refer to a set of values, beliefs and norms that have been historically transmitted from generation to generation. Culture in this sense is all-pervasive; it is familiar to us as it provides the context for our everyday lives. It orients our perspective by providing a 'cultural lens' with which to view, and hence make sense of, our social worlds. We may also speak of culture as a 'complex whole' that encompasses the knowledge, morals, laws and customs of society (Tylor, 1871). The range of areas to which culture has been applied has since outstripped even these broad definitions, and in contemporary use it may be more informative to identify how culture has changed by discussing what it is not.

Early references to culture often entailed the cultivation of a 'cultured mind' (Williams, 1976). This presumed clear distinctions between standardised ideals

¹⁴ Agency refers to the capacity for individuals to engage in actions that transform the social conditions in which they find themselves.

and lower forms of culture (Bennett, 2005). In recent times, these divisions have been challenged. By critiquing such definitions, sociologists and anthropologists have sought to emphasise the multiplicity of cultures within which people form fluid social relations. They have endeavoured to refine this concept so that culture takes into account the way in which we make our lives meaningful through social interaction:

Culture is involved in all those practices...which carry meaning and value for us, which need to be meaningfully interpreted by others, or which depend on meaning for their effective operation (Hall, 1997 p.3).

Culture...is a network of representations – texts, images, talk, codes of behaviour, and the narrative structures organising these – which shapes every aspect of social life (Frow & Morris, 1997 p.viii).

In this sense of the term, culture is 'intersubjective' as the meanings and values that constitute culture are formed through a 'web of human interdependency' (Bauman, 1990). Culture then is not only a force that we are affected and shaped by, but is also something that we can shape and transform over time through our interactions with one another.

6.1.2. Cultural change

Since culture not only produces subjects, but is also produced by them, it follows

that cultures cannot be thought of as separate or fixed entities. Cultures do not remain static across time or over generations; they are in a constant state of flux.¹⁴ Similarly, the meanings attached to alcohol consumption are always changing. Norms and values that define what, where, when and how we drink, and who we drink with, are mediated between people over time. Consequently, ideas on drinking and drinking practices are ever-shifting and constantly contested. The dialogue between disparate cultures is also now more prevalent and will influence each culture in multiple ways. In short, as with all socially mediated aspects of culture, meanings of drinking and drinking behaviour are open to transformation.

For the purposes of this project, we are interested in researching young people and their drinking behaviours within the context of cultural change. As this section will outline, we will focus specifically on consumerism as a force that has brought about rapid and markedly different cultural changes:

The spread...of differentiated cultural markets and lifestyles, each with its own distinctive styles of consumption and ways of fashioning behaviour, has proved a more adaptable way of reshaping social distinctions by virtue of the groups into which individuals seem naturally to sort themselves through the cultural activities they pursue (Bennett, 2005).

¹⁵ For example, language is a commonly shared social structure, the rules and characteristics of which are reproduced every time we use it. Since this is largely practised in a communicative sense between a cultural sender and interpreted by a receiver, there is always space for language to be misinterpreted or modified.

6.1.3. Consumer culture and the culture industries

In broad terms, consumption refers to the act of fulfilling an intrinsic need; whereas early use of the term referred to the using up and destruction of a resource (Warde, 2005). However, the prominence of consumption as an organised system of cultural values and meanings in advanced industrial society also marks a wider structural shift, whereby social life is now driven by consumption rather than production. Within this consumer culture, we are encouraged to seek happiness, meaning and fulfilment through the consumption of goods. We become accustomed to looking for newness in all things as the ‘culture industries’¹⁶ support the insatiableness of our desires by providing a constant stream of new products and images for us to consume (Adorno, 1991).

The most important characteristic of modern consumption that makes it a ‘way of life’, and therefore a culture, is a dissatisfaction with these new goods:

...the goal of marketing becomes not only to make us dissatisfied with what we have, but also with who we are. As it seeks evermore ways to colonize our consciousness, the market both fosters and exploits the restless, insatiable expectation that there must be more to life (Eckersley, 2006, p. 253).

This dissatisfaction is largely created by the market through ‘planned obsolescence’ (McKendrick, Brewer, & Plumb, 1982). This is evident in the way advertisers work to constantly highlight and emphasise newness by rendering past products stylistically and emotionally obsolete (Ewen, 1988). For example, advertisements for alcohol products will frequently highlight new additives (e.g., guarana) or maintain that the consumption of alcohol will exceed the consumer’s expectations (e.g., drink X will augment your physical attractiveness, social life, sexuality and popularity). In this regard, dissatisfaction and a corresponding desire for newness are manufactured. Consequently, a tension exists whereby consumers are pulled between the poles of intense desire and boredom. No longer is it acceptable to simply have, one must also continue to long for, desire and search out new consumer goods that ‘fit’ with one’s lifestyle.

Social theorists have added significantly to our understanding of the mechanisms of consumerism. They argue that we no longer consume products for their intrinsic use-value but instead are attracted to the artificially created symbolic value attached to these products (Gottdiener, 2001). This is evident in the stylisation of commodities associated with happiness and fulfilment (Baudrillard, 1988; Lury, 1996). The sociology of consumption can be traced back to the late nineteenth century, during which time the emergence

¹⁶ It is argued that the ‘culture industries’ create false needs that they pass onto the consumer as the freedom of choice (Adorno, 1991; Marcuse, 1964). The cultural industries are regarded by critics as producers of a popular culture, the purpose of which is to manipulate and maintain control over the masses (Adorno, 1991).

of a new leisure class was found to consolidate its status through the display of goods (Veblen, in (Miles, 2001). The symbolic realm of consumer culture, termed 'conspicuous consumption', marks out one's place in society. This is summarised in the following quote:

...the value of goods springs not from their inherent material qualities but from their role as symbols which actively serve to mediate social relationships (Miles, 2001, p.65).

What makes contemporary culture distinct is that the processes of consumer capitalism have sped up to such a degree that almost any good or service can be marketed and consumed at a price as consumer capitalism enters overdrive, or what some have called 'hypercommodification'. When values, lifestyles and identities can be consumed, the individual is presented with the promise of 'freedom of choice'. However, critics have questioned whether consumerism only offers the illusion of choice, as it can be as constraining as it is liberating:

Such freedom favours that emptiness and instability that allows one to give full rein to every accidental, whimsical and tempting impulse (Simmel, 2004, p.42).

Young people who have not yet been afforded full citizenship rights are particularly vulnerable to this apparent contradiction as their marginal status in society often limits their access to

economic resources as well as social and cultural capital. Compounding this contradiction is consumerism's idealisation of youthful values and all that 'youth' embodies. Consequently, young people are identified by commercial interests not only for their increasing power as consumers, but as representative of the ideals around which commodities are focused. This is evident in the alcohol industry's appropriation and sponsorship of various music and dance cultures that are synonymous with young people.¹⁷

In this sense, youth are not only the target for much of consumer culture but also function as the product of commercial interests. The commercialisation of cultural contexts that are popular amongst young people therefore works as an arena for the production of meanings that associate 'youth' with identity and lifestyle choices. By contextualising the current project in light of this cultural change we can orient the research towards the complexity and differences between young people of varying cohorts in regard to their drinking behaviours. In particular, alcohol-related perceptions, motivations, attitudes and behaviours in the context of such rapid consumer-oriented change will be explored.

6.1.4. Australian drinking cultures

Alcohol consumption is embedded in Australian society and underpins much of social life. Alcohol is used to celebrate and commiserate key events such as births,

¹⁷ In 2007, Toohey's and Jack Daniels were listed as sponsors of Australia's biggest national music festival 'Big Day Out' whilst Smirnoff was listed as a sponsor for the dance music festival 'Parklife' which toured five Australian capital cities.

deaths, marriage, graduation, promotions and sackings. It can also feature strongly in the more mundane activities of everyday life. One of the most dominant national myths in Australia is that its citizens have a reputation for heavy drinking (Room, 1988). To understand how this idea was first established, it is necessary to look at the socio-cultural history of alcohol in Australia. Alcohol drinking practices were first introduced as part of established Anglo-Celtic cultural norms brought to Australia during British colonisation. In the early colonies, spirits were used in barter and convicts were part-paid in rum. Heavy consumption of spirits and the use of rum as currency was so great that these colonies were referred to as a 'rum state' (Lewis, 1992).¹⁸ Over time, heavy drinking has become central to various rituals of male solidarity, including:

... 'shouting' (each man in turn buys a round of drinks for the whole group) and 'work and bust' (the prolonged drunken spree following a long period of hard work in the bush)... seem to have promoted widespread heavy drinking (Lewis, 1992, p.4).

These rituals are often couched within the positively valued Australian ideals of 'mateship' and 'work ethic'. Social historians rightly attest that these are highly gendered terms historically associated with the masculine domain of the drinking hotel or 'pub' (Horne, 1977). Non-European immigrants and Aboriginal

people were also excluded from this nationalistic drinking culture (Kirkby, 2003). As such, the egalitarian myth that is often associated with pub drinking is one that does not always stand up to historical verification. In this picture of mid-twentieth century Australia, a clear distinction is made in the location of drinking practices between the private domain of the family home in which alcohol consumption seldom occurred and the public sphere of the local pub (Room, 1988). Following the Second World War, alcohol consumption rates increased substantially, peaking in the 1970s and steadily declining thereafter. This period of peak consumption is often attributed to the:

...easing of controls on availability combined with 'cosmopolitanisation' and 'commodification of leisure' – changes which Australia shared with other industrialised countries (Lewis, 2006, p.10).

Likewise, increased concern in the 1980s about health and fitness was commodified in leisure forms of diet and exercise that tempered the amount of alcohol consumed. Also adding to the decline was the introduction of a wine drinking culture in the 1960s, whereby alcohol was integrated more closely with food. This had the effect of de-emphasising excessive consumption and drunkenness and signalled the new discourse of moderation in which the pleasures and functions of alcohol consumption were no

¹⁸ Although it is not the aim of this section, we acknowledge that these same heavy drinking traditions brought to Australia on the First Fleets have since contributed significantly to the destruction of Indigenous culture.

longer tied to heavy drinking. The range of drinking styles then can be located historically, with considerable diversity evident when sub-categories of drinkers and non-drinkers are taken into account. This may include differences between a daily drinker and the person who has a celebratory glass at Christmas, lifetime abstainers and those who have ceased drinking because of illness, addiction, changes in taste or religious affiliation (Edwards, 2000). This range of drinking styles reaffirms the need to better understand the wider cultural context in which the consumption of alcohol takes place.

6.1.5. Drinking in a wider cultural context

When discussing cultural influences on drinking it is necessary to look beyond narrow definitions of 'drinking styles' and 'drinking cultures'. Culture does not operate in isolated, discrete areas of life but is subsumed within larger social, political and economic forces. Essentially, culture can be defined as the set of meaning-making processes that infiltrates all areas of social life. It is important to account for this wider context as it provides a useful way of understanding the role of cultural change in how young people drink. For example, cultural norms around drinking have been transformed through wider structural and policy changes.

In more recent times, the forces of globalisation and postmodernity have made the task of pinpointing an identifiable and unique 'Australian' drinking culture increasingly difficult. Like other beverage and food commodities, alcohol products have been subject to global market influences.¹⁹ An example of this has been the availability of a wider range of imported beers.²⁰ Changes in migration patterns, tourism and expanding technological networks have 'globalised' leisure lifestyles to drive this increased diversity in choice. Consequently, the commodification of alcohol as just another lifestyle choice has been geared towards its integration into a wide array of social situations (Lewis, 2006).

The commercialisation of leisure has also fragmented the drinking cultures of contemporary Australians. For young people, drinking is a cultural practice that fits with their leisure lifestyles. It is proposed that drinking in this context is made meaningful because it is used by young people as a form of group identification that distinguishes them from other socio-cultural groups and lifestyles (Jarvinen & Gundelach, 2007). This is a social process, as differences between lifestyles only work if they are 'socially recognised and legitimated' (Featherstone, 1991, p.87). Recent research in this area has found that 'what,

19 For example, the choice of which beer to drink is no longer as strongly influenced by state-based parochialism as was once the case with several 'local' brands now falling under Australasian-based multinational companies.

20 AC Nielson ScanTrack Liquor reports a 19.6% increase in off-premise retail sales for imported packaged beer for year ending September 2006 (AC Nielsen & Scan Track Liquor, 2006).

where and how a person drinks is a simultaneous enactment of [social] class and gender' (Lindsay, 2006, p.29). For example, the creation of niche markets has also influenced young women, whose contextually based drinking styles are dependent on whether they drink in pubs, homes, restaurants or nightclubs (de Crespigny et al., 1999).

The research cited here marks two significant changes in Australian drinking culture. Firstly, drinking is no longer bound to the public realm of the drinking hotel but has multiplied into diverse areas including the private sphere. Secondly, alcohol consumption has become an important part of women's lifestyles. By taking into account this diverse socio-cultural history, this project will be better positioned to frame alcohol consumption within broader social issues and patterns. This approach recognises that alcohol consumption is not an individual idiosyncratic pursuit but part of a wider historical and social context in which drinking practices and behaviours are produced (Lewis, 2006).

6.2. Youth

6.2.1. Defining 'youth'

Young people are a heterogeneous group intersected by class, gender, family, ethnicity and cultural norms and values. However, definitions of youth do have a common basis in that 'youth' is defined in relation to, or more accurately 'against', adulthood. Using this 'logic of identification' allows us to understand how identity is necessarily social. The commonalities shared by young people are therefore developed through classifications and criteria that are used to form boundaries between in-groups and out-groups. Cultural definitions of youth are based around a set of values and understandings that are typically organised around three key categorisations.

1. Youth defined as a biological age range

Perhaps most commonly accepted in broader society is the notion that 'youth' denotes a particular age range that is a transitory period traversed by young people before reaching adulthood. Since age is a biological process, youth is often employed as an objective category that is validated by political, economic and legal structures. However, the objectivity of these categories is not as rigid as they appear, with today's young people maturing earlier than in previous generations. For example, in a recent study of Caucasian girls, one in seven developed breasts or pubic hair by age eight (Lemonick et al., 2000). These early

physical changes create developmental and social challenges in the lives of young girls, as young girls who look like teenagers are often under intense cultural pressure to act like a teenager (Lemonick et al., 2000). A study conducted in both the US and Australia (Patton et al., 2004) of 5,769 students between the ages of 10 and 15 years, found a relationship between early maturation and likelihood of developing risky drinking behaviours, independent of age and school grade level. Early maturers displayed higher levels of substance use because they enter the period for the uptake of risky behaviours at an earlier point than late maturers (Patton et al., 2004). For this reason, they may be more likely to drink alcohol (Dick, Rose, Viken, & Kaprio, 2000). That is, puberty ushers adolescents into early entry of high risk life stages. Puberty facilitates 'profound changes in cognitive and emotional styles, with an increasing orientation to adult environmental cues' (Dick et al., 2000).

These studies therefore highlight the need to account for the meanings, values and understandings around youth that vary from culture to culture as there is little consensus over exactly where the boundaries that bookend 'youth' should be drawn. As such, arbitrary and ill-defined categorisations of youth according to age serve to highlight the 'slipperiness' of the concept when cultural as well as biological changes are taken into account. In terms of social research, it also points to the need to account for the context in which youth is defined and given its meaning.

2. Youth as a set of traits and behaviours

Since the 1950s, young people have been defined and treated in an ambivalent manner, typically with negative associations. Institutions such as the media and the government often depict youth as a threat to social order (Wyn & White, 1997). Underpinning this belief is the idea that young people are symbols of the decaying state of moral society and that their anti-social or disruptive behaviours are simply a reflection of wider social ills. Examples of this would include the well-documented constructions of moral panic that label young people as 'folk devils' (Cohen, 1987). At this extreme, youth is employed to denigrate groups of young people as 'juveniles' who require monitoring, discipline and social control. Young people are the source of concern, viewed as being 'at-risk' or vulnerable to a range of abuses and harms (Taylor, 2007). It is argued that the way young people are viewed by adults can produce an 'institutionalized mistrust' under which young people become the target of a range of surveillance and regulatory interventions and strategies (Kelly, 2003). This is complicated, however, with the commodification of leisure activities and spaces that are unevenly controlled. For example, it is argued that there are:

...discontinuities in licensed leisure space and their relationship to changing patterns of legal and illicit (i.e., illegal and quasi legal) drug use...leisure represents a potential 'controlled loss of control' in a culture of control and surveillance (Measham, 2004, p.338).

With specific regard to drinking behaviours, current public concern has been heightened and amplified over the rates of binge drinking amongst young people. This is not to argue that drinking is not a problem amongst young people, but rather that there is a need to understand the context in which social problems are constructed. This is of particular relevance in the public health domain as policy debate and formulation takes place within a public realm dominated by media activity (Lupton, 1994). In this sense, the idea that young people inherently pose a threat to others, and themselves, may associate young people with traits or behaviours that they may not necessarily exhibit.

3. Youth as a cultural ideal, attainable through 'lifestyle'

It is only relatively recently that the term 'youth' has been used to refer to a discernible age group. In the 1950s, the term was first used to discuss young men in the UK and the US with working class backgrounds who had greater economic independence due to low unemployment rates (Frith, 1986; Wyn & White, 1997). With their new-found disposable income, early definitions of youth were bounded by young people's power to consume new and varied forms of leisure goods and lifestyle activities. The legacy of this early categorisation of youth has been the media and marketing construction of youth as the ideal embodiment of consumerism. In this sense, the term 'youth' can be used positively to refer to 'youthful exuberance', and, as noted above, it is idealised by marketers for

its associations with newness, progress, creativity, beauty, health, vitality and sexuality. Paradoxically, youth symbolises consumerism's ability to transcend age by promising the never-ending possibility of transformation (Wyn & White, 1997). As a cultural ideal, 'youth' becomes attainable by all age groups provided that consumers accept the precept that 'youth' has commodity value as a socially recognised lifestyle marker.

This stands in contrast to traditional notions of youth as a transitional stage between childhood and adulthood, as consumerism's definition of youth has successfully disrupted the certainty of not only adolescence, but the final destination of adulthood:

The symbolic meaning of youth, then, is not 'coming of age' but 'being anything you want to be' (Wyn & White, 1997, p.21).

This is perhaps most evident in the beauty and cosmetic industries whose technologies are argued to halt, mask or even reverse the visible signs of ageing. As with all commodities, 'youth' is now available to all consumers as a lifestyle identity, albeit one which has become the most dominant and sought after in Western society. In contemporary society, there is no longer a discernable demarcation of 'youth' from 'adulthood' or 'maturity'. In this regard, even the idea of a prolonged youth or extended adolescence fails to capture the extent of the idealisation of youth.

At the same time, and somewhat paradoxically, voices in the media proclaim their concerns over 'adultescents'

and 'kidults' who 'refuse to grow up' (Crawford, 2006). For example, much of popular culture typically associated with young people, such as video games and animated movies, is now marketed to appeal and be accessible to those over the age of 21. 'Youth', therefore, is a socially and historically constructed concept that tends to homogenise young people's characteristics. As ascertained above, although 'youth' often refers to a biological age range (over which there is little consensus), media and marketing agencies have colonised definitions of 'youth'. Examining this categorisation process more closely, young people are defined according to a dualism whereby they are both the symbol of society's future and its victims. This polarisation of the 'youth' category, however, is unified by the underlying definition of youth as a lack of adulthood in which young people are not yet afforded actual or symbolic membership.

The concept of youth involves a tension between the social significance of age, which gives young people a common social status which is different from adulthood, and the social significance of other social divisions, which differentiate young people from each other (Wyn & White, 1997, p.15).

By conceptualising youth in this fluid manner, as opposed to rigid categorisation, we are better placed to understand the power relations and hence contextual influences on young people's experiences. In this manner, we can begin to ascertain more useful similarities and differences in young people's drinking.

6.2.2. Youth culture and generational change

The mass media frequently differentiate cultural groups according to age cohorts or 'generations'. This is done by segmenting and identifying varying consumer groups and distinguishing them from other age groups as evidence of wider generational change. For example, labels such as 'Baby Boomers', 'Generation X', 'Generation Y' and now 'Generation Z' are often used to discuss changing consumption patterns, cultural preferences and leisure 'styles' (Muggleton, 2000). A cursory search of Australian newspapers from the past year revealed over 900 references to Generation Y. However, attempts to reach consensus over what specifically characterises this group proved to be elusive. This is because the concepts of Generation X, Y and Z are largely media constructions that operate according to their newsworthiness. Typically, they are supported by 'research' conducted by marketing agencies and consultancy groups (Saulwick & Muller, 2006). Consequently, characterisations of the current cohort of young people have been (mis)represented as 'conservative, materialistic, over-nurtured, ignorant, insular, apolitical' (Devine, 2006, p.19).

This is not to discount the usefulness of generations as a concept, as the term aids understanding of the similarities in young people's worldviews as well as how they are formed by cultural, political, technological, global and economic processes (Edmunds & Turner, 2005; McMullin, Duerden Comeau, & Jovic, 2007; Vincent, 2005; Wyn & Woodman,

2006). For example, researchers studying the changes in young people's drinking practices in the UK argue that there is a 'new culture of intoxication' that is typified by the pursuit of altered 'psychoactive states' and encouraged by economic deregulation and the transformation of the alcohol industry into a 'postmodern, consumer alcohol order' (Brain, 2000; Measham & Brain, 2005). What is needed when identifying the unifying aspects of experiences of youth, is a contextual approach that acknowledges that young people are located within wider economic and social change. This call is evident in the following response to claims that Generation Y is uncommitted in their life choices:

They said nothing about the rising cost of education, or inflated property prices, or increasingly 'flexible' and casual workplaces where permanent jobs are rare. They didn't address the high divorce rates, or the important commitments that people make to partners that aren't contracts of marriage, or the value of being committed to friends and community networks (Crawford, 2006, p.5).

6.2.3. Young people's friendship groups and social networks

The significance of friendship groups and social networks has been of particular interest to social researchers in recent times. In the context of rapid social change, concern has been raised about

the detachment of the self from group life, community and traditions. This is a problem as the social aspect of life, or that which gives it meaning, becomes 'alien' to us:

The confusion of autonomy with independence encourages a perception by individuals that they are separate from others and the environment in which they live, and so from the very things that affect their lives. The more narrowly and separately the self is defined, the greater the likelihood that the personal influences and social forces acting on us are experienced as external and alien (Eckersley, 2006, p.254).

Put simply, there is concern that individualising processes make us feel disconnected from one another. Consequently, social research has attempted to identify new forms of sociality and community that challenge the experience of isolation. In particular, the idea that young people associate in 'tribes' has garnered support from the literature and has also infiltrated lay language.²¹ 'Tribes' (or 'neo-tribes') refers to more 'ephemeral and localised' relationships in which 'the shared sentiment is the true social bond' (Maffesoli, 1996, p.43). It is a term most often applied to research on young people's lifestyle, leisure, music and dance communities and seeks to find ways in which identity is not prescribed by dominant forms of mass culture.

Instead of attributing social relationships in accordance with class or economic

²¹ This concept follows on from Cultural Studies' notion of 'subcultures' that are now deemed as being too rigid and tied in with class to appropriately explain contemporary experiences of youth (Bennett, 1999; Blackman, 2005).

factors, this approach focuses on the shared ethics, values and sentiments as well as the emotional and physical proximity of group members. Compared to the use of subcultures or generations, neo-tribes allow us to account for the plurality and diversity of youth cultures and the relatively free movement within which young people move between them in a 'series of temporal gatherings characterised by fluid boundaries and floating memberships' (Bennett, 1999, p.600). This accommodates the idea that group memberships are 'temporal' in that they change rapidly over time, and 'fluid' in that cultural affiliations are dynamic and continually shifting. This may be of particular relevance to the current project as young people are among those most willing to adapt to postmodern and technologically advanced forms of sociality and networking (Bakardjieva, 2003; Hey, 2005; Maffesoli, 1996).

6.2.4. Young people and technology

In contemporary youth culture, the newness of social relationships is most evident in discussions on the importance of technology in young people's lives. In particular, use of mobile phones and the Internet by young people has attracted much attention, with media producers, consumers and commentators alike espousing the potential for new technologies to enable young people to participate in, and create their own, cultural forms. Perhaps inevitably, there

has also been considerable concern over how these temporal, decentralised and delocalised forms of technology may affect young people. In terms of social research, more work needs to be done to reach any conclusions about the positive or negative impacts these technologies have on young people. What is known, however, is that there are new forms of social relationships that emerge from their use. This is evident in the popular use of mobile phones²² with telecommunications manufacturers selling their products based on their multi-functionality. This ever-increasing range of features includes photo cameras, video recording, global positioning systems, and access to email and the Internet. Mobile phones feature heavily in the lives of young people. For some of them mobile technologies may help in creating 'communities of use' (Beaton & Wajcman, 2004). Others argue that teenagers use mobile phones as part of the identity formation process particularly when deciding how they present themselves in the public arena (Caronia & Caron, 2004). Apart from new forms of communication, this technology also provides new commercial avenues in the form of accessories and peripherals through which consumers are encouraged to signify their identity and 'individuality'.

Another technology that has the potential to expand people's social networks is evident in Internet phenomena such as MySpace and Facebook. These 'social networking' sites lend support to the significance of maintaining and managing social networks in postmodern culture

22 In 2005, around 90% of the Australian population were mobile phone subscribers (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006c; OECD, 2007).

through technology. Though networking itself is not unique to contemporary society, what is new is its ritualisation and commodification (Wittel, 2001). While previous communities were based upon shared experiences and history, new social networks tend to favour those for whom pragmatism and speed are important. This helps explain young people's enthusiastic and widespread uptake of social networking technologies as it enables them to communicate across time and space in ways that previous generations were unable to.

Likewise, today's young people have been raised in a technologically advanced society so that all aspects of their lives, whether it be education, work or leisure, are inextricably linked with the use of virtual technologies. With specific regard to alcohol consumption, little research has focused on the significance of new technologies and how they impact on young people's drinking behaviours. However, the existing literature on the social and communicative uses of technology in postmodernity will be employed to inform our further research.

6.2.5. Drinking in the life course of young people

Young people in the transition stage of adolescence must negotiate culturally specific 'rites of passage' that determine their entry into adulthood. However, the transition from adolescence to adulthood has become increasingly fragmented and uncertain (Northcote, 2006). Traditional notions of 'coming of age' are now obsolete due to changes in

the broader social, political and economic context (Wyn & White, 1997). In Western industrialised societies, 'coming of age' no longer constitutes a clear transitional path towards adulthood. In particular, young people have greater options and flexibility in choosing how they move through traditional entrance markers into adulthood (Kelly, 2006; Northcote, 2006; Walther, 2006).

However, there are a number of qualifiers that we must add to this point. Firstly, this transition is not embarked upon by the young person as an isolated individual (Te Riele, 2004). Secondly, the precise location of adulthood as an end destination is not clearly defined (Wyn & White, 1997). We can also question the linearity of this path, as it has been argued that such pathways are now disrupted by the wider array of options afforded to young people by the wider social structure. Other researchers are also critical of the illusory representation of choice as inherently liberating. They argue that in actuality choice is always circumscribed, as exemplified in this definition of the 'choice biography' (Beck, 1992).

'Choice biographies' are by no means purely based on freedom and own choice, but are determined by a paradox which is typical in modern life: although (western) societies provide more options to choose from, modern (young) people are forced to reflect on the available options and justify their options (du Bois-Reymond, 1998, p.65).

For example, traditional rites of passage are now engaged in within leisure-time pursuits (Northcote, 2006). These activities

are socially mediated and, therefore, are often prescribed and sanctioned forms of behaviour. This is illustrated in young people's construction of 'quasi rites of passage' such as nightclubbing and in new rites of passage such as drinking games that communicate meaning amongst young people's social groups (Beccaria & Sande, 2003; Northcote, 2006; Polizzotto, Saw, Tjhung, Chua, & Stockwell, 2007). What these meanings are and how they differ from traditional rites of passage are described in the following:

The empirical evidence reveals a story of old ritual forms and traditions, used by young people to mark and celebrate the transformation. The new elements are games and experimental use of alcohol by young people in the making of their own image, related to others inside the peer groups. This practice is more individualistic and separate from relations within the family...In the new ritual form, young people organize and celebrate the tradition by themselves within the peer group without parents, priests and teachers (Beccaria & Sande, 2003, p.112).

The leisure sphere has been identified as an autonomous space in which young people are less heavily surveilled and regulated. As part of their leisure activities, drinking thus enables them to play with, and express, their identity in a more open and autonomous manner (Duff, 2003; Parker, Aldridge, & Measham, 1998). Other studies on teenage drinkers highlight the way in which alcohol consumption is

part of their struggle for social recognition amongst their peer group (Demant & Jarvinen, 2006). These authors argue that the alcohol experience and positive attitudes towards drinking work as a symbolic marker for teenagers which is used as a form of inclusion and exclusion.

6.2.6. Symbolic and interpretive context of drinking

For young people, consumption habits are determined by the symbolic value of what an object communicates about their identity to the people around them, rather than that object's functional value (Duff, 2003). The use-value of goods, such as alcohol, has since been overshadowed by their symbolic value:

Commodities hence become free to take on a wide range of cultural associations and illusions. Advertising in particular is able to exploit this and attach images of romance, exotica, desire, beauty, fulfilment, communality, scientific progress and the good life to mundane consumer goods such as soap, washing machines, motor cars and alcoholic drinks (Featherstone, 1991, p.14).

Social theory has sought to illuminate this notion by arguing that the distinctions we make reveal and shape our social identity. This point is made more succinctly in the following:

Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish

themselves by the distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in which their position in the objective classifications is expressed or betrayed (Bourdieu, 1984, p.6).

This sociological theory is relevant when examining young people's drinking practices as it emphasises the need to focus on the immediate social context in which they drink and the way that they organise their practices according to socially constructed differences. If drinking practices are guided by symbolic meanings negotiated through social interactions then understanding young people's drinking must also be understood at that level. The changing experience of rites of passage for young people has been noted, but the complexity of these new rites and how they may reflect broader cultural changes requires further examination.

This has significance for understanding young people's drinking behaviours as new leisure patterns and identities are produced through the multiplicity of choices offered in the consumption sphere (Brain, 2000). It has been argued that we witnessed a decade ago a 'transformation in the leisure order' that is signalled by a shift away from traditional drinking contexts such as the local pub to raves, clubs and dance parties (Brain, 2000, p.3). However, whether the findings of this research, which was conducted amongst British youth, is applicable to the Australian context requires further research. To gain a more complete picture, it is important that a contextual

approach is taken that accounts for shifting cultural dynamics that underlie the fluid experiences of young people and how they construct their identities. What is needed is an approach that does not focus solely on the cultural environment as a determinant of young people's lives, but one where culture frames young people's perspective through the process of socialisation.

The use of the term 'cultural drivers' and even 'cultural influences' is therefore used advisedly, as how culture influences people is more complex than those terms suggest. This is evident in the following:

The obvious problem encountered by any strong theory of cultural effects is that people may – to a greater or lesser degree – select from among alternative experiences of culture those that somehow 'speak to' them. In this sense, people choose what may, in turn, affect them (Hall, Neitz, & Battani, 2003, p.226).

As cultural agents, young people interpret cultural values and meanings to make their own subjective cultural worlds. The degree of autonomy young people exercise to construct these worlds, however, is still up for debate. In attempting to understand young people's drinking, it is imperative then that this research seeks to account for this level of agency.

6.3. Pleasure, culture and identity

6.3.1. The pursuit of pleasure

Consumerism seeks to reclaim pleasure...from sanctimonious moralizing and the grim heritage of the Protestant ethic which said 'Work! Work! Work!'. It celebrates the diversity of pleasures to be obtained from commodities, proposing such pleasures as realistic, attainable goals of everyday life...The pursuit of pleasure, untarnished by guilt or shame, becomes the bedrock of a new moral philosophy (Gabriel & Lang, 1995, p.101).

Although the literature discussing pleasure and hedonism as key characteristics of consumer culture is well-established, it is only recently that research has sought to identify these values as potential cultural factors that shape people's alcohol consumption behaviours. Even attempts to focus on the emerging role that pleasure may play in health promotion tend to overlook young people as potential candidates.²³ Young people's own subjective accounts of pleasure can be found in social research that examines the contentious 'normalisation' of licit and illicit drug use amongst young people (Duff, 2003; Parker et al., 1998). It is argued that alcohol consumption amongst young people has become part of young people's leisure lifestyles as it has shed the stigma of a deviant practice (Duff, 2005).

Given the politics and sensitivities of discussing young people and alcohol, it is not surprising that discussion of pleasure as a cultural norm that influences young people's drinking has long been an 'absent presence' in empirical and theoretical studies in the health field. Traditionally, the health field's general aversion to the use of pleasure may be explained as it not being considered a 'serious' scientific pursuit (Coveney & Bunton, 2003). Additionally, notions of pleasure and enjoyment are loaded terms with significant political implications and many discourses on alcohol are particularly averse to citing pleasure as a key cultural motivator for alcohol consumption (O'Malley & Valverde, 2004).

More recently, however, there has been a shift towards emphasising the positive aspects of health and wellbeing. Implicit in these guides to living 'the good life' is the basic tenet that life should be pleasurable. Nevertheless, ambivalence exists whereby this ideal is undermined by the biomedical view that:

...pleasure and pleasure-seeking activities are often considered to be at the root of irrational, often spontaneous actions which predisposes individuals to unhealthy, so-called risk-taking behaviours (Coveney & Bunton, 2003, p.166).

Indeed, there are arguments that this continued 'puritanical "healthist" culture in the West of denying pleasure and promoting guilt' has the unintended

²³ For example, in the book titled 'Alcohol and Pleasure: A Health Perspective' (Peele & Grant, 1999) pleasure in relation to young people is only mentioned briefly. This relative oversight may be attributable to the difficulties in discussing the pleasure of young people's drinking in a politically and morally charged arena.

consequence of placing more stress on individuals who are implored to follow health guidelines (Coveney & Bunton, 2003, p.166). Instead, such approaches assume that young people act according to an instrumental rationality that aligns with the messages of risk that dominate contemporary biomedical advice and policy. However, recent research finds that although young people may be aware of the negative effects of substance use, this does not necessarily translate into behavioural change (Lubman, Hides, & Jorm, 2007). What is critically overlooked then is the symbolic dimension of social interaction and the idea that young people use and engage with a constant stream of information whose messages are widely varied. Attempts to understand young people that do not account for the subjective engagement of cultural values such as pleasure only paint a partial picture of the underlying rationale and motivations for drinking.

6.3.2. Hedonism: calculated, controlled and bounded?

Consumer choice is often presented as liberating in that it frees the individual from structural constraints and lends them the power to create their own sense of identity by indulging in their own personal tastes, likes and desires. However, the cultural resources necessary to make choice available to young people are unequally distributed according to young people's social, cultural and economic status as well as their geographic location

(Jones & Wallace, 1992). Balancing these constraints whilst fulfilling the desire to consume is a complex act that entails considered and planned organisation. One of the dominant forms of rationality that young people may engage in with postmodern consumerism is that of 'calculating hedonism' (Featherstone, 1991).

The hedonism of young drinkers is not simply one of uncontrolled abandon to the sensuous pleasures of indulgence, but rather a calculated and planned, rational hedonism. Here, contemporary young drinkers mark out pleasure spaces in which they can plan to 'let loose' and engage in less restrained behaviour than they would have to in the formal, complex structures of institutional interdependence such as school, work or organised leisure or the networks of interdependence in families. This leads to a form of hedonistic but bounded consumption (Brain, 2000, p.7).

Although the advertising and alcohol industries present a plethora of consumption choices to young drinkers, young people select their alcohol beverages according to a complex hierarchy of ideas and priorities that differentiates between alcohol strength, price, taste and image (Brain, 2000). Supporting this notion of boundedness,²⁴ research in Northern European drinking contexts argues that a 'culture of intoxication' is informed by a tradition of

²⁴ Boundedness in this context refers to the structural and pragmatic constraints that limit the degree of alcohol consumption.

'weekday restraint and weekend excess' (Measham, 2006, p.258). This refers to the apparent contradiction in which modern forms of a Protestant work ethic informs restrained alcohol consumption during the working week are offset by an emphasis on hedonistic consumption to the point of excess that characterise weekend drinking practices (Measham, 2006). Again, this is a calculated hedonism, bound by the constraints of time, space, sociality and intensity (Measham, 2004).

Cultural boundaries, in terms of the appropriateness of when, where and with whom people drink are also important mediators of drinking choices made by young people. This picture of a 'controlled loss of control' stands in contrast to the 'utterly unbridled excessive consumption portrayed in media images of youth at play' (Measham, 2004, p.319). These representations are countered with findings that suggest there is a 'determined drunkenness' amongst young people that is consciously managed and organised according to pragmatic concerns and situational constraints. However, acknowledging that young people do make judgments within structural constraints has only recently emerged. Part of the reason behind this is that public health models have traditionally not cited the pursuit of pleasure or enjoyment as possible influences (O'Malley & Valverde, 2004). In these models, the implication is that motivations for consumption are largely attributable to impulses and intra-psychic factors rather than the interplay between the individual, culture and society.

The call from studies that have identified young people's varying forms of self-regulation is that these processes may be used to inform public health policy and practice. This would then fill the gap in programs and services that work at the extremes of prevention and treatment. These programs and services are yet to fully address young people's drinking that has surpassed the prevention model but which falls short of 'problematic' behaviour requiring intervention (Duff, 2003). This is largely because the pleasures of drug and alcohol use have been subsumed under the focus of potential harms and risks associated with drug and alcohol use. Critics therefore call for a more reflexive and pragmatic approach, one in which the issue of pleasure provides a more complete picture of alcohol consumption behaviour (Duff, 2003).

6.3.3. Organising pleasure

It is also important to consider that a focus on pleasure is not always an inherent motivation of the individual, but is something that is structured by the market economy and the alcohol industries. In particular, broader shifts in the commercial market have brought about a 'new culture of intoxication' to which the notion of pleasure is central (Measham & Brain, 2005). To this end, it is necessary to acknowledge the plurality of drinking cultures:

...much of literature on drinking tends to homogenize alcohol – it often speaks of alcohol as if it were a single product (Lindsay, 2005, p.35).

Changes in the types of drinks young people consume, specifically with regard to the increasing popularity of alcopops and pre-mixed RTDs (Ready to Drink), have been driven by a larger move to recommodify alcoholic drinks. It has been argued that alcohol companies created these new types of alcoholic drinks in fear of losing market share to illicit drugs associated with the rise of dance culture in the late 1980s (Brain, 2000; Measham, 2004; Parker et al., 1998). Consequently, many of the values, ideals and aesthetic tropes of dance culture have been appropriated by the alcopops and RTDs that are now the staple beverage in nightclubs and dance venues. As a marker of broader cultural shifts, alcohol companies have therefore commodified the hedonistic values of pleasure and excess that mark consumerism by co-opting a dance subculture that was organised historically around these principles.

In terms of life spheres outside of leisure, the absence of, or disconnection from, family, work or school structures has been found to be associated with 'unbounded hedonistic consumption' (Brain, 2000). For these young drinkers, alienation from regulatory and interdependent spheres of life, such as work and education, meant that they were able to consume in a more unbounded way. That is, their drinking became more of a lifestyle than just a leisure activity (Brain, 2000). However, it is important to remember that the resources young people have available to them to negotiate risk are not evenly distributed (Jones & Wallace, 1992):

There is increasing divergence in young people's experience between the products that are available for consumption by them, which on the surface appears to be 'inclusive', and the reality of exclusion from expected standards of living (Wyn & White, 1997, p.124).

Research in the UK has found that forms of social exclusion from the labour and education markets influence whether young people engage in legitimate bounded hedonistic consumption (away from work and schooling) or unbounded hedonistic consumption (in place of work and schooling) (Brain, 2000). However, it remains to be seen whether these same findings will be replicated in an Australian context where socioeconomic class is less pervasive. Instead, research that has been conducted amongst young Australian women argues for a more dynamic conception of social class as well as an increased focus on, for example, tertiary education as a key marker of social divisions (Lindsay, 2006). These findings are informative for the current project as they highlight the possible tension between an over-emphasis on the individualised promotion of consumer rights and capacity of young people to access the social, economic, and cultural resources necessary to sustain socially acceptable standards of consumption. The diverse experiences of these young consumers requires more research as it will provide a more contextual background to young people's drinking behaviours.

6.3.4. Identity and the 'consuming self'

Young people's sense of power is still most often marked by their embodiment of consumerist ideals and their capacity as consumers. With the rise of consumer culture and emphasis on leisure, alcohol consumption has since come to occupy an important place in young people's lifestyles and identities (Measham, 2004). The ever-changing range of temporary identities is largely offered by the culture industries. Due to processes that have made consumption and lifestyle, rather than work, the predominant cultural shapers of identity, young people's decision over which 'self' to choose becomes a problem of consumption. One way of conceptualising how young people's 'self-esteem and social status are inextricably linked to the capacity to fulfil desires generated by the market' is with the notion of the 'consuming self' (Langer, 1996, p.57):

Particularly for youth, identity is formed in the sphere of consumption. Consumer societies depend upon constantly stimulating wants and needs, generating a constant search for sensation and excitement, and producing a proliferation of styles, fashions, and consumer identities (Brain, 2000, p.7).

As stated above, the culture industries propel this process by ensnaring young people's need for recognition, belonging and meaning in a seemingly endless cycle of desire. It does this by operating at the level of our imaginations. Referred to as the 'romantic ethic', social theorists argue that consumer products promote

daydreams, fantasies and other imaginative experiences that become the key sources of hedonistic gratification (Campbell, 1987). For instance, drinking to become intoxicated is not always an end in itself but may play a part in how one hopes they are viewed by others. This is revealed by examining the distinctions young people make between what they drink, where they drink and who they drink with. In this theory, it is the imagined and anticipated emotional response to consuming these products that becomes more pleasurable than the actual experience of having material consumer goods. This is propelled by the complementary values of novelty and obsolescence. The constant need to invent and re-invent oneself through consumption is modelled by celebrities, musicians and other cultural icons who best embody the incessant pace at which the reflexive self can be made and re-made. This is of particular significance to young people who are compelled more so than other age groups to choose and navigate their identity options as part of the process of finding or becoming their 'authentic' adult selves. This becomes a problem as the pathways towards adulthood become increasingly varied whilst the destination itself is not clearly defined. It is the ephemeral nature of pleasure then that organises the activities of modern consumers (Appadurai, 1996).

Having set the cultural context in which young people find themselves, the next logical question is: how do cultural drivers based on consumerism influence young people's drinking behaviours? To answer this, we need to emphasise that culture does not only operate as a top-down process.

Rather, young people function as active agents who are capable of shaping their own cultural forms and integrating their own cultural understandings into their everyday lives. The concept of ‘youth’ then needs to be understood as a process whereby young people are capable of articulating their identity by taking part in the production of culture (Bloustien & Peters, 2003). As discussed earlier, the definition of youth as a transitory stage towards adulthood is exploited by the commercial market and the culture industries (Frith, 1978). From this perspective, consumer culture is the dominant mediator in structuring how young people engage and participate in culture whilst simultaneously defining ‘youth’ as the normative cultural ideal.

This project will endeavour to understand not only the analogous ways in which young people respond to the demands of consumerism, but also the alternative ways that young people engage with culture. We can predict that heterogeneous groups of young people will not necessarily engage with culture in the same ways, and therefore, compliance to consumer culture’s norms, ideals and values will not be uniform. Examining the modes of participation that are not circumscribed by consumerism will be useful for the current project as it may provide insights into the alternative forms of leisure and cultural participation that take the place of dominant cultural norms and meanings around drinking. To do this, we will examine the ‘tactics’ and strategies employed by young people in their cultural practices and social relationships that express this form of cultural resistance (de Certeau, 1984, p.xix). This provides a platform upon which we can attempt

to better understand ‘non-consumption’ or non-drinking practices amongst young people and to determine how it fits within their lifestyles and identity. Specifically, this approach will guide us in resolving the following questions:

- If hedonism and sensation-seeking are dominant values in youth culture, how is this expressed in terms of alcohol consumption?
- How do young people who do not engage in high risk drinking negotiate the same cultural values?
- What are the critical factors in mediating young people’s decision to drink?
- What factors influence the choice to abstain or drink in moderate amounts?

Answering these questions requires a focus on the social context in which cultural rituals and practices, such as drinking, are regarded as a resource that young people use to express their identity and shape their social interactions. Traditionally, sources of identity have come from the family, nationhood, religion, and the state (see Chapter 7 for more details). However, these traditional bases for identity have begun to break down. This is often attributed to processes such as post-industrialisation, globalisation and technology.

6.3.5. Youth identity in ‘risk society’

The impact that constantly shifting affiliations with groups and peers has on young people’s leisure activities, such as drinking, is yet to be fully understood. A further aspect yet to be explored is

the concept of risk. In social theory, 'risk' typifies the transformation of 'late industrial societies' into 'risk societies' in which our lives are being increasingly dominated and governed according to notions of risk and risk avoidance (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1990, 1991). For example, the breakdown of traditional work and family patterns is viewed as sensitising us towards a heightened perception of risk that informs our everyday decisions:

For the individual, it is argued, these changes are associated with an intensifying sense of uncertainty, complexity, ambivalence and disorder, a growing distrust of social institutions and traditional authorities and an increasing awareness of the threats inherent in everyday life (Lupton, 1999, p.11-12).

In this context, it is the individual's responsibility to manage and take advantage of the supposedly varied and diffuse educational, work and family options available to them. In light of this, risk theory posits that this process produces anxiety and concern for the individual, particularly when one's access to the resources needed to engage these options is limited (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997). Risk is a socially constructed concept in that risk behaviours, as well as the perceptions of risk themselves, change over time and are 'embedded within specific social situations and relationships' (Alaszewski, 2005, p.101).

This is particularly important with regard to young people who typically do not respond to rational models of risk, as the earlier section on pleasure attests. What is needed is a greater understanding of

how young people perceive their alcohol experiences in light of objective definitions of risk. This approach seeks to account for the complex interaction of subjective versus objective conceptualisations of risk in people's everyday lives.

6.4. Summary

This project aims to examine the cultural influences on young people's drinking as well as how young people attempt to make sense of and negotiate the meanings of these influences into their own worlds. Crucial to this is the construction of identity and the degree of freedom young people have to form their own leisure lifestyles in the context of 'risk society'. To do this, young people must navigate a cultural world that is shaped by the demands, values, and ideals of consumer capitalism. With particular regard to alcohol consumption, notions of pleasure have yet to be fully integrated into cultural explanations of young people's drinking. Whilst previous studies go some way in exploring how young people manoeuvre within their socio-cultural worlds, they still tend to err on the side of presenting young people as passive consumers. That is, the commodification of youth culture is often discussed as being so dominant that young people are unable to construct their own culture. The form that these cultural influences takes in terms of young people's drinking behaviours depends on where young people are situated amidst a range of social, cultural and economic changes. What is needed is a more in-depth understanding of the spaces in which young people do take a more active role in the production of culture. These issues are examined more closely in the following chapters.

7. Social Trends and Interpersonal Factors

This chapter examines a wide range of social trends and interpersonal factors which may impact on drinking behaviours. Macro-level social trends in the economy, education, employment and changing social attitudes, gender roles and family dynamics were examined (Weston, Stanton, Qu, & Soriano, 2001). How these then influence interpersonal relationships through parenting styles, sibling and peer influences are also considered. Individual differences in terms of early maturation, religion and geographical location also impact on the extent to which young adults follow perceived 'social norms' and develop risky drinking behaviours (Read et al., 2002). These factors can all contribute to the ways in which young people perceive and use alcohol. Young people's alcohol consumption patterns may also be influenced by their perceptions of the severity of consequences, attitudes about alternative activities, perceptions of their own drunkenness, peer approval, parental disapproval and parental monitoring (Guilamo-Ramos, Turrisi, Jaccard, Wood, & Gonzalez, 2004).

7.1. Social trends

Young people today have been exposed to a myriad of diverse national and international cultural influences that emerged during the decades following the Second World War. In part, our emergent cultural diversity came from exposure to different ethnic and racial groups who migrated to Australia during the 1950s, 60s and 70s. At 30 June 2006, 24% of the Australian population was born overseas (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006d), in contrast to only 10% in 1947 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006g). The cultural mix in the Australian population is an important part of community life and contributes to the richness and diversity of our communities (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006a). It has also had an important impact on what we eat and drink,²⁵ and in particular the types of alcoholic beverages we prefer to consume.

Today's adolescents and young adults were raised by baby boomer parents who, in turn, were raised by parents whose parenting styles were generally strict and

²⁵ Up until the 1970s, the stereotypical Australian family menu probably included a Sunday lamb roast, 'celebratory' barbecues, lamingtons at the school/church bake-stall, and fish and chips on the beach. In the last 20 years or so food preferences have become more cosmopolitan because of multiculturalism and globalisation. These influences can be seen by the growth in popularity of Mediterranean-, Asian- and Indian-inspired dishes, Australian bush foods, and supermarkets providing an endless array of ingredients once considered exotic or gourmet.

rigid, reflecting their experiences of living through the Great Depression and the Second World War (Huntley, 2006). Baby Boomers experienced the rapid social change and generational upheavals that followed the Second World War (Linacre, 2005). During the post-war period Australian culture changed significantly. New values, expectations and aspirations emerged. It was a period marked by political freedom and economic growth and this was mirrored in a wide range of changes in social values.

While the 1950s and 1960s were periods of high economic growth and optimism, 'the optimism of the fifties and sixties, and the high rates of growth in these decades, began to alter in the early seventies' (Theobald, 1999 p.97). The 1970s and 1980s were times of greater uncertainty across many domains including social, political and economic spheres. Key social changes in the decades leading up to the present time are briefly outlined below, together with their implications for young people's behaviour in general and their drinking patterns in particular.

7.2. Gender

Historically, drinking patterns in Australia have been sharply differentiated by gender. Drinking by men has always been an integral part of the cultural identity of Australians (Hall & Hunter, 1995). It was seen as a symbol of 'manliness'. Intoxication by men is viewed as

consistent with numerous masculine traits like individual prowess, physical stamina and risk taking (Herd, 1997).²⁶

Drinking by women, in contrast, has traditionally been viewed negatively, and drunkenness in women was seen to result in a lack of femininity and loss of sexual inhibitions (Herd, 1997). Women have long played a major role as producers and sellers of alcohol, but drinking by women has not had general social support (Plant, 1997). However, this view began to change in the early 1970s (Hall & Hunter, 1995) and women's drinking is now more readily accepted. In recent years, women in Australia have been drinking larger amounts of alcohol. Consumption levels amongst 18–23 year old females have increased, particularly drinking at hazardous levels (Roche & Deehan, 2002). The 2004 National Drug Strategy Household Survey (AIHW, 2005d) found some risky drinking patterns appeared to be more prominent among young females compared to males. There are trends to suggest the gap between young women's and young men's drinking is closing (Ricciardelli, Connor, Williams, & Young, 2001). Drinking convergence has been a question of interest for some decades. A higher proportion of young single women with no children or domestic responsibilities are more likely to drink at high levels than those who are married with children (Jonas, Dobson, & Brown, 2000). Lindsay (Lindsay, 2006) argues that the gender gap in Australia is

²⁶ However, a recent UK study (Mullen, Watson, Swift, & Black, 2007) suggests that there is a weakening of hegemonic masculinity and a development of plural masculinities in relation to male drinking behaviour. Unlike men from past generations, young British men today report that they would prefer to drink in mixed-sex groups and would rather avoid aggressive drunks (Mullen et al., 2007). Similar, but perhaps less distinct, trends have emerged in Australia.

closing and night life is being feminised with drinking venues dominated by contemporary young women. A survey conducted in 1996 as part of the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health reported that 7% of 18-23 year olds usually consumed nine or more drinks per drinking occasion, 17% drank five or more drinks at least weekly and 21% drank five or more drinks at least monthly (Young & Powers, 2005). However, when these young women were re-surveyed in 2003, 2% usually consumed nine or more drinks per drinking occasion, 12% drank five or more drinks at least weekly and 19% drank five or more drinks at least monthly (Young & Powers, 2005), indicating their consumption levels had declined dramatically, which is consistent with 'maturing out of' risky drinking.

Increases in drinking by women may be due to the changing nature of gender roles which has involved greater exposure and opportunities to drink, while weakening the social stigma surrounding female alcohol consumption (Ricciardelli et al., 2001). Increases in female drinking may also be a result of women's greater participation in the paid workforce (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004b) and traditionally male occupations. However, taboos in regard to women's drinking still exist in Australian society (Ricciardelli et al., 2001) especially in relation to very young women, but these taboos may be eroding very rapidly.

7.2.1. Changing roles of women

One of the most significant changes in Australia's cultural values and norms is in regard to changed attitudes toward women. It is only relatively recently that traditional female homemaker and male breadwinner roles have dissolved (Pocock, 2003). In comparison to previous generations, young women today have greater access to birth control, participation in post-school education and a wide variety of paid work (Linacre, 2005). Between 1986 and 2001, the proportion of women aged 15-24 years who were studying increased from 36% to 56%, and labour force participation of women aged 25-34 years (the peak child bearing years) increased from 61% to 70% (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003).

Fertility rates have also declined dramatically. The overall fertility rate in Australia declined from 3.5 births per woman at the height of the baby boom in 1961 to an historic low of 1.75 births per woman in 2003 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004b).²⁷ Women in their twenties today are less likely to become mothers by the time they reach 30 years of age compared to previous generations (Linacre, 2005). The median age of all mothers who gave birth in 1993 was 28.9 years. This rose to 29.5 years in 1998 and to 30.5 years in 2003 (Linacre, 2005) (Figure 18).

²⁷ The fertility rate has since increased slightly to 1.81 births per women in 2005 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007d)

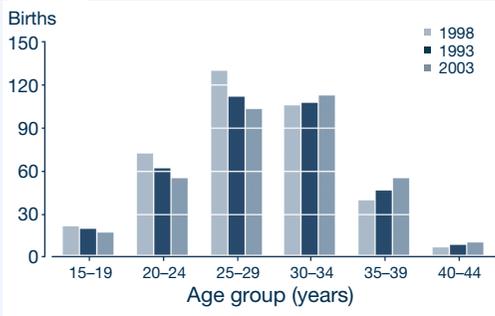


Figure 18. Age specific fertility rates(a) – selected years (reproduced from ABS, Linacre, 2005)

(a) Births per 1,000 women.

(b) Includes births to mothers aged less than 15 years.

The likelihood of people in their twenties to be partnered or married is also decreasing. ABS (Linacre, 2005) reports that in 2001, 97% of 20 year olds and 49% of 29 year olds had never been married, compared to 76% of 20 year olds and 13% of 29 year olds in 1976 (Figure 19). The proportion of people who are married decreases with each successive year of age. It is also noted that a growing proportion of Australian women and their partners will never have children. Estimates for 2000 indicated that 24% of women currently in their reproductive years will never bear children (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2000).

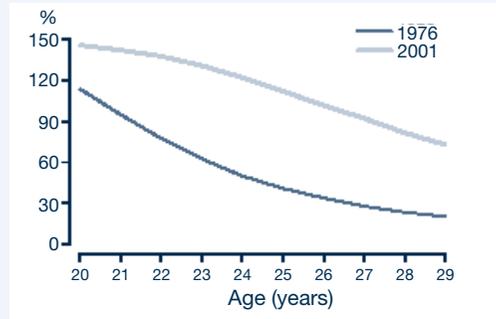


Figure 19. Persons aged 20-29 years: proportion never married (reproduced from ABS 2001 Population and Housing Census)

Young people today are also more likely to be studying than in the past and therefore may not be in an economic position to marry and have children. Unlike previous generations, many young people delay having children to avoid struggling financially to raise children, as they may have witnessed their parents struggle (Huntley, 2006). Young people may have observed their parents' experiences of being overworked and struggling to balance work with family responsibilities (Huntley, 2006; Pocock, 2005). As a result, many seek a more balanced life, with both work and leisure as priorities, and hold the view that there is no rush to attain what their parents had strived for (Huntley, 2006; Pocock, 2005). As young people remain in the education system longer, they gain economic independence later in life and form long-term relationships at an older age, which in turn may delay child bearing and rearing. These changes in education, work participation, fertility and marriage have gone hand-in-hand with women's greater aspirations to have a challenging, rewarding career and to be financially independent (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004b; Pocock, 2005).

7.3. Family structure

Over the last century, the structure of the Australian family has undergone substantial change. Families are embedded within society and therefore, as society develops, change within the family is inevitable (AIHW, 2005c). At the time of Federation, the Australian family comprised extended kin who commonly co-habited, often with other unrelated people (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004b). Following the Second World War, the nuclear family emerged and family units and living arrangements centred on couples and parent-child relationships with few, if any, extended members. In the later decades of the twentieth century, one-parent, same-sex and blended families, as well as families with only one or two or even no children became more prevalent (Mission Australia, 2002).

Families in contemporary Australia do not resemble the past nuclear family. The notion of a stay-at-home mum, working dad and 2.5 children, plus extended family networks of aunts, uncles and grandparents, has been superseded by more diverse and complex social structures. Today, many young Australians are growing up in blended families, with step-siblings, half-siblings and step-parents. In 2001, 19% of children aged 0-14 years were raised in a single-parent household (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006f). Some may also have multiple ex-step-parents or same-sex parents (Kinnear, 2002).

Traditionally, families relied on the support of the wider family group to cope in times of hardship. It was not uncommon for grandparents, aunts or uncles to take part

in child rearing. The role of the family as a support network, however, has dwindled as families now more commonly live greater distances from one another, due to employment opportunities or housing affordability (Mission Australia, 2002). These days young families have greater responsibilities placed upon them and are required to raise children in relative social isolation. As a result, young people may delay having children to ensure that they will be able to provide sufficient financial and social support.

Rather than having children in their early twenties, young people want an interesting job that can provide a balanced life that involves a mixture of work, relationships, friends, fun, travel and life experience (Huntley, 2006). Young people also aspire to travel internationally and will often seek a job that will provide opportunities for this (Huntley, 2006). These new priorities reflect today's youth culture. Most young people today do not have responsibilities like child rearing and partner commitments. This leaves them with more time to participate in recreational and leisure activities. Moreover, it places them at greater liberty than previous generations of young people to engage in a wide variety of social activities, including activities where alcohol and/or intoxication may play an integral role.

7.3.1. Single-parent families

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2005c) reports that the proportion of single-parent families increased from 17% in 1992 to 22% in 2003. Latest census data reports that in 2006 there were 823,254

one-parent families in Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007a). That is, 15.8% of all Australian families report having only one parent living in the family household. This is predicted to increase to between 875,000 (23%) and 1.3 million (33%) by the year 2026 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006f). In comparison, the number of single

parent families in 1986 was 311,800 (Figure 20). Paralleling this change, the number of children living in intact couple families fell by 6% between 1992 and 2003. At the same time, the number of children living in all other family types increased, with the most notable increase being the proportion of children in one-parent families (36%) (AIHW, 2005c).

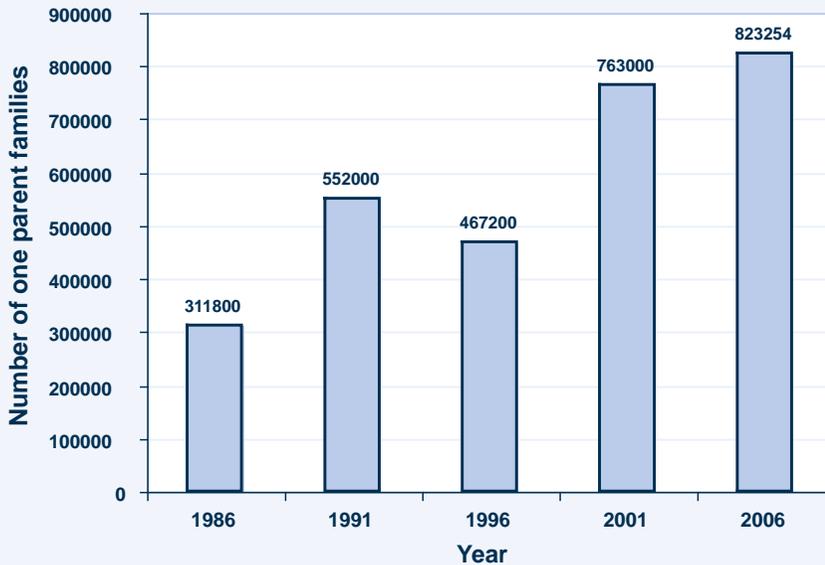


Figure 20. Number of one-parent families in Australia (data from ABS, 1997, 2006 and 2007)

Adolescents who live in one-parent families are likely to have lower levels of social support, are less likely to engage in hobbies or constructive leisure time activities and are more vulnerable to the development of psychological problems (Griffin, Botvin, Scheier, Diaz, & Miller, 2000; Hayes, Smart, Toumbourou, & Sanson, 2004; Ledoux, Miller, Choquet, & Plant, 2002; Miller, 1997; Spruijt & de Goede, 1997). Young people from one-parent families may also be more likely to seek peer companionship and engage more in risk-taking behaviours (Duncan, Duncan, & Strycker, 2006; Ledoux et al.,

2002). Such findings are consistent with the Problem Behaviour Theory of Jessor and Jessor (1977) which holds that:

...parental problems and behaviours may exert important and enduring influences on children. The possible effects of parental separation for example, might be to loosen family/home ties or controls and to foster closer attachments with age peers, including those who have less contact with parents and more involvement with activities such as drinking (Miller, 1997, p.128).

7.4. Religion

Religious affiliation is thought to have a positive effect on mental health with religious and spiritual people experiencing less depression and anxiety and less alcohol and drug dependence (Lavelle, 2007). A recent Australian study of school students found religiosity to be inversely related to risk behaviour (Beyers, Toumbourou, Catalano, Arthur, & Hawkins, 2004; Williams & Sternthal, 2007). Religion can have a positive effect on health and wellbeing because it can provide social support, existential meaning, a sense of purpose, a coherent belief system and a clear moral code (Eckersley, 2007). All of these things can be found in other ways, however religion packages all the ingredients of health and wellbeing to make it easily accessible. Affiliating with a religion and participating in its group activities is also one of the

ways by which people develop social networks and connect with communities (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004a).

The proportion of Australians stating an affiliation to some type of religion remained relatively stable from 1933 until 1971, at slightly less than 90% (Figure 21). This proportion dropped to 80% in 1976, then declined to 73% in 2001 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004a). This gradual fall occurred against a backdrop of change in social values and attitudes while accompanied by a rising tendency among Australians to state that they did not affiliate with any religion (7% in 1971 and 16% in 2001) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004a). Among young adults aged 18-24 years, 69% of women indicated an affiliation with a religion (62% with Christianity) compared with 65% of men (59% with Christianity) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004a).

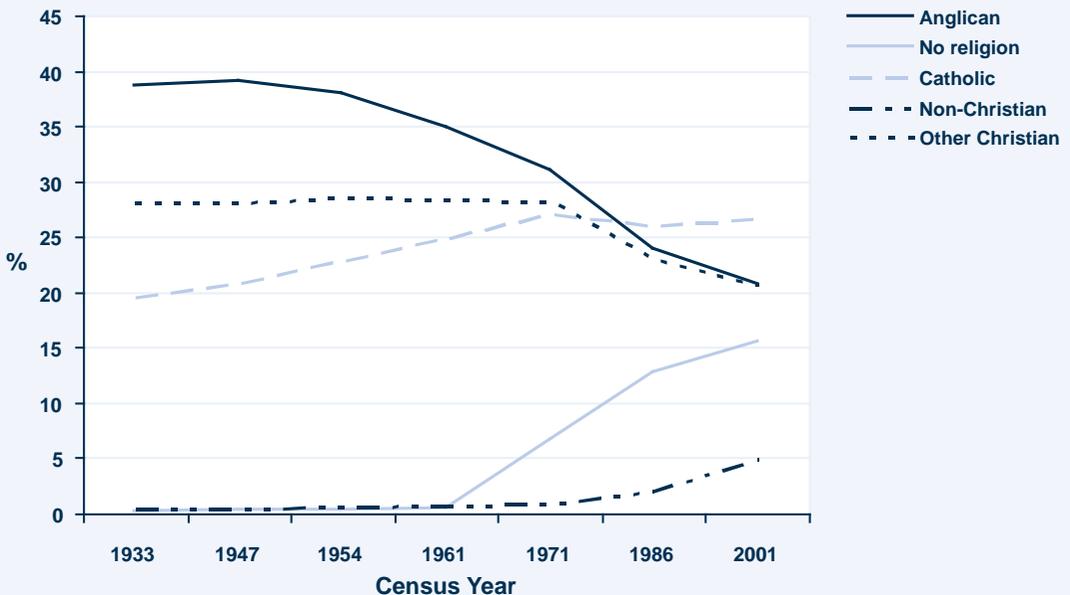


Figure 21. Religious affiliation of Australians of all ages (reproduced from ABS, Social Trends 2003)

7.5. Socioeconomic status

The relationship between socioeconomic status (SES) and adolescent drinking is complex. The Australian Temperament Project, a longitudinal study which has followed the psychosocial development of a large and representative sample of Australian children born in Victoria over the previous 21 years, found that class or SES is generally not a strong predictor of adolescent drinking (Williams, Sanson, Toumbourou, & Smart, 2000). Similarly, the WHO (World Health Organization) Health Behaviours of School Children survey of 162,305 adolescents (aged 11, 13 and 15 years) in 34 countries provided self-report data on family affluence, alcohol consumption and episodes of drunkenness and found no correlation between family SES and adolescent drinking patterns amongst 15 year olds. Rather, alcohol consumption was found to be more likely to be influenced by factors such as maturation, coping strategies, peer group or culture (World Health Organization, 2000).

In contrast, a Canadian cross-sectional study of 8,080 respondents aged 15-19 years suggests that there is a positive relationship between socio-demographic factors such as family and community SES and heavy episodic drinking (Breslin & Adlaf, 2005). Breslin's study found that individuals with lower family and community SES have a lower rate of alcohol consumption than those with a higher SES. This is supported by a recent New Zealand study of 3,434 students aged 14-17 years, which found that young people with a higher disposable

income were more likely to purchase alcohol (Darling, Reeder, McGee, & Williams, 2006). A UK study of 10,271 school students aged 15-16 years also found that those who received more than £10 a week in spending money and who bought alcohol for themselves were more likely to become 'problem drinkers' (Bellis et al., 2007a). However, further research is needed to differentiate between demographics in terms of how they consume alcohol and the purpose it serves in their everyday lives. By examining the underlying meanings of drinking, we are better placed to understand apparent differences in the relationship between SES and drinking.

7.6. Transitions

7.6.1. Leaving home

Another significant change to the structure and composition of the family is that young people today leave home at an older age than previously was the case. Traditionally, there has been a strong link between marriage and leaving home, particularly among women (Young in McDonald & Evans, 2003). In the late 1980s, this link began to weaken and young people were increasingly leaving home to pursue an independent lifestyle, not to get married. Leaving home is typically the first step that many young adults take to embark on an independent adult life (Weston et al., 2001). However, a substantial proportion of young people these days delay leaving the parental home until their mid to late twenties. In 2001, 30% of people in their twenties

were living with at least one parent, in contrast to only 21% of people in this age group living with at least one parent in 1976 (Linacre, 2005).

Moreover, the act of 'leaving home' has evolved increasingly into a process that occurs over a prolonged period of time – and sometimes more than once. Leaving home these days is generally a process, not a single event, and it is different for both males and females, with females having a greater tendency to leave home earlier (McDonald & Evans, 2003). Depending on their social and economic resources and personal preferences, young people move into a wide array of housing arrangements that include living with partners, students, friends and housemates. The domestic living arrangements of young people have important implications for their drinking behaviours.

Lack of housing affordability provides a further impetus for staying at home. Although the Australian dream of owning a home remains firmly entrenched in the Australian psyche, home ownership amongst young people is declining (Schofield, 2002). Housing prices have risen substantially in recent years resulting in home ownership being financially out of reach for many young people, especially those who have accrued a large HELP²⁸ debt through university studies (Huntley, 2006). Compounding this is the gentrification of inner-city urban areas that may have previously provided cheap

accommodation for young people. Whilst some young people may be able to afford a house, it is unlikely to be as comfortable as the family home, and is likely to be on the urban periphery, away from friends, family and familiar places, which may be viewed as too great a price to pay for home ownership (Huntley, 2006).

Young people who continue to live in the family home may have increased expendable income, as they will not have accommodation and related expenses. More relaxed and lenient parenting styles of contemporary parents may also mean greater tolerance of heavy drinking and intoxication by the stay-at-home young person.

7.6.2. Educational retention

In the 1980s and 1990s, the demand for a skilled workforce increased. As a consequence, young people remained in the education system and lived in the family home longer to receive financial support from parents (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006e; Weston et al., 2001). After high school, the first priority for many young people is to gain a higher education qualification to enhance their employment prospects (Huntley, 2006). In 2001, 45% of people in their twenties had obtained a post-school qualification, compared to only 31% in 1976 (Linacre, 2005). Similarly, 35% of 20-29 year olds were in receipt of post-secondary

²⁸ HECS-HELP is a loan available to eligible students enrolled in Commonwealth supported tertiary education places. A HECS-HELP loan covers all or part of the student contribution to education fees.

education in 2001, compared to only 18% in 1976 (Linacre, 2005) (Figure 22). Concomitantly, the number of dependent students aged 15-24 years living at home rose from 403,500 to 425,000 between 1992 and 2003 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004b).

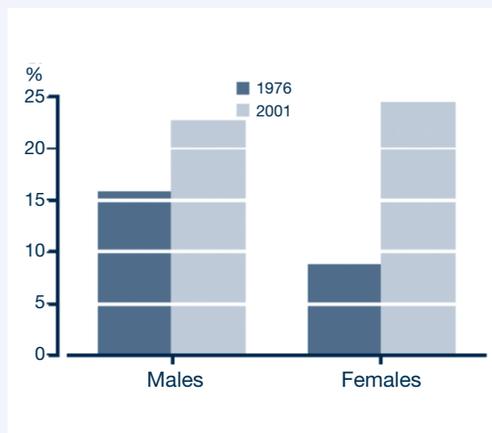


Figure 22. Proportion of persons aged 20-29 years attending educational institutions (reproduced from ABS 2001 Population and Housing Census)

7.6.3. School to university transition

The young adult's transition from school to university is a time of particular vulnerability for developing risky behaviours (Dowling, Clark, & Corney, 2006). This transition involves exposure to a culture of alcohol use evident in the university environment. An Australian study of 275 university students found that 88% drank alcohol, with 70% reporting that they binge drink at least monthly (Davey, Davey, & Obst, 2002). Another Australian study involving 400 university students aged 17-25 years found that:

Approximately half the male students and one-fifth of female students reported drinking to intoxication once or more per week. Consumption of five or more standard drinks on a typical drinking occasion was reported by 54% of students. Overall, more than two-thirds (69%) of the sample reported drinking at hazardous or harmful levels (Roche & Watt, 1999, p.389).

Interpreting social norms, introduction to new peers, adapting to new social values and entry and exposure to adult behaviours are all social influences which young adults encounter in the transition to higher education (Read, Wood, & Capone, 2005). Read asserts that young people are particularly susceptible to social influences while attending higher education institutions and in turn these social influences may fuel young people's drinking habits (Read et al., 2005).

Drinking patterns or behaviours often develop during periods of celebration prior to the transition to work or further study. Drinking behaviours are often developed during celebrations related to milestone birthdays, leaving home or finishing secondary school (Sher & Rutledge, 2007). For example, a study of health-related behaviours of 18 year old Australians (Milligan et al., 1997) cited social occasions, times of celebration and parties specifically, as the main barriers young people perceive to safe drinking. Another Australian study of 658 young people aged 17-18 years found that having just finished high school was associated with high levels of drinking and intoxication (Zinkiewicz, Davey, & Curd, 1999).

The experiences encountered when moving from the more protected school environment to either work or university present a number of challenges. Some of these experiences clearly contribute to the development of risky drinking behaviours. Some commentators, however, view problematic drinking amongst youth as embedded in the context of ongoing adolescent development rather than as a problem specifically related to adolescent entry to the workforce or higher studies (Sher & Rutledge, 2007).

7.6.4. Education to work transition

The school to work transition phase is a critical period for adolescents. The experiences and environments adolescents are exposed to during this transition period not only impact on career outcomes (Nurmi, 2004) but can also have consequences for their psychological and physical wellbeing. Of particular interest is the impact of employment on adolescents' alcohol consumption patterns. Paid employment is significantly associated with increased levels of adolescent alcohol use (Breslin & Adlaf, 2005; Johnson, 2004; Mihalic & Elliot, 1997; Steinberg & Dornbusch, 1991; Valois, Dunham, Jackson, & Waller, 1999), but importantly, the proportion of employed adolescents who drink at risky levels varies according to occupational and industry groupings (Berry et al., 2007).

Increased alcohol use among employed adolescents may be the result of work stress, the stress of combining part-time work with high school study, or the result of increased disposable income.

However, it is also likely that exposure to social influence processes within workplace cultures play a role.

Cultural norms concerning alcohol use exist within work organisations (Pidd & Roche, in press). All workplaces have formal and informal norms, rules and procedures regarding appropriate work behaviour including those concerning employee alcohol use. Workplace norms, rules and procedures related to alcohol may be consistent with the rules and norms of the wider community, or they may be widely divergent. For example, for safety reasons, the consumption of any amount of alcohol during work hours may be actively discouraged, while for celebratory reasons moderate consumption may be actively encouraged in the wider community.

Similarly, drinking norms at work may differ from an individual worker's norms for drinking away from the workplace. For example, workers may be pressured to join co-workers in regular 'end of the working day' drinking rituals in contrast to their normal social drinking patterns which may not involve any drinking at the end of each day. In some work settings, workers who do not normally drink in their own leisure time may find it expected of them at work.

Reinforcement of the use of alcohol and exposure to the use of alcohol by others is more likely to occur in the workplace compared to the school environment (Mihalic & Elliot, 1997). As outlined above, the behaviour and expectations of parents and peers have been shown to influence alcohol-related behaviour

during adolescence (Ames, Cunradi, & Moore, 2002; Bahr, Hoffmann, & Yang, 2005; Nash, McQueen, & Bray, 2005; Simons-Morton & Chen, 2006). However, both co-workers' behaviours and the expectations placed upon a worker from fellow colleagues (Frone, 2003), together with workplace drug and alcohol policies restricting use, are also positively associated with alcohol behaviours (Pidd, Boeckmann, & Morris, 2006b).

New entrants to the workplace undergo a process of organisational socialisation which involves the acquisition of skills, attitudes, values and behaviours necessary to become integrated into the workforce as a valued and effective member of the work organisation (Feij, 1998). Adolescents' work experiences play a major role in shaping their work-related attitudes, values and behaviours (Loughlin & Barling, 2001; Mortimer, Harley, & Staff, 2002). In addition, the transition from school to work has important consequences for the formation of adult identity (Bynner, 1998; Cohen-Scali, 2003). For many adolescents, workplace entry and socialisation occurs at a crucial stage in identity development (Erikson, 1968) and the training and work experience they receive can impact on their self-concept (i.e., their occupational identity) and social category (e.g., income, social status, etc). Thus, adolescents as

new entrants to the workplace may be particularly susceptible to cultural and social influence processes evident in the workplace and these processes may have a substantial impact on their beliefs and behaviours concerning alcohol.

A recent Australian study has found that the largest percentages of workers who frequently drank at short-term risky or high risk levels were employed in the hospitality industry (Table 10) (Pidd et al., 2006a). Since many young people obtain employment in the hospitality industry, exposure to workplace alcohol cultures may be greatly increased. Exposure to such workplace cultures may increase the likelihood of young people developing risky drinking behaviours. That study also found that for some age groups and risk categories a larger percentage of female employees consumed alcohol at risk levels compared to their male peers (Figure 23 & Figure 24) (Pidd et al., 2006a). A tailored workplace approach that emphasises responsible drinking may be useful, particularly in industries with high proportions of employees who engage in risky and high risk drinking.

Table 10. Summary of industry classification by risk category for employed recent drinkers (from Pidd et al., 2006)

| Industry | Frequent short-term risk drinking (risky and high risk)* | Infrequent short-term risk drinking (risky and high risk)** | Long-term risky and high risk levels |
|----------------------------|--|---|--------------------------------------|
| Hospitality | 16.5% | 37.5% | 19.6% |
| Agriculture | 13.3% | 35.3% | 15.4% |
| Manufacturing | 11.8% | 38.7% | 12.5% |
| Retail | 11.4% | 36.8% | 16.3% |
| Construction | 10.7% | 40.6% | 15.8% |
| Transport | 9.6% | 41.9% | 13.2% |
| Mining | 9.4% | 48.0% | 10.0% |
| Wholesale | 8.4% | 43.5% | 11.9% |
| Financial services | 7.9% | 40.8% | 11.7% |
| Administration and defence | 7.6% | 39.0% | 9.6% |
| Services | 7.0% | 35.5% | 11.6% |
| Education | 4.3% | 30.1% | 7.9% |

Note.

- *Frequent short-term risk drinking is drinking at short-term risk levels at least weekly.
- **Infrequent short-term risk drinking is drinking at short-term risk levels at least monthly or at least yearly.
- Bolding denotes the industry with the highest proportion of risk consumption.

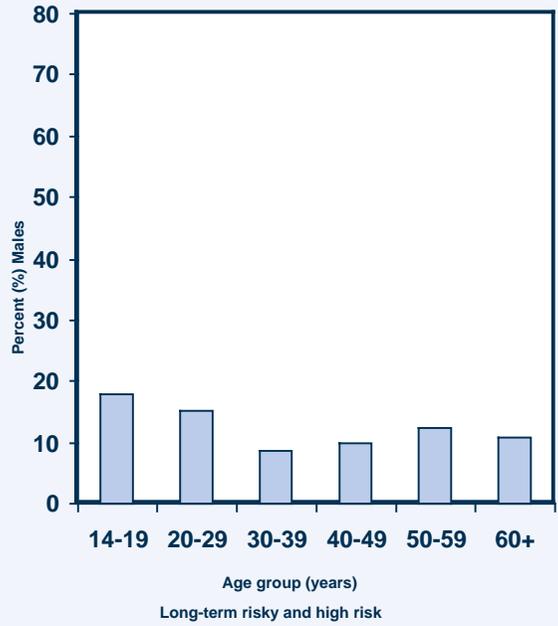
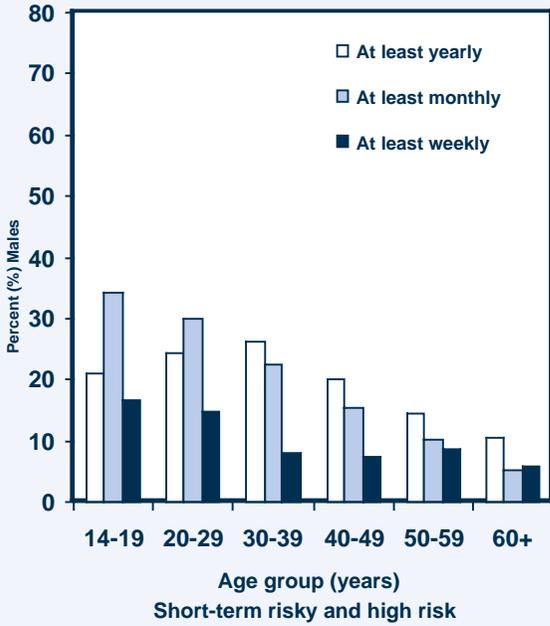


Figure 23. Risk category by age group, employed male recent drinkers (from Pidd et al., 2006)

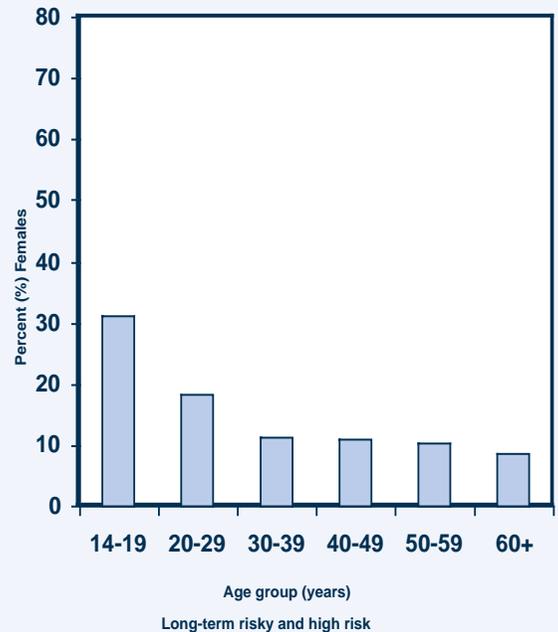
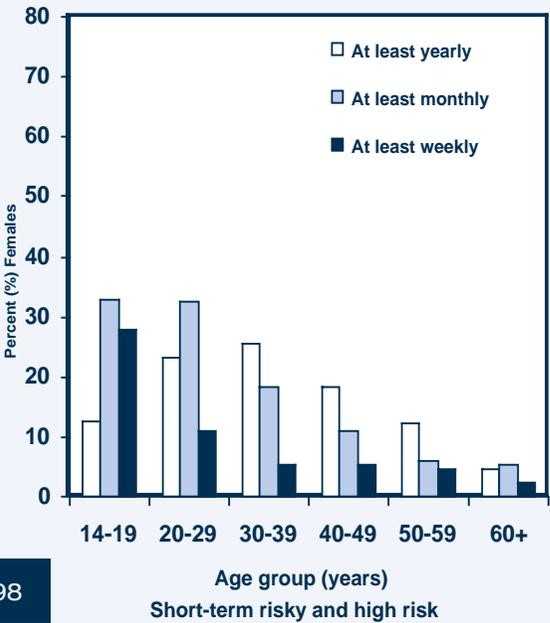


Figure 24. Risk category by age group, employed female recent drinkers (from Pidd et al., 2006)

7.7. Interpersonal factors

7.7.1. Family socialisation

Family socialisation factors associated with adolescents' use of alcohol and other substances, include parental support, which involves nurturance, affection and acceptance; parental control, including monitoring or permissiveness; and parental modelling, which relates to parents' own drinking behaviour (Barnes, Hoffman, Welte, Farrell, & Dintcheff, 2006; Trewin, 2006a). Similar to parental support, the notion of the cohesive family relates to the emotional bonds that exist amongst family members and is usually measured in terms of low levels of interpersonal tensions. Low family cohesion is also thought to be a risk factor during adolescence, as being a part of a cohesive family unit acts as a protective buffer and helps young people to cope with stress (AIHW, 2007).

Secure relationships with parents, provision of responsive care and implementation of appropriate limits operate as protective factors against substance misuse, including risky drinking (ANCD, 2007). Adolescents may also be at increased risk of developing problematic behaviours if, due to work demands or time barriers, parents are not as readily available to provide support, control and appropriate modelling. Australia has a relatively high level of workforce participation by parents. In 2003, 60% of families had

both parents in the workforce (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003). In 2005, 38% of school children aged 5-8 years and 28% of school children aged 9-12 years received before and after school care and/or other types of child care on weekdays (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007d). This may decrease children's experience of family time and, as a result, they may not receive sufficient family support, supervision and general socialisation, which may lead to problematic behaviours during adolescence.

Parent-sibling relationships have also changed in contemporary Australia. Parents no longer want distance from their grown-up children. Parents of young children often reject rigid and authoritarian parenting styles and adopt more lenient and relaxed approaches to control and discipline (Farouque, 2007). Some parents want to be 'a friend' to their child. Parents in their fifties and children in their twenties may also share a similar life stage as both groups may have few family commitments and are focused on fun and travel (Macken, 2007). The weakening of traditional parental roles, and the blurring of distinction between parent and child roles, has important implications for socialisation, modelling and how young people learn self regulation.

7.7.2. Parenting style²⁹

Parental support is crucial to adolescent development and a key factor in reducing

²⁹ Questions about the role parents can play have prompted the production of resources to inform and guide parents on adolescent alcohol use. For example, Trinity Grammar School in Victoria has recently produced a resource for parents on alcohol and drugs. It is intended to be used as a catalyst for communication amongst parents and children and to promote positive adolescent health and wellbeing (Trinity Grammar School, 2007).

risk-taking behaviours and preventing youth deviance (Barnes et al., 2006). Parental disapproval of adolescent drinking has been found to be an effective deterrent to problem drinking (Reifman, Barnes, Dintcheff, Farrell, & Uhteg, 1998) and strict enforcement of rules followed by regular reminders from parents can result in decreased alcohol consumption (Davey et al., 2002; van der Vorst, Engels, Meeus, & Dekovic, 2006). However, one US study of 1,420 light drinkers suggested that imposition of overly strict rules and reactive parenting techniques can result in adolescents drinking more not less (Guilamo-Ramos et al., 2004). A World Health Organization study (World Health Organization, 2000) comparing health behaviours in school-aged children in several countries found that youth who have difficulty communicating with their parents are likely to drink and experience intoxication more often than adolescents who have good communication with parents. This finding supports the primary socialisation theory that predicts a higher probability of youth involvement in risky behaviours when bonds between the adolescent and his or her family or school environment are weak (Oetting & Donnermeyer, 1998). More proactive parenting techniques have been found to prevent risky behaviours developing (Guilamo-Ramos et al., 2004). Proactive parenting methods include parental provision of support to their child, involvement in their child's life, establishing good communication patterns and providing expressions of warmth and affection. Proactive parenting also facilitates open communication between adolescents and parents.

Parental control and monitoring is another important element in the prevention of risk-taking behaviour amongst youth. Parental control and monitoring includes general monitoring of children's drinking behaviour as well as specific rules and norms related to use of alcohol (Barnes et al., 2006). An important aspect of monitoring is ensuring that parents are aware of the whereabouts of their child and the activities in which they are involved (Hayes et al., 2004). Low parental monitoring is consistently associated with adolescents' advancement to heavier drinking (Reifman et al., 1998). Positive family involvement and monitoring has been found to discourage initiation into and experimentation with alcohol among Australian adolescents (Stritzke & Butt, 2001). Lack of adult involvement also increases the probability of adolescents adopting peer values that may support heavy drinking (Guilamo-Ramos et al., 2004).

Parental alcohol use may influence adolescent substance use, not only directly through observation and modelling, but also indirectly by affecting parents' ability to provide adequate support and monitoring (Reifman et al., 1998). For example, Reifman et al. (Reifman et al.) reported that the behaviour of primary influential adults, in particular the mother's drinking habits, increased the likelihood of adolescents drinking heavily. Similarly, an Australian longitudinal study of 7,223 Brisbane women and their children found that exposure to maternal drinking in adolescence was a strong risk factor in the development of alcohol problems in early adulthood (Alati et al., 2005). This echoes findings of an earlier Australian study involving 2,336 primary school students aged 10-11 years that found children

whose parents drank at least weekly were significantly more likely than other children to have intentions to drink alcohol and were more likely to accept an alcohol beverage if offered one by a friend (Quine & Stephenson, 1990). Correspondingly, an Australian survey of 658 Victorian students aged 16-17 years found that adolescents who had experienced an alcohol-related injury were 1.8 times more likely than other adolescents to have parents that drank daily (Bonomo et al., 2001). It is estimated that in Australia 13.2% of children aged 12 years or less are at risk of exposure to binge drinking by at least one adult in the household (ANCD, 2007). These studies provide strong evidence that parents' drinking behaviours directly influence their child's drinking behaviours through to their adolescent years.

Thus, parental modelling is a crucial component in the development of adolescent drinking patterns. Not only does parental consumption of alcohol have a significant effect on adolescent drinking behaviours, but parental attitudes towards alcohol also influence their child's drinking behaviours (Bellis et al., 2007a; Reifman et al., 1998). If parents support norms favourable to alcohol use, model such behaviours and reinforce attitudes that promote alcohol use, this in turn will encourage children to imitate this behaviour (Fagan & Najman, 2005). Parents who themselves drink may also have more relaxed norms in regard to alcohol consumption and may not set strict rules for young people to follow. Lack of appropriate rules may therefore contribute to adolescent drinking (van der Vorst et al., 2006).

7.7.3. Parental supply of alcohol

In Australia, most adolescents have been introduced to alcohol before the age of 18 years. As reported in the 2004 National Drug Strategy Household Survey, over 90% of young people have tried their first serve of alcohol by the age of 17 (AIHW, 2005d). Once adolescents consume their first glass of alcohol, likelihood of progression to regular drinking is high (Hayes et al., 2004). Some evidence suggests that the later young people delay their first drink, the less chance they will have of becoming regular consumers or drinking at higher levels (Hayes et al., 2004). The 2005 Australian School Students' Alcohol and Drug (ASSAD) survey of 24,403 students in years 7-12 (i.e., aged approximately 12-18 years) reported that parents were the primary source of alcohol supply (White & Hayman, 2006). Similarly, the 2003 Victorian Youth Alcohol and Drug Survey found that parents had purchased alcohol for 51% of the adolescents below 18 years who had drunk alcohol (Premier's Drug Prevention Council, 2003).

Parents may supply young people with alcohol with the view that it will introduce adolescents to alcohol in a relatively safe home environment where they can control the amount consumed (Farouque, 2007; Hayes et al., 2004). Thus, supplying alcohol in this manner is seen as a means by which to guide young people towards responsible alcohol use. Australia's ASSAD data and a recent UK-based study indicate that young people of all ages are less likely to consume large amounts of alcohol if they obtain alcohol

from their parents as opposed to another source (Bellis et al., 2007a; King et al., 2005a; White & Hayman, 2006) and that adolescents consume more alcohol when they drink at a friend's house or social occasion compared to when they drink at home (Bellis et al., 2007a; King et al., 2005a; White & Hayman, 2006).

In contrast, the supply of alcohol by parents has been thought by some to be a major cause of risky drinking amongst adolescents (de Bonnaire C, Kalafatellis E, Whitfield J, & M., 2000; Tutt, 2003). However, evidence to support this claim is limited (Kypri, Dean, & Stojanovski, 2007). An Australian longitudinal study found regular drinking during adolescence contributed to the development of risky patterns of use during early adulthood and maintained that parental supply of alcohol to young people could be detrimental (Toumbourou et al., 2004). While parents may have certain reasons for drinking alcohol, adolescents have other motivations, including the pursuit of intoxication. As a result, early introduction to alcohol may be problematic (Milgram, 2001). A New Zealand study of 748 parents of 13-17 year olds found that parents generally opposed the supply of alcohol to minors or believed that if alcohol was supplied to minors it should be the responsibility of the parents to ensure that strict limits were imposed (Kypri et al., 2007). However, others argue that every family holds their own cultural values in regard to drinking and the adolescent will largely reflect these values (Bellis et al., 2007a; Milgram, 2001). In sum, parents' attitudes towards alcohol and the way in which they model drinking-related behaviours may be one of the primary

underlying influences on young people, whether or not alcohol is introduced and consumed at an age below the legal limit. However, more research is needed to determine how early socialisation factors into subsequent periods of socialisation during post-adolescence. It is likely that the young person will have to actively negotiate norms and values from their family culture with those of the wider culture as they get older. In this sense, the influence of leisure activities and their peers may mediate parental and family influences.

7.7.4. Siblings

Although parental influences play a vital role in young people's drinking behaviours, siblings may also be influential (Fagan & Najman, 2005). As members of the same family, siblings often have strong ties and shared experiences and can be powerful role models for one another, particularly when sibling relationships extend from the family environment to the peer domain (Fagan & Najman, 2005). A recent US study (Trim, Leuthe, & Chassin, 2006) suggests that older siblings are more likely to exert an influence on a younger sibling's drinking behaviour where there is similarity in gender and age. Correspondingly, younger siblings were also found to influence older siblings if they were very close in age.

Currently, there is little available research to identify whether similarities in sibling drinking behaviours may be due to the sibling relationship itself or due to shared characteristics associated with the family environment which could result in both

siblings producing similar behaviours (Fagan & Najman, 2005). However, a US study (McGue, Sharma, & Benson, 1996) of 653 families with adopted children measured the association between adolescent alcohol use and parental and sibling drinking behaviours and the degree to which these relationships were correlated with genetic or shared environmental influences. Their findings suggested that adolescent alcohol use is affected less by parental problem drinking and family functioning, but substantially influenced by sibling drinking behaviours (McGue et al., 1996). In particular, older siblings were found to be a more important role model for younger adolescents than parents. Of course, older siblings were influenced themselves by parent's modelling while they were growing up (Milgram, 2001).

Australia's declining fertility over recent decades has resulted in a higher prevalence of one child families than ever before. Having no siblings may disadvantage young people as they may lack access to various forms of support gained via one's siblings. Conversely, it may also result in lone children receiving more parental control, support and modelling than children in larger families. However, one Australian study reports that, due to work demands, parents are often unable to spend time with their children and compensate by providing their children with extra pocket money (Pocock & Clarke, 2004), sometimes described as 'guilt money'. Research indicates that young people prefer to spend more time in the company of their parents than receive extra pocket

money (Pocock & Clarke, 2004). The solo child may therefore receive a larger financial allowance and this has important implications for how they spend their leisure time and what they access with their discretionary income.

7.8. Peer influence

During adolescence the influence of parents reduces, and peers play a greater role (Hayes et al., 2004; Hyde et al., 2001). Adolescents' drinking behaviours are substantially influenced by peers and siblings (Quine & Stephenson, 1990) and peer influence can be more potent when an adolescent's relationship with their parents is poor (Hayes et al., 2004). Once initiation to drinking has occurred, those who have tried alcohol may seek out peers who are drinkers (Urberg, Deirmenciolu, & Pilgrim, 1997). The influence of peers is also likely to occur through peer modelling and peer pressure (Hayes et al., 2004). Peer influence and peer selection processes thereby compliment one another (Hayes et al., 2004). Kirke (Kirke) highlights the concern that the role of peer influence may be exaggerated if the behaviour in question is attributed solely to the influence of peers (socialisation) when, in effect, many adolescents choose their peers because their attitudes and behaviours are similar to their own (selection).

Introduction to new peers and social networks can affect the ways in which young people consume alcohol. Association with heavier drinking peers and increased access to alcohol can play an important role in alcohol use and related problems among

adolescents (Sher & Rutledge, 2007). Hogan (Hogan, 2002) also maintains that adolescents' drinking behaviours are driven by what is perceived as normal behaviour among one's close friends (Borsari & Carey, 2003; Neighbors et al., 2006b; Read et al., 2002). This is consistent with the central thesis of normalisation theory (Duff, 2005) 'what one believes others think has a profound impact on what one does' (Asch, 1951 and Sherif, 1936 in (Neighbors et al., 2006b p. 282). Numerous studies have found that perceptions of drinking norms correlate with individual drinking behaviours (Borsari & Carey, 2001; Kypri & Langley, 2003; Neighbors, Dillard, Lewis, Bergstrom, & Neil, 2006a; Neighbors et al., 2006b; Oostveen, Knibbe, & de Vries, 1996; Wild, 2002). Just as misconceptions of drinking norms contribute to a social environment that favours high consumption, accurate perceptions are likely to decrease risk-taking behaviours in a social environment (Steffian, 1999). Following on from Chapter 6, it is suggested that understanding the current drinking culture, and how youth perceive drinking norms, is the first step towards making change (Coleman & Cater, 2007).

A Finnish study (Lintonen & Konu, 2004) found that adolescents' misperceptions about peers' drinking were related to their own drinking patterns. Non-drinkers and those who frequently got drunk were reasonably accurate in their assessment of peers' drinking. In contrast, approximately 50% of the sample were 'moderate' drinkers (those who drank at times, but never to

drunkenness), who overestimated their peers' drinking (frequency and quantity). Social norms marketing interventions, which provided adolescents with factual data on the drinking behaviour of their peers and emphasised that the majority of adolescents drank at moderate levels or abstained, have shown promising results in reducing alcohol use in young people (Lintonen & Konu, 2004; Mattern & Neighbors, 2004; Perkins & Craig, 2006; Wild, 2002). Again, these types of interventions are dependent upon a clear understanding of the subjective meanings drinking holds for young people.

Campaigns conducted in the US to reverse student beliefs relating to heavy drinking have resulted in students developing new norms that support less risky drinking behaviours (Mattern & Neighbors, 2004; Perkins & Craig, 2006). A social norms campaign, the Social Norms Analysis Project (SNAP), is currently being trialled in Australia (Cook, 2005). It aims to reduce alcohol-related harm among high school students and is examining the way young people are influenced by their perceptions of what their peers think and do. However, rather than focusing on individuals, SNAP aims to change the social environment in order to make it more supportive of safer (and non-) consumption of alcohol (Hughes, 2007).

For many young Australians, drinking at risky levels is deemed normal. To not drink may be considered socially deviant and have a negative impact on social acceptance. Abstinence³⁰ may not be a socially viable option for many young

30 The Australian National Drug Strategy Household Survey (NDSHS) defined an abstainer as a person who had never consumed a full serve of alcohol (AIHW, 2005a).

people. However, research suggests that abstinence amongst young people is increasing. A comparison of the 2001 and 2004 NDSHS survey results shows an increase in the rate of abstaining among 14-19 year olds from 21.6% to 26.4% (males: 21.7% to 27.7%, females: 21.5% to 25.0%) (AIHW, 2002b, 2005a). Research has found that abstinence, or the formation of alternative non-drinking social identities, is incongruent with existing drinking norms (Leifman, Kuhlhorn, Allebeck, Andreasson, & Romelsjo, 1995; Nairn, Higgins, Thompson, Anderson, & Fu, 2006). Non-drinking teenagers may choose alternative social identities and use sports, religion or health as a 'legitimate' excuse for not drinking; overtly expressing a dislike for alcohol; or 'passing' as a drinker by using bottles or glasses that appear to contain alcohol and acting drunk (Leifman et al., 1995; Nairn et al., 2006).

traditional passages into adulthood are being disrupted and delayed. Although the influences of parenting styles and siblings still have a large impact on young people's drinking, the picture is becoming increasingly complex. For example, young people tend to remain in tertiary education longer and leave the family home later. As such, socialisation processes have also changed, with young people's relationships with their peers becoming more prominent in influencing behaviour. Many of these changes have effectively redefined the 'youth' experience so that opportunities for leisure have increased along with greater involvement with peer groups. In the following section, the influences of wider social and cultural change on the everyday lives of young people are discussed in the context of their leisure and lifestyle activities.

7.9. Summary

This chapter has identified a number of key social trends that affect young people and their social worlds. In relatively recent times, we have witnessed major shifts in the structure of the family, the role of women, the labour market and education. Specifically, the location of young people within these structures has changed significantly, meaning that

young people and alcohol

8. Leisure and Lifestyle

Leisure plays an intrinsic and central role in Australian culture (Minahan & Porublev, 2005). For young people, leisure activity is significant in the formative stages of the life course when identity development occurs (Feinstein, Bynner, & Duckworth, 2006). Leisure time provides space for socialisation – where cultural behaviour patterns may be assumed, lifestyles can be adopted and one’s sense of self is often explored through engagement in multifarious activities with different social groups. Further, research has demonstrated that leisure interests developed during the younger years are often continued into adulthood (Shannon, 2006). While opportunities for social interaction and building a sense of belonging are among the positive outcomes of leisure, activities that involve risk-taking behaviours, such as drinking at harmful levels, can be problematic. It has been postulated that ‘determined drunkenness’ (Measham, 2004), or the pursuit of intoxication, is a desired aspect of the Australian leisure experience. Among young people, drinking may itself be a leisure activity. The above highlights the importance of understanding young people’s alcohol-related behaviours in light of their leisure and lifestyles.

Generational differences and perpetual changes in the lives of young Australians

are explored in the previous chapter. The impact of these on leisure participation among young Australians, the activities they enjoy and the meanings these activities have in light of alcohol-related decisions and behaviours is relevant. Given the importance of social influences on shaping behaviours, this chapter examines how the social influences young people encounter within different contexts operate to shape leisure and lifestyles and, within this, their drinking choices.

This section considers the pragmatic and symbolic role of leisure in the lives of young Australians and, within this, how young people identify themselves with particular lifestyles or as belonging to social groupings. The aim is to illuminate the place of leisure activities in the lives of young Australians and how elements of the leisure environment, and the social structures and surroundings operating in this context, may shape drinking behaviours.

As a starting point, it may be useful to consider how leisure time in Australian society is defined and to explore this in the context of young Australians’ experience. Leisure has been characterised by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) as:

The residual time a person has after they have attended to the necessities of life (e.g., work, family care, self care). This time can be described as 'free time' – meaning that during this time a person is free of obligation or duty, and free to choose the way in which the time is spent (i.e., what activities they undertake in that time). This definition is inclusive of a wide range of human activities. It tends to include activities undertaken with the primary intention of enjoyment, relaxation, rejuvenation or recreation, in other words, activities that enhance people's lives in some way (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001).

The ABS goes on to clarify the bounds of what constitutes leisure time and states:

...(the above) definition makes no assumption that leisure activities are inherently beneficial. It includes activities enjoyed by some but condemned by others, and activities with both positive and negative personal and social implications. A range of activities that can be clearly linked to some negative outcomes remain prominent leisure choices (e.g., vandalism, drug use) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2001).

The definition of leisure coined by the ABS seems somewhat outmoded in light of the realities of Australian life today. It suggests that leisure is a 'residual phenomenon' (Veal & Lynch, 2001), in that it is viewed as the time remaining once other life-

sustaining tasks (work, both domestic and paid, and personal care – eating, sleeping, tending to hygiene) are complete. Further, this implies that such tasks function in isolation from other life and leisure activities whereas, as previously argued in Chapter 6, in postmodern society consumption is more than meeting daily living requirements – it also represents lifestyle and leisure choices. For example, eating out is a popular contemporary leisure activity that simultaneously meets daily living requirements and the need for social contact and conviviality. When conceptualising leisure, focussing on time alone does not account for inadvertent or intentional overlap between activities.

The increasingly hazy boundary between work and leisure provides another example of the ill-defined nature of leisure in Australian culture (Pocock, Skinner, & Williams, 2007). The phrase 'work is the new leisure' hints at Australians' increasing struggle to achieve a work-life balance (Minahan & Porublev, 2005). The tendency for Australians to prioritise work above other life aspects and how this will impact the leisure choices and lifestyles of future generations of Australians is generally under-researched. An exception exists in a unique study conducted among a broad cross-section of young Australians (n=93) aged 10-12 years and 16-18 years that explored the future expectations and preferences of young people in relation to work and family life (Pocock, 2005). This research found young Australians were concerned about beginning a family in light of financial considerations, the desire for stability, risk of detriment to careers, and concern about the end of 'partying' – all

reflections that are arguably emblematic of our increasingly consumerist society.

The applicability of the ABS definition of leisure to young people is particularly questionable. It is also unclear how much access young people, particularly those who are underage, have to true 'free time' spent outside of adult surveillance. Importantly, how this may impact on young people's involvement of drinking activities in their leisure time needs to be delineated.

It may be postulated that an idealised notion of freedom in leisure continues to exist in Australian culture. It would seem that, living in a technologically advanced consumer society, young people today have a plethora of leisure opportunities available to them from a multitude of sources (the arts, sports, tourism, politics and so on). Yet does the contemporary Australian leisure experience reflect true freedom of choice? If not, how may such constraints influence young people's alcohol-related decisions? In addition, as forms of social organisation are subject to change, so too is the realm of leisure within society. Contemporary leisure has been described as:

An emerging leisure milieu, reflecting the changing economic, cultural, technological and social environment that has been described as 'postmodern'. The increased commoditisation of leisure, rapid changes in working environments, 'telecommuting' and other features of the 'postmodern' world suggest that leisure has been, or will be, adapting accordingly (Veal & Lynch, 2001, p.24).

The activities young people enjoy today and the meaning underpinning leisure choices naturally differ to the experience of previous generations, highlighting the need for ongoing research in this area.

8.1. Leisure, consumption and identity

Leisure time provides young people with an opportunity to explore and form their identity (Iso-Ahola & Crowley, 1991), particularly leisure that involves consumption of goods such as alcohol. In postmodern societies, consumption styles express significant things about the self and may function to build identity (Giddens, 1991) and/or to establish a place in social networks. It has been suggested that '...consumption is central to the leisure experience', that 'leisure is central to the construction and performance of image' (Rojek, 2000 in Measham, 2004, p.338) and this is evident in a range of 'aspirational, risk-taking, status-defining, and image-enhancing leisure time pursuits' (Measham, 2004, p.338). Further to this, youth lifestyles and social worlds are thought to be largely centred on leisure choices (Room, 2002).

It may be useful to consider the concept of 'lifestyle' when attempting to understand how individual identities are constructed in an increasingly consumer-oriented society. The term 'lifestyle' has been used to describe:

...the sensibilities employed by the individual choosing certain commodities and patterns of consumption and articulating these

cultural resources as modes of personal expression (Bennett, 1999, p.607).

To extend this interpretation of lifestyle, it may also be conceptualised as a 'relational phenomenon' or a system of classified and classifying practices (Bourdieu, 1984) whereby certain attributes of individuals or groups are defined as desired while others are excluded – a process of distinction amongst social groups.

Commonsense understandings would regard leisure choices as simply resulting from personal taste. However, this view limits the important role of culture in shaping behaviours (Bennet, Emmison, & Frow, 1999). Contemporary social theorists have conceived leisure choices as centring on social or cultural capital which suggests that leisure choices represent lifestyles and symbolise belonging to a social group. It is argued that lifestyle preferences and consumption patterns are linked, in that people use objects of consumption in their physical environment to symbolise and negotiate social relationships (Chaney, 1998).

'Conspicuous consumption' (Veblen, 1899), that is, the products consumed and patterns of consumption, may be seen as a means by which some young people assert their social status (Bourdieu, 1984). It is thought that social differences are represented in different consumption tastes. Consumption may serve to distinguish young people as both belonging to a particular social group and simultaneously separate from another (Campbell, 1987). How leisure time is used and the activities young people

engage in are culturally meaningful, and are an important element in forging social relationships. Within this context, alcohol products or the types of beverages young people consume may serve as 'lifestyle markers' (Brain, 2000).

Through the symbolic consumption of certain alcoholic drinks over and above others, along with the purchase of clothes, music and other consumer items, young adults both create and maintain their desired image and also distance themselves from their 'undesired self' (Hogg and Banister, 2001 in Measham, 2004, p.342).

The potential role of alcohol as an individual identity resource and a social identity marker among contemporary young Australians needs to be explored.

Social theory also proposes that young people's lifestyles and identities are fluid. Different identities are assumed within different social milieu, including the activities undertaken, the social interactions played out, products consumed and so on. In this way, alcohol consumption, the types of products consumed, the associated behaviours and the setting in which alcohol drinking occurs may be envisaged as markers of individual and group identity (lifestyles) and, therefore, may be highly symbolic activity (Bourdieu, 1984). A recent study analysed alcohol-related lifestyles among Danish young people (n=2,000) aged 15-16 years (Jarvinen & Gundelach, 2007). Researchers interpreted drinking as a symbolically significant activity with the potential to create and maintain

distinctions or hierarchies in young peoples' social realm. That study found young people negotiated the meaning of alcohol in their social group and used alcohol experience to strengthen their position among their peers. Findings from that study also reinforce the notion that drinking patterns embodied by young people are closely related to those of their peers (as previously discussed in Chapter 7). How drinking experience may function as symbolic capital³¹ to create peer group distinctions that result in social cohesiveness or exclusion among young Australians requires exploration.

Postmodern social theory suggests that traditional economic class or gender-based structures are no longer the sole determinant of people's lifestyles and tastes. It has been postulated that:

...the development of new forms of expertise in interpersonal and symbol manipulation creates new modes of cultural capital... this process has both disrupted traditional cultural distinctions of previous generations and has created new sources of social esteem in which cultural expertise has become a crucial medium (Chaney, 1998, p.538).

Through the displacement of traditional social structural categories, young people living in 'contemporary consumers societies'

can use their consumption of material objects to represent social categorisation and social affiliations (Featherstone, 1991) and to reject lifestyles to which they do not relate (Miles, 2002). It seems that young people may create lifestyles around drinking choices (for example, the types of beverages consumed) and may use drinking to symbolise social identification. A recent study investigated the ways young Australians (aged 18-30 years³²) from different class backgrounds adopt drinking styles in different drinking contexts within contemporary Melbourne clubs and pub settings (Lindsay, 2006). This study found young people's selection of venue and alcohol beverage type was differentiated by social class. Research is required to further delineate this apparent link between social context of consumption and drinking styles.

8.1.1. Access to leisure

Different age groups have different leisure participation levels and styles (Veal & Lynch, 2001). As young people typically have few 'adult' responsibilities, they are often considered to have proportionately more leisure time than other age groups (with the exception of retirees/the elderly). Further to this, access to greater discretionary income also enables participation in various leisure activities. It seems that the consumer power of young people rests on income, which may be considered the cornerstone

31 Symbolic capital is a "form of capital or value that is not recognised as such. Prestige and a glowing reputation, for example, operate as symbolic capital because they mean nothing in themselves, but depend on people believing that someone possesses these qualities" (Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2002, p.xv).

32 The age range of this study sample (18-30 year olds) overlaps with the age group of interest to this project (14-24 year olds), however, as the study results do not differentiate between age sub-groups, findings have been extrapolated from the complete study.

of young people's independence. However, a varying degree of free choice is exercised when young people decide how their leisure time will be used (Lloyd, Harrington, Hibbins, Boag, & Cuthill, 2006). It is feasible that young people's range of choices about leisure is also influenced by social class (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997), however class differentiation is arguably more prominent in the UK than in Australia. In Australia, it may be more relevant to use expendable income as a potential determinant of access to leisure choices. In addition, the amount of time spent on leisure activities typically fluctuates. For young people, leisure time is determined by school or study demands and casual or part-time employment, which in turn impacts on disposable income and mobility, thereby affecting leisure affordability and accessibility.

Broad social changes have also shaped young people's use of leisure time and particularly their use of public spaces. Globalisation, economic development and technological advances have resulted in changes in the way young people interact socially and how leisure time is used. It has been noted that:

The leisure environment is (also) changing radically, through increasing commercialisation and professionalisation of leisure services and experiences, the influence of the internet, the rise of gambling and the decline of community-based activities (Haworth & Veal, 2005, preface).

Youth leisure has become a profitable industry. The contemporary focus on income generation and the sale of leisure

or 'commercialised leisure consumption' affects the affordability of some leisure options available to young people (Arai & Pedlar, 2003). Commercialisation has increased the cost of some popular leisure choices resulting in a concomitant decrease in access, particularly for young people from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

Going to the movies, dining out and attending music concerts are all increasingly popular leisure activities among young people and provide examples of commercialised leisure choices. Interestingly, following the advent of the Greater Union Gold Class movie cinemas in Australia, all of the above leisure choices also provide spaces in which alcohol can be purchased and consumed. Differences in gender and age, as well as geographical location and family socioeconomic status also influence young people's leisure choices (Feinstein et al., 2006; Lloyd et al., 2006) and patterns of consumption and leisure lifestyles have been considered important makers of masculine and feminine identities (Hollands, 1995 in Furlong & Cartmel, 1997). The differential use of physical and social space by various individual and social groupings and the meaning this represents for young people and their drinking behaviours requires consideration.

Public leisure space is increasingly constructed as a 'commodity', resulting in some young people feeling that they are progressively being monitored, controlled and in many cases, excluded from using public spaces (Waiton, 2003). Notable evidence toward an increasingly surveilled society is evident in CCTV (closed circuit

television) cameras installed throughout Britain as a form of 'scarecrow policing'. Regulatory policies and policing activities such as surveillance, curfews, move-on and anti-congregation laws have been introduced in Australia and often target young people accessing public spaces, such as shopping malls and parks, during their leisure time. An overall tendency to view young people and the leisure activities they engage in as problematic or deviant potentially amplifies feelings of marginalisation. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) Growing Up in Cities project, which involves young people and governments in evaluating and improving local environments, identified key factors that young people indicated disenfranchised and excluded them from public spaces – a prominent factor was commercialisation of leisure (Malone, 1998, 1999; Malone & Hasluck, 1998). That project also found limited places were available to meet young people's needs of no age restrictions, access to transport and financial constraints.

In contrast to the purported difficulty some young people experience in accessing certain forms of leisure, access to alcohol and drinking-related activities is seemingly non-problematic for many. As previously noted, many young people can readily access alcohol through older friends, siblings and sometimes their parents and consume it in the private sphere whilst avoiding detection and enforcement. The increasing commercialisation of young people's recreation and leisure outlets may impact on their choice of place to spend their leisure time and whether alcohol is involved (White, 2001).

8.1.2. Leisure boredom

It has been flagged that a perceived lack of leisure choices, constraints on leisure or dissatisfaction with the activities available to young people may result in 'leisure boredom' and may contribute to early alcohol use and/or risky drinking. In the words of one UK-based researcher, lack of appropriate leisure is "driving young people to drink" (Sheehan & Ridge, 2001). Commenting from the US perspective, Caetano echoed a similar concern that drinking is often the only viable form of recreation readily available to young people (Caetano, 2007). Some studies have identified drinking as relief from 'boredom', defined as 'a state of relatively low arousal and dissatisfaction which (is) attributed to an inadequately stimulating environment' (Mikulas and Vodnovich in (Vodanovich, 2003, p.570), or a result of a lack of leisure opportunities (Coleman & Cater, 2005a). Whether similar observations can be made among young Australians needs to be determined.

Leisure boredom refers to:

The subjective perception that available leisure experiences are not sufficient to instrumentally satisfy needs for optimal arousal...leisure experiences are not sufficiently frequent, involving, exciting, varied or novel (Ahola & Weissinger in Lloyd et al., 2006, p.26).

In Australia, leisure boredom appears to be an issue that crosses geographical boundaries (Patterson, Pegg, & Dobson-Patterson, 2000). Even young people

residing on the activity-laden Gold Coast³³ reported experiencing leisure boredom (Lloyd et al., 2006), as did young people residing in rural Australian locations (Patterson & Pegg, 1999). Differences do exist, however, in the nature of the activities young people residing in different geographical locations enjoy. A study of the leisure (classified as 'out-of-school' time) time-usage of high school students aged 12-19 (n=65) in North Queensland found urban-dwelling young people spent more time engaged in 'social leisure' (e.g., going to the movies) while their rural counterparts engaged in 'passive leisure' (e.g., reading, watching television) activities (Gordon & Caltabiano, 1996). This is of concern given findings from an observational study of drinking among Dutch young people (n=238) that found passive pastimes (e.g., being alone, watching television) were linked with higher alcohol consumption as opposed to active pastimes (e.g., playing games, making phone calls) (Bot, Engels, Knibbe, & Meeus, 2007). Findings are consistent with Australian prevalence data that show people residing in rural areas typically drink more than their city counterparts (Pidd et al., 2006a). Among young Australians, while differences in alcohol consumption levels were not obvious by geographical location, the types of alcohol-related harms experienced by young people in rural compared to metropolitan areas differed.

When young people are actively engaged in structured, social, recreational or community activities they are less likely to drink, or to drink at risky levels (Bellis,

Hughes, Dillon, Copeland, & Gates, 2007b; Bot et al., 2007). For example, a study of leisure activities engaged in by young Icelandic people aged 15-16 years found that those who partake in activities such as sport and organised club activities were less likely to drink than those whose leisure activities revolved around a 'party scene' (Thorlindsson & Bernburg, 2006).

A study of the causes of boredom amongst eighth grade students in the US (n=82) found that when young people engaged in activities because they wanted to, they reported lower levels of boredom during the activity, compared to young people who reported participating in an activity because they felt they had to or because they had nothing else to do (Caldwell, Darling, Payne, & Dowdy, 1999). This study also found 'a lack of deliberate choice undermined the leisure experience'. An Australian study that explored the links between leisure boredom and alcohol use among university students (n=271) in rural versus urban regions of Queensland found the higher young people rated their leisure self-determination the lower the amount of alcohol they consumed (Patterson et al., 2000). Social control or resistance theories of boredom highlight that when the potential for a young person to exercise autonomy by self-selecting leisure opportunities is undermined, the likelihood that leisure boredom will be experienced is increased (Caldwell et al., 1999). It seems that, for many young people, motivations for participating in an activity affect the outcome and levels of enjoyment in that activity.

33 The Australian Gold Coast has been referred to as a 'pleasurescape' defined as 'the organisation of space and social geography so as to maximise fun and pleasure, rather than functionality or aesthetics' (Beilharz & Hogan, 2006, p.113).

Further to the potential leisure access issues discussed previously in this chapter, there appears to be a lack of underage leisure choices available to young Australians. A 2003 Australian Democrats' Youth Poll (Australian Democrats, 2005) found 84% of respondents said there were not enough venues for underage people and 56% of respondents attended a licensed venue while underage to: socialise (41%), hear a band (20%), drink alcohol (15%) and dance (14%). Whilst these figures should be interpreted with caution, they nonetheless indicate that many young Australians perceive a lack of entertainment options. The impact of this on experiences of leisure boredom and the potential link with underage drinking needs to be explored.

8.1.3. Drinking for pleasure...or leisure?

How contemporary young Australians use their leisure time, and which leisure activities provide the greatest level of enjoyment and fulfilment is generally under-researched. However, local and international research on young people's drinking motives provides insight into the types of activities commonly enjoyed, particularly those that involve alcohol. Most leisure activities young Australians undertake are social and many involve alcohol. For example, a qualitative investigation of young Australian women aged 18-25 years (n=18) residing in Sydney found that while they engaged in a broad range of leisure activities, risky drinking with friends was common (Moreton, 2003).

International research also sheds light on links between leisure activities and alcohol. For example, a US study of college student drinkers' (n=108) alcohol-related and alcohol-free enjoyment found that alcohol-related leisure activities (e.g., parties, time spent at a pub or nightclub) were more enjoyable than alcohol-free activities (e.g., movies) and, importantly, increased alcohol consumption had a positive correlation with increased enjoyment (Murphy, Barnett, & Colby, 2006). Similarly, a study of meaning and social context of 15 year olds' (n=106) alcohol consumption in Scotland revealed that respondents enjoyed themselves more and had a better time when their social group drank alcohol (Pavis et al., 1997). The positive relationship between leisure time, quantity of alcohol consumed and level of enjoyment attained may in part explain why many young people drink at risky levels despite the potential harms such behaviour poses. Alcohol consumption may be deemed a pleasurable leisure activity in its own right among young Australians.

8.1.4. Drinking contexts

As previously discussed in the chapter on culture, drinking traditionally occurred within the public sphere. Today, drinking in a wide range of contexts, settings, situations and on various occasions (both at home and away from home) is not uncommon within Australian culture (Shanahan et al., 2002). To understand what drives and shapes young people's drinking behaviours, it is useful to locate such behaviours within specific social contexts (Heath, 2000). Young people

drink in different social settings, for differing reasons or to fulfil different functions (de Crespigny et al., 1999; Pavis et al., 1997). For young people, particular leisure activities that involve alcohol appear to demarcate entry to the adult social world. For example, leisure in the form of nightclubbing may be perceived as a rite of passage signalling the attainment of adult status through entry to the adult leisure realm (Lloyd et al., 2006; Northcote, 2006).

Young people under the legal drinking age who are unable to access licensed venues may resort to public spaces to avoid adult surveillance. For example, an investigation of young people's underage drinking in unsupervised outdoor locations in the UK (including parks, beaches, streets, city centres, outside licensed premises and in a friend's home temporarily vacated by adult supervision) found drinking in such locations was associated with adverse outcomes, such as intoxication, accidents and other risky behaviours like vandalism (Coleman & Cater, 2005a). Whilst this study was conducted in the UK setting, drinking in similar outdoor public settings is witnessed among young Australians (see Chapter 5: Patterns and Prevalence of Drinking).

The social context of drinking refers not only to specific physical settings but also to the amount consumed within settings and the people within the social setting that may impact on drinking (Cooper, 1994 in (Kuntsche, Knibbe, Gmel, & Engels, 2006). For example, an Australian study

of young women's (18-30 year olds³⁴) risky drinking found alcohol use deliberately varied according to implicit norms and perceived needs within any given context (de Crespigny et al., 1999). Accordingly, drinking was a calculated activity. Young women planned what they would drink and how much they would drink in each setting. This finding is consistent with results from another qualitative study of young Australian women's drinking (aged 18-25 years) that found the environmental setting often determined the drinking behaviour and the type of social experience young women expected to have (Moreton, 2003).

To a large extent, age determines where young people drink, whether it is in a licensed premise (bar, restaurant) or private setting (at home, house parties). A marked difference in consumption patterns and beverage types is also evident in these different settings. For example, for young people (aged 21-24 years), club and pub style drinking typically involves spirits or beer, while wine usually accompanies dinner at a restaurant or home. Features of the drinking setting have also been found to influence outcomes. For example, happy hour with cheap drinks, special celebrations of a planned 'big night' out and different drinking contexts have been found to encourage or hinder risky drinking (Lindsay, 2005; Lindsay, 2006).

A 'party' atmosphere may also contribute to heavy alcohol consumption. For example, a study of Canadian high school

34 The age range of this study sample (18-30 year olds) overlaps with the age group of interest to this project (14-24 year olds), however, as the study results do not differentiate between age sub-groups findings have been extrapolated from the complete study.

students' (n=1,236) alcohol use, beliefs and behaviours investigated factors that influence young people to drink and found the most commonly cited reason for drinking was 'to get in a party mood' followed closely by 'because I enjoy it', 'to create a party atmosphere' and 'to get drunk' (Feldman, Harvey, Holowaty, & Shortt, 1999). An event where food was available was associated with a reduced likelihood of risky drinking (Feldman et al., 1999). Group size has also been found to correlate with increased alcohol consumption (Clapp et al., 2003). That is, the larger the group the more alcohol consumed (Demers et al, 2002 in (Clapp et al., 2003). These findings have important implications for the style and/or nature of licensed premises and for the organisation of large youth events or social gatherings where alcohol may be consumed (which is discussed in more detail in Chapter 10).

Further, drinking settings and leisure environments function as important determinants of the level and type of risk associated with alcohol consumption. Two sequential studies (n=1,609 and n=400) conducted in the US that examined the validity of a set of environmental variables to predict heavy drinking at college students' most recent drinking occasions (Clapp et al., 2003) found young people often seek leisure environments where heavy drinking is facilitated. Characteristics of such 'risky drinking environments' included the presence of intoxicated people, illicit drugs and bring-your-own alcohol. Other factors within social settings that can contribute to risky outcomes involve drinking games

(Borsari, 2004; Grossbard, Geisner, Neighbors, Kilmer, & Larimer, 2007; Polizzotto et al., 2007; Zamboanga, Bean, Pietras, & Pabon, 2005; Zamboanga, Leitkowski, Rodriguez, & Cascio, 2006) where the intention is intoxication, 'pre-gaming' or 'pre-loading', drinking in order to get 'tipsy' before going to a party or function where alcohol will be expensive (e.g., licensed venue), or drinking prior to an event where alcohol will be unavailable (e.g., at a school function) (Borsari et al., in press). The basis on which young Australians select leisure and drinking settings needs to be understood.

The social influences young people encounter within different contexts and how these shape drinking behaviours are also of interest. The presence and role of drinking games, which facilitate rapid consumption of high volumes of alcohol, are of particular concern in light of the adverse consequences participation typically involves. A recent study explored the contexts, motivations and consequences of drinking games among Western Australian students aged 18-25 years (Polizzotto et al., 2007). This study found young people's motivation for participating in drinking games was predominantly social. Although acknowledgment of the potential adverse outcomes of drinking games was reported by the majority of young people studied, pro-social outcomes, including heightening group bonding and easing awkwardness within social interactions, meant drinking games were viewed as a socially acceptable means of gaining enjoyment.

Participation in drinking games was also found to increase the amount of alcohol young people intended to drink. Whilst a body of international research on young people's involvement in drinking games exists (Adams & Nagoshi, 1999; Borsari, 2004; Borsari, Bergen-Cico, & Carey, 2003; Engs & Hanson, 1993; Green & Grider, 1990; Grossbard et al., 2007; Johnson, 2002; Johnson & Sheets, 2004; Newman, Crawford, & Neliss, 1991; Pedersen, 1990; Wood, Johnson, & Sher, 1992; Zamboanga et al., 2005; Zamboanga et al., 2006), drinking game participation in the Australian context was previously an uncharted area of enquiry. It is possible to view drinking games as a micro-climate where broader social influences (including associated norms and rituals) perpetuated by our Australian drinking culture are exercised. Further research to determine possible alternatives that maintain the social functions currently bestowed by the drinking game phenomenon will be important. Research findings (above) which suggest that the 'party' phenomenon has an important function in the social world of underage Australians should also be prominent when exploring young people's drinking contexts.

Specific social activities or features of leisure settings, including celebratory events (e.g., Schoolies Week and national events such as music festivals, Australia Day, Melbourne Cup Day), sport, travel and entertainment (including technology such as mobile phones, movies, music, and the Internet), have been identified as either reflecting Australia's broader drinking culture, possessing distinctive drinking cultures and/or influencing young

people's drinking behaviours. These are explored in an attempt to identify how aspects of Australia's drinking culture may impact on young people's alcohol-related behaviours, to open up new areas for investigation and uncover potential entry points for intervention.

8.2. Events and celebrations

Alcohol is very much a part of the celebratory and cultural traditions of Australia. Celebrations that mark special occasions in our lives (e.g., reaching milestone ages, graduation ceremonies) are typically joyful events involving some form of ceremony and ritual. Such rituals often involve alcohol. Alcohol is also often linked with negative occasions where people drink to commiserate or 'drown their sorrows'.

Cultural values can be understood and interpreted through the symbolic meanings of rites, actions and ceremonies. The National Alcohol Strategy 2006-2009 (Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy, 2006) acknowledges important intangible social forces including habits, customs, images and norms drive and shape Australia's drinking culture. Social events are also characterised by certain cultural practices and obligations that encourage heavy drinking, for example, 'happy hours', drinking in rounds, shouts and drinking games (Lindsay, 2005).

Aside from physiological pleasures associated with the psychoactive effects of alcohol, people often drink to feel part of celebrations. The following observations

allude to the nexus between situational social influences and risky drinking:

Drinking and celebration are often very closely tied together as part of tradition. The build up for the new millennium as being ‘the party of the century’ means that everyone is going to be exposed to intense pressure to drink heavily or risk being ostracised and labelled a ‘party pooper’ (Australian Drug Foundation, 1999).

It would be almost unAustralian not to get drunk after winning a (football) premiership, not to celebrate mateship with a beer, to have a dry Anzac Day or a non-alcoholic New Year’s Eve, to propose a soft-drink toast to the bride and groom, or to organise an office party fuelled by mineral water (David Crosbie, CEO of Odyssey House Victoria in Crosbie, 2003).

For many Australians, drinking marks both major and minor transitions or events. As previously indicated, consumer capitalism and the commodification of leisure has resulted in nearly all forms of leisure being associated with drinking. An example of this exists in the common practice of celebrating the end of the working week with a drink. In this way leisure time spent drinking represents a reward for work, illustrates Australians’ protestant work ethic, and reinforces the notion of ‘earning’ a hedonistic weekend (Rojek, 1989).

To a large extent, young people celebrate with alcohol because adult Australians

celebrate with alcohol. There appear to be social norms, rules and expectations surrounding how young people should celebrate. In some social settings drinking heavily may be perceived by young people as conforming behaviour, not an act of social deviance. There are many key transitional events in the lives of young people (e.g., birthday celebrations, reaching the legal age for driving, alcohol, sexual relations, entry to the paid workforce, high school and higher education graduation). Most key transitions are associated with rituals that signify life change to adulthood and a mature existence. It is important to note that transitional periods are not necessarily linear among young people in contemporary society (Te Riele, 2004; Wyn & Woodman, 2006). Today, various pathways from youth to adulthood may be taken, representing the fluidity and complexity of young people’s lives. The role of alcohol may change according to life stage or the pathway chosen. It has also been postulated that a changing youth labour market and subsequent emphasis placed on educational qualification has contributed to prolonged dependency of young people on their parents (Te Riele, 2004). It may be that young people use alcohol as a means of engaging in adult leisure practices when other forms of adult dependency have not been attained.

8.2.1. School leaver celebrations

The Australian Schoolies Week phenomenon is a one-to-three-week graduation festival celebrated by Year 12 school leavers around Australia. It provides a prime example of how young

people's celebration of key transitional events are often integrally linked with risky drinking. Schoolies marks a unique period of transition for many young people. Celebrating the 'end of school' with peers, away from home, signifies a move from school life to a more 'adult' future and often involves 'adult behaviours' such as alcohol consumption.

A number of studies have investigated the relationship between risk-taking behaviours, including alcohol and other drug use, and Schoolies Week. A cross-sectional study of Schoolies Week covering years 1999-2003 surveyed 4,848 young Australian school leavers aged 16-20 years and found alcohol was overwhelmingly the drug of choice when celebrating Schoolies Week on the Gold Coast (Salom, Watts, Kinner, & Young, 2005). Of the 2003 sample:

- 88% of young people reported they had consumed alcohol in the past seven days, a similar finding to previous years
- 73% had been drunk
- 37% had experienced a hangover
- 17% had been in a car where they believed the driver was under the influence of alcohol and/or other drugs
- 21% reported they had vomited due to drinking alcohol and/or taking drugs
- 19% indicated they had passed out due to drinking alcohol and/or taking drugs (Salom et al., 2005).

Whilst there were no significant age differences, gender differences in these behaviours were evident. Males were significantly more likely than females to have driven under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs, to have been a passenger in a car where the driver was under the influence and to have been in a fight (it was not stipulated whether this was fuelled by alcohol and/or drugs) (Salom et al., 2005). Prevalence of these behaviours was stable over time.

Young people's expectation of their behaviour at Schoolies (Smith & Rosenthal, 1997) and their perceptions of what Schoolies should entail (Winchester & McGuirk, 1999) were found to influence alcohol-related behaviours and outcomes. These studies also reported the incidence of risk-taking behaviours including drunkenness and its potential by-products (vomiting, drink-driving, violence, harassment and injury) (Zinkiewicz et al., 1999) at Schoolies Week. Many young Australians viewed Schoolies to be part of their rite of passage into adulthood. Misbehaving was 'expected' at Schoolies and, despite an awareness of potential harms associated with risk-taking behaviours such as drunkenness, a sense of dislocation from harmful consequences was common. The Gold Coast has traditionally been the favoured destination among Australian school leavers. A study of substance use and interpersonal conflict within the previous 24 hours of young people celebrating Schoolies in three popular Queensland destinations (Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast and Wide Bay regions) found behaviour at the Gold Coast was riskier than elsewhere (Zinkiewicz et al., 1999).

Further understanding of the culture of Schoolies Week, including meaning behind young people's expectations of what will, and perceptions of what should, occur during Schoolies celebrations is required. Interventions to achieve culture change within Schoolies Week have been initiated. For example, Schoolies week on the Sunshine Coast was introduced in 1997 and aims to provide a safe alternative to the Gold Coast rendition through changing the nature of the event while retaining the meaning and young people's opportunity to take time out to celebrate with friends. Sunshine Coast Schoolies Week is exclusively for 16-18 year olds and provides supervised alcohol-free entertainment, a transport service and a security strategy that targets non-schoolies (Curd, 2004; Tresidder, 2005). Schoolies Festival,³⁵ designed to manage the annual Schoolies Week celebrations held in Victor Harbor, South Australia, provides another example of a 'safe celebration' initiative for school leavers. While rigorous research on the effect of these interventions was not located, other reports indicate positive preliminary findings.

8.2.2. National events

Australia's drinking culture is reflected in large-scale, Australia-wide music events attended by young people annually. Triple J radio station's Hottest 100 countdown,³⁶ held on Australia Day, and the Big Day Out music festivals, which, notably, are sponsored by members of

the alcohol industry, provide examples of national events where intoxication is intimately mixed with celebration. Research indicates music events to be a popular leisure option among young people. According to a survey conducted by the ABS in 2005-06 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007c) approximately 4,035,900 people aged 15 years and over attended popular music concerts in the 12 months before interview. This represented an attendance rate of 25%. Almost two-thirds (65%) of those who had attended popular music concerts during the 12-month period had attended more than once. The attendance rates for males and females were similar (25% and 26% respectively). Attendance rates declined with increasing age – two-fifths (40%) of people aged 18-24 years had been to popular music concerts in the previous 12 months, while about one-third (31%) of 15-17 and 25-34 year olds had attended. This compares with 7% of people aged 75 years and over.

The Big Day Out is arguably more than a music festival for music fans. It is also an opportunity for young people to express national pride. The perspective on Australia Day is to celebrate and reflect on what it means to be Australian. Participation in national events is emblematic of identifying with Australian culture and, unfortunately for many young people, being a 'proud Aussie' is often asserted in the form of drinking to excess. Further, alcohol sponsorship of such national events is problematic. A longitudinal study conducted in the

³⁵ Developed by Encounter Youth in 1999 <http://www.encounteryouth.com.au/>

³⁶ Australia's largest public music poll <http://www.abc.net.au/triplej/hottest100/>

US found alcohol advertising and beer concession stands at events, such as music festivals and sporting events, predicted drinking frequency among young people (n=3,111) aged 13-14 years (Ellickson, Collins, Hambarsoomians, & McCaffrey, 2005). The perturbing nature of alcohol advertising as a potential driver of young people's alcohol-related decisions will be explored further in the following chapter.

Melbourne Cup Week and celebrations across the nation for the running of the Melbourne Cup (Green, 2003) provides another example of nationalism expressed in the form of excessive alcohol consumption. Even the 'uninitiated' horse racing patrons embrace this national celebration. Underage drinking is a feature at horse racing events all over Australia, including state-based events such as the Easter Oakbank Carnival in South Australia (Government of South Australia Office of the Liquor and Gambling Commissioner, 2006; Iannella, 2007). This emphasises the link between cultural norms and celebration in Australia and affirms the continued prominence of alcohol in the Australian sporting context, to be discussed later.

8.2.3. Safe celebrations

Due to some negative outcomes in the past, public celebrations are often constructed as problematic rather than positive instances where significant, meaningful events are celebrated by the community in a safe manner. However, possibilities exist for encouraging safe celebrations among young Australians

by challenging dominant cultural norms which link celebration with alcohol drinking and providing attractive alternatives for celebrating and socialising. Following their exploration of the behaviours of New Zealand high school students who are alcohol abstainers (n=39), Nairn et al. suggest social norms are social constructs and are therefore fluid and changeable (2006). They attest that:

No norm is ever secure, even a hegemonic norm, and that in the reiteration of identities such as drinking and non-drinking, there is space for disruption, for the interpellation of other ways of being (Nairn et al., 2006, p.301).

This is encouraging from an intervention perspective, particularly in relation to celebrations such as Schoolies where socially constructed meanings surrounding how young people should behave are evidently strong.

A range of Australian initiatives designed to assist with organising and holding a safe party has been recently developed. For example, the Australian Red Cross Save-A-Mate (SAM) program (<http://www.saveamate.org.au/>) in South Australia and New South Wales uses a peer education model to encourage young people to 'look after their mates' in any party setting and to encourage 'safe partying' to reduce the likelihood of harms occurring from alcohol and other drug use. The SAM team also has a presence at events such as festivals and concerts providing health promotion and at times first aid support. The North West Coast Collaborative Communities Alcohol Project's (NWC-

CCAP) iparty (<http://www.iparty.com.au>), targeted at rural and isolated communities in Tasmania, provides practical party planning tips for parents and carers organising neighbourhood social events for young people. Youthsafe, a not-for-profit organisation committed to reducing serious injuries in young people aged 15-25 years, also provides a 'safe celebrating' initiative (Youthsafe, 2006). The Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation's (AERF) 'Fresh Party' (<http://www.freshparty.com.au>) recently provided an alcohol-free alternative music event. Further, a new responsible drinking education campaign jointly funded by NSW Government and DrinkWise Australia, 'Be Part of It, Not Out of It', targets anti-social behaviour that arises through drinking to excess, and focuses on 14-17 year old Australians drinking at private events and 18-29 year olds who drink at licensed venues.

8.3. Sport and recreation

Research by the Australian Sports Commission from 1995 to 1998 found that participation rates for organised sport and physical activity decreases with age. The participation rate overall in this study of people aged 18 years and over was highest for the 18-24 year age group (Australian Sports Commission, 2000). Sport constitutes a major component of social and leisure activities, particularly among young Australians. More recently, the ABS reported that more than one in four (27%) Australians aged 15 years and over were involved in organised sport or physical activity in the year to April 2004 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004c).

Sport is a strong recreational feature of the Australian cultural landscape. This is aptly indicated by a Sydney Morning Herald newspaper headline in November, 2003 which boasted that 'sport is culture and nowhere more so than in Australia'. The commentator went on to note:

Sport has long played an important social and cultural role in Australia, providing a form of social cement which binds communities and creates broader imagined communities (Cashman, 2003).

For young people globally, sporting environments offer numerous physiological benefits and contribute to the formation of positive social and community interactions. Sport has been employed as part of personal and social development strategies to reduce 'antisocial behaviour' among Australians aged 10-24 years with positive effects on improving emotional wellbeing (e.g., self-esteem) and cognitive skills (e.g., problem-solving) (Morris, Sallybanks, Willis, & Makkai, 2004). Involvement in regular, structured physical activity may also reduce boredom among young people and decrease their amount of unsupervised leisure time – outcomes which have been linked with risky drinking among young people (see above). Furthermore, involvement in sporting activities can result in protective outcomes for young people's alcohol consumption. Findings from a study of Western Australian high school students in years 10 and 12 (n=189) suggests involvement in healthy leisure activities is likely to prevent young people from developing

risky drinking behaviours (Stritzke & Butt, 2001). Similarly, international research of factors associated with drinking among 12-18 year old Norwegians (n=3,500) (Hellandsjø Bu, Watten, Foxcroft, Ingebrigtsen, & Relling, 2002) found participation in sports to be an important factor in delaying alcohol uptake. A study of elite student athletes in South France also found sports to be protective against overall alcohol consumption, yet did not stipulate the level of consumption (Peretti-Watel et al., 2003).

Despite the physiological positives associated with physical activity and sporting club membership, potentially more salient harms associated with the drinking culture present within many sporting clubs gives cause for concern. The strong link between sport and alcohol in Australian society exists on various levels, including alcohol sponsorship, role modelling by elite athletes and risky alcohol consumption in local sporting clubs. Sports celebrities are also influential in shaping young people's behaviours (Bush, Martin, & Bush, 2004). They act as powerful role models, setting standards for young people's behaviour.

In Australian culture, sport is a leisure activity that has clear links with risky drinking behaviours. While Australian sporting clubs foster social networking and community involvement integral to wellbeing, they are also environments where alcohol is often consumed at risky levels. The 'insidious sense in which sport and drug (and alcohol) use are entwined at community levels' (Premier's Drug

Prevention Council, 2004) in Australian society has been noted. Australian research conducted by the Centre for Youth Drug Studies of the Australian Drug Foundation (Snow & Maher, 2000) highlighted the prominent role of alcohol within sporting clubs in light of findings from a survey of 73 Victorian metropolitan football clubs (Snow & Maher, 2000). Of the 632 club members who returned surveys:

- 63% socialised at their club once or twice per week; 32% three or four times per week
- 42% typically consumed five or more standard drinks each time they visited their club
- Higher levels of consumption were evident in younger age groups
- 83% travelled to and from the club by car, as the driver (Snow & Maher, 2000).

This study also found that 13% of 18-20 year olds drank 13 or more standard drinks each time they visited their sporting club, more than three times the 'safe' limit for young males (Snow & Maher, 2000).

Sport is also characterised by revered rituals and traditions, of which alcohol is an important subsidiary (Thompson, Palmer, & Raven, 2006). There is a place for alcohol in almost every sporting setting.

In Australia, alcohol and sport are intimately linked. Alcohol is used to celebrate a win, to commiserate a loss and to reinforce camaraderie and mateship among teams (Australian Drug Foundation, 2004).

Drinking at the sporting club may itself be an important tradition. Many clubs foster a drinking culture important to club members' enjoyment (Snow & Maher, 2000). It appears that risky drinking carries important meanings at all levels of involvement both among players (Lawson & Evans, 1992) and spectators (Thompson et al., 2006). Needless to say, particular sports (e.g., rugby league, Australian Rules football and cricket) may embody and perpetuate Australia's drinking culture more so than others.

Two recent investigations have explored the culture and social traditions of alcohol use within Australian sporting clubs. A study of the attitudes and behaviours of Australian sporting clubs ($n=213$) found strong links between alcohol consumption and relaxing after sport, fostering club camaraderie, celebrating the game, socialising with club members and adhering to and maintaining club traditions (Duff, Scealy, & Rowland, 2005). Another study that explored the place of alcohol in the lives of South Australian football fans ($n=60$) identified social and cultural meanings, rituals, roles and social status associated with drinking and football (Thompson et al., 2006). This study found that alcohol plays a significant role in the social identity of football fans. While not the case for all fans, for a defined sub-set, alcohol was found to be central to their football experience. This study also found drinking habits away from football were similar to those at football suggesting that 'sport is perhaps one of the best indicators or expressions of culture... sports reflects culture' (Sands, 1999, p.3 in (Thompson et al., 2006, p.5). Factors

within football clubs that may influence the likelihood of risky drinking were also identified (Thompson et al., 2006). These included functions where drinks were free or subsidised and alcohol-related rituals and traditions. Fans viewed raising revenue for the club through alcohol sales as a positive function of their club.

Findings from previous studies provide insight into the intrinsic, deep-rooted connection between alcohol and sport in Australia. The link between alcohol and sport in Australia highlights the relevance of investigating specific and unique cultural traditions to provide a full contextual picture of how young people drink in a given time and place. Underage drinking on club premises, modelling of intoxication, drink-driving to and from the club and continued service to intoxicated patrons, as well as alcohol as a reward given to players who exhibit desirable athletic performances in the form of shouts or free drinks, are aspects of the drinking culture within Australian sport that pose risks to young people.

An attempt to change the drinking culture within Australian sporting clubs is evident in interventions such as the Australian Drug Foundation's Good Sports Accreditation Program (also see Sponsorship in section 9.1.2). Good Sports aims to reduce alcohol (and other drug) problems, increase the viability of sporting clubs (without relying on alcohol sales revenue) and improve the range and quality of sports options available within the community. The program helps sporting clubs manage alcohol responsibly and reduce alcohol-related

harms relating to binge and underage drinking. Another example is the Enough is Enough alcohol campaign designed to reduce drunkenness and change the drinking culture in Western Australia. This campaign involves Fremantle Football Club players spreading health-promoting drinking messages (Drug and Alcohol Office, 2007). The acceptability of intervention strategies that increased the responsible service of alcohol by Australian rugby league clubs has been investigated (Warner-Smith, Wiggers, Considine, & Knight, 2000). Clubs were found to be receptive to public health strategies (e.g., responsible and safe drinking information kit) that increased their responsible service of alcohol. These results are encouraging for changing drinking culture in the broader Australian sporting context. Continued challenges for interventions designed to address risky drinking in the sporting context include the role alcohol sales play as a key source of revenue for amateur sporting clubs, together with the role of sponsorship of sport by alcohol companies.

8.4. Holidays and travel

Holidays and travel are important times in Australians' lives for various reasons. Regular day-to-day routines change, opportunities for relaxation and socialising increase and so do opportunities for consuming alcohol, often at higher levels and in a riskier manner than at other times. Holidays and travel provide an opportunity to recover from work, study

and daily routines. Further, globalisation has changed the way Australians travel. We have witnessed a growth in international travel due to cheaper airfares and concomitantly, greater access to travel opportunities. For young Australians today, local and international travel is commonplace and often takes form in a ritual gap year³⁷ spent travelling. In 2000, a total of 18,776 young people aged 10-24 years left Australia (22% of all departures) (Pitman, Herbert, Land, & O'Neill, 2003). The largest group of all Australian travellers was 20-24 year olds (Pitman et al., 2003).

Holiday and recreational travel are key times for leisure activities and are linked with a sense of freedom from responsibilities and may be appealing to young people as a form of entry to adulthood. Further, research indicates that when holidaying or travelling people alter their behaviour and engage in more risk-taking behaviours as a result of the loosening of work or study constraints and other commitments of routine daily life (Lee, Maggs, & Rankin, 2006). It is also known that holiday-makers consume more alcohol than they would at other times (Crundall, 1996, Hughes, 2004 #922). This is especially true for younger age groups who tend to be heavy drinkers in general. There is only limited research that explores how holidays, including both 'working' holidays and recreational travel, affect the drinking behaviours of young Australians specifically. One recent study of UK backpackers visiting Australia found no notable changes in

³⁷ Gap year refers to the 12-month period taken off full-time education by a young person leaving high school and before commencing university.

the level of alcohol consumed compared with their levels at home, but a significant increase in the frequency of consumption whilst travelling (Bellis et al., 2007b). Motivations for travel among young Australians and the role and meaning of alcohol as part of this experience have yet to be fully explored.

8.5. Technology-driven entertainment

Popular entertainment and recreation activities that revolve around, or are facilitated by, technology is another aspect of the world of young people that is rapidly evolving. Technology has created new styles and modes of interaction among young people (Ling, 2000) as well as a plethora of entertainment options. Technology is both a by-product and a driver of globalisation. It is also a symbol of consumerism in an increasingly product-driven consumerist society.

It seems that a complex relationship exists between young people, technology and associated behaviours. Recent marketing research conducted in the UK (Rolfe & Gilbert, 2006) explored the nature of young people's relationship with technology and found that young people's main preoccupation with technology is in relation to its role as a facilitator in communication as well as a form of entertainment during leisure time. An exploration of the meaning behind young people's use of technology

found mobile phones in particular were a 'prerequisite for a social life' and enabled young people to establish an identity and sense of belonging (Carroll, Howard, Vetere, Peck, & Murphy, 2001). Other researchers argue that young people rely on technology to maintain their social life and connection with vital friendship networks (Huntley, 2006). As previously discussed, social groupings among young people are typically fluid. Communication technologies may enable young people access to a broader social network and increase their opportunities for socialisation. A recent UK study investigated how young British people use mobile phones and found over three-quarters of the sample (n=1,058) of males and females aged between 11 and 21 'could not bear to be without' their mobile phone (Haste, 2005). It could be argued that other social networking technologies, such as the Internet, MSN, Facebook and MySpace, fulfil a similar function. Understandings of the role technology plays in the lives of a generation of young Australians who have grown up with it as a part of their everyday existence are premature.

Research conducted with young Australians (18-30 year olds³⁸) in Melbourne found access to communication technologies, such as mobile phones, has an impact on young people's drinking patterns by facilitating the organisation of 'big nights' (Lindsay, 2005). Findings from a survey of 14-16 year old Finnish people

38 The age range of this study sample (18-30 year olds) overlaps with the age group of interest to this project (14-24 year olds), however, as the study results do not differentiate between age sub-groups, findings have been extrapolated from the complete study.

(Leena, Tomi, & Arja, 2005) also found intensity of mobile phone use was positively correlated with health-compromising behaviours, including heavy use of alcohol. The precise nature of the link between mobile phones and increased alcohol use is an important issue that needs further investigation. It may be that mobile phones signify independence and an increase in young people's sense of self-determination through the increased accessibility to peers and social interactions they enable. The ability to reach a wider social network through multiple-send mobile phone text messaging may facilitate the organisation of large-scale social events, which as previously discussed have been found to increase the prospect of risky drinking occurring.

Whilst undoubtedly there are pro-social effects of technology-driven entertainment, concern about the safety risks they foster requires consideration. Anecdotal evidence suggests on-line social networking sites, such as MySpace and Facebook, may hold a range of potential risks in facilitating social interactions involving alcohol that may have potentially harmful repercussions. For example, the Sydney Morning Herald recently claimed that 'young girls are the new face of underage drinking, lured to hastily organised booze sessions in parks and beaches by Internet sites such as MySpace' (Marcus & Cuming, 2007). Whilst the tendency of the media to create moral panic around youth-related issues must be acknowledged, this statement alludes to a potential relationship between communication technologies and alcohol that warrants exploration.

Further, networking sites are infused with alcohol marketing. A recent news.com.au article reported a growing presence of brand name alcoholic products (e.g., Toohey's Extra Dry, Foster's Cougar Bourbon and McKenna Bourbon) in on-line forums to access young people (Schliebs, 2007) (see Chapter 9 for more detail). The alcohol industry claims a commitment to judicious marketing and maintains that it does not target underage people. However, by pervading the on-line networks young people use to socialise, advertisers are tapping into a medium with which young people are frequently engaged. This is a clever option when traditional methods of advertising, such as print media or radio, are possibly outmoded for a young audience. Technology is a medium for communication that is well tapped into and arguably exploited by alcohol marketers – promotional activities are sent to mobile phones, Internet games promote alcoholic beverages, and alcoholic beverage companies such as Lion Nathan have begun showing their television advertisements on YouTube (www.youtube.com), a popular video-sharing website where users can upload, view and share video clips free-of-charge.

Research on the qualitative impact of technology-driven entertainment options and communication technologies on young people's relationships, how they access information to inform decisions and how this may shape choices around alcohol is required. We are aware that young Australians' use of technology is expanding exponentially, but the impact of technology on their leisure choices and

their drinking behaviour is unclear. This may be due predominately to the rapid development and growing popularity of innovative communications. The growing popularity of innovative communications and the use of technology as a forum for promoting products to build up brand recognition with young people to stimulate their desire for consumption is also of interest.

8.6. Popular media

To a large degree, young people's interaction with popular media shapes their worldview and their social development while simultaneously reflecting leisure choices and lifestyles. Young people are directly engaged with popular media in various formats: movies, television, magazines, music videos, etc. Going to the movies was found to be the most popular leisure activity among younger Australians. An ABS survey of attendance at cultural venues and events conducted in 2005-2006 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007c) found that 93% of 15-17 year olds went to the movies at least once over the past 12 months. Whilst popular among young people, research also illuminates a negative link between movie-viewing and drinking.

8.6.1. Movies

An Australian evaluation of the depiction of sex and drug use, including alcohol

intoxication, in the most popular movies of the last 20 years³⁹ highlighted how portrayals of negative health behaviours such as risky drinking are often included in popular movies (Gunasekera, Chapman, & Campbell, 2005). Alcohol intoxication specifically rather than alcohol consumption was noted. After analysing for inter-rater reliability, reviewers found 28 of 87 movies (32%) reviewed depicted alcohol intoxication. This finding is concerning in light of an investigation of the relationship between movie viewing and alcohol exposure among 10-14 year old Canadians that found a statistically significant association between exposure to movie alcohol use and early-onset drinking (Sargant, Wills, Stoolmiller, Gibson, & Gibbons, 2006). Further, this study found movie alcohol exposure was an independent risk factor for early-onset alcohol use after adjusting for potential confounding factors such as experimentation with other risk-taking behaviours (e.g., smoking), personality characteristics (e.g., sensation seeking), socio-demographics (e.g., gender, school) and other factors, including parenting style and school performance. The normative depiction of drinking at risky levels in movies is of concern given the popularity of this leisure choice among young people. Particularly in light of technology that enables increased access to movies (i.e., downloadable from the Internet) and unsupervised viewing.

³⁹ Researchers used the Internet Movie Database list of the top 200 movies of all time worldwide from 30 September 2003 (www.imdb.com) including mature-audience (MA) and restricted (R) rated movies only.

8.6.2. Television

An association between television viewing and alcohol consumption is also supported by the research literature. The portrayal of alcohol use in the popular media (movies, television shows, music videos) has been found to be typically depicted as consequence-free (with a few notable exceptions) and linked with enjoyable social activities that enhance the quality of life in recent US research studies (Okoro et al., 2004; Thomsen & Rekve, 2006). A Norwegian study found exposure to US television depicting alcohol consumption was a significant predictor of normative beliefs, positive alcohol-related expectancies and intentions to drink among young people (Thomsen & Rekve, 2006). Young people found alcohol-related media portrayals realistic, desirable and they wanted to be like or identify with the media depictions and associated positive outcome portrayals with positive drinking expectancies (Okoro et al., 2004). This study also found media exposure predicted actual drinking behaviour (Okoro et al., 2004).

8.6.3. Magazines

Magazines are another popular media targeted at young people which may have implications for their drinking. A recent UK study critically examined ways in which drinking, particularly different types of drinking (e.g., risky, binge), are portrayed in print media targeted at 18-24 year olds (Lyons, Dalton, & Hoy, 2006). This study reviewed two popular women's magazines (Cosmopolitan and Marie Claire) and two popular men's

magazines (FHM and Loaded), selected by highest monthly readership among the demographic studied. On account of their health content and to reduce bias, Health and Fitness and Men's Health magazines were also reviewed. Australian versions of the same magazines are published. The monthly magazines were reviewed across a three-month period from November to January, a study period specifically selected to capture the 'festive season' which is renowned as a period of celebration and increased drinking. This study found the magazines reviewed strongly conveyed notions that drinking alcohol, and drinking at risky levels in particular, is normal, adult, sophisticated and heightens popularity.

8.6.4. Music videos

A recent US study of young people's exposure to music videos found they frequently depict alcohol consumption. Researchers posited that music videos 'promote or glamorise alcohol use to young people' and 'act as a "super-peer" influencing behavioural norms and expectations' (Gruber, Thau, Hill, Fisher, & Grube, 2005 p. 83). This study took a three-week random sample of music videos (n=359) broadcast between 3pm and 11pm on MTV and BET cable US television channels and analysed content for the auditory (verbal references to) or visual presence (product placement) of alcohol or other product identifiers and advertising. Alcohol was present in one-third (34.5%) and product logos or other indirect advertising for alcohol

was present in 9% of all videos. Alcohol was 50% more likely to be present in rap or hip-hop genre than in other musical genres. The impact of such popular discourse depicted in music videos on young people's actual drinking behaviour was not studied.

8.6.5. Celebrity influence

The growth of technology-driven entertainment has also exposed young people to a broader array of figures of influence. An examination of the impact of media use on alcohol-related beliefs and behaviours found young people seek to identify with celebrity role models and desire to emulate behaviour portrayed in the media (Austin, Pinkleton, & Fujioka, 2000). This research also revealed desirable portrayals resulted in higher alcohol consumption levels amongst young people (Austin et al., 2000). A 17 year old US female commenting on Britney Spears stated 'why wouldn't girls be fascinated by her and her celebrity pals? These 21st century "bad influences" are young, beautiful and rich, unencumbered by school, curfews or parents. They've got great clothes and boyfriends; they seem to have a lot of fun' (Reno, Springen, Meadows, Underwood, & Scelfo, 2007). This young person identified such celebrities as a 'bad influence' yet continued to admire their lifestyle. Young Australians' perceptions of celebrity influence in relation to their identity aspirations need to be better understood. It may be possible that behaviours modelled by celebrities such as Paris Hilton and Lindsay Lohan have become 'normalised' in a contemporary

Australian society that emulates broader hedonistic cultural values and ideals.

Whilst it would be inappropriate to presume young people are passive subjects who objectively absorb popular media without critique, the potential for observational learning and modelling to occur should be acknowledged (Bandura, 1977). Of particular concern to this review, is how drinking behaviours acquired through modelling may be maintained through reinforcement in the form of cultural norms and social acceptance.

8.7. Summary

This section examined the role of the leisure sphere in shaping young Australians' drinking behaviours. Leisure pursuits that involve the consumption of alcohol express significant things about young people's social identity and symbolise affiliation with a social group. The types of alcohol products consumed and the drinking settings selected by young people serve as lifestyle markers. Drinking is, in this way, a symbolically significant activity with the ability to create and maintain distinctions and group hierarchies within young people's social realm. Young Australians' leisure choices vary according to access, both literal and emblematic. The importance of access to true free choice in how leisure time is spent appears to be paramount in preventing drinking as a by-product of perceived lack of leisure choices, constraints on accessing leisure time, or as a result of feeling disenfranchised from using public space.

The leisure realm also provides a forum where normative cultural behaviour patterns may be assumed and expressed. This is particularly evident in leisure areas such as national celebrations as well as sport and recreation settings, where Australian cultural practices and norms encourage heavy drinking. Other recreational settings, including school leaving festivals and holidays, also carry drinking-related social expectations surrounding how leisure time should be enjoyed. Communication technologies have naturally changed the way young people interact socially, enabling rapid access to multiple social contacts and the ability to plan their leisure time efficiently. New technologies also facilitate young people's organisation of large-scale social events which often involve alcohol consumption with potentially risky outcomes. Other areas where Australia's drinking culture influences young people is through media exposure to, and modelling of, risky drinking behaviours. The next chapter considers how market forces in the form of product marketing, alcohol advertising and beverage promotions, deployed via communication technologies and popular media, influence young people's drinking choices and behaviours.

9. Market Forces

There is a range of market forces operating at the global level that are thought to influence drinking behaviours, especially those of young people. These include marketing, advertising and promotions. Marketing and advertising by the alcohol industry are increasingly dominated by a few large transnational companies, which develop sophisticated global marketing strategies. The strategies are assisted by advances in technology that provide instant, interactive media, which are accessible and appealing to young people (e.g., Internet, on-line games, chat-rooms, SMS text).

9.1. Marketing and advertising

Although alcohol products may be advertised, promoted and legally sold in Australia to people aged 18 years and over, they are also commonly consumed by much younger individuals. While the alcohol industry may argue that they do not deliberately set out to target the very young (underage), nevertheless, this group is netted through various forms of exposure. Thus, young people provide added value to legitimate marketing methods in that alcohol companies can cultivate the next cohort of potential drinkers.

Evidence is growing that alcohol advertising and marketing significantly influence young people's decisions about drinking and their expectancies related to alcohol use. This includes not only their initiation to drinking, what they drink, how much they drink, where and with whom they drink, but also the way they think and feel about alcohol. That is, advertising and marketing is part of the cultural context that shapes the meanings young people construct around alcohol.

Advertising of alcohol products is a highly contentious issue as conflicting evidence from different types of studies demonstrates. Econometric studies analyse the relationship between overall levels of alcohol consumption (from sales data) and overall levels of advertising (from advertising expenditure) (Hastings, Anderson, Cooke, & Gordon, 2005). A recent review of the evidence showed that most econometric studies demonstrated little or no effect of advertising on aggregate alcohol consumption (Hastings et al., 2005). However, econometric studies examine total sales, which are primarily to adults and, therefore, less relevant to youth drinking; and this type of study generally fails to provide data on the behaviour of sub-groups (age groups, gender) or the proportional advertising

support for different brands/types of drinks. In contrast, consumer studies examine how drinking behaviour, attitudes and knowledge vary with exposure to alcohol advertising. These studies consistently show a strong association between exposure to alcohol advertising (in magazines, television, in-store displays and sports venues) and young people's early initiation to alcohol use and/or increased alcohol consumption (Ellickson et al., 2005; Hastings et al., 2005; Hughes et al., 1997; Hurtz, Henriksen, Wang, Feighery, & Fortmann, 2007; Snyder, Milici, Slater, Sun, & Strizhakova, 2006; Stacy, Zogg, Unger, & Dent, 2004). It is improbable that alcohol companies would invest heavily in advertising and marketing strategies that fail to increase the sales and consumption of their brands.

Marketing, advertising and promotional activities are legitimate methods for competitors in any particular market to distinguish their products from those of their rivals. A broad range of strategies may be used for this purpose and generally include the four well-known fundamental elements:

- Product – formulation and packaging may be tailored to reflect drinkers' preferences.
- Promotion – advertising, branding and sponsorship strategies may be used to confer desired image and values.

- Place – companies vie for prime location to facilitate access to their products.
- Price – price may be matched to a target market's available income and perceived product status.

The purchase and use of alcohol is not entirely driven by individuals' free choice, but rather it is constrained by the defined parameters of these four elements in the purposeful construction of advertisements.

9.1.1. Product

Innovative development of an alcohol product focuses on several variables, including the taste, colour, alcohol content and packaging of the product. In recent years, there have been significant developments in the tailored design and packaging of alcohol products to appeal to a more differentiated market, including specific products targeted at young people.

Traditionally, alcohol beverages were classified into three groups: beer, wine and spirits.⁴⁰ In the 1980s, a range of 'wine coolers' was introduced to the alcohol market. These sweet wine-based beverages, containing added fruit juice and/or flavourings, were relatively low in alcohol and were designed for 'entry-

⁴⁰ Beer is fermented from cereals, such as wheat, rye or barley, and alcohol content ranges between <3% for 'light' beer and from 5% to almost 30% for full-strength beer (Wikipedia). Variants include lager, ale, stout and mead. Wine is fermented from fruit, usually grapes, and alcohol content ranges between 0.5% and 20%. Spirits are distilled from a variety of sources, including cereals, fruit, berries, potatoes or rice, and may contain up to 90% alcohol. Variants include whiskey, brandy, bourbon, gin, vodka, rum and liqueurs.

level' drinkers (Mosher & Johnsson, 2005). Following a plateau in popularity of wine coolers in the early 1990s, there has been a rise in alternative alcohol products that blur the distinctions between traditional alcohol beverage categories.

In the late 1990s, a process of 're-commodification' of alcohol products occurred, which aimed to counteract the growth of the rave scene and the tendency for young people to use psychoactive recreational drugs like ecstasy in place of alcohol (Brain, 2000). The key changes in the alcohol market included:

- Introduction of 'designer drinks' or ready-to-drink alcohol beverages (RTDs) aimed at a new generation of drinkers. Also known as FABs (Flavoured Alcohol Beverages) or alcopops due to their similarity to soft drinks, RTDs include: 1) alcohol sodas, ciders and coolers; 2) spirits and liqueurs pre-mixed with soft drinks or milk; and 3) beers with added sugar, colour and flavouring
- Increased alcohol content in products
- Use of names that evoke drug images (e.g., Raver, Hemp, Cocaine), designed to appeal to the psychoactive drug users
- Increased advertising and branding in terms of lifestyle and image, which provoke emotional responses
- Introduction of theme pubs, café bars and club bars, designed to mimic the leisure and entertainment preferences of young consumers (Brain, 2000).

The reasoning for this re-commodification is illustrated by the following:

By increasing the strength of alcohol products and deliberately breaking down the barriers between the licit and illicit drugs markets, producing drinks that trade on dance club/ drug culture, [the alcohol industry] has sought to exploit and reproduce the drinking of alcohol for a psychoactive hit (Brain, 2000, p.9).

More recently, novel modes of product delivery have also been developed, including spirits in the form of 'shooters', 'slammers' or 'shots'. These products, which may contain multiple measures (i.e., in excess of a standard drink) of different alcohol products layered in a shot glass, are designed to be swallowed in one gulp. Typically high in alcohol, these products are also promoted in novel ways, including using squirt guns or having drinking 'countdowns', which encourage rapid ingestion of high alcohol products within a short period of time. There is evidence of the growing popularity of these alternative beverage forms. For example, in 2003 over 1,000 Macquarie University students consumed 1,049 tequila slammers in 45 minutes to break the Guinness World record (Jacobsen, 2003). The UK drinks industry group, the Portman Group, recently revised their code of practice to ban such activities (Smithers, 2007).

Differentiation of products

The growing differentiation of alcohol products has also contributed to a change in the profile of alcohol consumers – from

a traditionally male (mixed age) customer base to a variety of customer groups (mixed gender, single gender, age-specific, weekend drinkers) (Measham & Brain, 2005).

Within different product categories, there is increasing heterogeneity, with differences in price and quality, but also perceived differences due to advertising and marketing.⁴¹ Consistent with the segmentation of the market for different alcohol products, there has been a rise in consumption of imported beers, which compete with local product; and growth of themed beer bars, which sell a wide range of imported and local beers. Imported and domestic premium⁴² beers have replaced the low- and full-strength beers that were once the staple drink of Australians (AC Nielsen & Scan Track Liquor, 2006; Ibisworld Press Releases, 2006). Compared with the previous year, full-strength beer sales (to September 2006) increased by 1.2%, and light beer sales fell by 7.1%, whereas domestic and imported premium beers experienced growth of 4.4% and 19.6%, respectively (AC Nielsen & Scan Track Liquor, 2006). In the year ending November 2006, RTD sales grew by 7.5%, and spirits sales increased by 4.5% (AC Nielsen & Scan Track Liquor, 2006). In 2006, Foster's introduced 'Pure Blonde', a low carbohydrate premium lager, to appeal to the 'health conscious' market. Segmentation of the

market allows alcohol companies to get closer to their customers by identifying and responding more precisely to the particular needs of a smaller group, thus increasing their market share of products consumed by that group.

An analysis of RTDs in the UK showed how *Mad Dog (MD 20/20)*, a fortified fruit wine, was developed and marketed for young 'starter drinkers' (14-15 years old) (Jackson et al., 2000). The sweet fruity flavour, screwtops for easy portability, bright colours to aid brand identification, high alcohol content (13.5-18%) for rapid intoxication, relatively low price and widespread availability (small local stores) made it very appealing to young adolescents. In contrast, *Bacardi Breezer*, a rum-based pre-mix that is available in a range of sweet fruity flavours, is more expensive and meets the needs of more 'established drinkers' (16-24 years old). Consumption of RTDs has been associated with heavier drinking, increased drunkenness and drinking in less controlled environments (Hughes et al., 1997).

Taste perceptions and preferences

In general, young adolescents (12-15 years old) do not initially enjoy the taste of alcohol (Hughes et al., 1997; Shanahan & Hewitt, 1999), describing it as 'disgusting' and 'burning' the throat (MacKintosh et

41 Marketing companies identify a target group – potential customers who are similar to one another, but distinct from others – that is large enough to provide a profitable return on investment and sufficiently accessible to promotional activity and product distribution (Jackson, Hastings, Wheeler, Eadie, & Mackintosh, 2000).

42 'Premium' beer is a term commonly applied to the 'flagship' beer that a company wants to promote. It tends to be higher in alcohol, has a higher profit margin ($\geq 10\%$ more than mainstream beer), is often packaged in green or clear bottles, and is targeted to distinct sections of the market (personal communication, ex-Lion Nathan employee).

al., 1997). This is consistent with evidence showing that young people (under 15 years) have a stronger preference for sweet flavours compared to those aged over 19 years (Desor & Beauchamp, 1987). The sweet taste of RTDs tends to mask the alcohol, making it more appealing to inexperienced drinkers (Copeland, Gates, Stevenson, & Dillon, 2005). RTDs are the preferred alcohol beverage for 12-15 year old Australians, especially females (Copeland et al., 2005). The preferences and palatability of a range of alcohol RTDs and their non-alcohol mixers were examined in 350 young people (12-23 years) and older adults (24-30 years). The Vodka *Mudshake* (chocolate milk and Vodka) received the highest palatability rating followed by the watermelon *Breezer* (watermelon flavoured soft drink and *Bacardi*), performing more like their non-alcohol base (chocolate milk or soft drink) than their alcohol component. With increasing age, preferences moved from RTDs towards spirits or beer for males, and spirits or wine for females (Copeland et al., 2005). As individuals mature, there also is an element of socially constructed preferences for alcohol tastes, such that the 'appreciation' of wine or single malt whiskies goes beyond physiological taste preferences.

Marketing and branding consultants for the alcohol industry acknowledge that sweeter RTDs are marketed and promoted specifically to a younger audience:

These drinks are predominately sweeter to capture this market.

They can then work their way to the established brands as they mature and their tastes change i.e., Grant's whiskey and cola for the younger moving to only whiskey as they mature in taste and age (Wade, 2004).

Cheap sugary drinks packaged in bright colours are the best way to start people drinking early in adulthood. [Absolut Cut] is one of the few drinks where you don't necessarily know you're drinking alcohol and that's a conscious effort to make those drinks more appealing to young people. The drinks are about masking the alcohol taste. When you're young, your palate is tuned for sugary drinks (Mat Baxter, marketing executive, Absolut Cut in AAP, 2007).

Young adolescents (12-15 years) tend to drink what they see others drinking (parents, older siblings, friends) (MacKintosh et al., 1997).⁴³ A British qualitative study of adolescent drinking (MacKintosh et al., 1997) reported that the younger age group (12-13 year olds) tended to drink mouthfuls rather than full cans or bottles, whereas the 14-15 year olds drank what they needed to get drunk, although most did not enjoy the 'process' of getting drunk, only the end result (losing control). Older age groups (16-17 year olds) often drank to get drunk, but were more likely to use drinking to enhance their social activities, than use it as a social activity in itself. This group

⁴³ Analysis of data from the Australian NDSHS showed that the first alcohol drink was supplied most commonly by peers (43%) or parents (35%).

found the taste of alcohol more palatable and the type of alcohol, and its packaging, was important to them as it signalled a particular 'image'.

Packaging

Products are packaged and labelled to provide: 1) physical protection (e.g., from contamination); 2) containment (e.g., for transportation); and 3) information (e.g., contents and instructions for use). Product packaging may also incorporate features that add convenience for customers, such as 'tear tabs', 'pop-tops' and screw-tops on cans and bottles. Packaging design may also be used as a marketing tool to attract customers to purchase the product. For example, in the US, Snapple introduced a redesigned oversized pink can of *Arizona Iced Tea* and increased its market share to 14% within one year (Miller, 1994). Similarly, the Saratoga Spring Water Co. created a group of seven Generation X cartoon characters whose trials and tribulations of living in Big City, US, are printed as a drama series on the labels of their Toga brand of iced teas and fruit juices (Miller, 1994). These innovative and often interactive ways of communicating with a target audience are very effective marketing techniques that are cheaper than spending millions of dollars on national advertising campaigns.

Youth-oriented products, such as soft drinks, are packaged specifically to grab the attention of young people and portray the 'personality' of the product using

adult images (Rubel, 1996). Young people construct their social identity around the alcohol products that they use. Over time, packaging of alcohol products, particularly RTDs, have become more similar to popular soft drinks, thereby drawing young people's attention to them (Austin & Hust, 2005; MacKintosh et al., 1997). Similarly, newer high energy soft drink products have been packaged to appear more like 'hard' alcohol drinks – e.g., Red Bull, Mother. For example, the 8.3oz slim blue and silver can of Red Bull,⁴⁴ which dominated the energy drinks market in 2004, has an edgy, almost dangerous image (Rodgers, 2001). Its motto 'Red Bull gives you wings', appeals strongly to young clubbers who want to dance all night. Moreover, the blurring of product presentation style and packaging between non-alcohol and alcohol beverages makes it: 1) easier for a young person to opt to drink an alcohol beverage; and 2) more difficult to consciously distinguish between the two types of beverages.

The importance of product presentation and packaging is gaining greater recognition. Evidence from several studies indicates that adolescents aged under 18 years believe that RTD products are designed specifically to appeal to their age group (Copeland et al., 2005; Jones & Donovan, 2001; Smith, Edwards, & Harris, 2005; Van Beurden & Davis, 2005). For example, 27% of 15-16 year old Australians believe that RTD advertisements are targeted at 'people

44 Among other ingredients, Red Bull contains taurine, which is believed to reduce muscle fatigue.

my age', and almost 50% of 19-21 year olds believe that RTD advertising is aimed at 'people younger or much younger than me' (Jones & Donovan, 2001). In addition, Copeland et al. (2005) showed that, in general, the packaging of alcohol beverages (spirits, beer and wine) were designed to appeal to older study participants (24-30 years), and palatability ratings⁴⁵ increased when participants saw the packaging. In contrast, non-alcohol beverages were designed to appeal to younger participants (12-17 years), with an associated increase in palatability ratings (Gates, Copeland, Stevenson, & Dillon, 2007). However, there were notable exceptions for the RTDs Bacardi Breezer and Mudshake. While the packaging of these products appealed to all participants, the palatability rating decreased with age, indicating greater appeal to the younger age group (Copeland et al., 2005; Jones & Donovan, 2001).

The portability of RTDs also adds to their appeal to underage Australian drinkers (Smith et al., 2005). That is, there is no need to carry glasses, mixers and spirit bottles. Some young people also prefer to carry a bottle with screw-top to deter drink spiking. Additionally, workers in the alcohol industry (pubs and bottle shops) agree that RTDs are packaged and marketed primarily for underage drinkers (Smith et al., 2005). (See also the influence of placement of RTDs in section 9.1.3).

9.1.2. Promotion

Advertising

In 2004, the Australian alcohol industry spent \$124 million on alcohol advertising, primarily aired on television (57%) (Nielsen Media Research in King, Taylor, & Carroll, 2005b). However, estimates from US data (Federal Trade Commission, 1999 in (Jernigan, Ostroff, & Ross, 2005), suggest that it is likely that two to three times this amount is spent on 'unmeasured' advertising, such as sponsorships, Point-of-Sale promotions⁴⁶, giveaways, branded materials and special events. Neither econometric nor consumer studies of the impact of alcohol advertising take into account these 'unmeasured' forms or the non-commercial⁴⁷ types of marketing (Cherrington, Chamberlain, & Grixti, 2006).

At the simplest level, advertisements are used to bring a product to the attention of potential consumers, promote its benefits and features compared to rival products, and gain market share for a company. This type of 'product' advertisement for alcohol focuses primarily on the merits of the product (e.g., taste, quality). In contrast, a more powerful form of advertising has been developed, which focuses on image or lifestyle factors. Alcohol ads often entail interactive aspects to engage the audience by using elements of conversation (e.g., turn-

45 Palatability ratings were determined using a Likert scale (1-7) to measure how much the participants liked a product.

46 Point-of-Sale materials are typically colourful displays of posters and branded items.

47 Non-commercial marketing includes family, friends and local communities that frame alcohol in positive terms; television, films and music shows; fund-raising events that use alcohol products or alcohol-related items (e.g., wine label designs) to raise money.

taking, anticipation, sentence completion) (McCreanor, Greenaway, Moewaka Barnes, Borell, & Gregory, 2005). Thus the dialogue brings the audience closer to the product; they get to know the product as something familiar and natural (enculturation and normalisation).

At the most basic level, images of alcohol are used to persuade people to act – i.e., to purchase and consume a product. However, they may also be used to influence our perceptions of alcohol and society (Sulkunen, 1998). For example, the use of humour in alcohol advertisements may be used to mock conventional views of society, symbolising an anti-authoritarian attitude, reinforcing the thrill of deviating from the norm and representing instant gratification, rather than the discipline of restraint. This creates a tension between hedonism and asceticism (unbounded vs bounded pleasure). For example, the Toohey's New 'Guide Dog' ad uses humour to break the rules about 'No dogs allowed' in pubs (<http://www.urbantelegraph.com.au/beer-ad-guide-dog/>).

Image and lifestyle-focused advertising implies that the depicted idealised lifestyle can be attained by using the advertised product. The advertising messages embedded in alcohol ads typically parallel young people's goals of good times, sex and social acceptance.

Persuasive themes and stereotypes in advertising

Alcohol advertisements create a relationship between drinking and valued outcomes, including relaxation,

romance, fun and adventure (Austin & Hust, 2005). In an examination of the content and appeal of alcohol and non-alcohol ads in magazines in the US, Austin and Hust (2005) reported that the themes and appeals portrayed in alcohol ads frequently mirrored the themes portrayed in non-alcohol ads. Both types of ads featured the branded beverage juxtaposed with relaxation, humour, the outdoors, friendship and work. This has a normalising effect such that when young people first become aware of alcohol ads, they are already familiar with the themes and appeals.

Key differences between non-alcohol and alcohol advertising were in the representation of women and age groups (Austin & Hust, 2005). Men were portrayed in more dominant roles and women were typically de-emphasised and stereotyped in alcohol ads. Sexual innuendo and portrayal of women as sex objects occurred in up to 70% of alcohol ads. Similarly, content analysis of alcohol ads in Rolling Stone magazine, which has a strong youth readership, showed that some of the more common themes included humour (24% of ads), sex appeal (23%), romance and relationships (17%) and hanging out or partying (11%) (Hill, White, Chung, Hawkins, & Catalano, 2000). The connection between drinking alcohol and sexual appeal is important, given that unsafe sex practices are often associated with alcohol use in young people (Bonomo et al., 2001). While young adults were targeted in both alcohol and non-alcohol ads (Austin & Hust, 2005), non-alcohol ads aimed at a broader range of age groups, whereas alcohol ads were

predominantly aimed at youth in youth-oriented magazines.

Television and magazine advertising in Australia is replete with examples of sexual stereotyping and sexual innuendo. Recently, a Hahn beer TV ad drew complaints of overt sexism. In the ad, a bikini-clad woman draws a love heart in the sand and a young man adds nipples to turn it into a pair of breasts, then drinks from a Hahn Superdry bottle of beer (Mickelborough, 2007). Similarly, magazines in Australia commonly contain ads that imply sexual success or sexual connotations (e.g., Carlton's 'Stay Hard, Play Hard' ad and Subzero's Cosmopolitan ad) (Donovan, Donovan, Howat, & Weller, 2007).

Australian icons and quintessential images of mateship and larrikin behaviour have also been a recurrent theme in many Australian beer commercials, including the following ads:

- Foster's 'I believe' (<http://www.urbantelegraph.com.au/beer-ad-i-believe/>)
- Carlton's 'the shed' (<http://www.urbantelegraph.com.au/beer-ad-the-shed/>)
- Hahn's 'love bomb' (<http://www.urbantelegraph.com.au/aussie-beer-ad-love-bomb/>)

These ads perpetuate male stereotypes of masculinity and/or women as the butt of a joke.

More recent beer ads have taken a new direction, introducing the 'gross-out' factor, such as in the highly memorable

Toohey's Extra Dry 'tongue' ad (<http://www.urbantelegraph.com.au/beer-ad-the-quest-that-tongue-ad/>); and appealing to non-traditional beer markets, such as women, as depicted in Toohey's New 'bottle opener' ad (<http://www.urbantelegraph.com.au/beer-ad-bottle-opener/>). This way of thinking resonates with adolescents as they shape their individual identities distinct from those of their parents.

Youth-oriented alcohol advertising

Compared with alcohol product advertisements, image advertisements are particularly appealing to younger adolescents, who find them more persuasive and attention demanding (Chen, Grube, Bersamin, Waiters, & Keefe, 2005; Kelly & Edwards, 1998). In addition, those who do not yet drink show a strong preference for image advertisements (compared to product advertisements) and intention to drink in the future (Kelly & Edwards, 1998). Preference for image advertisements appears to wane with increasing maturity (Kohn, Smart, & Ogborne, 1984).

This raises questions about who is targeted in alcohol commercials. If adolescents are not the intended target of advertising, and image advertisements have no more appeal than product advertisements to adults, then it has been suggested by some commentators that image/lifestyle advertisements for alcohol products should be banned (Kelly & Edwards, 1998).

A growing body of evidence indicates that alcohol advertising via a range of media

(television, radio, magazines, billboards) reaches children and adolescents (Collins, Ellickson, McCaffrey, & Hambarsoomians, 2005; Collins, Schell, Ellickson, & McCaffrey, 2003; Grube & Wallack, 1994; Jernigan et al., 2005; Martin et al., 2002). This implicates alcohol advertising as a key influence on young people's drinking behaviour (Stacy et al., 2004), including underage drinking (Atkin, Hocking, & Block, 1984; Austin, Chen, & Grube, 2005; Collins, Ellickson, McCaffrey, & Hambarsoomians, 2007), 'binge' drinking (Connolly, Casswell, Zhang, & Silva, 1994; Wyllie, Zhang, & Casswell, 1998), and the precursors to drinking – liking for alcohol ads (Martin et al., 2002), positive attitudes towards drinking (Donovan et al., 2007), and intention to drink as an adult (Chen et al., 2005; Wyllie et al., 1998). In the period April 2004–March 2005, 13-17 year olds in Sydney and Melbourne were potentially exposed to a similar number of alcohol advertisements as seen by 18-29 year olds (King et al., 2005b).⁴⁸ However, for many alcohol brands (40% in Sydney and >70% of brands in Melbourne), advertising exposure was at least 90% or higher in the younger age group (13-17 year olds) compared to the older group (18-29 year olds).

The time of day of alcohol advertising may also impact on youth exposure. An examination of the time of day that alcohol ads were broadcast in Sydney and Melbourne revealed that 38% of alcohol ads that were broadcast on weekends and public holidays occurred

between 5am and 8.30pm, times that coincided with live sports coverage and a substantial youth audience (King et al., 2005b). However, placing alcohol advertisements in later time slots does not necessarily prevent young people's exposure. In New Zealand, Wyllie et al. (Wyllie et al., 1998) showed that 48% of 10-13 year olds and 83% of 14-17 year olds could recall at least four alcohol ads that were televised after 9pm in one week of watching television.

Alcohol advertising 'overexposure' occurs when young people are over-represented in the audience relative to their presence in the general population, with the result that, per capita, they are more likely to see the advertising than adults (Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth, 2005b). Voluntary changes, which were introduced by the US alcohol industry in September 2003, to limit advertising to a maximum of 30% young audience composition (aged under 21 years) resulted in a decline in youth exposure to alcohol ads in magazines during 2001-2004 (Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth, 2005b). However, CAMY (Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth, 2006) reported a subsequent increase (by 41% in 2005) in the number of alcohol ads being seen on television by young people (12-20 year olds). This was mostly related to increased advertising expenditure on distilled spirits in cable networks. For example, 24 times more \$US was spent in 2005 (\$122 million) compared to 2001 (\$5 million).

48 From Nielsen Media Research, the weight of potential alcohol advertisements was calculated using Target Audience Rating Points (TARPs = the proportion of a targeted demographic group potentially exposed to an ad and represents the reach and frequency of alcohol advertising within the designated group).

In the US print media, the number of advertisements for beer and distilled spirits has been found to be significantly correlated with adolescent readership (Garfield, Chung, & Rathouz, 2003). On average, for every additional one million adolescent readers (12-19 year olds) of a magazine, there were 1.6 times as many advertisements for beer ($p < 0.05$) and 1.3 times as many advertisements for spirits ($p < 0.01$) compared with other magazines. That is, beer and spirits appeared more frequently in magazines with high adolescent readership (1997-2001). For young adults (20-24 year olds), there was a significant association between readership and spirits (Advertising Rate Ratio (ARR)⁴⁹ = 2.6, $p < 0.001$) and wine (ARR = 3.0, $p < 0.001$), but not for beer. Although these data do not imply a causal relationship, they indicate that advertisers are aware of demographic consumption patterns (i.e., adolescents prefer beer and spirits; young adults prefer wine and spirits). Given the association between exposure and consumption, even incidental levels of alcohol advertisement exposure to young adolescents may be a public health concern.

Occurrence tracking⁵⁰ (for brand advertising) and audience estimates data (for different demographic groups) in the US have been used to measure and compare the exposure to alcohol advertising in young people (aged under 21 years) and adults (21 years and older) (Jernigan et al., 2005). Compared to

adults, young people in the US were exposed to 48% more beer ads, 20% more spirits ads, 92% more alcopops ads, and 66% fewer wine ads in magazines. While the analysis for television ads was less precise, results showed that 24% of alcohol advertisements on television were more likely per capita to be seen by youth under 21 years compared to adults. For example, all the top 15 US shows with a very high preponderance of teenage audiences contained alcohol ads. Although alcohol industry funded ads pertaining to responsible drinking were televised during the same period (2001-2003), young people were 96 times more likely to see alcohol commercials than responsibility ads (Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth, 2005a).

Similarly, in five of the leading 15 alcohol markets in radio advertising, young people heard more alcohol ads per capita than adults and 28% of the ads were on at times when young people were more than 30% of the audience (twice the proportion in the general population). A more recent report, which measured alcohol product and alcohol responsibility advertisements on television in the US (2001-2005), reported that alcohol companies spent almost a third more on product ads (from \$780 million to \$1 billion) between 2001 and 2005 and cut \$2 million from their annual budget for public service advertisements (Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth, 2007). As a result, young people were 239 times more likely to see product ads

49 ARR = Regression analysis coefficients were reported as ARR – the proportional difference in advertisement rate for each unit difference in readership.

50 Occurrence tracking is a measure of the number of advertisements that occur in a specified time period and location.

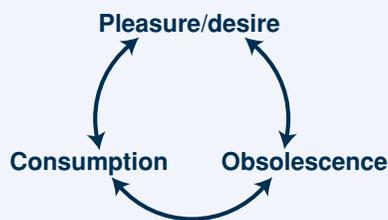
compared with responsibility ads. Data relating to the expenditure and ratio of alcohol ads to responsibility ads in Australia is unavailable.

Some of the most powerful advertising, which is not measured accurately, is ubiquitous – e.g., billboards, bus shelters, buses and trains, where exposure is high to children and adolescents without a driver's licence or car. In addition, the unparalleled growth in electronic media has provided a new, and largely unregulated, means to promote alcohol products to a global audience. Moreover, this form of communication is particularly appealing to computer-savvy adolescents. The websites established by alcohol companies are designed with a strong focus on youth-oriented images, including a wide range of cartoons, animation, music videos and interactive games (often with prizes and incentives) that provide an attractive virtual playground for children and adolescents. In 2005, over 13% of alcohol website visits were by underage youth, despite the presence of an age-verification page, and most alcohol brands (76%) were not blocked by parental control software programmes (Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth, 2005a).

In Australia, a range of alcohol beverage websites, which promote brands that are available in Australia, were examined to assess the level of appeal the sites might have for young people (Carroll & Donovan, 2002). Six websites were examined, including www.carltoncold.com.au, www.jimbeam.com, www.strongbow.com.au, www.wickedwines.com.au, www.midori.com.au, and www.subzero.com.au. In each website, there were elements of

strong appeal to young people, including those aged under 18 years. Music, extreme sports, arcade games, sexual innuendoes, and competitions to win alcohol products or other prizes were common features. Discouragement of visitors who were under 18 years was generally by way of a perfunctory warning, with no real way to limit entry. Other examples of 'under the radar' marketing include paying adolescents to get a marketing message out to young people in on-line Chat Rooms (Rushkoff, 2001) and Point-of-Sale promotions, which are discussed in more detail below (see 9.1.3: Placement).

Generational marketing involves segmenting a market to gain insight into consumers' attitudes, beliefs, values and experiences, with a view to influencing buying behaviour (Promar International, 2001). Seeking ways to make products identify or 'connect' with consumers is fundamental to successful marketing. One of the keys to selling to young people is to fuel their insecurities, suggesting they are missing out on desirables (e.g., love, happiness, sex, wealth, success) unless they buy a particular product. The consumer culture is preserved, thus:



Alcohol marketing may influence identity formation in young people. As previously outlined, young people find meaning and significance in their lives through their

consumption behaviours (McCreanor et al., 2005). Market researchers commonly use qualitative research practices, such as discourse analysis and ethnographic research, to understand identity formation (McCreanor et al., 2005). These tools allow them to conceptualise market segments and lifestyle clusters in order to target their products more effectively.

Youth identity is constituted through consumption practices, representation and the transference of symbolic meaning. Through consumption practices young people create micro-cultures that shape their identity and status in relation to others. In a context of rapid and constant social change it is argued that young people experience stability through the creation of consumer identities (McCreanor et al., 2005, p.253).

Such stability is not manifested in the form of a deep-rooted sense of sameness, but in a flexible, mutable and diverse sense of identity within which consumerism appears to present the only viable resource... Young people use consumption as a means of establishing lifestyles that make the world a manageable place (McCreanor et al., 2005, p 142; Miles, 2001).

Advertising and promotions are never static – even when markets are well-established (e.g., Coca-Cola) – as new cohorts are needed to fill the gap when a particular group matures (Saffer, 2002). Ads are crafted to both reflect and express the dominant culture and lifestyle of the targeted group in a two-

way relationship. That is, youth culture is co-opted and commodified. In order to find out what really connects with young people, marketing moguls keep adolescents under constant surveillance, hunting for what is ‘cool’ and deftly targeting their products to the young consumer (Klein, 2001; Rushkoff, 2001). Using characteristics of young people, such as rebelliousness, marketing companies skilfully reflect back the idea that ‘parents are creeps, teachers are nerds and authority figures are laughable’ (Rushkoff, 2001). Thus, no one really understands them except the corporate sponsor.

Exposure – consumption association

A large body of evidence consistently shows a strong association between exposure to alcohol advertisements and the development of positive attitudes towards alcohol (Donovan et al., 2007), increased intentions to drink (Pasch, Komro, Perry, Hearst, & Farbaksh, 2007) and increased alcohol consumption in young people (Stacy et al., 2004). For example, US adolescents reporting weekly visits to stores (i.e., grocery stores) containing alcohol advertising material were three times more likely to have ever tried drinking and 1.5 times more likely to report current drinking (Hurtz et al., 2007).

It should be noted that linking alcohol advertising directly to behavioural outcomes is fraught with difficulties in experimental studies – largely due to:

- A question of causality. Do alcohol ads cause drinking? or does drinking cause increased awareness of ads?
- A suite of potential confounding effects (incidental exposure, family/

peer influences, frequency of previous alcohol consumption etc).

- Use of self-reported data that relies on memory for alcohol ads and are prone to recall bias, which tends to overestimate advertising effects.

However, a growing body of evidence suggests that the direction of effect favours alcohol ads facilitating drinking (Casswell & Zhang, 1998; Connolly et al., 1994; Grube & Wallack, 1994; Martin et al., 2002; Pasch et al., 2007; Snyder et al., 2006; Wyllie et al., 1998). Snyder et al. (Snyder et al., 2006) showed that for every additional alcohol ad over an average of 23 per month, young people drank 1% more; and for every additional dollar per capita spent on alcohol ads (over an average of \$6.80 per capita), they drank 3% more. Despite heated arguments and counterarguments (Schultz, 2006), these findings are consistent across large studies with large sample sizes (Ellickson et al., 2005; Snyder et al., 2006; Stacy et al., 2004).

While it is suggested that young people actively negotiate meanings in context, research also suggests that high exposure to advertising can lead to more passive participation, whereby adolescents may form an association between alcohol use and important values and lifestyles, even when they are sceptical of the ads (Mazis, 1995). Changes in the brain structure during adolescence reduce inhibitory control and may increase the risk for

influence by advertising (Pechmann, Levine, Loughlin, & Leslie, 2005).

Likeability – consumption association

Young people (<18 years) are not only exposed to high levels of alcohol advertising, but also show a liking for them and have good recall of beer ads – predictors for future heavy drinking – compared to those with no particular liking for beer ads (Casswell & Zhang, 1998; Connolly et al., 1994; Wyllie et al., 1998). Content analyses showed that the images portrayed in beer commercials contained attractive young people or animal characters and elements of humour, fun, excitement, adventure, success, sexual appeal, romance and popular music. Consequently, young people liked the advertisements, recalled them easily, identified the sponsors (Donovan et al., 2007; Zwarun, Linz, Metzger, & Kunkel, 2006), and reported intentions to purchase the advertised product (Chen et al., 2005).

Advertising and marketing strategies are likely to have a cumulative effect, which is difficult to measure in an experimental study. Therefore, different research methods are required. Using the Elaboration Likelihood Model⁵¹ of persuasion, Slater (Slater et al., 1996) showed that young men consistently preferred beer ads with sports content compared to beer ads without sports content or non-beer ads with sports content. This advertising technique maintains sexual stereotypes that

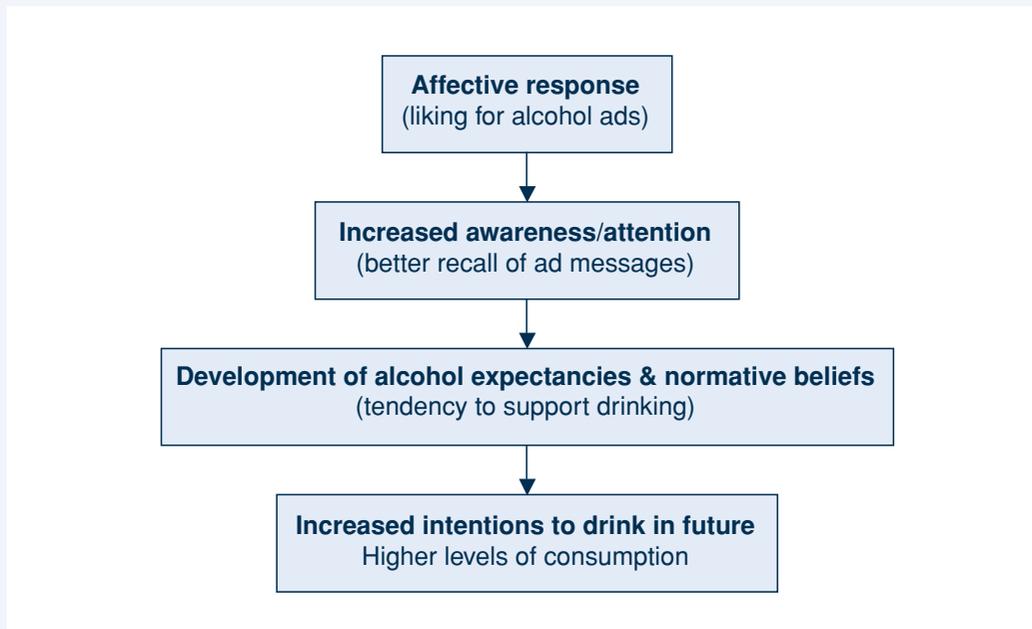
51 The Elaboration Likelihood Model of persuasion pertains to how attitudes are formed and changed. This model distinguishes between two routes: the central route (issues and content of message) and the peripheral route (e.g., source credibility and attractiveness).

exist around sport and exercise and strengthens social and individual identity with the product.

In particular, adolescents are attracted to image and lifestyle elements, whereas they dislike product- or quality-oriented ads (Kelly & Edwards, 1998; Waiters,

Trendo, & Grube, 2001). Liking alcohol advertisements may be a key factor in increasing awareness and mediating the effects of exposure. The potential mechanisms linking likeability of alcohol advertisements and increased levels of consumption in young people are shown in the model illustrated in Figure 25.

Figure 25. Model of potential link between liking of alcohol advertisements and alcohol consumption



Branding and brand building

Brands are trademarks or labels associated with a particular product. They include symbols, characters, logos or the product itself or its packaging – e.g., iconic shape of a Coca-Cola bottle. Recognition of a brand is the key first step, whereas loyalty to the brand is the ultimate goal for companies. Loyalty is developed by using formal advertising strategies,

product placement, sponsorship and constant exposure. Eventually brands may become synonymous with whole categories of products and activities – e.g., Band-Aid, Kleenex, Panadol.

The primary function of marketing is the development of brand capital, which involves a gradual increase in the meaning and emotion associated with a brand (Saffer, 2002). Brand capital is achieved by

subtly embedding brands within a culture by developing the brand as a concept, such as experience or lifestyle, rather than a product or commodity (Klein, 2001). The brand becomes an entity with a particular personality that invites consumers to form a relationship with the brand. Brand-building aims to connect a product to the consumer by tapping into emotional characteristics and common values and beliefs that are part of our shared culture. Brands that are accepted on an emotional and cultural level are generally more powerful. For youth culture, this is particularly effective as brand affiliation contributes to the self-identity of young people (Brain, 2000; McCreanor et al., 2005). The brand is a symbolic marker; a statement of who you are.

Alcohol companies use a range of youth-oriented images and language to attract young people to particular products and educate them about the brand and the product. Alcohol-branded merchandise, such as T-shirts, hats, watches and glassware, is finding its way into the hands of adolescents (Workman, 2003). Moreover, owning alcohol-branded merchandise is associated with initiation of alcohol use, after adjusting for potential confounders (academic performance, smoking, parental permissiveness, gender, peer drinking and levels of sensation-seeking and rebelliousness) (McClure, Dal Cin, Gibson, & Sargent, 2006). Although the McClure et al. study was cross-sectional and causal inferences cannot be made, their findings parallel the earlier relationship found between cigarette-branded merchandise and smoking initiation, which was confirmed in longitudinal studies (Sargent et al., 2000).

Brands are 'naturalised' within youth culture so they become an intrinsic, normal part of young people's social environment. To do this, a brand is portrayed as a transmitter of culture through sponsorship of fashion, music, dance parties and competitions (e.g., Absolut Vodka) (McCreanor et al., 2005). Branding uses the 'cultural capital' of an audience to tap into shared understandings with humour, music, style and language. Examples from Australian advertisements include:

- Toohey's beer: 'I feel like a Toohey's' campaign uses a catchy theme song and images of hard-working Australians who reward their 'hard-earned thirst'.
- Toohey's beer: Iconic images of mateship and working together in the 'Street Party' ad to divert the beer truck.
- Cooper's beer: After losing a bet (that Cooper's can't make a quality pale ale), male has to dress in a tutu and ask a beefy, tattooed male at the bar for a dance
- Carlton beer: 'Flashdance beer' – overweight male dressed in a leotard dances to Flashdance music to get a job at Carlton brewery.

An emphasis on branding and interaction with the youth culture is evident from various promotional campaigns. For example, in New Zealand, 2003, Smirnoff Vodka launched the 'Smirnoff Half Day Off' campaign, which encouraged people to dodge their responsibilities on 7 December and spend half the day enjoying Smirnoff at participating bars.

They could also register on the Smirnoff website to enter a draw to win a \$25 bar tab (Casswell, 2004). This campaign included 'viral marketing' techniques that take advantage of existing interpersonal networks, such as personalised email, funny video clips, interactive Flash games, images or SMS text messages. To enter the draw, each participant had to provide a contact for three additional friends, who each received personalised messages inviting them to participate. Five thousand \$25 bar tabs were distributed. This is another example of the tension between pleasure/hedonism and asceticism, where individuals are encouraged to reward themselves for working hard.

Sponsorship

The primary reason that companies invest in sponsorship, especially sports sponsorship, is to increase television exposure for their branded products (House of the Oireachtas, 2007). A recent survey of 91 arts and sports organisations in New Zealand (Inter-Agency Committee on Drugs, 2007) found that all rugby clubs who responded had beer sponsorship and all other sports or events were sponsored by beer or wine products, whereas arts organisations were sponsored primarily by wine companies. While more than 50% of the organisations with alcohol sponsorship included participants or spectators aged under 18 years, few respondents believed that alcohol sponsorship conflicted with the organisation's objective.

Sponsorship of sports, arts, music and other events offers alcohol companies a receptive audience that is already primed to have a good time. Music events that are designed to 'create emotional

connectedness and memorable experiences for consumers' (advertising executive for Jim Beam Bourbon, sponsor of the National Campus Band Competition, (2005) primarily appeal to young people. Examples of music sponsorship include the Big Day Out, Splendour in the Grass and Homebake (Jack Daniels); and Planet X Tour, Jim Beam Rock Exposed Competition, East Coast Blues and Roots Festival and the Jim Beam Young and Loaded University Tour (Jim Beam). For example, the Big Day Out event brings together local and international bands and attracts young people of all ages to a venue where the sponsors' products and branded merchandise are displayed exclusively. This form of sponsorship consolidates the association between the product and all the positive effects of having a good time with friends.

Similarly, sponsorship of popular sports is dominated heavily by gambling, alcohol and fast-food organisations (Maher, Wilson, Signal, & Thomson, 2006). Both Australian Rules Football League (AFL) and National Rugby League (NRL) competitions, as well as major events, such as the Melbourne Cup horse race, are sponsored heavily by beer companies. In addition, alcohol companies are the key sponsors for the Australian Grand Prix (Foster's) and the V8 Supercars series (Jim Beam and Jack Daniel's). Alcohol sports sponsorship reinforces sexual stereotyping and links masculinity with sports and alcohol consumption, particularly in young males who are most likely to drink at riskier levels. In turn, alcohol products are embedded into enjoyable leisure activities through

the event name, results (e.g., Cup, medal, prize with sponsor's name) and commentary of sporting events, thereby reinforcing cultural identity (House of the Oireachtas, 2007). Sponsorship by alcohol companies also enhances the perception that the alcohol industry is 'a good corporate citizen', with a genuine interest in promoting a healthy sports-oriented lifestyle.

The potentially detrimental relationship between sports and excessive drinking has been increasingly recognised. Steps have been taken to redress the embedded nature of drinking cultures within some sporting areas. For example, to counteract the impact of alcohol-related problems in sports clubs, the Good Sports program was developed by the Australian Drug Foundation and, at the time of writing, was funded by the Alcohol, Education and Rehabilitation Foundation (also see section 8.3). The primary goal of the program is to assist sports clubs to manage alcohol consumption by promoting low risk drinking environments. The key tenets of this program include:

- Change the culture of the club (e.g., discontinue tradition of giving alcohol as rewards/prizes)
- Deter drink-driving by encouraging use of alternative transport options
- Reduce the level of alcohol consumption and increase sales of non-alcohol drinks
- Improve compliance with liquor licensing laws and train bar staff in responsible service

- Reduce underage drinking
- Change the attitude and behaviour of club members (e.g., drunken behaviour).

Counter-advertising

In order to counter the effects of alcohol advertising, marketing and sponsorship on potentially harmful alcohol consumption, particularly in young people, a number of measures have been employed, including public service broadcasts (responsibility ads), product warning labels and media education programs. However, young people's exposure to counter-advertising messages is very low by comparison to alcohol product promotion messages (see previous section Youth-oriented alcohol advertising) (Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth, 2007).

A qualitative study in the US examined perceptions about key messages in campaigns designed to increase the awareness of risks about binge drinking in 66 college students aged 19-24 (Jack, Bouck, Beynon, Ciliska, & Mitchell, 2005). Results from focus groups indicated that participants' attention to the health messages were more likely to be captured if campaigns contained an 'extreme' message or a 'twist' in the presentation of features. In particular, results suggested that the types of messages should focus on:

- 1) Responsible drinking, rather than alcohol abstinence and condemnation of drinking
- 2) Harm reduction

- 3) Providing information on how to care for intoxicated peers
- 4) Encouraging moderate drinking and knowledge about limits
- 5) Economic and social costs of binge drinking
- 6) Immediate threats to physical health and safety, rather than long-term health consequences
- 7) Emotional appeals to young people to reflect on the impact risky drinking may have on their family and friends.

Additionally, responsibility messages should use appropriate youth-oriented language (e.g., 'chugging a beer' vs binge drinking), engage celebrities or individuals with personal stories, portray realistic situations, and incorporate local statistics pertaining to health risks and consequences of risky drinking (Agostinelli & Grube, 2002; Jack et al., 2005).

Compared to anti-drinking public service messages, 246 young college students (US) thought that alcohol ads were less realistic, less straightforward and less effective, but also more enjoyable and more visually appealing (Andsager, Austin, & Pinkleton, 2001). The perceived realism and themes were deemed relevant to participants and increased the salience and persuasiveness of the messages.

In the US, the introduction of health warning labels legislation for alcohol products has had mixed effects, depending on how noticeable the labels are, how graphic the content of the warnings are, and the target audience (Agostinelli & Grube,

2002). Product warning labels for alcohol in the Australian market is currently being debated.

An alternative approach to counteract the effect of alcohol advertising is to arm young people with knowledge about advertising techniques. Media education programs have been designed for children to 'deconstruct' alcohol advertising and teach them to think critically about the messages, brands and gender stereotyping depicted in ads, as well as to be proactive rather than passive recipients of the advertiser's message (2006). For example, one education program (ALERT Plus) (Ellickson et al., 2005), which includes media lessons on understanding how advertising, promotions and packaging are designed to influence use, was effective at reducing young people's 'intention to drink'. Given the overall lack of effectiveness of most school-based drug and alcohol education programs (Foxcroft, Ireland, Lowe, & Breen, 2006), these are encouraging results. Similarly, an anti-alcohol intervention, which focused on increasing children's understanding of advertisers' motives and their persuasive strategies, resulted in reduced intentions to drink (Goldberg, Niedermeier, Bechtel, & Gorn, 2006). Children learned about the partial truths that advertisers use, such as parties are more fun with alcohol, and that the rest of the story included vomiting, hangovers, absence from school, unwanted/unsafe sex, injuries and violence. They learned to counterargue the advertising messages with 'reality checks'. For example, 'Yes, the ads show beautiful, young, fit people drinking alcohol, but alcohol won't do that to me'.

9.1.3. Placement

Alcohol companies carefully consider the position of their promotional materials in order to obtain optimal exposure. This includes not only the posters, display bins, billboards and price tickets placed inside or outside premises, but also alcohol-branded functional items, such as beer mats, bar towels, T-shirts and caps worn by staff; and alcohol products subtly displayed in movies or television and mentioned in music.

The ubiquitous presence of alcohol advertising is likely to have a cumulative effect, not only on the target audience, but also on others who are coincidentally exposed to the ads. An examination of the density of outdoor alcohol advertising situated within 1,500 feet of 63 Chicago schools showed an association between high density of outdoor ads and increasing subsequent intentions to use alcohol in Grade 6 students, even among non-users of alcohol (Pasch et al., 2007).

While national campaigns about responsible drinking may influence how people think about drinking, it is the local promotions that influence their drinking behaviour. Point-of-Sale advertising is known to increase sales substantially (2-64% increase) (Beverage Industry, 2001). Using colourful displays in high traffic areas, marketers highlight features that make the product stand out from the competition and, thus, entice customers to select their product. Approximately 70% of consumers' final purchase decisions are made within the store (Beverage Industry, 2001). Point-of-Sale marketing is seen increasingly as the final critical

moment of the purchasing decision that leads to a first-time purchase (Isoline & Macomber, 2002). This type of marketing is less regulated than traditional formats (television, magazines), less subject to individual control (i.e., consumers cannot switch channels or turn a page), and targets consumers at the place of purchase, thereby reinforcing previous advertising messages and playing on impulsivity (Howard, Flora, Schleicher, & Gonzalez, 2004).

Alcohol companies carefully negotiate with storeowners to gain prime positioning of their products. An Australian study showed that more than 40% of all glass-door display fridges in bottle shops (Central Coast, NSW) were dedicated to RTDs (Smith et al., 2005). Fridges were supplied free by the alcohol industry, with the understanding they were to be used exclusively for their products and displayed in a prominent position that was visible from outside the store. This is an example of 'bracket creep', whereby advertising that is aimed at one target group impacts on another younger group. Products, which are displayed to attract consumers from outside the store, appeal strongly to young people, thereby expanding the target age group to include younger 'new' drinkers.

More subtle, but powerful, forms of product placement occur during films and television programmes, and in the lyrics of popular music. For example, an analysis of alcohol references in rap music (Herd, 2005) showed that alcohol was inculcated into the hip-hop culture as 71% of rap songs from 1994 to 1997

mentioned specific alcohol brands in positive terms. Product placement in films, television shows, and sports or music events is largely unregulated and unmonitored and alcohol companies pay for prominent placement of brands in films and television (Casswell & Maxwell, 2005). A UK organisation, Alcohol Concern, which conducted a survey of television drama program content over several weeks, found that there were, on average, seven drinking scenes per hour in soap operas (Hansen, 2003). In these programs, alcohol was used primarily as part of a healthy lifestyle in the context of celebrations or romance and potential problem drinkers were portrayed in a humorous manner, with little or no negative consequences associated with getting drunk or drinking at risky levels.

9.1.4. Price

Price of alcohol beverages, particularly at the point of sale, has an impact on young people's choice of beverage and quantity consumed. Promotional activities, such as 'happy hour' and special price promotions, have been associated with increased consumption and higher levels of consumption during the promotion period in bars around US campuses (Kuo, Wechsler, Greenberg, & Lee, 2003) and in British pubs (MCM, 2004). Similar opportunities for discounted drinks are also available commonly in licensed outlets across Australia, including cheap happy-hour cocktails served in jugs.

Discounted alcohol sold in supermarkets is thought to underlie the growth in 'pre-loading' among young people in UK (Addaction, 2007).

We are seeing younger teens especially who cannot afford drinks in bars even at happy hour or who might not get served, sharing a bottle of £6 vodka before going clubbing or going out to see friends. Some young people have admitted to drinking at least half a large bottle and sometimes more, before hitting the town. That way they are in a happy, silly, giggly and sometimes aggressive mode the instant they walk into a club. Unfortunately this leads to all sorts of problems such as accidents, violence and, particularly for girls, unsafe sex. In many cases the damage has been done before they've even left home (Carmel Swan, Manager of Addaction's Centre for Young People in Derby city).

In a report of research and consultation conducted by MCM Research Ltd (UK) (MCM, 2004), bar staff interviewed in pubs in Manchester, London and Nottingham generally agreed that heavily promoted discounted drinks and the practice of 'up-selling'⁵² increased alcohol consumption. Young people interviewed in the same bars and pubs reported selecting drinking venues on the basis of the discounts and promotions on offer to 'get the evening started' (MCM, 2004, p.15).

⁵² Up-selling refers to the practice of offering the customer an option to purchase more alcohol to get better value for money. For example, bar staff may suggest the customer purchase a bottle if they order two glasses of wine, on the basis that the bottle represents better value.

The cheapest priced alcohol item is cask wine, which barely registers in young people's consumption patterns (<1% males; 3% females) (King et al., 2005a). However, this data misses important sub-groups, such as the homeless and transient populations, who may be more cost-conscious. Additionally, since RTDs are taxed equally irrespective of their alcohol content⁵³ young people tend to buy the higher alcohol product as it provides more 'bang for the buck'. Young people weigh up their own criteria, including cost-benefits, in deciding which alcohol products to purchase.

The alcohol industry is aware of the high appeal that the RTDs have in providing young people with a cost-effective means of consuming a high alcohol product.

Young people could buy three drinks with 7% alcohol and get the same effect for less outlay than if they bought five 5.5% drinks (Mat Baxter, marketing executive, Absolut Cut, The Age, 6 August 2007).

For further details on the influence of taxation on alcohol price, see section 10.2.1.

9.2. Policies on alcohol advertising

In Australia, the code for advertising alcohol is self-regulatory. In 1998, the alcohol industry developed the Alcoholic Beverages Advertising Code (ABAC) (see Table 11) and Complaints Management system, which is administered through the Alcoholic Beverages Advertising Code Complaints Adjudication Panel.

The Alcohol Beverages Advertising Code was revised in 2003⁵⁴ to respond to new media developments and concern about its utility. Despite the revision, however, there remain questions as to whether the complaints mechanism is effective (Donovan et al., 2007). A recent study assessed the frequency and content of alcohol advertisements and promotions in 93 magazines that are popular with young Australians (18-30 years) and evaluated the degree to which the ads complied with the ABAC guidelines (Donovan et al., 2007). Results showed that 52% of the alcohol ads, including promotions and sponsorship, appeared to contravene at least one section of the code. Moreover, 22% were deemed to have strong appeal to children or adolescents. For example, they depicted alcohol in connection with skateboarding and partying and characters within the ads appeared younger than 25 years, in contravention of Section B of the code.

⁵³ This issue is discussed in more detail in Chapter 10.

⁵⁴ Updates:

- 1) Internet advertising included in definition of advertising;
- 2) reporting to government more transparent;
- 3) all complaints referred to the Board;
- 4) public health experts included on adjudication panels;
- 5) alcohol beverage manufacturers asked to agree to code; and
- 5) promotion of alcohol to be limited at events with young people.

Table 11. Alcohol beverages advertising code (ABAC)

| Advertisements for alcohol beverages must: | |
|--|---|
| A | <p>Present a mature, balanced and responsible approach to the consumption of alcohol beverages.</p> <p>i. Must not encourage excessive consumption ii. Must not encourage underage drinking iii. Must not promote offensive behaviour iv. Must only depict moderate responsible consumption</p> |
| B | <p>Not have a strong or evident appeal to children or adolescents.</p> <p>i. Adults in ads must be clearly over 25 years old ii. Children and adolescents may only appear in natural situations, with no suggestion they will consume alcohol iii. Adults under 25 years old may only appear as part of natural background</p> |
| C | <p>Not suggest that the consumption or presence of alcohol beverages may create or contribute to the significant change in mood or environment.</p> <p>i. Ads must not imply that alcohol consumption contributes to personal, business, social, sporting or sexual success ii. Alcohol depicted in celebration must not suggest that alcohol caused success iii. Ads must not suggest that alcohol offers therapeutic benefit or is necessary for relaxation</p> |
| D | <p>Not depict any direct association between the consumption of alcohol beverages, other than low-alcohol beverages, and the operation of a motor vehicle, boat or aircraft or the engagement in any sport (including swimming and water sports) or potentially hazardous activity.</p> <p>i. Alcohol consumption connected with activities must occur before or during the activity ii. Claims of safe consumption of low alcohol beverages must be demonstrated accurately</p> |
| E | <p>Not challenge or dare people to drink or sample a particular alcohol beverage, other than low-alcohol beverages, and must not contain any inducement to prefer an alcohol beverage because of its higher alcohol content.</p> |
| F | <p>Comply with Advertiser Code of Ethics adopted by the Australian Association of National Advertisers.</p> |
| G | <p>Not encourage consumption that is in excess of , or inconsistent with, the Australian Alcohol Guidelines (NHMRC).</p> |

The self-regulatory system depends on complaints being made and upheld before advertisements are withdrawn. In 2005, 29 out of 105 complaints were referred to the Board and two were upheld (Donovan et al., 2007). Nevertheless, by the time a complaint is made and subsequently upheld, the intended period of advertising for the product is usually completed. While the self-regulatory system focuses primarily on the content of an advertising message, it also addresses the hours of broadcast, types of beverages and programming placement (Casswell, 2004). However, the code is weak in several areas, including:

- Addressing the emotional impact of ads
- Controlling advertising in media other than television, such as branded events, sponsorship, Internet and Point-of-Sale material, as well as product packaging, placement and pricing
- Maintaining stable consistent practice when the industry faces a potential drop in sales.

Although alcohol advertisements tend not to show drinking explicitly before or during particular risk-taking activities, such as driving a car or boat (as stipulated in Section D), these activities frequently accompany the outdoor activities and lifestyle messages portrayed in commercials (US) (Zwarun et al., 2006). Alternatively, computer animations are introduced to indicate fantasy, thereby

sidestepping the self-regulated codes. For example, a character in a beer ad skiing down a big frosted beer bottle instead of a mountain evades the link between alcohol and actual participation in sport. Visual metaphors are used successfully in advertising to make inferences about information that is not explicitly linked in the commercial (Phillips, 1997). For example, just as a cuddly teddy bear and fabric softener are not directly related, these images advertised together imply that the fabric softener will leave clothes soft and comfortable. Similarly, characters undertaking risky activities juxtaposed with images of alcohol are likely to imply participation in exciting activities under the influence of alcohol.

Strategies used by other countries to restrict alcohol advertising include prohibiting reference to people's lifestyles (Switzerland); prohibiting advertising on youth-oriented goods, such as T-shirts and caps (Switzerland); limiting advertising broadcast times (Thailand); and including a health message (France) (Casswell & Maxwell, 2005). Some evidence suggests that alcohol advertising bans are effective in reducing consumption⁵⁵ and alcohol-related harms (Premier's Drug Prevention Council, 2004). However, the largest part of a company's marketing budget is often invested into other promotional activities, including sponsorship, Point-of-Sale, and special event promotions, which would be unaffected by bans on alcohol advertising via television, radio, magazines or billboards.

55 16% lower alcohol consumption in OECD countries that have banned spirits advertising, compared to countries without bans; 10% lower car deaths with bans on spirits ads and 23% lower car deaths with bans on beer, wine and spirits (Nelson & Young, 2001).

In contrast, partial and total alcohol advertising bans have resulted in some reductions in adolescents' alcohol consumption (Saffer, 2002). However, this study had some methodological limitations, including the use of aggregate data, potential sources of misclassification and susceptibility to confounding. Saffer and Dave (Saffer & Dave, 2003) also conducted an economic analysis on youth drinking and concluded that a total ban on alcohol advertising could reduce monthly levels of youth drinking and youth binge drinking by 24% and 42% respectively. However, the French experience following introduction of the Loi Evin⁵⁶ highlights the difficulties of implementing a total ban on alcohol advertising. For example, while alcohol companies could not directly advertise alcohol products in sports events televised in French channels, there was no restriction on advertising alcohol products indirectly in sports events that took place in other countries, but were broadcast on French television (Dorozynski, 1995). Following lobbying by advertising and industry bodies, Loi Evin had several amendments, resulting in some relaxation of the original restrictions (Casswell & Maxwell, 2005).

A recent review of the self-regulatory framework for alcohol advertising in New Zealand concluded that alcohol advertising contributes to the culture of drinking in NZ (Inter-Agency Committee on Drugs, 2007). Following recommendations from the Steering Committee for the New Zealand

report, a new framework that moves from voluntary self-regulation to enforced self-regulation has been proposed. The key changes include:

- Extending the scope of the self-regulatory system to include a broader range of marketing (e.g., packaging, labelling, merchandising and Point-of-Sale promotions), and emerging advertising techniques (e.g. Internet)
- Increased monitoring and research
- Sanctions for non-compliance. The Director-General of Health has the power to issue a 'cease and desist' order for breaches of the alcohol advertising code and fines will apply (Burton, 2007).

Some argue that introducing stricter regulations for alcohol advertising is likely to lead to displacement effects, whereby advertisers shift towards marketing strategies that are more difficult to monitor and regulate, such as Internet, emails, mobile phones and on-site promotions. However, a shift to newer strategies may still be less effective than the current marketing strategies – otherwise they would be in higher use now. Thus, potential displacement effects to alternative marketing may still be counteracted by the potential benefits of reducing exposure to the highly effective existing marketing techniques (Inter-Agency Committee on Drugs, 2007). However, since a total ban on alcohol advertising is unlikely – anti-

⁵⁶ Loi Evin, which was named after Claude Evin, the French Health Minister in 1991, banned advertisements for alcohol beverages on television, in cinemas, and at cultural or sports events; prohibited ads targeting young people, and/or messages related to image and lifestyle; and required health messages to be included in each advertisement.

competition legislation would preclude it – more effective regulation of the existing code and review of what is acceptable in alcohol advertising may be more practical strategies for limiting young people's exposure to alcohol advertising. In addition, alcohol advertising and promotions should be balanced with accurate information about the potential harms of alcohol use.

9.3. Summary

A large body of research in advertising and marketing and in the applied health areas have tried to determine whether commercial promotion of alcohol through a range of mainstream media (television, radio, magazines) specifically causes or contributes to young people drinking more and developing negative health outcomes. Most of this research uses a positivist approach and tries to objectively measure exposure and consumption, in isolation from other influences on young people's behaviour. These studies often fail to account for the variable dynamic social and cultural contexts that intersect with alcohol advertising exposure.

Alcohol marketing and advertising, which is well-funded by large global companies, uses sophisticated techniques that impact on young adults and adolescents, including those who have not yet started drinking. Marketing alcohol products defines alcohol as a normal, accepted feature of youth culture. It links alcohol to both social and sexual success, promoting drinking in positive ways as enjoyable, good fun and free of risk. Recent marketing, advertising and

promotional trends that are more difficult to measure, monitor and regulate, such as sponsorships, Internet advertising, Point-of-Sale promotions, product placement and branding, are likely to substantially increase young people's exposure to alcohol products and, thus, influence their drinking behaviour adversely. Alcohol ads influence non-drinkers to start drinking; exposure to ads influences the level of drinking in established drinkers; and drinking generates positive attitude towards alcohol ads (a two-way relationship). In addition, by embedding alcohol products within youth culture, alcohol companies interact with young people and, thus, proactively contribute to the overall composition of that culture.

Overall, new marketing techniques are grounded in social science theories of identity formation and consumption. This is shown in the pervasive multiplicity of avenues, formats and media used to promote particular brands that reach beyond raising awareness of a particular product to incorporating the product into the normal culture of a targeted group.

10. Structural, Legislative and Regulatory Factors

This section examines a range of structural, legislative and regulatory factors which impact on the way alcohol is incorporated within various aspects of our day-to-day lives. It addresses factors related to the physical presence of alcohol and the settings in which it is sold or otherwise available for purchase and consumption. It also addresses the range of regulatory and enforcement processes available to government and other authorities to monitor, control and shape the use of alcohol in the community at large. Such factors form an integral component of the social, economic and cultural fabric of society; and, more specifically, can have a strong influence on the way young people view alcohol and how they use it. In broader terms, it also contributes to the drinking culture of Australia.

10.1. The licensed premise

We shape our buildings; thereafter they shape us. (Winston Churchill)

The first of these factors to be examined is the licensed premises in which alcohol is sold and consumed. It is important to examine the characteristics of these settings and assess how this impacts on the way in which alcohol is perceived, the meanings attached to alcohol and

the ways in which this influences cultural norms around alcohol in general and in relation to young people in particular.

There has been a strong trend in recent years away from drinking in public locations, including licensed premises, to drinking in private settings such as one's home or that of friends. Nonetheless, public drinking environments feature large in the Australian social, economic and cultural landscape. These public drinking settings are also especially important in the lives of young people. As discussed in Chapter 5, pubs and clubs are the settings reported as the usual place of drinking for 18-24 year olds (see Figure 15 above). Moreover, pubs and clubs are the locations that riskier drinkers, compared to low risk level drinkers (for both 12-17 and 18-24 year old age groups), cite as their preferred drinking locations (see Figure 16 above). This makes public drinking locations, in the form of pubs and clubs, a prime candidate for close examination.

A wide range of important changes has occurred to public drinking settings over the past four to five decades. The most notable are those that occurred in the immediate post-war period when pubs were transformed from the exclusive

domain of the 'Aussie' male into social centres that at first grudgingly tolerated, then accepted, and ultimately embraced the presence of females. Until relatively recently, an important rite of passage for a young Australian boy turning 18 years of age was to be taken to the local pub by his father or older brother for his first legitimate beer as a 'real man'. Not only has this tradition changed in many respects, the defining features of the quintessential Australian pub have also changed such that they would be largely unrecognisable from their previous incarnations. Given the preference of young people to consume alcohol on licensed premises, such locations play a potentially important role in shaping the patterns of their alcohol consumption, and in mediating the alcohol-related risk-taking behaviour of young people.

Of principal concern is the potential for licensed premises to impact on levels of intoxication-related harms, including assaults, accidents and motor vehicle crashes. Also important, are the more specific, and sometimes more subtle, characteristics of the licensed premises themselves and their surrounds, because these too shape the culture of the drinking environment and the resultant behaviour of young people.

Licensed premises are particularly important for several reasons (Babor et al., 2003). They provide unique settings that convey images and messages about community norms, standards and values in relation to alcohol per se and also in relation to the act of consumption in its various manifestations. Moreover, they offer both

symbolic and actual mechanisms to either facilitate and reinforce or curtail a wide range of behaviours, including excessive consumption, intoxication and associated behaviours. This is in direct contrast to *off premises* consumption, where the opportunity to influence behaviour is limited to the type, strength and packaging of the alcoholic beverages and the time, costs and location of alcohol sales.

With on premise retail outlets on the other hand, there is much greater opportunity to directly influence what is drunk, how much is consumed and by whom, and to monitor and shape associated behaviours. The licensed drinking setting is the vehicle through which important variables can be influenced such as drink sizes, drink promotions, service behaviours of staff, design and furnishing of premises, and overall style and presentation of the setting. The latter includes such issues as cleanliness, noise levels, food service, availability of entertainment and other non-alcohol-related matters. Environmental factors include overcrowding, poor quality entertainment, poor lighting, inconvenient bar access, inadequate seating, poor ventilation, swearing, rowdiness and inadequate staffing. In addition, appropriate levels of lighting, good ventilation, cleanliness, the level of repair and the standard of furnishings all provide important cultural cues to the patrons of licensed premises concerning the acceptable standards of behaviour in those premises (Homel, Carvolth, Hauritz, McIlwain, & Teague, 2004). Also important in this regard is the quality of entertainment and the provision of food (Doherty & Roche, 2003).

Organisational factors include trading hours, responsible service of alcohol (RSA) training, RSA 'house' policies, prohibition of drink promotions, the provision of food, employment of security staff, and bar staff behaviours (e.g., refusal of service to intoxicated patrons, checking for ID and dealing with aggression) (Homel et al., 2004). It is the interaction between such factors and intoxication that often contributes to violence and aggression associated with alcohol consumption on licensed premises (Homel et al., 2004).

Regulations can also require that intoxicated people not be served alcohol, prevent drinking games and prevent the distribution of other promotional activities and materials. As Babor et al. reported:

The focus on high-risk environments such as licensed premises has several advantages. It can have a broader impact than individual approaches on persons who are at high risk, especially young people and subcultures with risky drinking practices. A variety of approaches can be applied at the one time (e.g., training, enforcement of alcohol serving regulations, reducing environmental risks). Finally, most approaches targeting high-risk environments are generally perceived as acceptable across cultures and are therefore readily adopted (Babor et al., 2003p.142).

10.1.2. Types of licensed premises

Australia has approximately 17,000⁵⁷ licensed premises (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006b) and the number of licensed premises has increased substantially over the past decade. The nature and characteristics of these settings strongly influences the amount of alcohol and types of products consumed, the manner in which it is drunk and the types of outcomes (adverse or otherwise) that can eventuate.

It is self-evident that not all licensed premises are similar in style, presentation, patronage, and potential consequences. Drinking environments are increasingly designed and structured with specific images in mind. Some settings are designed to attract particular age or patron groups. Changing just the physical and environmental features of the drinking environment can effectively change the patrons who frequent them, what they consume and how they behave. The physical features and management style of licensed premises and their environs impact upon individual and group behaviour in a variety of ways (Roche, 2002).

Alcohol-related risky behaviours do not occur with equal frequency across all licensed premises. For example, a 1998 NSW report found that only 5% of 400 licensed premises had a higher

⁵⁷ Included in this number are hotels, taverns, bars, clubs, licensed cafes and restaurants, cafes and restaurants which are licensed and allow patrons to bring their own alcohol (BYO), and cafes and restaurants which only permit BYO. Excluded from this number are other categories of premises such as wholesale and retail liquor merchants, producers' licenses and residential licenses.

than average number of alcohol-related incidents (Considine et al., 1998). Whilst a study in 2003 found that within:

- inner Sydney, 12% of hotels and nightclubs accounted for almost 60% of all assaults at hotels and nightclubs
- inner Newcastle (NSW), 8% of licensed premises accounted for almost 80% of all assaults that occurred on licensed premises
- inner Wollongong (NSW), 6% of licensed premises accounted for 67% of all assaults on licensed premises (Briscoe & Donnelly, 2003).

Therefore, identifying the characteristics of licensed premises that are associated with high levels of risky behaviour and concomitant adverse outcomes for young people is an important first step in positively influencing the culture associated with these problems. It is important not to take an overly narrow view and to see licensed premises merely as providers of alcohol.

Viewing these premises in this way risks the development of correspondingly narrow responses, which focus primarily on the service of alcohol (Homel et al., 2004). In other words, changing the culture of licensed premises to reduce harm to young people is not simply a matter of ensuring that alcohol is served appropriately. In contrast:

Nightclubs and bars do not sell only liquor; they sell food, entertainment, excitement and perhaps drugs and they provide – at least at a cost – spaces for strenuous

physical activity, for meeting others, for sexual liaisons and generally for behaving outrageously with relative impunity...Popping pills and becoming thirsty, competing for women (or men), being offside with an aggressive bouncer, being chronically uncomfortable after standing for a long period, being crushed in a crowd, becoming deafened by loud music, or growing just simply hungry or tired can also have negative effects on individual groups behaviour and public order. It is not necessary to be drunk – no one in the place has to be drunk – to encounter danger on the dance floor or bullies at the bar (Homel et al., 2004, p.20).

Consequently, in order to ensure the culture of licensed premises minimises harm to young people, it is first necessary to gain a broad understanding of the characteristics of licensed premises that are most likely to be associated with harmful outcomes.

Hotels, taverns and nightclubs are the types of licensed premises associated with the majority of assaults (Briscoe & Donnelly, 2001). These kinds of premises were also found to be most likely to be associated with other categories of alcohol-related harm, including drink driving and involvement in a vehicle crash (Stockwell, Somerford, & Lang, 1992). It is not the type of licensed premise per se that was a key predictor of alcohol-related harm; rather, the most significant risk factors were overall amount of alcohol served on the premises and the extent to

which obviously intoxicated patrons were continued to be served alcohol (Stockwell et al., 1992). As a result, hotels, taverns and nightclubs may be the most risky venues, not because of the type of license they hold, but because of their serving practices.

The close association between level of harm experienced by drinkers and the amount of overall alcohol served by a licensed premise and the practice of continuing to serve intoxicated patrons highlights several things about the culture of drinking in Australia: first, is the lack of appreciation of the connection between intoxication and potential for harm to one's self or others; and second the wide scale acceptance of intoxicated behaviour.

Vertical drinking

A trend that has emerged recently in Australia, and elsewhere, is *vertical drinking*. This refers to licensed premises which have few chairs, shelves or other furniture for the use of patrons. As a result patrons are forced to stand (drinking vertically) and hold their drink in their hands. A variation of this found in the United Kingdom is *maximum volume vertical drinking bars* (Plant & Plant, 2006). Many such premises hold large numbers of patrons in settings that are noisy and large with a predominantly anonymous atmosphere. Reports suggest that this not only fosters excessive drinking but encourages far more extreme behaviours than would occur in smaller hotels.

In vertical drinking establishments the relative absence of furniture means that patrons have more direct access

to the bar, which in turn facilitates faster bar service. Arguably, the lack of comfort enhancing features in these premises also encourages drinking, so as to anaesthetise the patrons from the effects of their discomfort that occurs as a result of the noise, smoke and lack of seating. The features of vertical drinking establishments are contrasted with the 'civilising impact of physical comfort' described earlier (Homel et al., 2004). This is clearly a trend which would have a profoundly adverse effect upon the drinking culture of young people in Australia.

Faster consumption

Drinks promotions, such as cheap or free drinks or two for one offers, are strategies which promote excessive consumption. Such promotions are particularly attractive to younger drinkers who frequently drink in public environments and are attracted to cheap, high alcohol content drinks (Doherty & Roche, 2003). (See also section 9.1.4)

There have been important changes in drinking fashions in recent years, not only in what is fashionable to be drunk but also in how it is drunk. Drinking straight from the bottle was not long ago considered only appropriate for males, and then only under certain circumstances such as drinking beer from a bottle at a BBQ. However, drinking wine from the bottle would be held in disdain by most people, young and old, until relatively recently.

To facilitate the speed with which people drink, and therefore to also increase the amount they might drink, there have

been strategies introduced to encourage drinking from the bottle; and to assist it to be seen as 'cool' in most circumstances. Most new mixed drinks and some wine products come in individual serves and readily accessible containers (e.g., twist tops, ring-pull tabs) and are often served at the bar in this form. To further illustrate how ultra-trendy it has become to drink from the bottle, at a high profile celebrity event in Los Angeles in mid-2007, the champagne Moet-Chandon was served in individual serve size bottles with small champagne glasses attached to the neck of each bottle. The young and the beautiful drank straight from the bottle via the little inbuilt glasses and were photographed in the process of doing so.

Such strong images act as shapers of cultural norms and set standards of behaviour that others follow, especially young people. Moreover, many drinking establishments do not offer the option of having your drink 'decanted' into a glass or other container. Such serving practices are intentionally designed to speed the rate of service and rate and amount of consumption. The cultural practices that once surrounded drinking are fast changing. These changes are clearly driven by the alcohol industry through the forms that the products take and the practices that are put in place in licensed premises.

Drink or perish

Anecdotal reports of a range of less than optimal practices within some licensed premises also include the lack of the provision of water or other non-alcohol beverages. In some instances, the

purchase of bottled water is as expensive, or more so, than an alcohol beverage. Accounts have also been received of some licensed establishments removing the handles of water taps in the ladies bathrooms to discourage the consumption of 'free' water.

10.1.3. The practices of management and staff of licensed premises

The practices of management and staff of licensed premises have a profound influence on the subsequent behaviours of patrons and are pivotal to the culture of licensed premises (Homel et al., 2004). If management and staff have a permissive attitude towards intoxication and violent and unruly behaviour, then it is highly likely that this kind of behaviour will be a feature of the culture of their licensed premises. Strategies have been developed to ensure appropriate management of licensed premises through the establishment of formal and informal policies that explicitly specify what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour on those premises. This has been referred to as setting 'decorum expectations' (Homel et al., 2004, p.23). Making expectations clear and explicit about what is considered appropriate and inappropriate behaviour on the part of patrons, staff and management has a significant influence on the culture of licensed premises.

One strategy designed to reduce continued service to intoxicated patrons is Responsible Service of Alcohol (RSA) programs. These consist of training

programs and educational material for bar staff to enable them to better identify intoxicated patrons and to initiate refusal of service strategies. However, the utilisation of these programs is not generally legislated and is often over-ridden by considerations of profitability (Doherty & Roche, 2003).

In a NSW survey of 2,427 young adults, Scott et al. (Scott, Donnelly, Poynton, & Weatherburn, 2007) asked respondents about the degree to which they exhibited any of five signs of intoxication, and the degree to which they were provided with RSA during their last drinking occasion on licensed premises. Only 15% of respondents who showed any of the signs of intoxication received RSA measures and only 27% of respondents who showed three or more signs of intoxication received RSA measures. The authors noted that this represented an improvement in the level of RSA measures implemented since the survey was first undertaken in 2002. Nevertheless, approximately half of the young patrons who reported showing three or more signs of intoxication continued to be served alcohol. While encouraged by the improvement in RSA practices, there is clearly room for improvement and a need for multi-modal strategies involving training for bar staff and more effective enforcement practice.

As well as the sale of alcohol to intoxicated patrons, the sale of alcohol from licensed premises to underage patrons remains a significant problem in Australia. King et al. (King et al., 2005a) reported that in 2004, 8% of 15-17 year olds purchased

their alcohol themselves on their last drinking occasion. Similarly, the AIHW (AIHW, 2005a) reported that in 2004, 11% of 12-15 year olds and 39% of 16-17 year olds generally purchased their alcohol themselves from a shop or retail outlet.

10.1.4. Density of licensed premises

In addition to the styles, features, overall presentation and management approaches within licensed premises, the location of such premises, and, perhaps even more importantly, the density of licensed premises is crucial. The question of the impact of licensed premises on the 'amenity' of a community is paramount. The notion of amenity is now incorporated within most states' liquor licensing legislation and it is increasingly recognised that certain types of licensed premises can bring with them a strong, and sometimes negative, impact on a community or location. Premises that encourage or facilitate excessive consumption and rowdy anti-social behaviour have raised concerns. However, licensed premises that are integral to a restaurant, sidewalk café, coffee shop or similar setting may present few community concerns. Moreover, such settings are often seen to enhance the overall amenity of a community and enhance its cultural values rather than detract from them.

Nonetheless, there is a large research literature that highlights an association between alcohol outlet density and a range of alcohol-related harms such as assault, alcohol-related hospital admissions,

child abuse and neglect, motor vehicle crashes, pedestrian injuries, drink driving and a range of mortality outcomes (see Donnelly et al. for a summary) (Donnelly, Poynton, Weatherburn, Bamford, & Nottage, 2006).

Until recently, definitive evidence was not available on the impact of liquor outlet density on neighbourhood amenity. However, a comprehensive examination of this issue in NSW found respondents who live closer to liquor outlets were more likely to report problems with drunkenness and property damage in their neighbourhood (Donnelly et al., 2006). Similarly, respondents living in areas with a density of liquor outlets higher than one per 10,000 population, were more likely to report neighbourhood problems with drunkenness.

Failure to manage the potentially negative impact on community amenity can result in licensed premises in close proximity to each other with similar closing times disgorging large numbers of patrons onto the street simultaneously (Doherty & Roche, 2003). Conversely, staggered closing times can lead to 'venue hopping' in which intoxicated patrons move from closing venues to ones that remain open (Doherty & Roche, 2003). Ensuring that patrons depart with relative ease and with minimum disruption to the local community is also important.

Where these structural and managerial matters associated with licensed premises are not handled appropriately, a range of negative outcomes can eventuate. Because of the often public nature of these outcomes they also contribute to the observable nature of drinking in the

Australian community, and in this way they can make a major contribution to our drinking culture. Tolerance of loud, drunken, disruptive behaviour sends clear messages to young people that such behaviour is not only tolerated, it is facilitated and endorsed by the establishment. Young people then adopt similar normative behaviours and comply with models set by older members of the community.

10.1.5. Trading hours of licensed premises

A central concern in the operation of licensed premises relates to trading hours. There is a long, and ongoing, history of tension in this area. In the 1950s and 1960s there was great community controversy over the prospect of allowing pubs to open on a Sunday. These days, this would seem almost ludicrous – but community views and sentiment on such issues are not only important, they also reflect cultural mores of the times. Such controversies continue today, with pressure for unfettered hours of operation for many licensed premises. Factors propelling pressure for change include economic arguments and free trade issues (see the discussion below on the National Competition Policy).

However, beyond arguments that are economic in nature, there is a range of other drivers for such change. These include the changing lifestyle patterns of young people and in particular changing views about work/life balance. Young people increasingly hold the view that work should not take precedence in their life;

rather, leisure and recreational pursuits are often seen as being as important. As part of this new world view, young people have different expectations about when and where they will socialise and relax. They no longer feel constrained by the imperative of a 9 to 5 work day with only limited periods for relaxation on the weekend.

Young people have greater expectations and demands in terms of what their working life will offer, including more flexible work hours, options for part-time and casual work and higher levels of work-related mobility. Hence, as highlighted earlier in Chapter 7, the place of leisure in a young person's life is now more prominent than was ever previously the case. Given the workforce shortages currently encountered in Australia (and most other parts of the developed world) the young person in the employment market is in a strong negotiating position – they are in increasing shortage and can demand more in terms of employment options that suit their personal needs and lifestyle tastes and preferences.

In light of these recent developments, the role of licensed premises takes on a new complexion. There is, and will probably continue to be, greater demand for these preferred drinking locations of young people (i.e., licensed premises in the form of pubs and clubs) to be available at times convenient to their lifestyles. This is not to suggest that this is necessarily a good or recommended option, as there are other factors that also need to be considered as indicated below.

The extent to which extended trading results in increased levels of risky

consumption and an associated increase in adverse and harmful consequences has been studied and there is strong evidence that increasing the trading hours of licensed premises in Australia has had a significant effect on levels of alcohol-related harms. Chikritzhs, Stockwell and Masters (2002) report that extending the trading hours of Perth venues led to:

- a significant increase in the number of assaults occurring in the later trading premises
- a significant reduction in the times that premises with normal trading hours were cited as the last place of drinking for drink drivers
- a shift in the times at which drink driving and road crashes associated with the late trading venues, to the early hours of the morning.

Chikritzhs and Stockwell (2006) also found that males aged 18-25 years who last drank at a hotel with extended trading hours and who were apprehended between 12 midnight and 2am had significantly higher blood alcohol concentrations than patrons of hotels with non-late trading hotels. Chikritzhs and Stockwell also reported that the introduction of late trading to metropolitan Western Australia was related to a significant increase in the numbers of impaired drivers involved in motor vehicle crashes who last drank at the hotels with late trading (Chikritzhs & Stockwell, 2006). This is particularly important, as over 50% of serious alcohol-related road crash injuries occur among young people aged 15-24 years, more than 70% of whom are male.

In NSW, Briscoe and Donnelly (2003) also reported that hotels with 24-hour trading were associated with a greater number of assaults than those with normal extended (3am closing) trading hours. Hotels that closed at 3am were associated with more assaults than those with standard trading hours. The majority (74%) of inner Sydney hotels with 10 or more on premise assaults during the two-year study period had 24-hour trading authorisation. In contrast, no inner Sydney hotels with standard trading hours had 10 or more assaults on their premises during the study. It should also be noted that 19% of hotels that recorded no assaults during the study also had authorisation for 24-hour trading. This suggests that other factors associated with the style and characteristics of the licensed premises, in addition to extended trading hours, also increase the risk of violence at hotels.

It is clear then that the hours licensed premises are permitted to trade have a substantial effect on the drinking culture of a licensed premise and resultant harms from alcohol consumption by young people on those premises. Extended trading hours clearly hold potential to facilitate the development of negative cultural norms in regard to excessive drinking and associated anti-social activities.

10.2. Regulatory frameworks

The regulatory frameworks that control the sale of alcohol in Australia have a profound impact on Australia's drinking culture. Its effect is felt across many domains, but is particularly influential in terms of the patterns and levels of alcohol consumed by young people. The exercise of control

over the sale and supply of alcohol is one of the most significant powers at the disposal of governments for reducing alcohol-related harm (Stockwell & Gruenewald, 2004). Moreover, in the current context, legislative and regulatory frameworks are pivotal to the formation and maintenance of Australia's drinking culture.

There are two aspects of the alcohol regulatory framework that warrant consideration in terms of their ability to impact upon the culture of alcohol consumption among young people. These are the manner in which pricing structures are established for alcoholic beverages, including the associated taxation regimes; and the controls that are placed over the sale of alcohol by relevant liquor licensing legislation. These two facets of alcohol regulation are carried out by different levels of government. The Commonwealth is responsible for taxation and the States and Territories are responsible for liquor licensing legislation. There is some degree of inconsistency in the objectives of Commonwealth and State and Territory governments so far as the regulatory controls over alcohol are concerned. It is also noted that there are inherent tensions between health concerns, and those of the alcohol industries, and those segments of government focussed on revenue generation (e.g., treasury) and economic prosperity. These different perspectives are acknowledged, as are the difficulties that can arise in attempting to reconcile them.

10.2.1. Price and taxation

Alcohol is a product known to be price sensitive. There is an important

relationship between the price of alcohol and the frequency with which it is consumed. It is generally accepted that increases in the price of alcohol tend to lead to a decrease in consumption. Equally, a decrease in price often leads to an increase in consumption (Loxley et al., 2004). There is also evidence that following price increases, some drinkers may substitute cheaper brands or types of alcohol so as to maintain their consumption at the same level (Gruenewald, Ponicki, Holder, & Romelsjo, 2006).

In recent times, with the weakening of traditional market controls through anti-competition policies, we have seen a proliferation of licensed premises and the emergence of new market players in the form of supermarkets. A substantial proportion of alcohol in Australia is now sold through supermarkets. The opening up of the (alcohol) market place to supermarkets, and similar outlets, flags an important change in the public face of alcohol. Availability through supermarkets raises the spectre of it being perceived by the full community, young and old, as a common, every-day commercial product. A strong case has been established regarding why alcohol is not 'an ordinary commodity' (Babor et al., 2003), however, the relatively recent introduction of alcohol into Australian supermarkets runs the risk of conveying a message to the contrary, i.e., that it is an ordinary commodity with no particular risks associated with it.

Compounding this concern is the extent of advertising (covered in more detail in Chapter 9.) particularly focussed on the promotion of low price alcohol; see

for example the increase in full page advertisements in local newspapers promoting the sale of cheap and cut price alcohol products. Such advertisements are becoming commonplace, and appear as part of the usual swag of domestic advertising litter drops that cover an array of domestic products from dog food to toilet cleaners. In addition, there has also been the introduction of generic brand alcohol products sold at exceptionally cheap prices through supermarket outlets. Some products include six-packs of cans of alcohol (each containing approximately 1.8 standard drinks) for the equivalent price per unit (i.e., per can) of \$2. Cut price offers, and generic branding make some supermarket-based alcohol products cheaper to purchase than fruit juice.

In addressing the question of what constitutes cultural drivers of young people's drinking, and in particular what contributes to the formation of risky drinking behaviours, one needs to examine the role of the price of alcohol (also see section 9.1.4 above) and the overall shift in market place location of alcohol in Australia. A young person growing up in Australia today will have high levels of exposure to alcohol in everyday places such as their local supermarkets. They will have been exposed to heavy promotions of very cheap and readily available alcohol. They will have experienced alcohol as a product that can be purchased like milk or orange juice and that is sold with little indication of how to use it safely or of the inherent risks associated with its use.

To control alcohol-related problems, the imposition of taxation measures to impact

on price, has been a popular strategy used worldwide (Babor et al., 2003). This is not simply because governments need financial resources traditionally acquired by taxation. It is also because regulations on taxation and prices are relatively easy to put in place and enforce. Increases in alcohol taxation not only lead to a reduction in consumption, but to a reduction in alcohol-related harms (Babor et al., 2003). Reduction in harms associated with increases in taxation has been reported across the problem domains of liver cirrhosis, drink driving, fatal and non-fatal vehicle crashes (particularly those involving young people), and violent crime. In summarising the evidence on this issue they stated that:

What is most striking about these studies is their convergence upon a single theme: raising alcohol taxes will lead to a reduction in a host of undesirable outcomes related to alcohol use (Babor et al., 2003).

As it currently stands, the Australian pricing system for alcohol products is driven largely by the taxation regime imposed upon it. The current system has been described as an unruly mix of taxes with significant shortcomings that impact adversely on high risk subsets of the population, such as young people and Indigenous people (Stockwell, 2004). This has resulted in pricing structures that place more vulnerable groups in the community at risk of greater harms from alcohol. It is important to briefly outline the

anomalies of the current alcohol taxation system and why they are relevant to consideration of cultural drivers of young people's drinking and in assessing what factors might contribute to the uptake of risky patterns of consumption. The taxation system is briefly outlined below to illustrate these points.

The Australian alcohol taxation regime is based on type of beverage, not the alcohol content of the beverage. While a Goods and Services Tax of 10% applies to the retail sales price of all alcohol, a (Commonwealth) excise levy is also applied to:

- cans and bottles of low-strength beer (<3.0%) at the rate of \$6.54 per litre of pure alcohol⁵⁸
- cans and bottles of full-strength beer (>3.5%) at the rate of \$38.20 per litre of pure alcohol
- brandy at the rate of \$60.42 per litre of alcohol
- other spirits at the rate of \$64.72 per litre of alcohol (Australian Taxation Office, 2007).

Wine, on the other hand, is not subject to excise but is subject to a Wine Equalisation Tax (WET) which is not based on its alcohol content, but upon its wholesale value. This ad valorem tax is currently applied at the rate of 29% (Australian Taxation Office, 2007). Cask wine contains a relatively large number of standard drinks but has a relatively low wholesale price per standard drink. Consequently, the existing taxation

⁵⁸ Calculated on the alcohol content of that alcohol product by which the percentage volume of alcohol of the goods exceeds 1.5%.

regime substantially favours low-cost cask and fortified wines by placing a relatively low impost upon them because of their relatively low wholesale price. The non-GST tax per standard drink is therefore as follows:

- packaged full-strength beer: 33 cents
- packaged mid-strength beer: 30 cents
- packaged low-strength beer: 22 cents
- ready to drink products (full strength): 44 cents
- spirits: 75 cents
- semi-premium bottled wine: 22 cents
- cask wine: 7 cents (Alcohol and other Drugs Council of Australia, nd).

Two areas of concern in the present context are those highlighted in bold above:

- ready to drink (RTD) products, which are pre-mixed spirit or liqueur-based drinks
- cask wine.

RTDs: RTDs are not taxed as other spirit products, but at the same rate as full-strength beer. The differential excise rates that apply to low, mid- and full-strength beer, do not apply to the equivalent low- and mid-strength RTD products. Hence,

there is no incentive for RTD manufacturers to produce and promote low- and mid-strength RTD products, or for drinkers (especially young drinkers) to consume them. This is particularly significant in relation to young people's drinking because, as highlighted in Chapter 5., these drinks have become increasingly popular among that group⁵⁹ and are predicted to remain popular among young drinkers into the foreseeable future.

Cask wine: The tax applied, per standard drink, to cask wine is approximately one tenth that applied to spirits, and a quarter of that applied to full-strength beer. Although cask wine enjoys a substantial tax advantage and is therefore very cheap, it does not feature strongly in the drinking patterns of young people.⁶⁰

Nonetheless, the availability of cheap cask wine does adversely impact upon the drinking culture of young people and it is likely that these survey data (due to the data collection methods used) do not fully reflect drinking patterns of homeless or transient young people, some young Indigenous Australians, and those who are institutionalised. These groups are most likely to be attracted to cask wine because of their sensitivity to price.

There is also strong evidence that the consumption of cask wine (in addition to full-strength beer) is associated with

59 King, Taylor and Carroll (King et al., 2005a), for example, reported that between 2000 and 2004 there was an almost four-fold increase in the proportion of pre-mixed spirits and liqueurs consumed by 15-17 year olds in Australia.

60 King et al. (King et al., 2005a), for example, in their 2004 survey of 15-17 year olds, found that total wine consumption (including cask wine) represented less than 1% of alcohol beverage consumption among male higher risk drinkers and 3% of consumption among higher risk female drinkers. The Victorian Premier's Drug Prevention Council (Premier's Drug Prevention Council, 2005) survey of 16-24 year olds also found that only 13% of respondents reported usually consuming cask wine.

higher levels of violence, illness and injury compared with the consumption of other alcoholic beverages (Stockwell et al., 1998). Conversely, the proportion of alcohol consumed as low alcohol beer is negatively related to assaults and acute alcohol-related morbidity. Stockwell points out that:

...the combination of the continued availability of cheap wines and the relaxation of liquor laws pose specific and growing problems for disadvantaged and vulnerable Australians – notably the young and Aboriginal people (Stockwell & Gruenewald, 2004, p.398).

Curiously, the anomalies in the Australian alcohol taxation regime reflect historical patterns of consumption, rather than contemporary patterns of use. But more importantly, they do not accord with the 'burden of illness' (in other words the negative health impact) associated with the use of different alcohol products.

One further aspect of the relationship between the alcohol consumption of young people and taxation that warrants consideration is the extent to which consumption contributes to taxation revenue. Following their examination of this issue, Doran et al. (Doran, Gascoigne, Shakeshaft, & Petrie, 2006) reported that the alcohol consumed by Australian adolescents (aged 12-17 years) in the year 2002 contributed approximately \$112 million in taxation revenue to the Australian government. This represented an average of \$195 per adolescent drinker. The authors also estimated that the government spent approximately

\$17 million on adolescent drinking interventions in the same year, which amounts to approximately \$10.51 per adolescent. Consequently, for every dollar spent on alcohol interventions aimed at reducing alcohol use in adolescents, the government receives around \$7 in alcohol tax revenue.

The apparent disparity between the level of financial benefit gained by the government and the expenditure on programs designed to prevent and reduce adolescent drinking, provides a compelling argument for increased attention to this issue. If this were to occur, it could have a substantial impact upon the culture of alcohol consumption by young people. As Doran et al. noted:

It is unlikely to always be the case that government revenue raised from the sale of particular goods and services ought to be entirely hypothecated to health promotion strategies targeted at reducing the possible harms. However, it would appear to be justified in this instance, given the vulnerability of adolescent drinkers, as evidence by the disproportionately high amount of alcohol-related harm they experience and the potential to reduce the occurrence of future harms among adolescents (Doran et al., 2006, p.1921).

In sum, there are two aspects of the taxation of alcohol which are most likely to impact upon the culture of alcohol consumption by young people. The first of these is the lack of excise differentiation between RTD beverages with varying

levels of alcohol concentration. As noted, these drinks are very popular among younger drinkers and the resultant lack of retail price differentiation means that there is no price incentive for young people to buy and consume low alcohol RTD beverages. Second, the Wine Equalisation Tax which preferentially taxes cask wine sales, is likely to contribute to a harmful drinking culture, particularly among disadvantaged young people.

10.2.2. Liquor licensing legislation and its enforcement

Liquor laws in any country can have a very significant impact on the drinking culture. One could argue that they are the fundamental building blocks in the development of cultural norms around alcohol. Laws in relation to alcohol vary widely and can range from total prohibition (as seen in some Islamic countries) through to highly liberal laws (such as seen in Western Europe). Liquor laws can have an important influence on patterns of consumption and related harms. They can restrict the age, venues and the days and times when alcohol can be purchased and/or consumed. But, importantly, most liquor laws are shaped and determined largely by economic considerations, not considerations related to health, safety or community amenity. In this sense, alcohol is viewed as a commercial product and often treated in much the same way as any other commercial entity. The inherent problems encountered in a culture that focuses intensely on consumerism, as highlighted in Chapter 6, are complicated further with the commodification of alcohol.

While legislative instruments are very important, so too are the more subtle ways in which liquor controls can influence the drinking culture of a community or a specific group within it (for instance, young people). In the Australian context, the control over the sale of alcohol is vested in State and Territory legislation. In the past, a key aim of liquor licensing legislation has been to ensure that the alcohol industry remained viable (Chikritzhs, 2006). While historically, this legislation took account of the negative social impacts of alcohol consumption to some extent, there is little doubt that it was weighted towards protecting both the interests of the alcohol industries and the alcohol-related revenue stream that it generated for government. In this sense, the culture of alcohol in this country has been driven and shaped by economic, financial and employment factors; not social or community concerns. The overriding cultural norm has been one of profit, not safety or community wellbeing.

Over the past decade, Australian jurisdictions have made substantial legislative changes to reflect the need to reduce the harms associated with alcohol consumption (Chikritzhs, 2006). Harm minimisation has become the prime objective of liquor licensing legislation in several jurisdictions. Nonetheless, liquor legislation is often hampered by inadequate definitions of intoxication (which curtail the ability to prosecute licensees for serving intoxicated patrons); and inadequate legislative scope. Chikritzhs (2007) suggests that liquor licensing legislation in Australia

generally lacks the legal 'teeth' to ensure the systematic, ongoing and wide-ranging application of harm minimisation principles. Arguably, therefore, there is scope for improvement in the legislative tools which are available to shape the drinking culture of young Australians.

An important factor currently impacting upon the regulation of the alcohol industry in Australia is the National Competition Policy (NCP) arrangements. These arrangements are the Australian manifestation of a worldwide trend towards the liberalisation of international trade, which has been occurring since the end of the Second World War. Since that time, a variety of international trade agreements have been instituted, which seek to promote the free flow of goods, services, labour and investments, especially through the reduction of obstacles to free trade and production (Babor et al., 2003). These obstacles include tariff barriers, quantitative trade restrictions, state or private monopoly arrangements, and state subsidies to domestic industries.

In these international trade agreements and economic treaties, alcoholic beverages are almost always treated like normal consumer goods. Even when alcoholic beverages like wine are treated as special commodities, this is usually because they fall within the category of important agricultural products, not because they are harmful to health (Babor et al., 2003, p.243).

Furthermore:

These 'more effective' strategies are also those most likely to be threatened or weakened by international trade agreement disputes. To the extent that alcohol is considered to be an ordinary commodity, these agreements and treaties often become severe obstacles for conducting purposeful and efficient alcohol control policies (Babor et al., 2003, p.243).

In 1995, the Australian Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to review legislation and regulations across a range of areas considered to impede competition between businesses. Subsequently, some 1800 pieces of legislation were identified and scheduled for review. By 2005, 85% of this legislation had been reviewed, and, where appropriate, reformed (National Competition Council, 2005). Under the COAG agreement, the Commonwealth makes yearly payments to the States and Territories which are dependent on this legislative reform taking place. The NCC has the ability to recommend to the Commonwealth that these payments be partially or fully withheld if insufficient progress is being made in specific areas.

One area being addressed by the NCC is liquor licensing legislation. The NCC has particular concerns in relation to the impact on competition, restrictions on trading hours, and the number and density of licensed premises. The NCC can exempt jurisdictions from the requirement to change legislation where this is not in the public interest, for instance in relation

to reforms that increase levels of public harm (Marsden Jacob Associates, 2005). The NCC's principal concern is that some Australian liquor licensing legislation restricts competition on commercial grounds, rather than public interest grounds. Specifically, the Council is concerned that historically, restrictions have been placed on the entry of more liquor retailers into the industry, primarily to protect the profits of incumbent license holders (Feil, 2006).

On the advice of the NCC, the Commonwealth has withheld significant proportions of NCC payments to jurisdictions. In 2003-04 the Commonwealth withheld almost \$51 million from NSW as a result of that jurisdiction's failure to meet its obligations under NCP agreements. This represented almost one fifth of that jurisdiction's competition payments for that year. Of this penalty, \$12.7 million was for incomplete reform in relation to liquor licensing legislation (New South Wales Parliament, 2005). As is evident, there is a strong incentive for jurisdictions to comply with NCP and to amend liquor licensing legislation and free up competitive forces in the alcohol industry.

As discussed above, there is a close relationship between the density of licensed premises, their hours of trading, and levels of alcohol-related harm. It has been suggested that any increase in the number and density of licensed premises which could be associated with the influence of NCP could adversely impact on alcohol-related harms. Specifically:

Without a substantial commitment of new resources to improve enforcement capabilities and effectiveness, it is probable that an increase in outlet numbers and/or extension of trading hours will similarly multiply alcohol-related harms (Alcohol and other Drugs Council of Australia, 2004).

In addition, the Alcohol and other Drugs Council of Australia (Alcohol and other Drugs Council of Australia, 2004) was concerned that the benefits that accrue as a result of greater competition between those that sell, and seek to sell, alcohol would be more than offset by the costs associated with the subsequent harms.

The introduction of NCP is likely to be a powerful influence on the liberalisation of Australia's liquor licensing laws. In addition, the national push toward eliminating anti-competitive practices throughout Australia has arguably created some incompatibilities between the Commonwealth and the jurisdictions that administer liquor licensing laws (Chikritzhs, 2006).

In sum, there is substantial evidence that the alcohol culture in Australia, and as it pertains to young people in particular, is shaped by the regulatory framework that governs it. Australia is currently undergoing liberalisation of its liquor regulatory framework as a result of NCP, which is part of a broader international free trade movement. This is occurring in the context of an existing need to enhance the enforcement of licensing laws. There is little doubt that imprecise liquor licensing legislation, coupled with inadequate

levels of enforcement, are a major factor currently influencing the licensed drinking environments encountered by young people and therefore shaping their drinking culture. Allsop summarised the issue thus:

More easily accessible alcohol and low enforcement of liquor licensing regulations are associated with an increase in alcohol use and related harm. Controls on availability and enforcement of regulation are associated with decreases in harm. This observation is not remarkable. However, while such relationships are accepted in relation to a wide range of drugs, it has been a challenge to develop alcohol regulations based on this premise (Allsop, 2006, p.2) .

10.2.3. The role of law enforcement

Police and others with responsibility for enforcing liquor licensing laws often experience a range of barriers to the effective policing of those laws. Doherty and Roche (2003) highlighted some of these barriers, including:

- social attitudes that permit greater deviance while intoxicated than would normally be acceptable
- poor police knowledge, understanding and confidence in policing licensing laws
- police preferences for apprehension (reactive) rather than crime reduction (proactive) activities

- inadequate personnel allocation for police responses
- perceptions of insufficient penalties for liquor law breaches
- a lack of knowledge about the effects of alcohol and a failure to see the potential for harm from drinking
- a shift away from a centralised (or squad) approach to policing licensed premises.

To this list, Chikrihtzs (2007) added:

- difficulty in establishing guilt, particularly in the case of the existence of imprecise definitions of 'intoxication' and the levels of intoxication required to constitute an offence
- the development of close relationships between police and licensees
- police ambivalence concerning interfering with people's enjoyment
- concerns held by some police about the threats to the viability of some licensed premises, particularly in small communities.

A NSW study found that even when liquor licensing laws are enforced the emphasis of that enforcement tends to be upon breaches of the relevant legislation by patrons, rather than by licensees (Briscoe & Donnelly, 2003). Even when licensees, managers or company secretaries were held to legally account for their actions, this tended to be for technical breaches of legislation (such as failure to display appropriate signage). This approach may not be the most effective use of

legislation to reduce alcohol-related harm. Specifically, they argued that:

In a highly competitive industry, such as the retail liquor industry, licensed premises are unlikely to adhere to responsible service of alcohol laws if the perceived risk of apprehension for breaching the law is low or if the punishment associated with the breach is perceived to be trivial (Briscoe & Donnelly, 2003, p.14).

The level of enforcement of liquor licensing legislation is a critical factor which influences the culture of drinking among young people in Australia. As could be imagined, even if harm reduction focused legislative tools were to be made available, the absence of appropriate levels of enforcement gives licensees the opportunity to manage their premises simply to maximise profitability. This is unlikely to be compatible with practices that minimise alcohol-related harm to young people.

One aspect of liquor licensing legislation that is likely to impact on the culture of young peoples' alcohol consumption is alcohol-free or 'dry zones'. These can be established on a short-term basis (e.g., for a special event). They can also be established on a longer-term basis to ensure that areas are preserved for public enjoyment and recreation, free from intimidation or disturbance from persons affected by alcohol. While this is an important strategy to enhance public amenity, the effects of this on the drinking culture of young people is under-researched and therefore unclear.

There is little doubt that liquor licensing legislation can be a powerful tool in reducing the harm associated with alcohol consumption and is a major factor shaping the culture of young peoples' alcohol consumption on licensed premises. It is also clear that the enforcement of that legislation in Australia is currently being hampered by imprecision in the legislation itself and enforcement practices that might not be sufficiently targeted or vigorous.

There is a well-established literature concerning effective practices in the enforcement of liquor licensing laws (see, for example, Doherty & Roche, 2003). As Nicholas (Nicholas, 2006) pointed out, the challenge for policing and its partners is to implement what is already known about responses to this problem.

10.3. Summary

The taxation regime for alcohol, as well as its regulatory framework and the adequacy of enforcement of that framework, all play important roles in shaping the culture of alcohol consumption among young people in Australia. At the macro level, there is currently significant pressure in Australia to reduce both restrictions on the establishment of new licensed premises as well as restrictions on the hours that licensed premises can trade. This is occurring in the context of liquor law enforcement practices that arguably have considerable scope for improvement. There are also some problematic aspects of the way in which alcohol is taxed which are likely to impact on the culture of drinking among young Australians.

As well as these macro influences on drinking environments, there is good evidence that the characteristics of individual licensed premises and the practices of their staff and management significantly influence the drinking culture in those premises and resultant levels of harm to young people. The factors that exert influence range from the extent to which the premises comply with relevant legislation through to more subtle considerations, such as those which create the general ambience of the premises. There is also strong evidence that patrons gain a variety of cues from licensed premises and adjust their behaviour accordingly.

In this way, macro alcohol policy concerning taxation and legislation, as well as the characteristics of environments in which alcohol is consumed, are all important potential levers to reduce the harmful aspects of the culture of alcohol consumption by young people in Australia.

11. Future Directions

The literature surveyed in this document highlights some key areas that have yet to be addressed by current research. These are listed below, along with the implications for the next stage of our research.

- A broader definition of culture is needed to better understand the changes and complexity of young people's drinking. Typically, culture has been used to refer to an isolated or discrete sphere of social life. Our study employs a conceptualisation of culture that focuses on the dynamic and shifting characteristics of meaning-making processes throughout everyday life.
- 'Youth' is not a homogenous group. Young people differ according to their location amongst economic, social, political and educational spheres. Consequently, young people participate in a wide array of cultural groups and social affiliations. This entails a dynamic engagement with varying drinking styles, preferences and motivations as well as a more fluid picture of where and when young people drink. Our study will therefore employ a framework that allows for the multiplicity of youth cultures. It will also follow up prior research that suggests the significant role that technology plays in organising young people's social networks.
- The experience of youth is no longer a linear path marked by stable 'rites of passage'. Instead, the pathway has been disrupted by the dominance of the culture industries in instigating new commodified activities and events that embody the ideals and values of 'youth'. As such, the destination of adulthood is no longer fixed, with an increasing number of young people remaining 'in transition' towards an unclear sense of 'adulthood'. In the next stage of this study, we will undertake ethnographic research that seeks to better understand how the marketing and advertising industries have co-opted the transition into adulthood by examining the leisure spaces of young people.
- An increasing number of studies have acknowledged the need to understand young people's subjective meanings of drinking. They indicate that young people's motivations for drinking are often planned, situational and stand in contrast to biomedical models of

rational behaviour. By employing a framework based on critical social theory, our study aims to identify how the cultural context frames young people's understandings of alcohol and their drinking behaviours through the process of socialisation.

- To better understand culture's influence on young people's drinking, culture must be understood as providing the context from which young people act. The agency of young people in interpreting, negotiating, shaping and transforming culture will therefore be examined by researching young people's drinking at the cultural level. To do this, the methodological tools will be oriented towards a critical understanding of young people's social interactions amongst their peers.
- The need for identification, belonging and recognition are experienced by young people as part of a project in which they must construct their own identity. As part of wider consumer culture, drinking acts as an identity resource through which young people can distinguish themselves from others. Social research has only recently begun to examine this link between the symbolic dimension of drinking and behaviour.
- In the next phase of our research, the leisure activities of young people will be investigated in terms of the process of inclusion and exclusion. That is, we will examine how meanings of drinking are negotiated and used by young people to form

in-groups and out-groups. This is critical as it is through this process that social status and social class are delineated in a cultural context.

At this stage of our research, we have identified key gaps in the literature, as well as a theoretical framework that can be used to add to the understanding of young people's drinking. By employing the model of culture described above we will be better placed to understand how wider social, cultural and economic changes are integrated into the lives of young people. Specifically, we aim to add to the understanding of cultural influences on young people's drinking by gaining a more complex picture of the context in which young people form their meanings of drinking. This will provide a more useful platform from which to understand drinking behaviour and, most importantly, should contribute another dimension to interventions seeking to curb young people's high risk drinking.

12. References

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