

Exploring men's risky drinking cultures

Research by Monash University for VicHealth

Steven Roberts, Brittany Ralph, Karla Elliott, Brady Robards, Jo Lindsay, Kerry O'Brien
School of Social Sciences, Monash University

Michael Savic, Dan I. Lubman
Eastern Health Clinical School, Monash University and Turning Point



MONASH
University



Exploring men's risky drinking cultures

Research by Monash University for the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth)

Suggested citation

Roberts, S.[^], Ralph, B.[^], Elliott, K.[^], Robards, B.[^], Savic, M.*^{*}, Lindsay, J.[^], O'Brien, K.[^] and Lubman, D. I.* *Exploring men's risky drinking cultures* (for VicHealth). Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne, Australia.

[^] School of Social Sciences, Monash University

*Eastern Health Clinical School, Monash University and Turning Point

Products, services and brands that are mentioned or appear in this publication are owned by and/or registered trademarks of their respective proprietors.

Table of Contents

Executive summary	2
1.0 Introduction and background	5
1.1 What is 'risky drinking'?	5
1.2 The problem of men's drinking	5
1.3 Understanding drinking through Social Practice Theory	6
2.0 Methods	7
2.1 Recruitment procedure	8
2.2 Focus Groups	9
2.3 'Scroll back' individual interviews	9
2.4 Observations	9
2.5 Data analysis	10
2.6 Sample characteristics	10
3.0 Findings	14
3.1 'Meaning': Divergent and contested understandings of 'risky drinking'	14
3.2 'Meaning': The centrality of alcohol to homosociality	16
3.3 'Competence': Autonomy as a key manifestation of masculinity	17
3.3.1 Autonomy and self-control	17
3.3.2 Banter	19
3.4 'Meaning/materials/competence': Alcohol as having 'utility'	20
3.4.1 Alcohol as facilitating bonding and connection	20
3.4.2 Drink alcohol content (%), convenience and price	22
3.5 'Materials': shaping drinking atmospheres, practices, and harms	24
3.5.1 Drinking setting: the pub, the home, and trips away	24
3.5.2 Organisational material, infrastructures and practices	25
3.5.3 Jugs and rounds: collectivity, reciprocity and risk	26
3.6 'Competence': Care versus individual responsibility	27
3.6.1 Individual responsibility	27
3.6.2 Autonomy as a barrier to care	28
3.6.3 'Stealth' care	29
3.6.4 Drink driving: the exception	30
4.0 The role of social media in men's drinking cultures	31
4.1 Social media use around drinking was common but not universal	32
4.2 Social media practices around drinking are gendered	32
4.3 Different platforms serve different functions around drinking.	32
4.4 Reputational awareness	33
4.5 Scrolling back as a chance to pause for thought and reflection	33
5.0 Conclusion	33
5.1. Project limitations	34
Acknowledgements	34
References	35
Appendices	36

Executive summary

Overview

Funded by VicHealth and implemented by Monash University and Turning Point, this project examined the factors that influence men's risky drinking practices in Victoria, Australia. It aimed to:

1. Provide an in-depth understanding men's risky drinking (more than four units in a single occasion) cultures in Victoria.
2. Engage with a cross-section of subcultures and settings related to sports clubs, occupations, and place (including metropolitan and regional groups), including:
 - a. Rural (n=21) and urban (n=22) sports participants
 - b. Rural non-playing supporters/members (n=28)
 - c. 'After work' drinking cultures of hospitality staff (n=12) and corporate workers (n=18) in metropolitan Melbourne
3. Provide recommendations to VicHealth on how risky drinking practices and broader cultures might be intertwined with masculinity.

A sample of 101 men from differing backgrounds participated in the project and provided information via a multi-method approach involving surveys, focus groups, one-on-one interviews and observations. Qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis, and quantitative survey data was analysed using descriptive statistics.

Key findings

1. Meanings of 'risk' and drinking

We found that 'risky drinking' was highly prevalent across the sample and in all subcultural groups. Metropolitan based hospitality workers reported the highest proportions of 'risky drinkers' and indicated risky drinking activity on a more regular basis. This was due to a combination of occupational practices (including access to free drinks) and a perceived necessity for post-work 'wind down'.

Yet, men did not routinely perceive their drinking to be 'risky'. Men's understanding of what constitutes *risk* and risky *amounts* of alcohol differed considerably from the national guidelines. Many participants suggested that risk *for them* started at 10, 15, 20, or 30 standard drinks. A minority of men from all subgroups suggested that there is no level of alcohol consumption that ought to be considered risky.

2. Alcohol as central to social interaction and connection between men

Alcohol consumption was considered a central element of most of the participants' social interactions with other men. Though type, volume and pace of drinking varies across settings, all participants viewed drinking as the default social activity for men, describing it as embedded in Australian culture. Drawing on the Social Practice Theory framework, we found that drinking has become *routinised* through repeated (re)enactments of drinking practices on social occasions, and is thus taken for granted. Participants saw alcohol as a way of facilitating connections, particularly with

other men. Alcohol was often described as an ice-breaker, and as a means of lowering men's inhibitions to help them to 'open up'.

3. Autonomy as a key competence in men's drinking cultures

A key competence in men's drinking cultures was a commitment to autonomy. Participants framed their drinking practices as emerging not from gendered expectations or as a result of peer pressure, but from autonomous decision-making processes. Participants insisted they do not monitor one another's drinking, except when it came to preventing visibly drunk friends from driving. This was, however, nuanced by a universal engagement in 'gendered banter'. Though banter is not *intended* to regulate drinking behaviours, our data indicate that it does so in both subtle and explicit ways.

Participants adhered to the idea that ultimately the individual is responsible for monitoring and moderating their own drinking, and for understanding their limits in regard to alcohol. In principle, and of concern, participants reported they would not intervene in a male friend's drinking until the friend was incapable of taking care of himself. However, some men said they might perform more discreet forms of care, thereby navigating their friend's sense of autonomy, their own safety and their desire to look after their mates.

Drink driving was the one circumstance in which participants felt confident, and largely unhindered, in their ability to intervene in a friend's drinking behaviours. Though they pointed out the difficulty of ascertaining a friend's blood-alcohol level, most participants were confident that, if necessary, they would confiscate a friend's car keys. On the basis of this risk to *others*, participants could justify impinging on another man's autonomy by intervening in potential situations of drink driving.

Recommendations/policy translations

Efforts to change men's drinking practices and cultures might focus on addressing the three themes of risk, connection and autonomy and consider co-creating interventions with men.

Risk

- We suggest that health education and health promotion practitioners need to think more innovatively about men's perceptions of risk and how these can be changed. For public health messaging about risky drinking to have greater relevance to men, it needs to engage with the realities and pleasures of men's drinking and contextualised understandings of risk.
- While risky drinking was prevalent across all subcultures and settings, the case of hospitality workers warrants particular attention. The responsibility for creating 'affective atmospheres' (Farrugia et al., 2017) appears to combine with some masculine social norms and a culture of on the job drinking in ways that foster regular risky drinking. The building in of regular and/or risky drinking into work appears to be part of an occupational hazard, one that requires careful and targeted education intervention strategies.

Connection

- Because alcohol consumption is key to social connection between men, this poses a challenge to campaigns that promote individual abstinence or low consumption. This persists despite our data suggesting that men who abstain or drink at lower levels are not excluded from the friendship groups studied here. Alternatively, practitioners could consider possibilities for promoting social connection between men beyond collective drinking.
- Given our findings about the way in which men appear to subscribe to (or be enrolled in) discourses of autonomy and individual choice as ways of performing their masculinity, a focus on risk to others in public health campaigns may be more fruitful than an exclusive focus on individual consumption levels.

Autonomy

- Our finding that autonomy is a crucial aspect of masculine identities and practices suggests that messages about peer pressure may not have traction with men in the subcultures studied here. Notions of autonomy may blind men to the extent to which they are influenced by what they described as 'beer pressure' and a desire to impress their mates.
- The emphasis on autonomy may act as a barrier to men's care practices for others. Foregrounding and amplifying men's caring practices may be a fruitful area for public health efforts, though this is not without complication as 'caring' or demonstrating affection for mates was sometimes understood as insisting they drink more.

Including men in designing public health interventions

- Participants were dismissive of campaigns driven by numerical data drinking advice and emphasised annoyance at paternalistic approaches.
- Our findings about the general lack of engagement with public health messages and campaigns underscores the need for novel approaches that are grounded in the desires and realities of target populations, who should be active participants in the design of public health interventions and campaigns that seek to target them. One suggestion would be to use personalised narratives written as first person 'regretful moments' in relevant media outlets, in forms easily shared on social media.
- The reflective nature of the social media scroll-back method offers scope to be incorporated as part of an 'education intervention', such that men might be invited to review and reflect on the gendered nature of their drinking practices, to consider how gendered drinking practices might be performed differently or otherwise disrupted.

1.0 Introduction and background

This report presents the results from research, funded by VicHealth and conducted by Monash University, that sought to deliver insights into men's practices of 'risky drinking' (five or more standard drinks in a single session) in Victoria, Australia. The research explored the social norms and drinking practices of 101 men from a variety of subcultures and settings (sports spectators; sports players; corporate workers; and hospitality workers) in both regional and metropolitan Victoria. Data was collected through focus groups with existing groups of friends, individual interviews, surveys and observations of drinking settings.

Renewed interest and conceptual thought around drinking cultures and alcohol culture change provides a platform from which to stimulate new research and intervention activities at a subpopulation level. The research presented in this report seeks to contribute to this by exploring drinking norms and practices amongst specific subcultures of men. This report is set into four main parts: background; methods; findings; and a consideration of the role of social media in men's drinking practices. This first section outlines the definition of risky drinking; the 'problem' of men's drinking; the 'social practice theory' approach utilised in the research; and the data generated.

1.1 What is 'risky drinking'?

'Risky drinking' is defined by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare ([AIHW, 2017](#)) as:

- 'lifetime risk for alcohol consumption of more than two standard drinks [20 grams of alcohol] per day
- single occasion risk for alcohol consumption of more than four standard drinks at a single occasion'.

Recent data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2018) suggests that alcohol consumption in Australia is at its lowest rates since the 1960s, with the average person in 2016–2017 drinking less than half of what the average Australian was drinking in 1974–1975. This echoes downward trends in alcohol consumption among young people in Australia and a number of other similar nations. However, alcohol-related harms appear to be stable despite reduced drinking in the population overall. This suggests that subpopulations of young people are continuing to drink at risky levels (Livingston & Callinan, 2015). Similarly, rates of drinking and drinking-related harms among older age groups have not decreased. These high-risk groups may require public health responses targeted at subpopulations, rather than at the whole of population level.

1.2 The problem of men's drinking

Social science research literature has for some time theorised a strong relationship between men's drinking and masculine social norms (e.g. Lemle and Mishkind, 1989; Courtenay, 2000). Men's drinking practices are not biologically driven, but rather are grounded in 'socially constructed beliefs, values, and expectations of what it means to be a man ... [which] often dictate rules that men are expected to follow in order to demonstrate manliness' (Iwamoto et al., 2011). This helps make sense of the fact that 'men outnumber women in virtually every drinking category used in research for

comparison – prevalence consumption, frequency of drinking and intoxication, incidence of heavy and problem drinking [etc.]’ (Capraro, 2000: 307).

In Australia, hospital admission rates associated with risky drinking are almost three times higher among males aged 18–29 years. AIHW (2017) data shows that 56 per cent of 18–24-year olds had recently exceeded the single occasion risk guidelines, though men aged 25–39 also have high rates of risky drinking. Similarly, the rate of risky drinking amongst people aged over 55 has increased between 2013 and 2016 (AIHW, 2018). This demonstrates that the problem of men’s drinking, while having a youth dimension, should be considered as something that permeates the experience of being a man in Australia well beyond youth.

Masculinity is similarly recognised and is included in the VicHealth Alcohol Cultures Framework as influencing drinking practices. The OurWatch, ANROWS and VicHealth (2015: 9) *Change the Story* framework recommends addressing ‘the intersections between social norms relating to alcohol and gender’ in light of the insight that ‘[w]eakening of pro-social behaviour, especially harmful use of alcohol and/or drugs’, ‘can increase the frequency or severity of violence’ when it intersects with gendered drivers of violence against women.

Despite the well-established link between men, drinking and harm, there is a paucity of qualitative research identifying the cultural beliefs, practices (e.g. social/normative), and contextual factors (e.g. club alcohol sales/provisions, discounted alcohol, location, outlet density) that underpin risky drinking among men.

1.3 Understanding drinking through Social Practice Theory

While theories and understandings of masculinity play an important role in this research, our study was also informed both by recent thinking on drinking cultures and by social practice theory (SPT).

There has been considerable academic and policy interest in ‘changing drinking cultures’, yet little in the way of definitional clarity or a framework to guide action on alcohol culture change (Savic et al., 2016). Savic and colleagues (2016) note that thinking about drinking cultures requires a shift from considering just individual behaviour to focusing on the norms – or the rules – around drinking that operate in a society and in subgroups in society. A drinking cultures perspective draws attention to the multiplicity of drinking cultures that operate within any society. However, Savic et al. (2016) warn against viewing drinking cultures as simply causing particular drinking practices, pleasures or harms. Instead, they argue that drinking cultures are part of a network of other interacting factors (such as, amongst others, gender, class and masculinity) that together influence drinking behaviour.

VicHealth proposed a succinct definition of drinking cultures (which they call alcohol cultures) in their recently released *Alcohol Cultures Framework* (VicHealth, 2016). According to VicHealth, alcohol cultures are about ‘the way people drink including the formal rules, social norms, attitudes and beliefs around what is and what is not socially acceptable for a group of people before, during and after drinking’ (VicHealth, 2016: 1). VicHealth also developed a framework to guide public health action on drinking cultures (VicHealth, 2016). Unlike traditional public health approaches, which often focus on either factors such as alcohol availability and price at a societal level or on individual behaviour change, the *Alcohol Cultures Framework* shifts the focus to settings and subcultures (VicHealth, 2016).

SPT offers a complementary approach to extend recent thinking on drinking cultures. SPT warns against understanding social practices – such as eating, drug consumption, and in this case drinking – as simply individual behaviours or choices, as has often been the case in traditional public health and health promotion ‘behaviour change’ efforts. Instead, SPT aims to highlight the social by focusing on how individuals are carriers of practices and by stressing the mundane and routine aspects of such practices. Analysis of practices is achieved through attention to three interconnected ‘elements’, as noted in Figure 1:

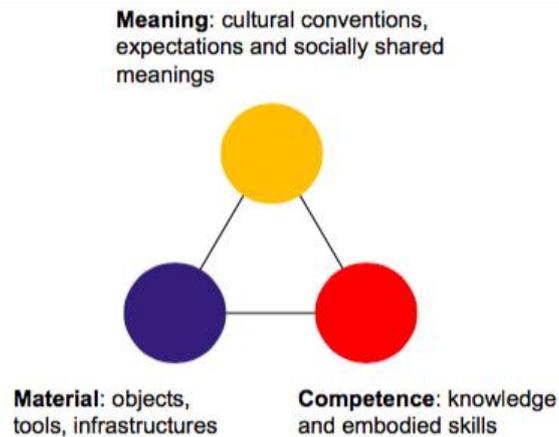


Figure 1. Shove, E., Pantzar, M. and Watson, M., 2012. *The dynamics of social practice: Everyday life and how it changes*. Sage Publications.

Social practice theory calls for a focus on how the meaning, material and competence elements of drinking practices are configured and relate to each other in order to understand how particular drinking practices emerge, persist and disappear (and do so differently) in different situations and in relation to other social practices (e.g. dancing, eating, sex, working and parenting) (Supski et al., 2017). As Maclean et al. (2018) note, SPT ‘is increasingly used to understand drinking and drug use as patterned activities that arise, spread and transform within particular contexts’. SPT is especially useful as it permits ‘an explanation of variation in drinking across different cultural or subpopulation groups’ (Maclean et al., 2018). Men’s drinking, and the differences across subpopulations and settings, is ripe for this kind of analysis. Exposing some of the meaning, material and competence elements of men’s drinking practices permits a variety of public health interventions in, for example, ‘settings, resources, meanings and drinking know-how’ (Maclean et al., 2018). SPT shifts the object of intervention from the individual to the social context and to practices that individuals ‘carry’ or in which they are entangled. Instead of focusing on individual behaviour change, the focus is on reconfiguring the meaning, material and competence elements of the social practice of drinking such that drinking emerges as a less risky practice (Supski et al., 2017).

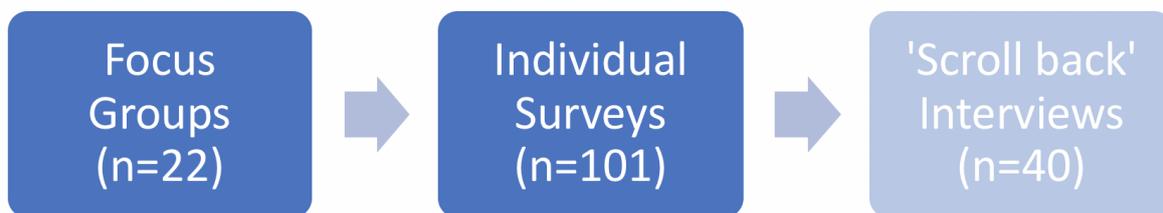
2.0 Methods

This study was designed to inform VicHealth’s aim of understanding and recalibrating the relationship between excessive alcohol consumption and masculine norms in various social settings. We used a purposive sampling approach and a three-pronged qualitative research design, comprising focus groups, individual semi-structured interviews, and ethnographic observations. This was supplemented by individual surveys, which collected basic information about drinking and social

media practices as well as sociodemographic information. Findings from each data source could therefore be triangulated to produce robust findings and recommendations.

2.1 Recruitment procedure

We recruited 101 men into the study aged 18 and over in Victoria who consume more than four standard drinks in one session at least once every six months. The project had ethics clearance from Monash University (project number 12218). We employed a range of recruitment methods including snowballing from existing contacts, posts on social media (both paid/boosted and organically distributed) and, due to limitations outlined below, the use of an external market research company for regional participants. The focus group was the entry point into the study. For these focus groups, we contacted one individual who would then invite a group of friends to participate. Explanatory statements, consent forms, and surveys were disseminated and completed at the beginning of each focus group. Focus group participants also volunteered for subsequent scroll back interviews.



There were three main barriers to recruitment. First, it was time-consuming and often extremely difficult recruiting participants in locations/subcultures where the research team did not have established networks (i.e. metropolitan hospitality workers and regional men). Regional and rural areas required the use of a third party, external market research company to aid in recruiting the sample.

Second, even when using existing research networks or VicHealth contacts, sporting clubs in both regional and metropolitan areas were often very hesitant to participate. Alcohol is a primary financial contributor to many of these clubs. Thus, there was both implicit and sometimes explicit wariness of the prospect of giving access to researchers focusing on alcohol. The following excerpt was part of an email from a gatekeeper in a regional area:

I just wanted to confirm that there is complete anonymity for the clubs and no identification of them. The general feel is, even though they don't push a drinking culture, it is their biggest money maker.

The potential risk to clubs' 'Good Sports' rating was also a barrier in this regard, as was discussed by a number of participants who sit on the boards of a regional sporting clubs. This is perhaps part of the reason why, in the two sports clubs we accessed through a formal top down approach, the club president was part of the focus group, and the general message was that the drinking cultures of players and fans were 'not bad' and had changed dramatically in recent decades.

Third, though more than 140 men agreed to participate, at almost every focus group, one or two participants – but as many as five – did not attend, which reduced overall participant numbers. However, groups of four to five participants were more conducive to equal participant contributions.

2.2 Focus Groups

Our primary data collection method was focus groups, which were conducted with established friendship clusters from five subcultural settings. We conducted 22 focus groups: six groups of regional sport spectators, four groups of regional sports players, five groups of metropolitan sports players, four groups of metropolitan corporate workers, and three groups of metropolitan hospitality workers (see Table 1).

The focus groups allowed access to natural social networks that provide cultural scripting for male-to-male, or ‘homosocial’, drinking practices. They also offered the benefit of established trust and social bonds between participants, and insight into how men collectively negotiate and articulate the norms that underpin their everyday behaviour. We used two stimulus materials to guide the focus group discussions: the *Over Beer?* Canadian Club advertisement (see Appendix 1), and 16 topical statements, which participants read aloud and discussed as a group (see Appendix 2).

Key themes addressed included: drink choice, pace and volume of consumption in different settings; perceptions of risky drinking and definition in national guidelines; drinking practices, including rounds and shots; the involvement of women in drinking practices; and approaches to care, with specific reference to vomiting, drink driving, and rowdy/aggressive behaviours.

2.3 ‘Scroll back’ individual interviews

We conducted 40 individual interviews – mainly with participants who identified as ‘regular’ or ‘sometimes’ users of social media to organise, record or reflect on drinking events. The interview sample included nine regional sports supporters, seven regional sports players, six metropolitan corporate workers, seven metropolitan hospitality workers, and 11 metropolitan sports players. Using the social media ‘scroll back method’ (see section 4.0), we explored the role of social media in organising, recording and reflecting on alcohol consumption. This method allowed us to move away from the broader, more abstract discussions of the focus groups to examine *specific events*, such as a typical Saturday afternoon at the pub, a music festival, Christmas parties, after-work events or a weekend away with friends. Some specific findings in relation to the social media scroll back interviews are documented in section 4.0.

2.4 Observations

Academic research has noted how ‘the bar has been linked to displays of manhood both as a mode of male bonding (Clark 1981) and, more recently, as a site for the legitimisation of male power’ (Arxer, 2011: 401). Accordingly, to complement the individual and group reflections, we conducted seven detailed observations at a drinking site related, with at least one related to the five subcultural groups. These consisted of observations at two popular after works drinks venues in Melbourne CBD; one late night hospitality staff-preferred post work venue; one regional soccer club match day; a regional pub televising a key AFL match; a regional pub hosting a pub quiz; and a regional pub

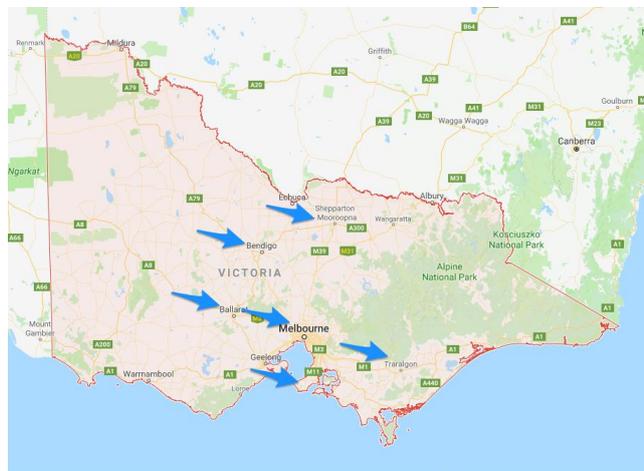
inhabited by mainly working class male patrons. These venues were suggested to us by participants, reflecting sites where they commonly consumed alcohol. These observations allowed for analyses of culture and practice in action rather than relying entirely on retrospective accounts, which tend to be divorced from the broader sociocultural practices, norms and contexts within which they are embedded. In this report, data from the other two methods underpin most analyses.

2.5 Data analysis

Qualitative data was analysed using the Framework Approach to thematic analysis, allowing for themes to be developed with respect to pre-existing frameworks and to emerge unexpectedly from the data (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994). An initial coding framework was developed by using the three elements of social practice theory (meanings, materials, competencies) as main theme headings, and then by identifying examples of each of these elements (e.g. subthemes) in the data. The coding framework and analyses were discussed by members of the research team, leading to new interpretations and deeper analysis. This analysis will continue in more targeted academic publications in the future. Descriptive analysis of survey data was conducted with SPSS.

2.6 Sample characteristics

As per Table 1, most participants were born in Australia and identified as heterosexual. The median age of participants was 28 years, and the range was from 19 to 73. There was an almost even split of participants who lived in metropolitan and rural/regional areas. While there were similar proportions in each participant group type, rural sport players were the largest group and hospitality workers were the smallest. Participants socialised relatively frequently with members of the same group, which afforded the possibility for fostering shared drinking norms and practices in each group. Social media use was ubiquitous in the sample.



The rural/regional focus groups were conducted in Ballarat (three groups), Bendigo (three groups) Shepparton (two groups), Traralgon (one group) and Cowes (one group). The other 12 focus groups were based in the metropolitan Melbourne area, all within 15 kilometres of the Central Business District. The sports players came from one regional cricket club, one regional hockey club, one metropolitan football club, one metropolitan rowing club and five groups who play in social sport competitions. It should be noted that this is not a strictly representative sample, as we set out to achieve depth rather than generalisability.

Table 1: Overall participant characteristics (n=101)

	n (%)
Gender	
Male	101 (100%)
Sexual identity	
Heterosexual	95 (94%)
Gay/homosexual	5 (5%)
Bisexual	1 (1%)
Country of birth	
Australia	84 (83%)
Overseas	17 (17%)
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) identification	
No	95 (94%)
Yes	6 (6%)
Highest level of education	
Bachelor degree or higher	45 (45%)
Certificate 3 or 4, Diploma, or Advanced diploma	18 (18%)
Year 12	29 (29%)
Year 11 or below	8 (8%)
Location	
Rural/regional	51 (51%)
Metropolitan	49 (49%)
Participant group type	
Rural/regional sports supporter – 6 groups	28 (28%)
Urban sports player – 5 groups	22 (21%)
Rural/regional sports player – 4 groups	21 (21%)
Corporate worker – 4 groups	18 (18%)
Hospitality worker – 3 groups	12 (12%)

Frequency of socialising with members of the same group	
Once a week or more	55 (55%)
One to a few times a month	40 (40%)
Less than monthly	5 (5%)
Social media use	
Yes	96 (95%)

Drinking alcohol was pervasive amongst the sample. All participants indicated drinking at least once in the past six months, with 98 per cent reporting that they had consumed alcohol at single occasion 'risky' levels (more than four standard drinks) at least once, and 84 per cent drinking 11 or more standard drinks in a single session at least once in the past six months.

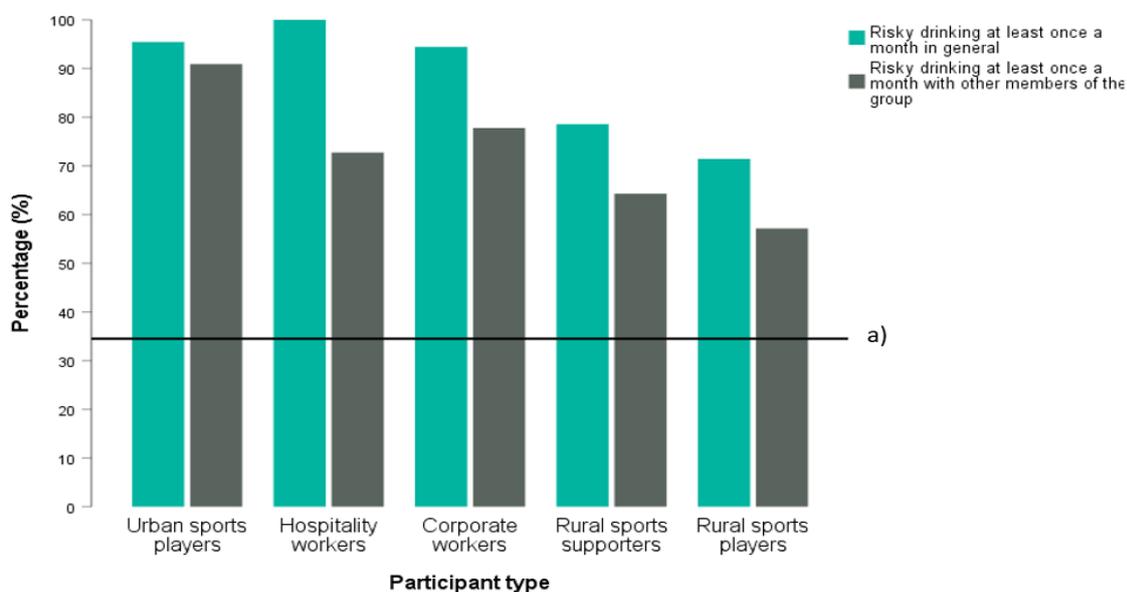
Table 2: Drinking characteristics in the past six months

	n (%)
Frequency of drinking	
Daily or almost daily	27 (27%)
Weekly	60 (60%)
Monthly	9 (9%)
Less than monthly	5 (5%)
Never	0 (0%)
Frequency of drinking 5+ drinks in a session	
Daily or almost daily	4 (4%)
Weekly	59 (58%)
Monthly	24 (24%)
Less than monthly	12 (12%)
Never	2 (2%)
Frequency of drinking 11+ drinks in a session	
Daily or almost daily	0 (0%)
Weekly	20 (20%)
Monthly	38 (38%)
Less than monthly	27 (27%)

Never	16 (16%)
Frequency of using social media to organise/record/or reflect on drinking events	
Regularly	19 (19%)
Sometimes	37 (37%)
Rarely	29 (29%)
Never	15 (15%)

While this was a non-random sample, it is interesting to note that of the five represented subgroups in our sample, more participants from the three urban subgroups (urban sports players, hospitality workers, and corporate workers) reported risky drinking (5+ standard drinks in a single occasion) at least once a month in general and with other members of their group (See Figure 2).

Figure 2: Proportion of participants who report risky (more than four standard drinks on a single occasion) drinking at least once a month in general and with other members of the group



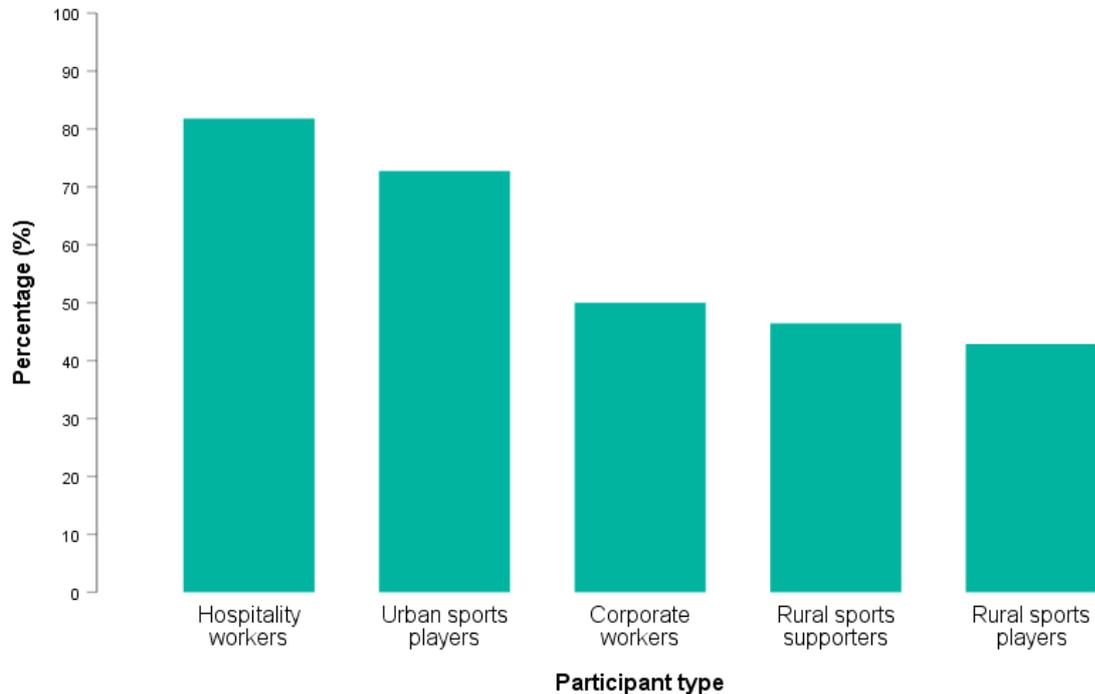
a) Proportion of men aged 14+ in the Australian general population who report risky (more than four on a single occasion) drinking at least once a month according Australian Institute of Health and Welfare data (2018)

Irrespective of the subgroup, the proportion of participants in our sample who reported risky single occasion drinking at least once a month was well above general population statistics for risky single occasion drinking amongst men in Australia (AIHW, 2018). There were not large drops in risky drinking when participants drank with other members of their focus groups, suggesting that groups held norms that promote drinking.

Social media use was highly entangled in drinking events, with 85 per cent of participants reporting that they used social media at least once to organise, record or reflect on drinking occasions. It

seems that interconnected social media and drinking practices were most prominent amongst hospitality workers, urban sports players and corporate workers (See Figure 3).

Figure 3: Frequent (regular/sometimes) use of social media to organise, record or reflect on drinking events by participant group type



3.0 Findings

Themes emerged from the data in relation to all three elements of social practice theory: meanings, materials and competencies. These included the centrality of alcohol to men’s homosocial interactions; autonomy as a key competence in men’s drinking cultures, and the key way masculinity emerged in the data; the framing of drinking behaviours through a discourse of utility as means of preserving this autonomy; this commitment to autonomy as a barrier to men’s practice of care in drinking contexts; and the role of social media.

There was less variation between the subcultural groups and between regional and metropolitan locations in terms of drinking norms and practices than was anticipated. The drinking cultures studied shared, to a certain degree, common drinking practices, with risky drinking being a pervasive practice. The findings presented here speak predominantly to these commonly identified themes. However, where appropriate we also briefly describe some differences between regional and metropolitan locations, or discuss issues that more obviously pertain to specific subcultural groups.

3.1 ‘Meaning’: Divergent and contested understandings of ‘risky drinking’

Across all groups, participants expressed a different understanding of ‘risky drinking’ to the definition of risky drinking in the national guidelines. According to our survey data, most participants consumed five or more standard drinks on a single occasion at least monthly, and eleven or more standard drinks on one occasion at least monthly. When asked to define the threshold at which

drinking becomes risky there was rarely a consensus, with participants arguing that ‘everybody is different’ according to contextual factors, metabolism, height, weight and alcohol tolerance. Nonetheless, the number of standard drinks considered risky was always significantly higher than the recommended guidelines.

R18.2¹: I’m probably up in the 10, 11, 12 mark

Facilitator: Standards or pints?

R18.2: Probably pints.

M7.2: I think like, 10 to 12 or something like that like –

M7.3: What, standard drinks?

M7.2: Yeah, I’m sort of basing it on a bottle of wine but like, a bottle of wine –

M7.3: I was going to say like, 30.

As above, participants variously suggested that risk ‘for them’ started at 10, 15, 20, or 30 standard drinks. A minority of men from both regional and metropolitan groups, and from both professional and non-professional backgrounds, suggested the threshold was ‘infinite’ (M12.2) or that ‘there is no number that makes it risky’ (R19.1). Observational data corroborates this, with the seven men in FG18 consuming at least 23 pints of beer during the course of the focus group. This rate of consumption was also evident among spectators of an AFL match being televised in the same pub. This rate of consumption declined considerably following the end of the match, when most patrons left the venue. This indicates how certain events or activities have a bearing on the rhythm and pace of drinking.

Most men articulated a variety of perceived risks, such as losing one’s balance, dangerously crossing a road, unsafe sex or long-term health conditions. Others, however, conceived of little more than sending a regrettable text message, or contended that there was *no risk* at all. This denial of risk is part of a complex paradox supported by masculine norms. On the one hand, research has shown that men engage in risky behaviours, including heavy drinking, as a way to elevate their masculine standing with other men (Iwamoto et al., 2011). On the other, the denial of taking risks speaks to the deeply embedded masculine norms of *autonomy*, *self-control* and *endurance*. The remainder of this report highlights these three norms as key features of men’s drinking practices.

The desire for autonomy translated into a general distaste for government definitions of risk. Participants were overtly cynical about government funded health advice, labelling it, among other things, ‘bullshit’ and paternalistic:

M4.1: Those guys in the ivory tower, they don’t know what we drink on our weekends, them telling us what we should be drinking, what do they know?

R18.1: It’s like being rolled off by your parents. And particularly for the target demographic, I would assume, that was in here – it’s not going to work, because I couldn’t have given two shits about what was said when I was 19.

This extended to dismissal of all advice from any ‘authority figures’, as this exchange demonstrates:

Facilitator: What do you think about those health campaigns that say stuff like you shouldn’t drink more than this number of drinks?

R19.2: Rubbish.

¹ Throughout this report we use unique participant identifiers (ID). A participant’s ID comprises a letter to signify the broad location (R = regional; M = metropolitan) followed by a number denoting the overall focus group number, and then a decimal indicating the participant number in that specific focus group. For example: M7.2 = Metropolitan, Focus Group 7, Participant 2.

R19.3: Load of shit.

R19.4: How can they tell what's good and bad for someone?

R19.2: My old man just had a heart attack and the doctors told him to stop drinking and he's already said, 'no, I'm not going to do it. I can't just stop drinking like that'. He's been drinking for years.

Facilitator: So why can't you stop it just like that?

R19.2: He just reckons he won't do it. He likes to enjoy his life and that's what he's doing, and he works 65, 70 hours a week.

3.2 'Meaning': The centrality of alcohol to homosociality

Alcohol consumption was considered a central element of most of the participants' social interactions with other men. The few exceptions included playing sport, having barbecues or picnics, going to the beach, or getting breakfast or a coffee – the former three being occasions where alcohol is not *central* but is often still *present*, and the latter being the rare occasion where it is not present at all. Though the type, volume and rate of drinking changed across settings, many participants understood alcohol consumption as a default, shared activity with their friends:

M6.4: That's the thing, like if it's activity based, like that's sometimes the only exception to, like, if we were actually drinking. There's usually got to be something – like something else involved for it to be as fun as drinking.

M11.5 [individual interview]: I actually find it hard to hang out with my friends and not drink beers. I find I'm like 'what do you do?' I'm like, 'I've had a cup of tea, we've played board games. Now we should either smoke a joint or drink beers, or both'. And I feel like that's become the norm for most social settings. And I don't know if that's my lifestyle or the way I've been just acclimatised to it in hospitality. Some of my friends do do it, my friends go hang out and they don't drink, and I'm like 'what are you guys doing all day?'

The sentiment that drinking makes social occasions more enjoyable was shared by all of the focus groups, along with the understanding that it is inherent to the culture Australian men are 'born into' (M6.1), one that 'you can't really just describe ... but by the time you get older it's just embedded, like you grow up and drink beers' (M6.4). While some participants did not interpret this 'embeddedness' as compulsory drinking, others were more reflexive. One participant in his individual interview stated:

R15.1: I think in this country we just have a terrible drinking culture ... I feel really a sense of compassion towards people who probably get labelled as, you know, just that person who drinks too much ... there's a lot going on behind that, there's a reason, there's a void I suppose that they're filling through that behaviour ... that's culturally in Australia, that's the attitude we have towards alcohol.

For many young men, and older men reflecting back, 'it was always that, if you didn't have a beer in your hand, you kind of didn't fit in with the group' (R18.3). Participants from both regional and metropolitan areas attributed this to intergenerational learning, particularly from their fathers:

M6.2: If you're like at Christmas lunch and dad gives you a beer, like you're not going to be like 'I don't want a beer' because that's rude and then you're weak, your dad thinks you're weak. Like if everyone's doing it, it's just like drinking water. Everyone's drinking water, you're going to drink water as well.

R19.4: When I was little dad would send me to the [supermarket] or something and I'd run down and he'd give me a sip of his beer and that's all right, it was cool, I loved it. And as I grew older it's like he'd buy us a six pack if we were going to a party or whatever and you just grow up drinking beer.

For regional participants aged 30 and above, engagement with local sports clubs was also described as a key element of their socialisation into drinking:

R20.3: So 1993 [21 years old] was my first Grand Final, we were at one of the club rooms and I'd had a few and I came back and the coach says, hands me a beer, cracks it [open] in front of me, he says, if you're any sort of premiership player you'll skull this. I got three or four mouthfuls in and spewed it up again.

Here, we can identify the way drinking has become normalised through *routinisation*, as per the SPT framework. Alcohol consumption is thus established through repeated (re)enactments of drinking practices in social occasions, and drinking emerges as a taken for granted practice that almost appears automatic, especially when it intersects with other social practices like group gatherings and celebrations.

Aside from this, however, the participants were largely unable to articulate *why* drinking is so central to Australian men's social interactions, stating it is 'just the way we are' (R19.1). This taken for granted attitude confirms the long-standing idea that 'social drinking is a primary cultural symbol of manliness' (Lemle and Mishkind, 1989: 213).

3.3 'Competence': Autonomy as a key manifestation of masculinity

Participants, however, expressly denied the notion that their drinking behaviours are shaped by gender, drawing instead on gendered discourses of autonomy and individual responsibility across many of the group discussions. They challenged the view that men use alcohol – in terms of high consumption rate, volume and endurance, and engagement in aggression and violence – to assert a masculine identity. This corresponds with other alcohol research (e.g. Mullen et al., 2007) and emphasises the complexity of the relationship between masculinity and drinking (see e.g. De Visser and Smith, 2007).

3.3.1 *Autonomy and self-control*

Participants explicitly distanced themselves from ideas of 'macho men' or 'jocks', and from the traditionally masculine alcohol-related behaviours these kinds of men allegedly engage in. Participants described themselves instead as accepting, open and, frankly, not at all concerned with monitoring their friends' drinking. M2.2 said 'I've never really supervised anyone's drinking', and M7.3 said 'we don't sit around counting each other's drinks'. However, these assertions were not evidenced by an uptake of diverse drinking styles. Most participants principally drank beer, at similar rates and often together in rounds. Despite this, and though they reflected on caving to peer

pressure in their teenage years, most men in this study viewed themselves as *self-determined* in their drinking behaviours.

Autonomy thus appeared to be a key competence for men's drinking behaviours. The participants regularly used variations of mantras emphasising the role of knowledge and self-control:

M2.1: it's just like *you do you* ... you know who you are, why would you go beyond that because of what someone else thinks?

Participants strongly disapproved of those who do not display the competence of autonomy, or those who appear to alter their behaviour in order to impress their friends or abide by social mores. For example, Focus Group 6 discussed a friend who pretends he likes drinking:

M6.2: If you're honest about it come out and say, 'I don't want to drink alcohol because I don't want to drink' then people will be like 'yeah, that's cool, you do you'. But if you've got a mate, like we do, who says he drinks but never drinks in front of us, that's when it's kind of like, you know, 'why are you lying?'

M6.3: Yeah, there's no reason for him to lie about it because ... we do not care at all if he doesn't drink, he still hangs out with us and we still like him when he hangs out with us, so there's no reason for him to say that he does drink.

Participants did acknowledge the role of pressures or encouragement to drink alcohol located in the broader culture. However, most participants suggested that pressure to conform did not exist within their friendship groups:

M9.5: I don't think there's that pressure. That pressure doesn't exist, if any of us got a different drink I don't think anyone would bat an eyelid.

M2.2: [Men] should feel comfortable with [their friends], you know? You don't have to prove yourself or do any of that.

This idea of a lack of pressure may stem from the proliferation of a wider variety of acceptable and legitimated masculinities. It is further evident in an exchange between participants in Focus Group 18, who described themselves as 'very open' compared to the men from the local cricket club:

R18.2: I would say as well though, it's – in this group of people, there is a difference. You wouldn't be afraid in a group like ours to drink something different.

R18.1: We're very open.

R18.2: Whereas I've grown up hanging around a cricket club, with ... a whole bunch of jocks ... who also play footy ... if you did that, if you drank something different, they would mock you for it.

Facilitator: Does that make you avoid the drinks that they'd make fun of you for drinking?

R18.2: Well for me it made me avoid going to their social functions, to be honest.

Facilitator: If you do go, do you just stick to beers?

R18.2: Yeah, I'd just drink beers when I go there.

R18.3: Yeah, if you like those beers or not, you sort of just, shut up and drink it.

R18.2: You would, just to avoid any extra unwanted attention, I suppose?

This excerpt highlights two key points. First, as noted above, participants in both regional and metropolitan settings distanced themselves from the idea of a macho *other* who uses alcohol to assert a masculine identity. This challenges the image of a unified regional masculinity versus fluid urban masculinities, suggesting instead that masculinity has varying effects on men's drinking cultures within both contexts. Second, 'banter' emerges here as significant in relation to men's drinking practices.

3.3.2 Banter

Participants considered banter a pivotal, expected and accepted element of homosocial interactions. In respect of drinking, men might 'cop a bit of shit' (M7.3) if, for example, they fall behind consumption in a round with mates (R17.2); if they 'didn't have an answer or a reason and [just wasn't] drinking for the sake of it' (M7.1), or if they 'came back [from the bar] with something flowery' (M7.2). This was evident in our observation of a popular venue for hospitality staff after work drinks, where we overheard a man say, 'that's a bit fruity' to a male friend who had purchased a cocktail. Such banter was often explained as 'boys being boys'.

Most focus groups argued that their banter was not intended to have any real impact. As M11.2 put it, 'it's not like "I don't want you to stop drinking", it's just like "I don't want you to go home", I feel like they love me'. There is, however, a difference between the banter that occurs between close friends, and the mockery that R18.2 experienced at the cricket club (as above). The former occurs in a context of more equal power dynamics and trust, which mediates the pain of harsh comments, but banter in the context of unequal power dynamics likely emerges as a direct attempt to reinforce one's position in the masculine hierarchy.

There were indications that banter (particularly that which underscores traditional masculine norms) to some extent shapes men's drinking behaviours. Mostly this was subtle with, for example, at least one participant from each focus group conceding that they drink beer despite not necessarily enjoying it because 'it's just what you do' (M7.1). In other focus groups this was far more explicit:

Facilitator: Do you reckon banter is ever actually used to make people drink more?

R19.2: Definitely, yeah, at least another one [drink], and then another one.

R19.4: It happened to me last time, I said 'I'm going to bed' and he said, 'no, you've got to have another one', so I had another one.

At its most extreme, while only on rare occasions, participants in individual interviews described how they continued drinking well beyond their intention. For example, in his interview R19.2 recounted drinking three pints of beer more than planned and ultimately vomiting because his friends repeatedly called him 'a pussy'. Such derogatory 'banter' can produce and reinforce highly negative gendered tropes and hierarchies and possibly constrains the emergence or expression of other forms of masculinity.

Notably, a subtle regional/metropolitan divide was present, with regional participants more likely to contend that banter can 'definitely' (R19.2), 'one hundred percent' (R17.2) change men's drinking behaviours, while the metropolitan men said 'no' (M6.3), 'maybe, you never know' (M6.3), or 'I don't think so' (M10.2). This perhaps speaks to the slightly different emphasis in the dominant modes of masculinity in each setting. The metropolitan men seemed more invested in autonomy

and the 'you do you' attitude, whereas regional men were slightly more invested in unified collective drinking practices. However, we stress again that there was a full spectrum of attitudes apparent across all locations.

Banter also played out across social and digital media, but with limitations. In interviews, a few different participants explained how circulating an image of a friend vomiting after drinking too much was okay in a group message with a small number of close friends, but it would be inappropriate on a more public channel such as a Facebook or Instagram post. M8.1 explained how at his football club, banter included a practice where peers were 'fined' for certain behaviour:

M8.1: One guy was spotted at the pub last night... drinking red wine or whatever... someone sent a photo of that, and that's a \$5 fine... you can choose anything that's a bit cringe worthy...

Interviewer: Tell me what's cringe worthy about the red wine?

M8.1: I don't know, he's captain of the under 19s footy team... and he's at the pub having a wine. Seems a bit... I don't know, a bit funny. But I don't think anyone judges him too harshly.

This pervasive use of banter problematises participants' claims to autonomy in relation to men's drinking practices. In both subtle and explicit ways, the banter that is so central to homosociality regulates what and how much men drink. From a drinking cultures perspective, banter acts as a carrier of norms but also as a mode of social control (see Savic et al., 2016) for enforcing and promoting particular (heavy) drinking practices.

3.4 'Meaning/materials/competence': Alcohol as having 'utility'

As above, autonomy and self-determination were central to the masculine norms that emerged around drinking. However, the participants did not conceptualise their drinking behaviours in relation to autonomy, and instead, employed a discourse of 'utility'. The sense of utility emerged in two ways. First, alcohol was argued to *connect* men, as a social lubricant, an ice-breaker, or a common activity. Second, participants made sense of their drinking practices – such as drink choice or the rate or volume of consumption – by discussing price, percentage and convenience, rather than gendered expectations of how or what men should drink. In discussing these factors, men demonstrated their knowledge and competence.

3.4.1 *Alcohol as facilitating bonding and connection*

Participants saw alcohol as a way of facilitating connections, particularly with other men. Notably, individual drinking was not a common occurrence in any of our observations, across all settings. Instead our fieldnotes record the presence of multiple groups of 4–6 men drinking together (often with women present too). The following excerpts highlight alcohol's potential function as an ice-breaker, and as a means of lowering men's inhibitions to help them to 'open up':

R18.2: Blokes don't really open up and they need, sometimes, an excuse to. And beer is that sort of thing that brings them together and helps them to socialise a bit more. And if we just sat around a table with nothing right now we probably, I don't know, it's quite the icebreaker sometimes, so.

R19.3: Because we do dumb shit. We do fun stuff, we won't say dumb shit, we do fun stuff. It's just, I don't know, it's fun.

R19.2: We open up.

R19.4: That's true you definitely open up.

Facilitator: What kind of stuff do you talk about when you're drinking?

R19.4: All sorts, your sex life, work life.

M11.2: People want to fit in, it's the human nature thing and if every other man is specifically drinking pints of beer and you're new to the situation or you're making some new friends and you want them to like you, you don't want to be too different.

M11.5: I look at it [a photo from a drinking event] and smile, I'm like 'what a good night'. I remember like the night was excellent, hanging out with my family and kind of getting to know my cousins on a deeper level. You know, those drunken deep and meaningful conversations you have with someone you don't, that you've known your entire life, but you don't really know that well ... from that night I feel closer to a few of my cousins that I hung out with, you know, I feel like we made some good bonding.

Beyond social connection, most focus groups agreed that alcohol facilitated pleasure and relaxation. For corporate workers, alcohol was seen to open up different ways of behaving and relating beyond the roles of 'colleagues' or 'workers'. This reportedly enhanced team bonding, and encouraged people to more effectively work for/with others.

Similarly, drinking in both metropolitan and regional sports groups was seen as a good way to promote a social atmosphere and team bonding at the sports club. For one metropolitan football club, the social aspects of the competition were key factors for recruiting players, and this 'socialising' invariably referred to drinking together:

Facilitator: Do you think the dynamic would be different if the drinking wasn't happening? Like, during trainings, during games, do you think there would be more or less camaraderie if there was no drinking happening afterwards or at all?

M7.1: There could be potentially less people participating because people would come to the club who didn't necessarily come through the main areas where this club pulls players from. And so friends of friends come because they like socialising with a group of people.

Hospitality workers often stated that drinking alcohol made them work *better*. Alcohol was described as helping them to 'loosen up' and improve the 'vibe' of the bar. At certain venues in the hospitality industry, drinking was seen as central to their working week at the bar:

M11.5: I've worked nights where I haven't drunk, I've worked nights where somebody else hasn't drunk –

M11.1: I've worked a night where I didn't drink.

M11.5: But I don't think I've worked a night where *no one* has had one drink.

Facilitator: As well as having a good time yourselves drinking, do you think it makes you better at your job, when you're drinking?

M11.5: Annoyingly I do. That's something that really grates on me is that I want to have a good time and then I get bought a few shots and all of a sudden I'll do fucking [unintelligible], and you're not drunk, you know when you're in the sweet spot, you're high-fiving people and you're chatty and you're having a good time and the flow is good, like my bartending is on point –

M11.2: Sometimes you just need to loosen up that 10 per cent.

M11.5: That's a coping mechanism or an enabler for me that drinking alcohol does put me in the right space of mind, where I can't do that sober – well, I probably could, but that's something that I'm aware of.

The relationship between hospitality work and risky drinking warrants further research. In addition to often drinking on the job, these groups talked about very regularly drinking at the bar after closing hours, and/or going to a particular bar after their shift known as a spot for hospitality workers to wind down. M10.2 explained this practice in his individual interview via discussion of a photograph he had posted on social media:

M10.2: That's four pints of beer lined up on the bar. That was mine, and the other three were mis-pours, so I just drank them all.

Interviewer: Was that here [in the bar in which he worked]?

M10.2: It was here ... I would have just knocked off work, finished a beer, and then something would have happened, they would have got busy, and they would have been like 'do you want another one? Do you want another one?'

Interviewer: So you just kind of stayed here and –

M10.2: Stayed here and drank. Yeah.

Interviewer: Do you do that a lot?

M10.2: Yeah ah, probably every Friday I do that ... I'll just stay here ... so I'll probably drink for either three to four to five hours depending on what time I finish.

In another interview, we scrolled back to images on M6.1's Instagram profile, from an annual 'boys' week away' with his closest friends he called 'goonfest':

M6.1: It's a space where all of us... let loose... you are allowed to be as open as you want to be... it is an escape. You'll drink as much as you can... everyone's there... we've got one dude who doesn't drink, he doesn't come out to bars and stuff, but he'll be at goonfest. He'll take care of us, and cook.

These stories of weekends or time away were common among many groups of friends, whether it was down the peninsula to an AirBnB or up a river to a campsite, these events always involved significant drinking and were framed as important for bonding/connection.

3.4.2 Drink alcohol content (%), convenience and price

The majority of men in this study acknowledged that their drinking practices when they were younger were governed by 'beer pressure': drinking a lot of beer, and drinking it quickly, in order to impress and gain credibility among their male friends. However, few participants stated that this was still the case, instead they offered percentage, convenience and price as the main factors in their decisions to drink beer, and at times, spirits.

Alcohol percentage (strength) was framed as a key factor in drink choice as the men described actively managing their intoxication according to contexts. When spending time with friends at the pub or having after-work drinks, beer was the usual drink choice due to the higher volume of liquid per standard drink:

M6.3: [Beer] doesn't get you too drunk.

M6.2: Yeah, it's very steady, as well.

M6.3: It's easy to manage.

As a night progresses – and the aim switches from managing intoxication to increasing it – many participants described switching to individually purchasing spirits and speeding up their rate of consumption. Our observation data supports the men's statements about the slower pace and prevalence of beer; however, the switch to drinking spirits was not observed due to the timeframe of the data collection.

Second, participants discussed the convenience of buying jugs or rounds of beer, rather than multiple different kinds of drinks, due to the speed and ease of access:

R16.3: It's not a shout if it's not beer.

R18.2: I would say that it was just easier if you bought this round and then we wouldn't have to be getting up and moving, just made more sense, didn't it? So.

R18.1: We're lazy when it comes to beer.

R18.2: It's efficient.

M6.1: If cocktails were like on tap ... I'd probably get cocktails more often. Yeah, beer and cider is just like right there, it'll take the bartender like ten seconds and then you've got it, but with cocktails it can take like two minutes and you're just kind of standing there and like people are behind you like getting antsy about like, you know, how long it's taking and you feel like it's all like your fault and so just grab something on tap and you're out of there.

Price was another particularly salient factor in terms of utility:

Facilitator: Why do you guys drink beer, in this situation?

M6.1: It's cheap. Cheaper.

Facilitator: Why do you three guys drink beer?

R19.2: It's cheap.

All groups rejected that price increases would prevent or even moderate drinking practices:

R19.3: If [the government] put a box of beer at 100 bucks I'd still pay... It would piss me off, but I'd still pay it. At the end of the day they're not going to stop it at all. Even if they raise the drinking age and all this it's not going to do shit.

By framing their drink choice and behaviours in terms of utility, participants avoided suggesting their drinking was influenced by gendered expectations. Their sense of autonomy was thereby maintained. Key steps in changing men's drinking cultures would thus be to reveal how discourses of utility and autonomy mask the gendered pressures men are subjected to in relation to alcohol; and

to reshape men's approach to autonomy such that it allows them to behave in safer and more responsible ways.

3.5 'Materials': shaping drinking atmospheres, practices, and harms

Rather than passive features of drinking contexts, materials emerged as factors that shaped drinking practices, atmospheres and afforded/constrained possibilities for harm reduction. In addition to phones and social media, which is discussed in theme 4.0, we identified three sub-themes related to materials: settings, organisational materials and practices, and objects such as larger alcohol receptacles (e.g. beer jugs).

3.5.1 Drinking setting: the pub, the home, and trips away

In a notable divergence from the metropolitan focus groups, men in the regional focus groups more readily talked about drinking at home or with friends in alternate spaces to licensed venues. Several regional focus groups implied that they attended licensed venues only very occasionally. Focus Group 19 explicitly detailed that the rising cost of alcohol at their local pub was the main reason they retreated to the home of a friend for their Friday night drinking. They furthermore noted incidentally that this pub had gone out of business:

R19.2: [Drinking at the pub] was just a thing for every Friday night. And you were dropping half your pay cheque there every week without a doubt, and we sort of all got together [and said] 'this is becoming ridiculous'.

R19.4: And then we started drinking at our own houses.

R19.1: We started drinking at each other's houses.

Facilitator: So who of the group decided or raised it and said, we're spending too much money?

R19.2: ...We all just agreed on it. It was all like, yeah, this is getting ridiculous and so we started drinking at each other's house and saving ourselves. Now instead of spending 300 bucks a night you're only spending 60, 70 bucks at the most now.

For these focus groups, the retreat to the home (as opposed to spending time at the pub) seemed to be a catalyst for increased consumption of alcohol, with shots, slabs of beer, and bottles of spirits becoming more affordable. Some groups, however, spoke of how being at home cultivated a more intimate or casual atmosphere in which drinking practices intersected with other practices (and the objects involved in these practices).

Such practices included playing video games, watching sport on TV, and having a meal together. When entangled in this bundle of practices and objects in participants' homes, drinking appeared to be moderate and afforded the possibility of intimate and caring conversations. For instance, participants in regional settings (e.g. FG 18) recounted being able to be vulnerable with each other and discuss feelings and emotive and intimate topics when they socialised in each other's' homes. This was counter to the atmosphere of abandon that was present in some groups' perceptions of the material influence of pubs and bars:

M7.3: If you go to the pub, generally I'll get in a round with a few people. So, you know, you might go pint for pint and if you've finished yours and it's their turn to buy and they've still

got half a pint you might say to them in jest, come on mate, keep up and that sort of forces him to drink quicker because he has to buy the next round.

R19.3: We just feed off each other. So, like I might have got [to the pub] late so I'm only half a beer down, the other boys have finished so I quickly neck mine back, so I can keep up with the others to get a beer with them.

Observations of drinking sites, however, again highlighted diversity within and across metropolitan and regional settings, challenging notions of homogenous drinking cultures in regional areas compared with metropolitan locations. For instance, at a pub in one regional location the mostly male patrons, many of whom were wearing high visibility work site or trades uniforms, drank at the same casual, relatively slow pace as those we observed at a quiz night in a more salubrious-looking regional bar.

Another setting – perhaps even a *context* – was *trips away from home*. Whether in relation to a sporting team, such as the footy trips described by FG7, FG14 and FG22 and the rowing regattas described by FG2, or simply a camping trip with family or friends, these excursions away from home and the local pub supported considerable risky drinking behaviours. Risky drinking was also a key part of the *journey* to the destination for these trips when the men travelled together on a bus, for example:

F: Was there much drinking involved [on the footy trip]?

M7.2: That's probably all there was...

F: How much [did you drink on the bus]?

M7.3: Well, two slabs [48 bottles of beer] between three of us and then we went out after that.

Similarly, FG19 described consuming three to four cartons of beer a day between four people, over two nights while on their monthly camping trips. While different to the collective setting of the 'team' bus, a similar atmosphere and rhythm of heavy drinking prevailed. In both cases, and not unlike other contexts such as a post-work or post-game wind down where drinking is the only option, in such circumstances drinking was naturalised and considered '*all there is*' to do. However, on these trips the exceptionally large volume of alcohol consumed is sustained over a period of consecutive days rather than hours. FG22 also discussed the pressure they exert on one another to drink heavily, from as early in the day as breakfast. As will be discussed in section 3.6.4, participants in FG19 also described being more likely to engage in drink driving while on a camping trip.

3.5.2: Organisational material, infrastructures and practices

Formal organisational materials and practices supported and encouraged the normalisation of drinking for a number of focus groups. Corporate workers in FG3 for example explained how a 'drinks cart' would be brought around the office for staff to 'take a beer' from about 1.30pm on a Friday afternoon. FG1 and FG4 explained that company credit cards were often used to fund after work drinking sessions as well as project specific celebrations. This resulted in greater volume and rate of consumption because 'who doesn't drink more when it's free?' (M4.2).

There was an awareness of professionalism if the company card was assigned to them individually:

Facilitator: So even if your manager says 'go out and go a bit nuts', you still are aware that you don't want to make it too –

M4.1: Yeah, because it is looked at, yeah. It's the company's money.

M4.4: They wouldn't necessarily pick you up on it, I don't think, but you're just like, consciously well, we're consciously thinking that we don't want this to look bad on us.

However, FG1 described circumventing this scrutiny by ensuring that the second most senior member of staff 'put down' their company credit card, so the most senior staff member present could 'sign it off'.

In organised sport settings, formal events were also heavily subsidised by the club through either bar tabs or 'ticketed' open bars. As a metropolitan based AFL club told us:

M7.1: Sometimes we do have functions on here like, we'll maybe have three functions throughout the year, that us players organise for the playing group. And generally, it's you buy a ticket and it might include alcohol so, you know, people like, you're pretty much just kind of here to drink with your friends.

Facilitator: Is there a bar tab sort of for a set period of time? If you buy a ticket do you get like, a certain number of drinks or is it like, just open bar?

M7.1: It depends exactly how they organise it. Sometimes you've got to pay for drinks but it's usually easier just because, you know, we don't have amazing bar facilities, you just pay say, whatever, and you can just drink. There's no set amount, you just take [...]

M7.4: I think the players prefer that as well because rather than paying for beers that might cost you \$5.50 you can say, pay \$50 and you have unlimited supply.

Individual cash or card payments were, then, identified as less preferable but also something that makes faster alcohol consumption 'less easy', while materials such as corporate credit cards or 'drink all you like' tickets facilitate risky drinking.

3.5.3 Jugs and rounds: collectivity, reciprocity and risk

Throughout the focus groups, jugs of beer were described as a standard method of drinking in rounds. Participants justified this practice as a quick, convenient and cheap option, as corroborated by observations of pubs and bars that run specials on jugs for lunch and on weekdays during peak 'after work' drinking periods. The gendered nature of this practice was also evident in observations, where, for example, in a popular corporate after work drinks venue in the Melbourne CBD we documented that men socialising predominantly with women had a range of drinks (including wine and cocktails), while men drinking with other men most often had one or more jugs of beer at the table.

Importantly, participants emphasised that, beyond convenience, sharing jugs of beer allows them to maximise their time together; 'you're there to chat not to like, wait for expensive orders of stuff to come out' (M4.2). There was a sense that this collectivity and reciprocity gave value to the experience of drinking together, as opposed to paying and drinking separately. It emerged as an important expression of trust that the participants knew the rounds will *always come back around*. However, though specifically designed to facilitate collective drinking, an observation of a metropolitan pub televising a high-profile AFL game revealed that men *do* purchase and consume

jugs individually. Indeed, as explored above, drinking jugs or in rounds can lead to increased rate and volume of drinking, as men attempt to keep up with one another. One participant stated that he purposely does not participate in rounds because he does not want to feel this pressure:

R20.3: I've actually stepped away from that [drinking in rounds] because I want to control my drinking levels not be governed by someone else, particularly if I get in with a young lot that can go a bit harder than me.

Of course, on its own a jug of beer does not cause risky drinking. The participants highlighted important benefits in terms of male bonding, and as described in section 3.4.2, men generally switch to spirits to become heavily intoxicated. However, it is worth noting that, in the setting of a pub or bar, this material (alongside the practice of rounds) can inadvertently encourage and normalise heavier alcohol consumption. This is especially the case when the same practice of sharing drinks from large receptacles revolves around cocktails – commonly called 'fishbowls'. While far from uniformly discussed, these were suggested in some individual interviews as having the same 'benefits' as jugs of beer. Encouraging the same pace and volume of consumption, but with much stronger alcohol content, this particular material – the excessively large glass – is implicated in facilitating very high levels of risky drinking.

3.6 'Competence': Care versus individual responsibility

The reshaping of discourses of autonomy and utility is particularly important in light of how these discourses currently act as barriers to men performing care. The caring practices of participants when drinking were hindered by their commitment to autonomy and, in some cases, by the threat of violence. Here we explore ideas of individual responsibility, barriers to providing care for friends in drinking situations, and, conversely, some examples that counter the assumption that care is absent from men's lives. Finally, we consider drink driving as the one circumstance in which participants felt relatively confident in intervening in a friend's drinking, but normally only when there was a risk to others rather than to the individual.

3.6.1 *Individual responsibility*

Despite often declaring 'you'd always be there for your mates' (M2.1), there was a strong allegiance to the idea of individual responsibility when drinking. Participants adhered to the notion that ultimately the individual is responsible for monitoring and moderating their drinking, and for understanding their limits regarding alcohol. Making a serious comment about another man's drinking, for example, was seen as inappropriate:

M6.4: If someone is obviously *not* a problem drinker, telling anybody how much they should or shouldn't drink is kind of like unnecessary, unwarranted, intrusive.

At a rowing regatta, this manifested as a belief that the individual is responsible for 'how bad [they] want to feel when [they're] doing a 5km race in the morning' (M2.3). Many of the participants indicated that they would not intervene in a male friend's risky drinking until he was completely incapable of taking care of himself. Where one participant diverged from this norm, it was to avoid repercussions from external parties:

R20.3: I go into caretaker mode, as [hockey] club president I sober up very quickly if I've had a few to drink ... my duty of care far outweighs any social irresponsibility of trying to make them drink more, because now you sit there and go, either I'm going to have to deal with a parent or I'm going to have to deal with a wife or whatever.

3.6.2 *Autonomy as a barrier to care*

The norm of autonomy obstructs men's own health related help-seeking behaviours (O'Brien, Hunt & Hart, 2004). Similarly, the desire to respect another man's autonomy acted as a barrier to participants providing health-related help and care for their friends. For example, when asked what they would do if a friend was vomiting as a result of drinking too much, the initial responses were 'step back' (M4.4), 'film him' (M6.2), 'laugh' (M9.3), or 'give them another drink' (M2.1). On the other hand, participants tended to follow up by saying they would give the friend water, make sure they were 'not like passed out on the ground' (M6.4), help them get home, or 'put them to bed' (R18.2), but only if the friend was incapacitated:

M4.2: [Reading from prompt] 'If one of us is vomiting we –'

M4.4: Step back.

M4.3: Yeah, step back.

M4.1: I guess probably it depends a little bit on the context like, if they're okay and vomiting I'd probably have a bit of a laugh, but I would like to think I can tell the difference between if someone's okay and vomiting and someone that's really struggling and sort of on the verge of losing consciousness, vomiting. In that case I probably wouldn't, I'd probably try and help them.

For some groups, this lack of care also applied to more serious injuries. Group 19 relayed:

R19.3: There was a car coming and I probably should've waited, but we ran across the road, I slipped off the curb and smashed me knee and it blew up like this big.

Facilitator: You didn't go to the hospital?

R19.4: He went the next day.

R19.3: No, the boys carried me to the pub.

In this scenario, the men in Focus Group 19 determined that it was up to R19.3 to decide when to seek medical attention for his injury, and they facilitated the continuation of his drinking despite his inability to walk. Focus Group 17 had a similar approach when responding to someone trying to start a fight with their friend:

R17.2: If they're by themselves, let them do their thing unless, if anything goes too far you've got to step in or if there's more than one person you've got to step in. But if it's just one-on-one I'd leave it until it gets to a point where someone's going to get hurt because they need to sort it out. If it's going to happen it's going to happen.

Focus Group 19, on the other hand, said they respond to aggression with aggression:

R19.1: So, [reading from prompt] if someone tries to punch on with one of us while we're drinking we...

R19.3: Let them, good luck to them.

R19.4: My answer would be, well, we're all going to stand together as a group and probably fuck the guy up.

These responses are significant, as all of the metropolitan groups and most other regional groups' first response was to 'de-escalate' or 'defuse' the situation. Despite being outliers in this sense, these responses represent the more traditionally masculine approach to 'care' – letting a friend fight for themselves, or backing them up to ensure they are victorious.

3.6.3 'Stealth' care

Participants did not disregard their friends' well-being. Highlighting a sense of caring about friends, R20.1 said 'You want them to get through, you want them to be okay because they're a friend. They're a mate'. Even when engaging in banter to speed up their friend's drinking, R17.2 noted that 'there's always a limit, you know when to let people do their own thing'. Participants commonly held that a friend's drinking should not be monitored, but that participants would 'keep an eye' (M9.3) on a friend if potential risks were noticed. As such, many groups described practicing care in more discreet, strategic ways.

To avoid obstructing another man's autonomy, participants had developed techniques to discreetly slow down a friend's drinking if necessary. Participants described giving 'subtle hints' (M9.5), bringing a bottle of water to the table (M4.2), taking the at-risk individual outside for a cigarette (M7.1), or, for example, M4.3 would tell a white lie and say:

M4.3: 'just be careful, you know, you've knocked a few people'... I usually try and use some kind of excuse like 'I think they're probably going to beat you mate, just maybe keep a lid on it', something like that.

In an interview one participant explained how on occasions he would 'send people home' when they were too drunk. When we scrolled back to a social media post about a 'mystery bus' pub crawl, he explained:

M8.1: 'One of my mates, she was just really struggling on the bus ride there, just from pre's [pre-drinks] ... then as we hopped off the bus she's thrown up, so then definitely... properly drunk, I went in the uber with her, and we dropped her off at home and then went back and met up with everyone else'.

M8.1 went on to explain that the same night, some hours later, a male friend also started vomiting and same advice was offered, but went home by himself. When asked about the gendered aspect, M8.1 explained he felt more 'obliged' to care for female friends.

Another participant described informing a bartender not to serve any more drinks to an intoxicated friend. In describing their own technique when a friend was at risk due to drinking, Focus Group 18 pointed out that approaching the topic directly in alcohol-fuelled scenarios may put one's own safety at risk:

R18.2: There's certain times with some of our friends where their lives weren't going very well, and you think, 'Oh hang on, they've had too many drinks. Got to play this one pretty carefully. If we don't, it could get worse'.

R18.1: It could go the wrong way, yeah.

R18.2: Yeah. Maybe a threat of getting punched in the face.

R18.3: That's usually when as a group we would all sort of go 'XY is, hitting it pretty hard again'. So we'd all slow [our drinking] down, so they'd be forced to, because otherwise they'd be ... drinking by themselves and we're all sort of drinking slowly.

R18.2: Without outwardly saying 'you'd better calm down'. Sort of – you're just more trying to do it subconsciously and just looking out for one another.

Through these more discreet performances of care, participants navigated their friend's sense of autonomy, their own safety, and their desire to look after their friends.

3.6.4 Drink driving: the exception

Drink driving was the one circumstance in which participants felt confident, and largely unhindered, in their ability to intervene in a friend's drinking behaviours. Most participants were confident that, if necessary, they would confiscate a friend's car keys if they were visibly over the blood-alcohol limit for driving.

This sentiment was particularly strong among the regional participants, a number of whose attitudes were underscored by having lost their licenses or knew someone who had lost their life as a result of drink driving. Others had not been caught, but had driven home so intoxicated that they had no memory of this in the morning. This for some had been enough to change their behaviour:

R18.2: One night, I was actually at my uncle's 50th or 60th or something ... in Wangaratta and I was meant to stay at my cousin's place. So I drove my car to his place. We all caught a bus or car to whatever the venue was and we just proceeded to get absolutely smashed, and then we got back to my cousin's place and apparently me and him had a big fight about something and I woke up in Bendigo, in my bed [with no memory of the drive] ... And that was a three-and-a-half-hour drive. I stopped drinking for four or five months after that.

Most metropolitan participants, however, only hypothesised about drink driving because of the availability of alternative forms of transport in Melbourne. Nonetheless, they denounced drink driving, and indicated they would feel comfortable intervening in a friend's drink driving if necessary. Some even described carefully calculating how many drinks they had the night before when deciding if they were safe to drive to work the following morning (M8.1).

Importantly, however, participants across all locations and subgroups prefaced these discussions by stating how difficult it is to objectively ascertain a friend's level of intoxication, and they distinguished between different levels of risk:

M2.1: It's case by case ... I would take it as how they're presenting, are they slurring, can they stand up, hold a conversation and what level is this person? And yeah, okay, maybe they're a little bit over the limit, that's their decision if they want to lose their licence. But are they going to run off the road, smash into something, you know?

M2.1: Yeah, are they going to harm somebody else? ... Are they putting their licence at risk or are they putting others at risk?

M2.3: And I think you can always raise that with them, you know, 'are you sure?'... And I think sometimes that's all they need to hear.

This exchange illustrates the ease with which Focus Group 2 felt they could approach a male friend about drink driving. Many focus groups attributed this sense of ease to effective government campaigns, particularly those that '[brought] up that point of how to tell your mate that they're being a wanker when they're doing that kind of stuff' (M2.2). However, this excerpt also highlights that it perceived risks to *others* that allows men to intervene.

When the risk was only to the individual, it was seen as *their decision* if they wanted to risk losing their license. Illustrative of this, Focus Group 19 said they would not drive on roads when they were over the blood-alcohol limit, but would drive to get firewood if they were camping, because 'there's nothing for you to run into out there apart from a tree' (R19.3). This distinction reveals that the perception of risk – which as discussed was distorted among the study participants – can impact on the extent to which men are willing to impinge on another man's autonomy and thereby transgress gendered boundaries.

4.0 The role of social media in men's drinking cultures

Social media plays an increasingly important role in organising, recording and reflecting on the consumption of alcohol (Lyons et al. 2016). In this study, we incorporated the 'digital traces' produced through social media use (images, comments, posts, stories) into our research design. In post focus group one-on-one interviews, we asked participants to 'scroll back' (Robards & Lincoln 2017) to photos and posts they had made or uploaded, or posts they were tagged in, that captured events or moments that included alcohol. The following are examples of these images, anonymised and included with participants permission².



The one-on-one social media scroll back interviews revealed key themes and issues:

² Consent to include these screenshots was multi-layered: 1) Participants agreed to participate in one-on-one interviews, where they understood that looking at and taking screenshots of their social media traces could be part of the process; 2) They were aware that taking screenshots of their alcohol-related posts was completely optional. If comfortable with this process, they took the screenshots to send to us themselves; and 3) They sent us the screenshots they were comfortable with, on the proviso they were anonymised (faces and usernames blurred out) if used in publications.

4.1 Social media use around drinking was common but not universal

A total of 19 of the 101 participants indicated in their survey responses that they regularly used social media while drinking, while 37 per cent indicated they used it sometimes, and 29 per cent only rarely. Some indicated they found it impolite to spend time using social media while out drinking with friends, though many found it positive to have memories of time spent with friends captured and recorded on social media. However, reputational and relationship risks surrounding social media use were salient worries for some participants (see below).

4.2 Social media practices around drinking are gendered

While most participants used social media daily (scrolling through news feeds, Instant Messenger conversations, commenting, closed groups), many of them did not actively post images of themselves or others at events, but relied on friends to tag them in images. Women often took on the role of photographers and curators of social media posts. In the interview with M1.1 for instance, all of the photos we scrolled back to were not photos he had uploaded himself, but were instead images uploaded by female friends that he was tagged in. We asked him why:

M1.1: I don't know why, but it's just not on the radar of the guys I spend time with. And I know I'm just stereotyping now but what I find interesting is, I have a couple of gay guy friends, and they will post a lot. One friend I guess could be considered more feminine, and he will post a lot. And he will do a lot of things to get the perfect photo... I don't know why, and generally I think girls are more... they are very concerned with how the photo is perceived and how their lives are perceived.

This echoes a broader reluctance among participants to suggest they spent significant amounts of time on social media. This might have been a result of gendered assumptions around appropriate use of social media, or recognition of growing privacy concerns.

4.3 Different platforms serve different functions around drinking.

What participants posted on Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat were often quite different. As discussed above, banter regulates what and how much men drink. Discourse on social media, especially Snapchat, often aligned with and extended this everyday banter. The ephemeral nature of Snapchat offered opportunities to post and send images and short videos of a more extreme or risky nature while drinking (examples from participants included nudity, drinking shots, jumping in a fire, people being sick). Different platforms and usages also fell into different places on a spectrum of what was appropriate while out drinking versus what was not. For instance, while sitting and scrolling through a Facebook newsfeed might be seen as anti-social, because it takes that person out of the environment and moment, recording a video of a band on Snapchat is framed as pro-social because it is about recording and sharing the moment. Intoxication also tended to lower 'filters' around sharing on some platforms. M4.1 explained:

M4.1: If I'm at a gig, and I've had a fair few beers, I'll send a Snap [a video or photo on Snapchat] of the band playing, but I would never do that if I was sober... my own filter is

lowered when I'm drinking... even with my friends, you see on Friday and Saturday nights more Snaps'.

4.4 Reputational awareness

There was often awareness around potential reputational or relationship risks relating to social media, but this varied. Many corporate workers and young men on professional career trajectories were highly conscious of how photos of them being intoxicated or unprofessional on social media might impact on their employment. M4.1 and M4.3, who we interviewed separately but who worked together, both had strict boundaries with who they would friend and follow on social media from work. They also commented on how their workplace social media guidelines signalled to them that the company brand had to be protected on social media. The teachers in our research were particularly aware of reputational risks, implementing strict privacy controls. Concerns around reputational risks were echoed by many regional participants in both professional and non-professional occupations.

Some participants discussed the risks of posts on social media causing problems in relationships, including with partners, friends and colleagues. When discussing boundaries between different groups, M4.3 explained, 'there's aspects of your life you don't want everyone to know about maybe... or your mum anyway... my mum in particular doesn't have the right idea about going out. She thinks it's a lot more dangerous than I think it is'. Similarly, R19.1 marked out his mum as the one who would rebuke him for 'dumb shit' he does when drunk, and hence why jumping into a live fire, or trying to chop wood while drunk, are acts only recorded and shared on Snapchat. Very few participants indicated they had no concerns at all around social media and reputational or relationship risks.

4.5 Scrolling back as a chance to pause for thought and reflection

Discussing one's own images sometimes provided pause for critical self-reflection. In explaining the full context and outcome of the various drinking occasions, several participants spoke regretfully, critiquing their own drinking and/or associated antics. M1.2, for instance, reflected on photos of him in an ambulance after drinking too much. At its most extreme, a few men, especially professional workers, even suggested the images made them realise that they drink too much. Other participants reflected fondly on memories of very risky drinking occasions. Though they recognised consequences stemming from the drinking (such as hangovers, injuries or embarrassment), they enjoyed remembering and relaying drinking stories and ultimately saw these events of excess as part of their growing up stories (see also Lindsay et al., 2009).

5.0 Conclusion

Through a multi-method approach – including surveys, focus groups, 'scroll back' interviews, and site observations – this study has delivered an in-depth understanding of how particular subgroups of men discuss and make sense of their drinking practices and how they negotiate and comprehend notions of risky drinking. This research highlights the centrality of drinking practices amongst a range of different groups of men. Heavy drinking was ubiquitous and men's views about 'what constitutes

risky' drinking were different to the definitions of risky drinking used in national guidelines. Drinking was an integral and routinised part of socialising and acted to enhance social connection between men. It was also clear that social media have become a channel for organising, recording, and reflecting on drinking practices and events. Despite drinking being embedded in social interaction, autonomy was seen as a key competence in men's drinking practices. Maintaining autonomy involved men monitoring and moderating their own individual drinking. Autonomy shaped the ways in which men could engage in caring practices. It meant that, with the exception of drink-driving, men would not intervene in another male friend's drinking behaviour as this would encroach on the other man's autonomy. To circumvent this, some men reported engaging in discrete forms of care, which would enable them to 'look after' friends while preserving their friend's autonomy. This report outlines a number of potentially fruitful suggestions for addressing men's drinking practices and cultures.

5.1. Project limitations

This data is based in a purposive sample and is not generalisable to the wider population. The sample had a high proportion of men who identified as heterosexual and a very low proportion of men who identified as having Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander backgrounds. The sample also did not contain anyone who identified as transgender or non-binary. The high proportion of regular 'risky' drinkers in the sample has enabled a fuller interrogation of how men made sense of this practice; however, low-moderate drinkers who might disrupt ideas about masculinity and drinking had low representation.

Time constraints precluded prolonged engagement in the field. The subtle differences between groups could be further teased out over a longer research time frame and a more intensive period of ethnographic research.

Future research should include women's perspectives on men's drinking. Despite existing evidence that points to the intersections of masculinity and alcohol being correlated with men's violence against women, consideration from the participants of the relationship between risky drinking and violence against women was strikingly absent.

Acknowledgements

The project team is grateful to Maya Ravis for ongoing support and constructive dialogue throughout the research period. The project team also owes a debt of gratitude to Signe Ravn, Sarah Maclean, Amy Pennay and Gen Hargrave, who were part of the expert advisory group that very usefully steered the early stages of the research.

References

- AIHW (2018) *Alcohol, tobacco & other drugs in Australia*. Cat. no: PHE 221. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/alcohol/alcohol-tobacco-other-drugs-australia/contents/introduction>
- ABS (2018) 'Media Release: Alcohol consumption lowest in half a century', 4307.0.55.001 – Apparent Consumption of Alcohol, Australia, 2016-17, *Australian Bureau of Statistics*, accessed Sept 4 2018: <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/latestProducts/4307.0.55.001Media%20Release12016-17>
- Capraro, R. L. (2000). Why college men drink: Alcohol, adventure, and the paradox of masculinity. *Journal of American college health*, 48(6), 307-315.
- Carah, N. (2014). Watching Nightlife: Affective Labor, Social Media, and Surveillance. *Television & New Media*, 15(3): 250-265.
- Carah, N., Meurk, C., Males, M., & Brown, J. (2018). Emerging social media 'platform' approaches to alcohol marketing: a comparative analysis of the activity of the top 20 Australian alcohol brands on Facebook (2012-2014). *Critical Public Health*, 28(1), 70-80.
- Courtenay WH. (2000). Constructions of masculinity and their influence on men's well-being: A theory of gender and health. *Social Science and Medicine*. 50:1395–1401.
- De Visser, R. O., & Smith, J. A. (2007). Alcohol consumption and masculine identity among young men. *Psychology and health*, 22(5), 595-614.
- Handyside, S., & Ringrose, J. (2017). Snapchat memory and youth digital sexual cultures: mediated temporality, duration and affect. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 36(4), 347–360. <http://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2017.1280384>
- Iwamoto, D. K., Cheng, A., Lee, C. S., Takamatsu, S., & Gordon, D. (2011). "Man-ing" up and getting drunk: The role of masculine norms, alcohol intoxication and alcohol-related problems among college men. *Addictive behaviors*, 36(9), 906-911.
- Lemle, R., & Mishkind, M. E. (1989). Alcohol and masculinity. *Journal of substance abuse treatment*, 6(4), 213-222.
- Lindsay, J., Harrison, L., Advocat, J., Kelly, P., & Hickey, C. (2009). "It's my time to shine": Young Australians reflect on past, present and imagined future alcohol consumption. *Youth Studies Australia*, 28(4), 44-51.
- Livingston, M., & Callinan, S. (2015). Underreporting in alcohol surveys: whose drinking is underestimated? *Journal of studies on alcohol and drugs*, 76(1), 158-164.
- Lyons, A. C., Goodwin, I., Griffin, C., McCreanor, T., & Moewaka Barnes, H. (2016). Facebook and the Fun of Drinking Photos: Reproducing Gendered Regimes of Power. *Social Media + Society*, 2(4), 1–13.
- O'Brien, R., Hunt, K. & Hart, G. (2005). 'It's caveman stuff, but that is to a certain extent how guys still operate': men's accounts of masculinity and help seeking. *Social Science & Medicine*, 61(3), 503-516.
- OurWatch, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS), & VicHealth (2015). *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia*. Melbourne, Australia: OurWatch.
- Ritchie J & Spencer L (1994) Qualitative data analysis for applied policy research. In *Analysing Qualitative Data*, pp. 173–194 [A Bryman and RG Burgess, editors]. London: Routledge.
- Robards, B., & Lincoln, S. (2017). Uncovering longitudinal life narratives: scrolling back on Facebook. *Qualitative Research*, 17(6), 715–730. <http://doi.org/10.1177/1468794117700707>
- Savic, M., Room, R., Mugavin, J., Pennay, A., & Livingston, M. (2016). Defining "drinking culture": A critical review of its meaning and connotation in social research on alcohol problems. *Drugs: Education, Prevention and Policy*, 23(4), 270-282.

Supski, S., Lindsay, J., & Tanner, C. (2017). University students' drinking as a social practice and the challenge for public health. *Critical Public Health*, 27(2), 228-237.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Focus group stimulus 1 – Canadian Club advertisement

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3b12nfOuKUo>



Over beer? The Big Question - Canadian Club TV Commercial Ad 2017
24,221 views 78 7 SHARE

Elvie Ahnym
Published on Sep 18, 2017

Canadian Club Adverts & Commercials Archive
Over beer? - The Big Question

SUBSCRIBE 158

Appendix 2: Focus group stimulus 2 – Discussion points

1. Alcohol is a key element of most of our social occasions.
2. Holding a drink all night is the same as drinking a lot.
3. Men should be able to drink more per night than women.
4. Men should be able to have more than five standard drinks without looking pissed.
5. I'm more likely to approach someone I'm attracted to after five drinks.
6. We have more fun as a group when we're drinking.
7. Our drinking sessions sometimes end up with one or more of us in hospital.
8. When we're out, we all buy our own drinks individually.
9. If we're buying rounds, we stay out until everyone has had a turn of buying.
10. We always have a designated driver.
11. Finish this sentence as a group: If one of us continually skips out of buying rounds we: ____
12. Finish this sentence as a group: If one of us starts getting too rowdy or aggressive we: ____
13. Finish this sentence as a group: If someone tries to punch on with one of us when we're drinking we: ____
14. Finish this sentence as a group: If someone in the group has been nursing a drink for more than an hour we: ____
15. Finish this sentence as a group: If someone is over the legal limit but they drove to the venue we: ____
16. Finish this sentence as a group: If someone is vomiting we: ____



Victorian Health Promotion Foundation
PO Box 154 Carlton South
Victoria 3053 Australia
T +61 3 9667 1333 F +61 3 9667 1375

vichealth@vichealth.vic.gov.au
vichealth.vic.gov.au
twitter.com/vichealth
facebook.com/vichealth

VicHealth acknowledges the support
of the Victorian Government.

© VicHealth 2019
February 2019 P-A-720

