

Institution: Royal Holloway, University of London
Unit of Assessment: C19 - Business & Management Studies
Title of case study: Young People and Alcohol Policy: Informing a Critical Evidence-based Debate that Challenges Popular Stereotypes
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words) Collaborative research conducted at Royal Holloway into young peoples' consumption of alcohol has influenced a richer and more nuanced understanding of the role of alcohol as a cultural force in young people's lives. It has contributed to the quality of the public and policy debate that surrounds alcohol policy issues, and in particular has helped to undermine the widespread stereotype of the 'mindless' and criminal young drinker that was the underlying premise of Government anti-drinking campaigns. The research continues to be cited by many alcohol research and policy bodies in the UK, Europe and Australia.
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words) The underpinning research was an ESRC funded study entitled 'Branded Consumption and Identification: Young People and Alcohol.' Hackley was one of three academics involved in the bid at Birmingham, along with social psychologist Griffin (PI) (who moved to Bath), marketing specialist Szmigin (Birmingham), and addiction professional Mistral (Bath). Hackley moved to Royal Holloway in September 2004, from where he took an equal part in data analysis, iteration of the research design, writing, engagement and dissemination. All his work on the live project was conducted from Royal Holloway. Hackley was lead author on three publications from the study, and joint second author on others. The study focused on the role of alcohol in young peoples' lives as a social enabler, a source of identity and a resource for articulating fun and friendship. The project entailed an analysis of alcohol marketing and advertising techniques followed by qualitative empirical data gathering in three UK regions. The uniqueness of the study was that it accessed subjective accounts of young peoples' (aged 18-25) social lives from a range of socio-economic and racial backgrounds by engaging them in friendship group conversations moderated by research assistants who were near to their own age. The data sets thus had an integrity often lacking in arms-length surveys. The entire research team met regularly to interpret the audio recorded and transcribed data sets using a discourse analytic interpretive scheme. The project report was completed in April 2008, but the study remains topical and a continuing stream of publications has developed and enhanced the initial findings. Key elements of the findings include the social motivation for determined drunkenness; the importance of stories of drunken escapades in group friendship for young people; the normalisation of extremely high levels of alcohol consumption during group drinking sessions; the use of 'pre-loading'; and the calculated awareness of risk entailed in heavy drinking in urban environments. In a lively and crowded field of research its unique feature is that it combined disciplinary perspectives from marketing, social psychology and addiction and alcohol studies, to bring a richer cultural understanding to the area, offering a counterpoint to the tide of moral panic and sensational media reports around an allegedly irresponsible and mindlessly hedonistic 'binge' drinking youth. Calls from medical and addiction lobbies have continued to reflect these priorities, although government has to date responded more in tone than substance.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

1. Economic and Social Research Council Identities and Social Action 'Branded Consumption and Social Identification: Young People and Alcohol' RES-148-25-0021 £200,000 (April, 2005-December, 2007) Griffin, C. (PI), University of Bath, Hackley, C., Royal Holloway University of London, Mistral W., University of Bath, and Szmigin, I., University of Birmingham.
<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/res-148-25-0021/read>
2. Hackley, C., Bengry-Howell, A., Griffin, C., Mistral, W., Szmigin, I. and Hackley, R.A. (2013). Young Adults and 'Binge' Drinking: A Bakhtinian Analysis. *Journal of Marketing Management*. **29/7**, pp 933-949.
3. Szmigin, I., Bengry-Howell, A., Griffin, C., Hackley, C. and Mistral, W. (2011). Social Marketing, Individual Responsibility and the "Culture of Intoxication". *European Journal of Marketing*. **45/5**, pp.759-779.
4. Griffin, C., Bengry-Howell, A., Hackley, C., Mistral W. and Szmigin, I. (2009). "Every time I do it I absolutely annihilate myself": Loss of (self) Consciousness and Loss of Memory in Young People's Drinking Narratives. *Sociology*. **43/3**, pp.457-477.
5. Hackley, C., Bengry-Howell, A., Griffin, C., Mistral, W. and Szmigin, I. (2008). The Discursive Constitution of the UK Alcohol Problem in Safe, Sensible, Social: a Discussion of Policy Implications. *Drugs: Education, Prevention and Policy*. **15/S1**, pp. 65-78.
6. Szmigin, I., Bengry-Howell, A., Griffin, C., Hackley, C. Mistral, W. and Weale, L. (2008). Re-framing 'Binge Drinking' as Calculated Hedonism - empirical evidence from the UK. *International Journal of Drug Policy*. **19/5**, pp. 359-366.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The research has contributed a critical perspective to alcohol policy debates in opposition to aspects of UK Government policy. It has enriched public debates with a better understanding of the sociology of 'binge' drinking to help balance the industry and government viewpoints alongside those of UK health bodies. Publication 5 was directly critical of the tone of the government alcohol policy document 'Safe, Sensible, Social - the next steps in the national alcohol strategy' (June 2007) because of its repeated juxtaposition of the terms 'young people' with 'binge drinking' and 'crime and social disorder'. We argued that this simplistic linkage facilitated a stereotype of the young drinker as a feckless and irresponsible individual worthy of moral condemnation, and played down the wider cultural issues in framing excessive drinking, not least, licensing liberalisation and the boom in alcohol marketing. The rhetoric was somewhat more moderate in an updated document called 'Safe, Sensible, Social - consultation on further action' (June 2008), and later public government statements emphasised the 'UK's drinking culture' rather than the irresponsible young drinker.

The initial interest in the research findings arose from a 2007 COI/Diageo advertising campaign targeting a small group of drinkers, the 'irresponsible shamefuls', on the premise that seeing how drunkenness looked to others would shame young people into staying sober. We argued that the campaign would have no effect on the majority of young drinkers who were well aware of their behaviour and viewed being very drunk as a source of fun. Government policy was, hence, based on a mis-reading of youth drinking. Our position was covered widely in national UK media and also by health and alcohol organisations such as the Institute of Alcohol Studies (sources 1 and 3). For example, BBC News (source 1i) quoted Hackley as saying that:

"The study suggests a radical rethinking of national alcohol policy is required which takes into account the social character of alcohol consumption and the identity implications for young

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people."

Hackley made similar points in invited contributions to BBC TV and radio (e.g., source 2), and there was another wave of coverage the following year (source 3 ii, iii).

In spite of being critical of government policy positions, the study's findings have been noted in policy fora. In 2011, a paper presented to the Parliamentary Science and Technology Committee on Alcohol Guidelines by Dr William Haydock in September 2011 (source 4) cited publication 6 as follows:

"Many young people drink to get drunk, which according to recent Government definitions would classify them as "binge" drinkers (see, for example, Szmigin et al. 2008)"

Publication 6 has been widely cited supporting the argument that determined drunkenness by groups of young people is far from 'mindless' and does, in fact, entail a carefully calculated risk.

After further engagement in policy meetings at Westminster, Hackley's contributions to policy debates have continued to be requested. In January 2012 he was interviewed live on Channel 4 News with the CEO of Alcohol Concern on the latest government drinking guidelines (source 5). He contributed to a Whitehall Department of Health seminar at the invitation of the Chief Medical Officer on July 3rd, 2012 (source 8). Subsequent to that meeting Hackley worked with the Cabinet Behavioural Insights Team's Policy Advisor to produce an internal paper about the role of brand positioning in alcohol consumption patterns (sources 9, 10). On December 26th 2012 Hackley spoke about the sociology of intoxication on BBC Radio 4's sociology review 'Thinking Allowed' as lead author of the latest paper from the study, a Bakhtinian analysis of youth drinking (source 7).

The impact and reach of the research on government, policy and scrutiny bodies is reflected in citations, for example, to one of Hackley's papers from the study (reference 5) in a 2010 memorandum from the UK Research Councils to the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee on the need to consider group identities in behaviour change policies (source 11i) and to one of Szmigin's (reference 6) in the UK Parliamentary Science and Technology Committee Report on Alcohol Guidelines (source 4). In addition, the study has been cited in many other comments and reports both in the UK and overseas by, for example, the Institute for Alcohol Studies (source 3i), Alcohol Research UK (source 6), Alcohol Concern (source 11ii), the National Drug Research Institute of Australia (source 11iii) and the Alcohol Advisory Council of New Zealand (Source 11iv).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

1. Links corroborating coverage of the study in the national press as a result of the criticism of a Government/Diageo anti-drinking advertising campaign, December 10th 2007: e.g.
 - i. BBC News: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/7132749.stm>
 - ii. The Telegraph: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1572044/Anti-drink-adverts-are-backfiring.html>
2. Corroboration of Hackley's contribution to the public debate with regard to UK government anti-drinking alcohol policy for young people, BBC 1, *BBC Breakfast*, December 10th 2007: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZvpyoFiHBDo>
3. Corroboration that widespread internet publication coverage and comment on the research in national UK media continued through 2008-2009, e.g.
 - i. <http://www.ias.org.uk/What-we-do/Publication-archive/Alcohol-Alert/Issue-1->

- 2008/Downing-Street-Summit-on-binge-drinking.aspx
- ii. <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/134188.php>
 - iii. <http://www.alcohol-help.co.uk/alcohol-price-controls-not-enough-says-expert-on-binge-drinking/>
4. UK Parliamentary Science and Technology Committee report on Alcohol Guidelines citing publications arising from the ESRC research, corroborating the impact of the research on government, policy and scrutiny bodies:
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmsctech/1536/1536vw.pdf>
 5. Hackley interviewed live on response to new government guidelines, with Alcohol Concern CEO, on Channel 4 News, January 9th 2012, further corroborating Professor Hackley's contributions to policy debates:
<http://www.itnsource.com/shotlist/ITN/2012/01/09/T09011225/?v=0&a=0>
 6. Hackley invited to comment on alcohol policy by various alcohol groups, e.g. Alcohol Research UK January 16th 2012 corroborating the impact of the research on policy and scrutiny bodies:
<http://www.alcoholpolicy.net/2012/01/opinion-the-grocer-isation-of-alcohol-brands-and-the-contradictions-of-alcohol-policy-in-the-uk-.html>
 7. Hackley discussed intoxication as lead author of the latest paper from the ESRC study on BBC Radio 4's flagship sociology review *Thinking Allowed* hosted by Laurie Taylor, 4PM, December 26th 2012, demonstrating ongoing impact upon policy debates:
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01pg54j>
 8. Invitation letter to Hackley from Chief Medical Officer to DES seminar on alcohol policy, corroborating Professor Hackley's contributions to policy debates.
 9. Copies of emails between Hackley and Cabinet Office discussing meeting and proposal for a jointly-drafted confidential cabinet office paper on alcohol policy and alcohol brand positioning.
 10. Copy of the (confidential) Cabinet Office paper which Hackley jointly drafted, citing Professor Hackley's work and the ESRC study. Sources 9 and 10 collectively corroborate Hackley's contributions to policy debates on alcohol marketing.
 11. Sources corroborating continued reach of the ESRC study and associated outputs among government, policy and scrutiny bodies in the UK and overseas:
 - i. Memorandum from RCUK to the House of Lords science and technology select committee in response to its call for evidence on behaviour change (October 2010)
http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/submissions/BehaviourChange_Oct2010.pdf
 - ii. Alcohol Concern: citing the study in their factsheet on Young People and Alcohol (2011)
<http://www.alcoholconcern.org.uk/publications/factsheets/factsheet-young-people>
 - iii. National Drug Research Institute of Australia: citing Reference 6
<http://ndri.curtin.edu.au/local/docs/pdf/publications/T192.pdf>
 - iv. Alcohol Advisory Council of New Zealand: citing output from the study in the 2013 edition of its AlcoholNZ magazine:
http://www.alcohol.org.nz/sites/default/files/alac-magazines/issues/AlcoholNZ_June2013-printable.pdf