

The handling of gender in research and policy on alcohol and nightlife violence: Findings from an international comparative study of Australia, Canada and Sweden

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Introduction:

Recent research activity and policy debate in Australia regarding measures to reduce the violence associated with nightlife drinking has paid little attention to the role of men and masculinities. This workshop will present findings from an international comparative study that sought to understand this absence and the ways in which gender concepts operate in research and policy on alcohol and violence.

Method:

The project involves an international comparison of research and policy on alcohol and violence in Australia, Canada and Sweden. It consists of textual analysis of key alcohol policy strategies and peer-reviewed research articles, as well as in-depth interviews with 42 alcohol policy stakeholders and 39 researchers across the three countries.

Key Findings:

Alcohol research is shaped by a complex set of methodological, institutional and political forces that overlook the gendering of violence. Though men's role in violence is frequently acknowledged, the preference for population-level (i.e., gender-neutral) measures focused specifically on controlling alcohol consumption, and the perceived absence of alternatives, limit policy responses and alternative research approaches that might address men and/or masculinities. Alcohol policy's narrow emphasis on alcohol consumption and intoxication obscures the multiple factors shaping violence, including gender. Where gender does appear in alcohol policy, it is treated as an individual attribute, as a synonym for women and as confined to the domestic sphere.

Discussion and Conclusions:

A more robust and consistent engagement with men and masculinities in research on alcohol and nightlife violence could identify gendered patterns of harm and produce additional policy options.

Implications for Practice or Policy:

Future alcohol research and policy should consider developing gender-sensitive quantitative tools, systematically integrating gender considerations and taking into account gendered effects when policy choices are made. This workshop will present the draft project report and recommendations, and facilitate a discussion on implementing the recommendations.

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