

## **COMPARING MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS OF YOUTH DRINKING AT HIGH AND LOW PERIODS OF CONSUMPTION**

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**Introduction/Issues:** Rates of youth drinking have declined markedly over the past 15 years in Australia, with population surveys showing elevated rates of drinking among teenagers in the 1990s, before a steady and ongoing decline that began somewhere around 2002-2004 (depending on the survey). The purpose of this study is to examine newspaper representations of youth drinking pre and post this decline, to assess whether these consumption trends are reflected in media reporting.

**Method/Approach:** Lexis Nexis was used to search major Australian newspapers for a two year period from January 1st 2000 to December 31<sup>st</sup> 2001; and again from January 1<sup>st</sup> 2012 to December 31<sup>st</sup> 2013. A discourse analysis was used to identify the primary representations of youth drinking at both time points.

**Key Findings:** Preliminary analysis suggests that the reporting of youth drinking in terms of quantity of articles decreased over the two time points. In terms of content, the representation of youth drinking as a social problem appears consistent across both time points, but there has also been some media attention to the shift in youth drinking practices.

**Discussions and Conclusions:** The media has a powerful influence over public opinion on alcohol use, and the problematisation of youth drinking in the media is an important reflection of the social position of alcohol in Australia. It is important to track how reliable and realistic media portrayal of youth drinking is, and also how it might influence public perceptions of youth drinking and subsequent practices.