

The Accordion Process: An emancipatory methodology for 'how to' co-design options for Australian alcohol policy to 'accord' with lay priorities"

Belinda Lunnay¹, Megan Warin², Paul R Ward³

¹*Research Centre for Public Health, Equity and Human Flourishing, Torrens University, Adelaide, Australia*

²*School of Society and Culture, Adelaide University, Adelaide, Australia*

Presenter's email: Belinda.Lunnay@torrens.edu.au

Introduction / Issues

Co-designing policy with communities is critical for advancing alcohol reduction and addressing alcohol-related harm. However, there is limited guidance on how to authentically engage communities to generate equitable, contextually relevant policy solutions. Reviews highlight inconsistent use of co-design frameworks and limited incorporation of participant narratives and lived experience in alcohol policy development.

Method / Approach

This paper presents the Accordion Process, an emancipatory, human-centred, experience-based design methodology for co-designing social and alcohol policy. Using a dialogic approach and deliberative dialogue methods, researchers act as conduits between community members and stakeholders, facilitating iterative, recursive cycles of listening, interpretation, and refinement to ensure policy options accord with lay priorities and real-world policy contexts. Using deliberative dialogues to collect data, this study identified entirely new options that venerated Australian women's 'asks' for changes at the 'systems' level to mediate gendered, social and commercial determinants of alcohol consumption.

Key Findings

Applied to alcohol reduction and alcohol-related breast cancer prevention among midlife women, the process generated policy options grounded in diverse lived experiences across social classes (n=15 women experts). It enabled meaningful engagement between communities and stakeholders (e.g. media, service delivery, advocacy), supporting co-development of feasible, context-sensitive recommendations. The process shifted beyond individual behaviour change to identify system-level alcohol reduction strategies targeting social, political, and commercial determinants of health.

Discussion and Conclusions

The Accordion Process bridges co-design theory and practice by centring lived experience and supporting actionable alcohol policy development. It enhances the relevance, acceptability, and feasibility of policy options while embedding equity in policy design.

Implications for Communities, Practice, and Policy

This framework supports authentic community engagement in translating research into alcohol policy co-design, strengthening equitable alcohol reduction through emphasising community priorities and enabling system-level responses.

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