



Alcohol's role in inclusion and exclusion

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Young people and exclusion

- Young people growing up in late-modern times are called on to be flexible, entrepreneurial and to plan for an uncertain future (Wyn & White 1997)
- Labour markets are changing, with increasing proportions of precarious short term, part time opportunities.
- Young adults experience ontological insecurity-difficulty seeing their lives as meaningful and ordered-particularly those who are socially excluded (Chesters et al., 2019)
- New inequalities emerge through spatial separation of rich and poor (Wacquant 1999).



How does heavy alcohol use act to intensify inclusion and exclusion for young adults?

Drawing on this study of young people from inner and outer-urban Melbourne

approach	Narrative interviews about alcohol
sample	18-24 year olds (N=60) accessed through educational institutes, advertisements & agencies
participants' residence	30 from an inner urban municipality 30 from an outer urban municipality
gender	50% female
ethnicity	17 were born outside Australia and 19 spoke a language in addition to English
mean age	20.8 years
year conducted	2012
ethical approval	Human Research Ethics Committees at University of Melbourne and Curtin University

Alcohol as an actor; a theoretical framework

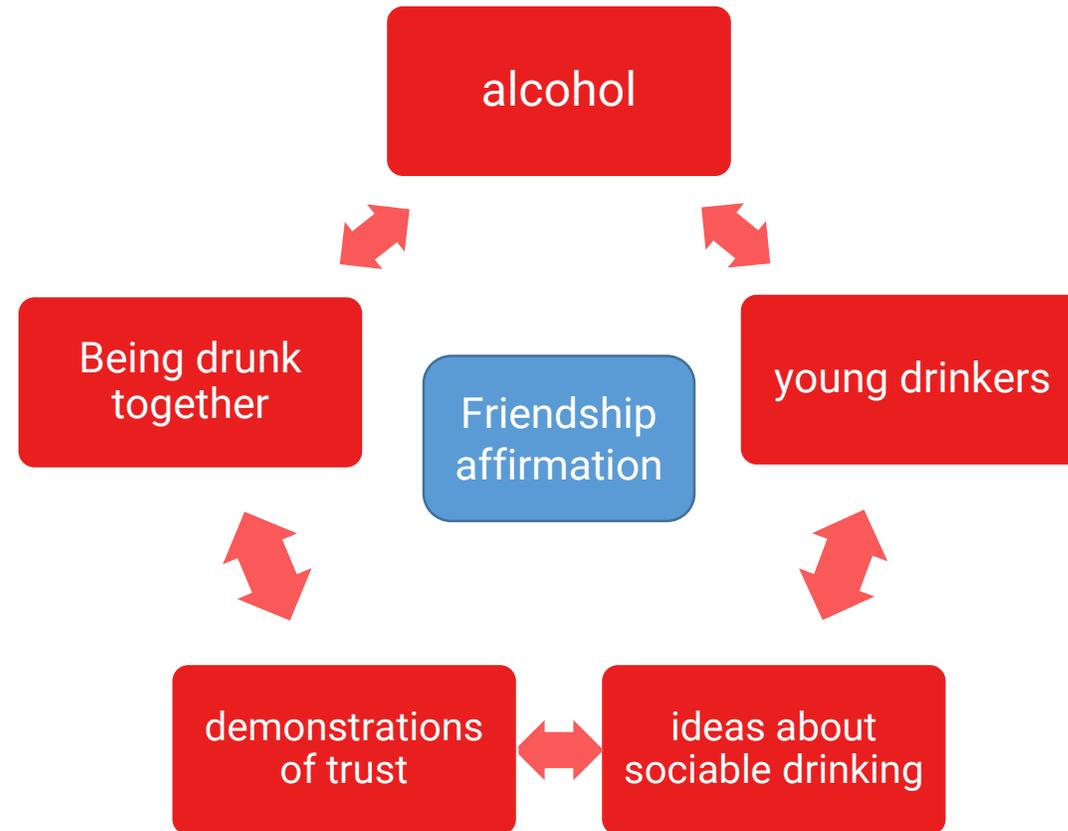
- Drawing on Latour (ie, 1987) Jakob Demant (2009) argues that constructivist sociological perspectives struggle to account for forces outside the social, such as the effects of material substances including alcohol.
 - Alcohol and other material forces (including settings where alcohol is consumed) also have agency, as do discourse (regimes of meaning) and subjectivities
 - None of these things have effects on their own, effects occur through networks of forces or actors.
 - People ‘invite alcohol into their networks’ (Demant, 2009) for its effects, yet unintended effects also emerge from networks involving alcohol.

Alcohol and inclusion

- Inclusion in friendship groups is very important for young adults, helping to manage ontological insecurity (Pahl, 2000).
- Alcohol can have the effect of reinforcing friendship (MacLean, 2016) through
 - opportunities to build affinity; ie being at a similar level of drunkenness and
 - Demonstrations of trust around drinking

Alcohol as an actor; a theoretical framework

- A network involving alcohol might look like this:



Alcohol and inclusion; building affinity

“ I think when you are really drunk you sort of want everyone to be on the same level, you want everyone to be having fun. So if you see someone that looks a bit more sober and they don't seem to be having a great time, I think you might be inclined to sort of try and convince them to drink more so everyone's on the same level'. (Clara, female, 20)

“ When you keep on drinking with your friend and you not stop, it's like I feel loyalty to my friend, close to them' (Thanh, male, 24).



Alcohol and inclusion; building trust

“Once you get past a point [of intoxication], there’s nothing you can do unless you have a really good friend with you who will take care of you. Like: ‘Hey don’t do this!’ And like: ‘Have more water’, ...‘Sit down’, ‘Don’t piss anyone off’, or whatever... **We encourage people to get drunk, but like once someone gets drunk we will help them.** Like you know make sure he doesn’t do anything stupid. Like you keep an eye on him, make sure he gets back home. **So that's kind of nice. That’s why we actually hang out, like why we go out together instead of just going out alone.**

(Sol, 21, male)

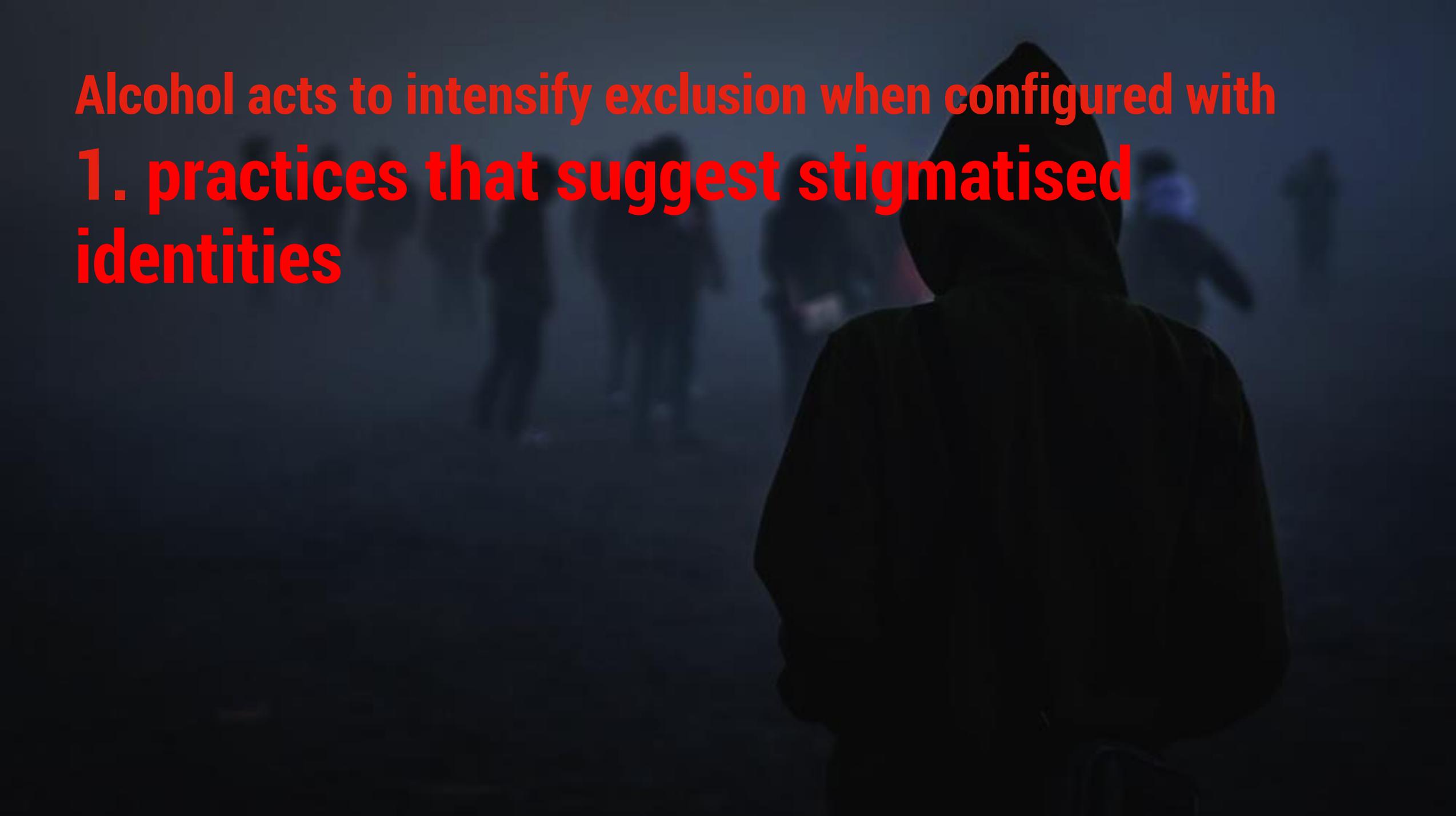


How does alcohol act to intensify exclusion?

I argue here that this occurs when alcohol is configured with:

1. practices that suggest stigmatised identities
2. location-based disadvantage
3. differentials in capacity to intra-sense how much to drink

Alcohol acts to intensify exclusion when configured with
**1. practices that suggest stigmatised
identities**



1. practices that suggest stigmatised identities

- Much of the literature on youthful alcohol use identifies an imperative to seek alterity through alcohol and other substance use (Griffin et al., 2009; Measham and Brain, 2005), emphasising the role of alcohol in socialising (MacLean, 2016)
- Perhaps what is under-emphasised is that drinking to intoxication remains a socially risky practice with potential to stigmatise.
- For example, women are in a difficult situation when it comes to appropriate drinking practices.

1. practices that suggest stigmatised identities

“ I’ve been too unguarded and said some things I shouldn’t have said, that sort of thing. I don’t think it’s nice to see yourself to be drunk and be that drunk in public I don’t think, other people like... it’s not, I don’t think it’s socially acceptable really.

(Steven, male, 22)

1. practices that suggest stigmatised identities

Intoxicated people risk gendered stigmatisation

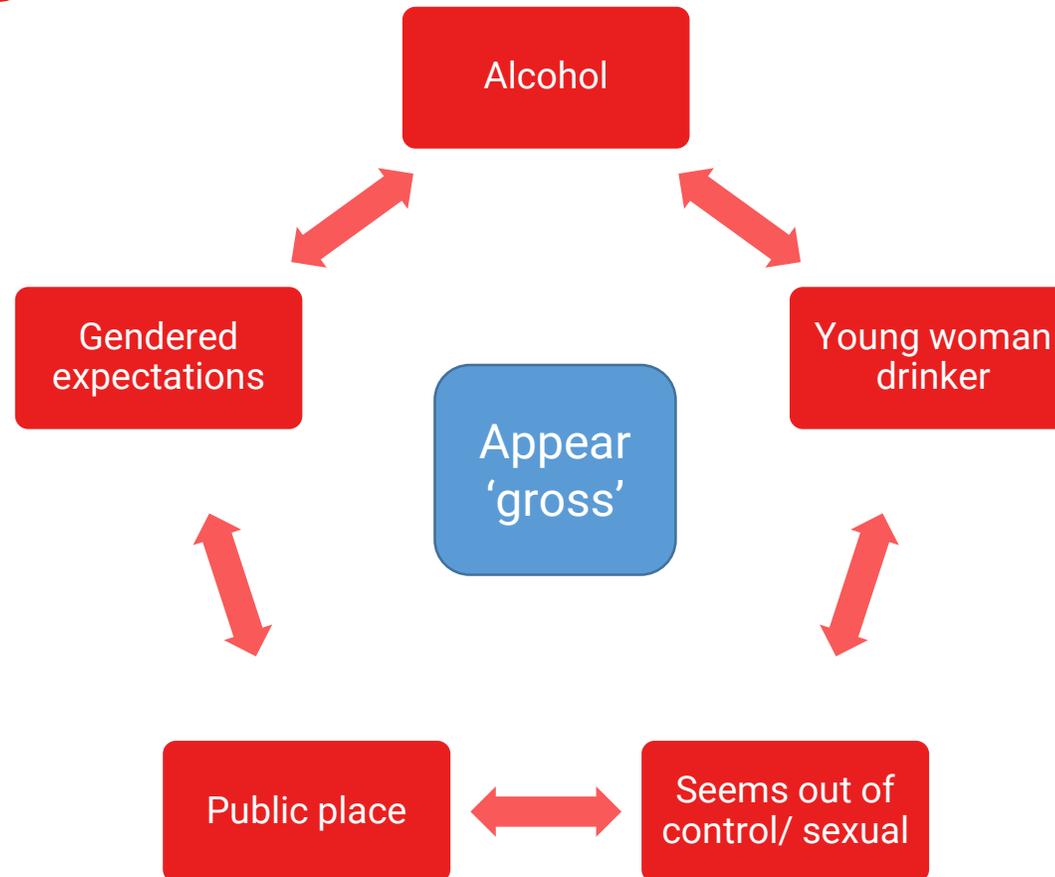
“ Well, yeah girls just look like trash when they're really drunk and also they, they look so vulnerable too. ... When I've been out and I've seen a girl [drunk], like they're really skanky [dirty and unpleasant]. I think that's gross, when a girl's really all over a guy, you know.

(Emma, female, 21)

1. practices that suggest stigmatised identities

“ I feel sick like you know, like when you see like a bum on the street that's like you know, off their face on something [intoxicating]. I just look at them and think 'You're repulsive'. Why, why would anybody want to do what you are doing right now? [laughter]
(Mitchell, male)

1. practices that suggest stigmatised identities



**Alcohol acts to intensify exclusion
when configured with**

2. location-based disadvantage

- Risk of discrimination and literal exclusion (from venues), and
- Exacerbation of exclusion through involvement in violence



2. location-based disadvantage

- Researchers are increasingly influenced by social geography to consider the effects of place on alcohol use.
- For example, Maria Herold and colleagues (2019) show how young people's alcohol use is enacted differently in rural settings to urban contexts where most research has occurred.

Location-based disadvantage in Melbourne

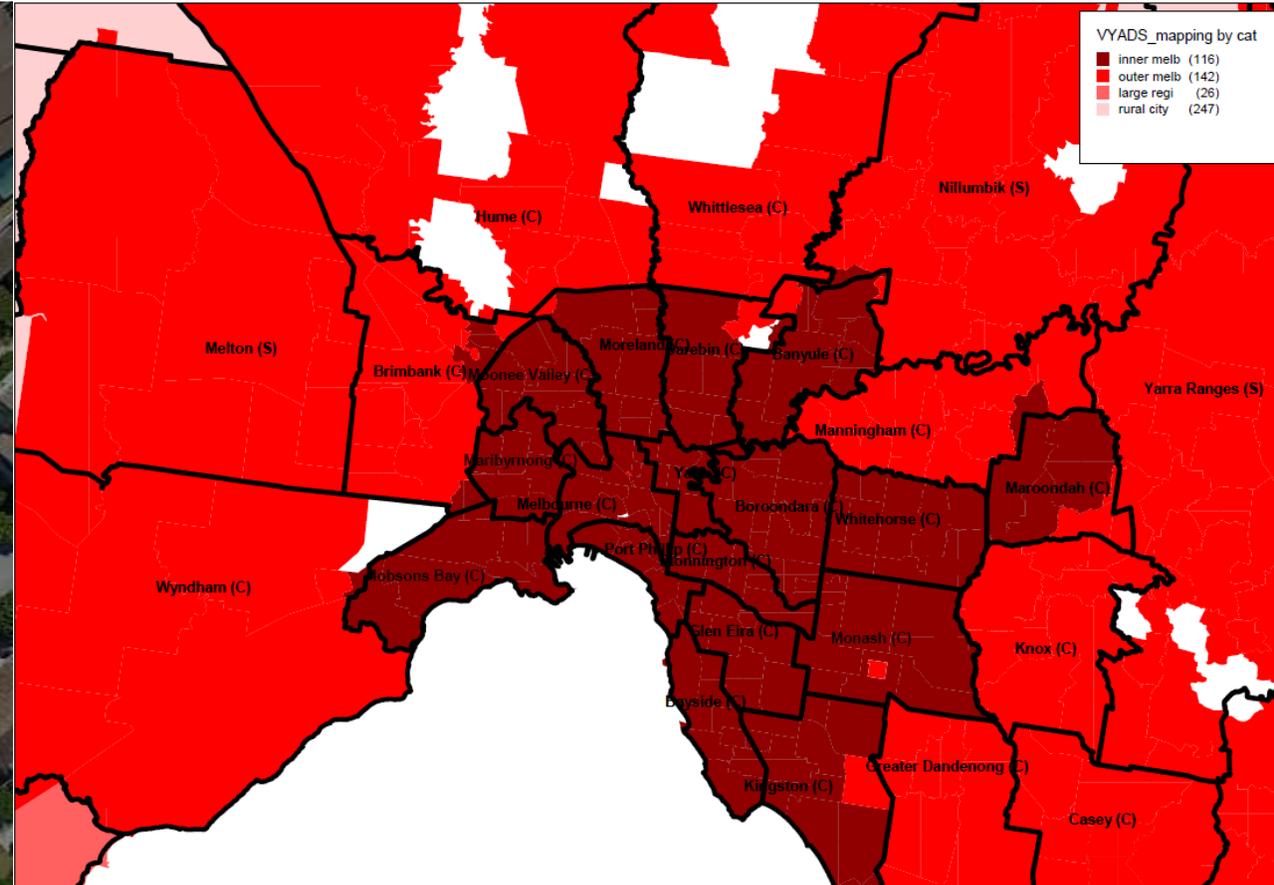
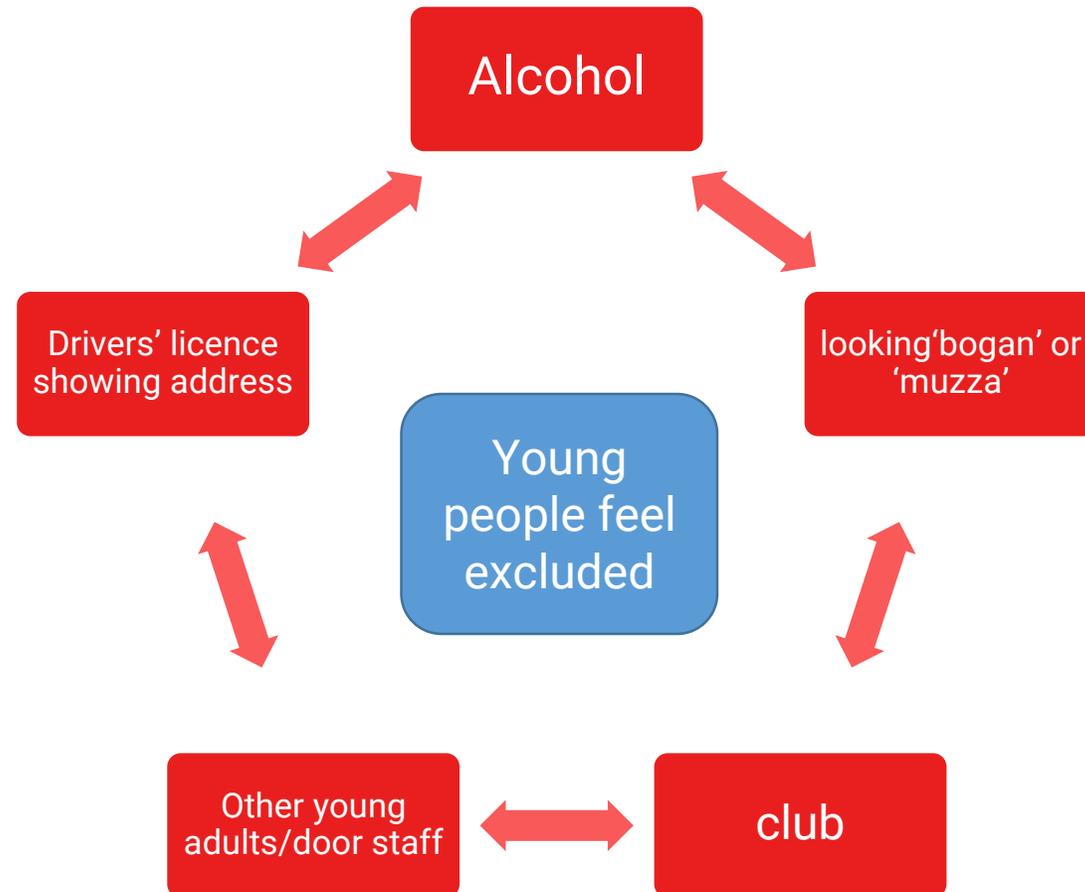


Photo by [Raphaël Biscaldi](#) on [Unsplash](#)

2. location-based disadvantage

“ I wouldn't go to a club if I knew it would be full of muzzas and bogans and people I didn't wanna hang around with and who I find really aggressive. ... I just don't like being around that sort of environment when I'm wasted, when I'm drunk and when I'm high. I don't wanna be around these big guys that are maybe trying to start a fight with me or pushing me out of the way.
(Ryan, 23, inner urban)



2. location-based disadvantage

Assault offenders during high alcohol hours 2011/2012, 18-24 year olds

LGA	Total alcohol events	Rate per 10,000 people	Confidence intervals
Inner- Melbourne	642	27	(25 – 29)
Outer-Melbourne	1179	61	(57 - 64)

(MacLean et al., 2014) Data provided by Victoria Police

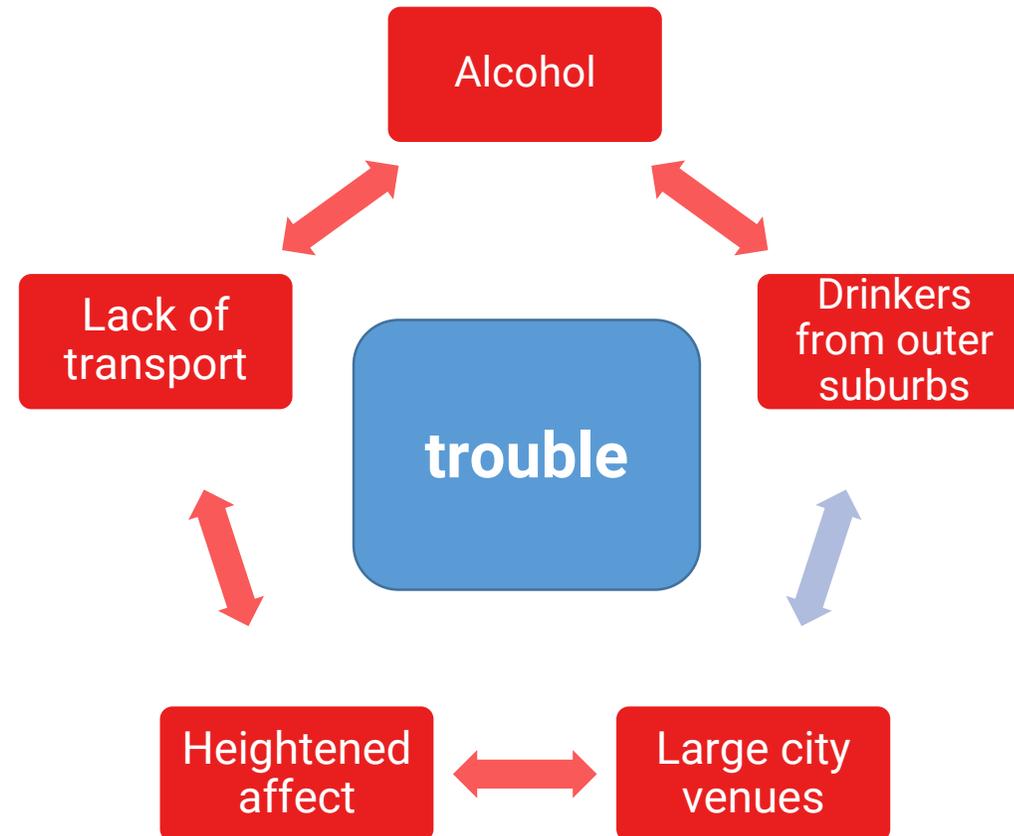
2. location-based disadvantage

An aerial night view of a city, showing a dense grid of lights and a river in the foreground. The city lights are reflected on the water, creating a shimmering effect. The sky is dark, and the overall scene is illuminated by the city's lights.

Young adults in outer-urban areas are more likely to experience trouble in city drinking settings because:

- They felt discriminated against
- They tend to frequent large mainstream venues where alcohol is strongly promoted
- High excitement – going out to entertainment precincts as a special occasion
- Lack of transport home (MacLean and Moore, 2014)

How does heavy alcohol use act to intensify inclusion and exclusion for young adults?



2. location-based disadvantage: Excitement in the city

“I think in the city [it's] the vibe. Like [they're] more pubs and there's a lot of other people you might not know because it's not your local area so you've got more, like there's more people meeting people, different people. And like just I think the clubs there, they make more money, so they might update the decor or get bigger DJs or something. They'll turn into events.
(Bella: female, 21, outer-urban)



2. location-based disadvantage: Excitement in the city NTE

“ [In the city you are] a bit more stupid, you get a bit more reckless. Like ... if you're in like a suburb you, usually everyone knows everyone.
(Riley: male, 21, outer suburb)

2. location-based disadvantage: Excitement in the city NTE

“ Yusef: Everyone yeah especially on the weekend everyone just gets together and you know [it] becomes a rumble, you know.

Interviewer: That doesn't happen if you go to the local?

Yusef: Nah, usually its old people kicking back and drinking, minding their own business.

(20, male, outer-urban)

2. location-based disadvantage: trouble getting home

“ You’ve got absolutely off their face people on the [night] bus. Like the amount of times we’ve been on it and there’s been punch ons.
(Bella: 21, female, outer urban)

“ Like we ran out of money, like had no money left. And even if we could catch a train there wasn’t a train for another three hours.
(Rima: 21, female, outer-urban)

**Alcohol acts to intensify exclusion when configured with
3. differentials in capacity to intra-sense
how much to drink**



3. differentials in capacity to intra-sense how much to drink

Policy frameworks implicitly require young people to self-manage their alcohol consumption and limit drunkenness. Strategies include

- Counting standard drinks
- Slowing down and alternating with soft drinks

3. differentials in capacity to intra-sense how much to drink

“ In a study of diabetics, Mol and Law describe how alongside using blood sugar measurement devices, people attend to their internal affective states to identify whether their blood sugar levels are within the required range: ‘in the day-to-day handling (or avoiding) of hypoglycaemia, *self-awareness* is at least as important as measuring’ (2004, p.47).

3. differentials in capacity to intra-sense how much to drink

“Young people deliberately stage intoxication to enhance pleasure and minimize pain from their consumption...Young people stage intoxication through timetabling when and with whom it will occur, by choreographing night out, and by managing the risks and consequences of drinking.

(Lindsay, 2009, p. 376).

- Young people often do this by ‘intra -sensing’ how drunk they are, to know when to slow down drinking (Zajdow and MacLean, 2014)

3. differentials in capacity to intra-sense how much to drink

“ I never count how many drinks I have. I never think ‘Okay I’ve had sixteen standard drinks that’s my limit’, because there’s other things that affect it as well. **I can sort of feel that ‘Okay if I have another... like if I drink a shot I’m not gonna feel good afterwards, I’m gonna be drunk, a little bit drunk and then I’m gonna be throwing up’.** And so I think after a few years of drinking I’ve learnt when that point is. It’s still hard to define exactly
(Ryan, male)

3. differentials in capacity to intra-sense how much to drink

“ I start drinking you know cos it's good, it feels good, you know. It feels right, everyone's drinking having a good time. Then when I feel like I'm pissed. probably after like about 12 cans, 13 cans, I get like anxiety. I just start to feel pissed so I drink more. And I feel better.

(Andy, male, outer-urban)

“ With alcohol for some reason you just keep drinking and drinking and drinking. And you don't realise until you're conked out [unconscious]. (Yusef, male, outer-urban)

3. differentials in capacity to intra-sense how much to drink

“ We’re frothing for [alcohol]. We don’t know what it is, we just wanna have a shot, we’ve gotta see – show us, show us, show us, show us! The other kids aren’t like us. From when they’re young they know what marijuana is, they know what alcohol is. We don’t, by the time we drink we’re eighteen years old.
(Zain, male, outer urban)

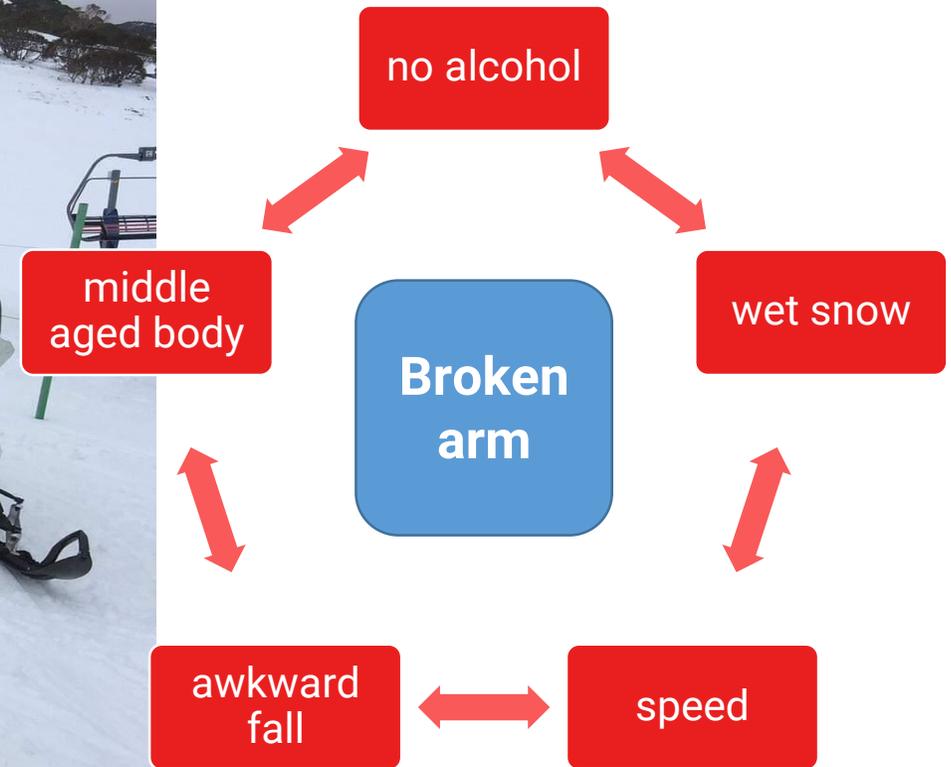
Alcohol consumption, social inequality and differences in harms

- **Poorer people experience greater harms** from consuming alcohol than richer people.
- Even when different drinking patterns are factored in, **poorer people experience more harm per unit of alcohol**. (World Health Organization, 2018).
- Finnish research shows how much **harm from alcohol is overrepresented in the highly marginalised** (Mäkelä, 1999; Mäkelä & Paljärvi 2008)
- In Denmark, **high alcohol consumption** is associated with greater **risk of alcohol-related medical events** for those with lower level education (Christensen et al., 2017).

Risk is everywhere



Falls Creek, Victoria, 21 July, 2019



Conclusion; declining drinking rates for young people

- Young people's net alcohol consumption has declined over the past two decades in Europe, Australia and North America (Pennay et al., 2015).

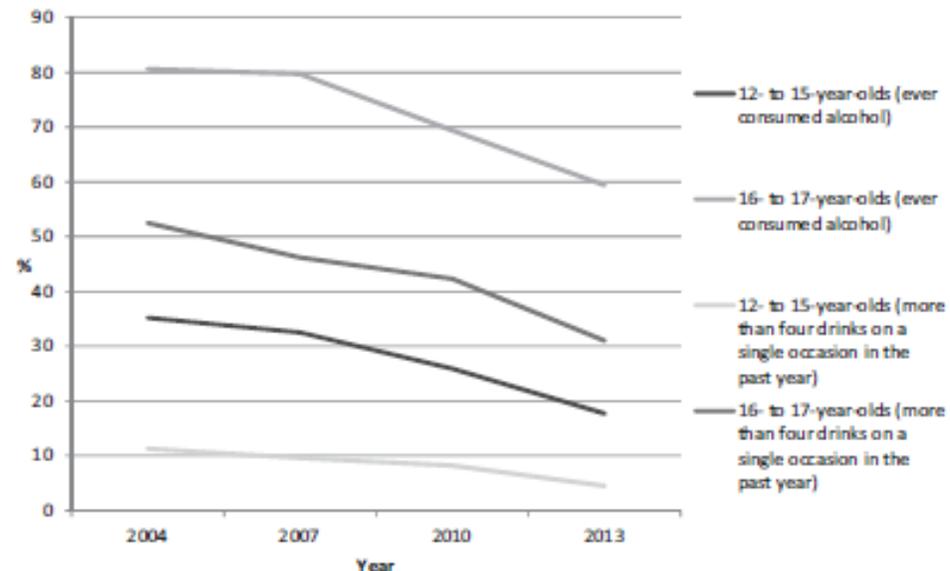


Figure 2. Rates of alcohol consumption (ever consumed) and recent risky alcohol consumption from the National Drug Strategy Household Survey.

Sources: (i) Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2014), National Drug Strategy Household Survey detailed report: 2013, Online Tables. Available at: <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail?id=60129549469&tab=3> (accessed October 2014) and (ii) Australian Institute of Health and Welfare [5].

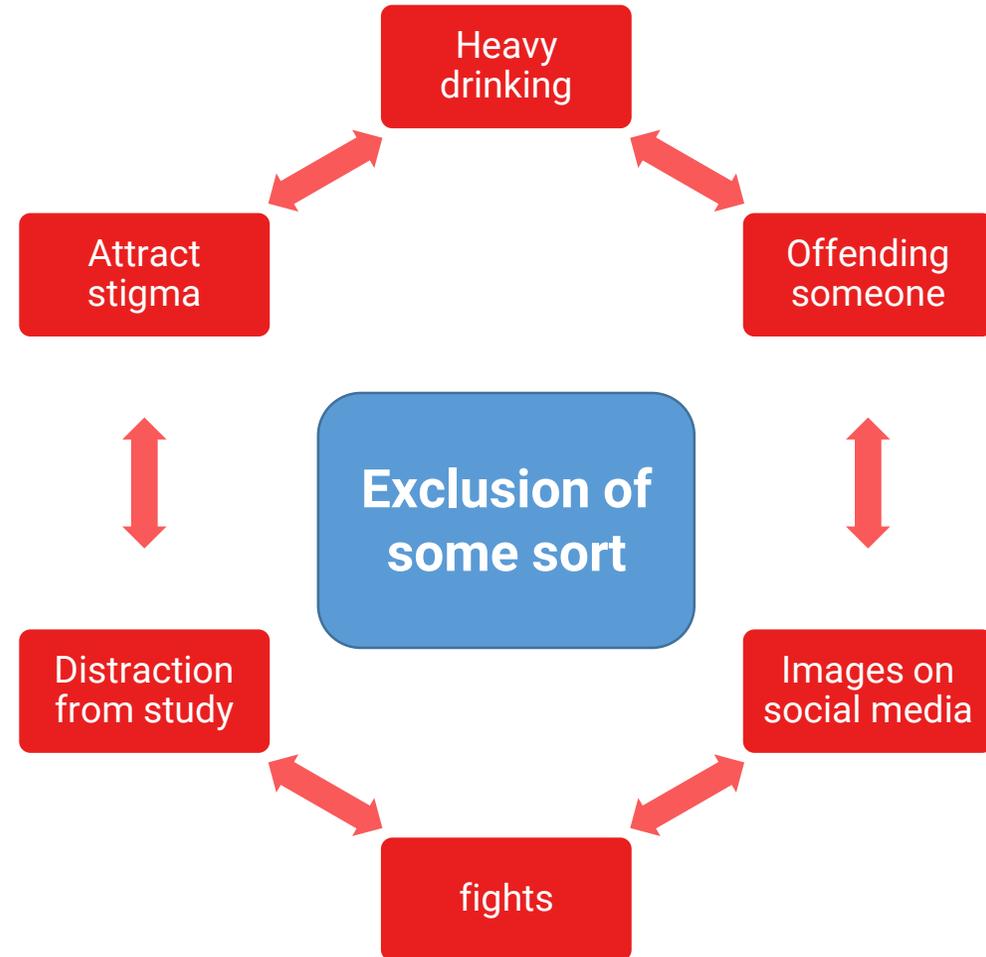
From Pennay et al (2015)

Conclusion; declining drinking rates for young people

- Young people are required to manage insecurity in their lives in a context where 'sense of control' over their futures, health, planet, careers and relationships are being eroded.
- Youth researchers are increasingly reflecting on the precarious nature of young people's lives.
- Across the western world, many young people feel that their future prospects are poorer than those of their parents (Chesters et al., 2019)
- For young people now 'a generalized sense of precariousness invades everyday life' (Worth, 2018)

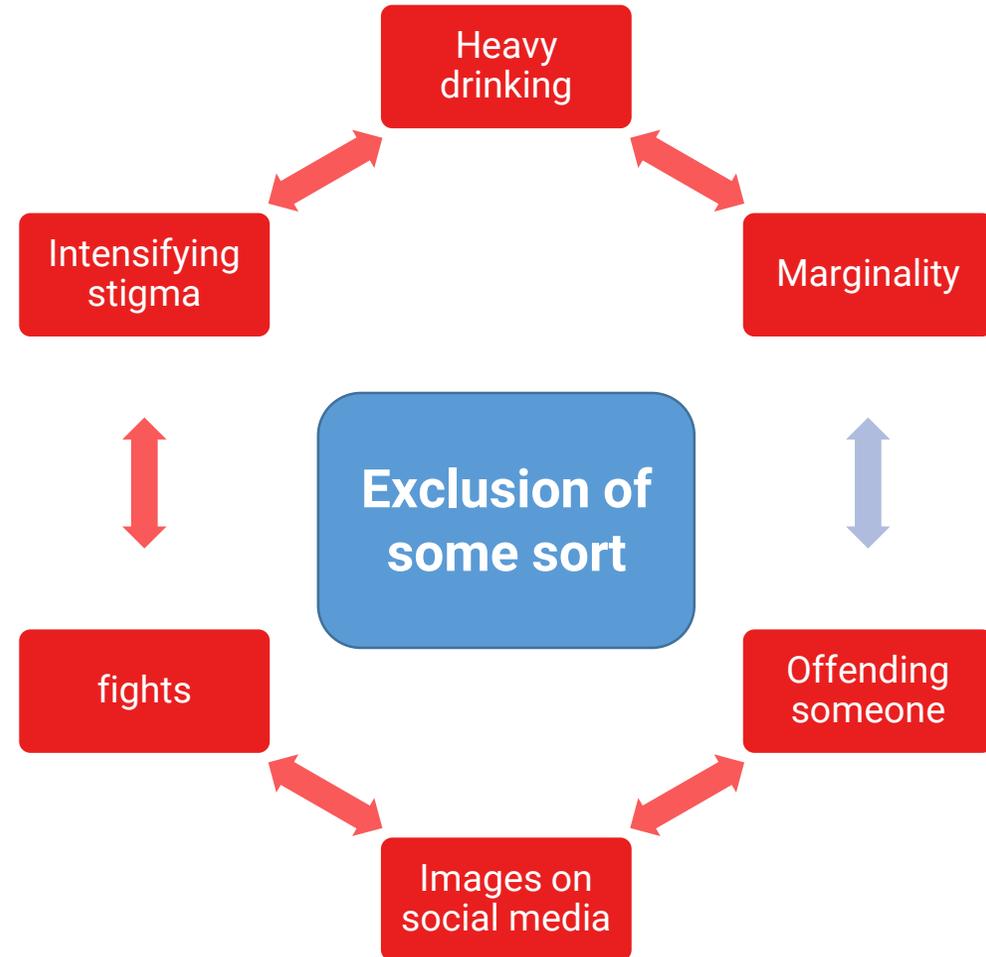
Conclusion; declining drinking rates for young people

- Törrönen et al (2019) argue that this is because youth are more responsabilised, avoiding risks to health and future prospects.
- In a world of great complexity, perhaps the effects of alcohol in the networks of young people's lives have become increasingly unstable and uncertain, playing into their sense of precarity.



Conclusion; declining drinking rates for young people

- Perhaps this sense of precarity explains why young people are not 'inviting alcohol into their networks' (Demant, 2009) as much as previous generations did.
- Adverse events from drinking are more likely for those who are already experiencing some form of social exclusion.



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