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1 Young Men's Alcohol Consumption Experiences and Performances of Masculinity

2 Abstract

3 Background

4 By creating a dichotomy between those who are 'out-of-control' 'binge drinkers' and those for
5 whom alcohol contributes to friendship fun, academic and alcohol policy literature often fail
6 to acknowledge the nuances in the diverse drinking practices of men.

7 Methods

8 This paper engages with findings from a multiple qualitative method research project
9 (comprising of individual and friendship group interviews; diaries; and participant
10 observation), conducted with 16 young men, aged 15-24: eight living in the middle-class area
11 of Chorlton, and eight living in the working-class area of Wythenshawe, Manchester, United
12 Kingdom.

13 Results

14 This paper provides fine-grained insights into the doings, complexities and contradictions
15 of **masculinity** in the context of drinking. For instance, some young men present themselves as
16 caretakers, and risk-managers for others, whilst other young men display emotional
17 vulnerability, and homoeroticism.

18 Conclusion

19 This paper shows a much more complex image of young men's drinking practices than has
20 hitherto been conceptualised in the existing literature, and brings to the fore doings of
21 alternative masculinities. This has important implications for alcohol policy interventions
22 targeting men, in that the complexities and contradictions of masculinity in relation to drinking
23 must be taken seriously.

24 **Key words:** Alcohol; Care; Gender; Masculinity; Performance

25

26 **Young Men’s Alcohol Consumption Experiences and Performances of Masculinity**

27 **Introduction**

28 Young people and alcohol consumption has received a significant amount of attention in
29 popular and policy press, and academic work. The treatment of young people in academic and
30 policy literature is, however, contradictory. Public debate in the UK is permeated by a rhetoric
31 of anxiety relating to ‘out-of-control’ young people (Parkes and Conolly, 2011), who are
32 positioned as lacking capacities of/for self-regulation (Kelly, 2003). Pickard (2014) accuses the
33 British press of creating a ‘moral panic’ surrounding young people’s alcohol consumption in
34 public space. Young people who drink tend to be presented as “folk devils”- a bad influence
35 on society (Oswell, 1998:36). The demonisation of young people as ‘binge drinkers’ gives the
36 impression that they are anti-social, dangerous and lack a moral compass (Smith, 2013).

37 On the other hand, independent UK alcohol awareness charity, Drinkaware (2011:6), argue
38 that alcohol consumption can act as a “social glue” for many young people, binding friends
39 together, and providing common ground. Drinkaware (2011) add that episodes of drunkenness
40 are generally shared experiences and, after a night out, young people trade stories of drunken
41 behaviour as a form of social currency. With a specific focus on men and alcohol consumption,
42 Men’s Health (2017) reported that men are more likely to become friends with other men if
43 they consume alcohol with them.

44 By creating a dichotomy between those who are ‘out-of-control’ ‘binge drinkers’ and those for
45 whom alcohol contributes to friendship fun, the nuances in the diverse drinking practices of
46 men fail to be acknowledged. This paper will rectify this, by engaging with the complexities
47 of the alcohol consumption practices and experiences of young men, aged 15-24, living in the
48 suburban case study locations of Chorlton and Wythenshawe, Manchester, UK. These case
49 study locations were chosen due to their different socio-economic make up (Chorlton being
50 more middle-class, and Wythenshawe more working class), and their different spaces and

51 places for drinking (e.g. parks, streets, bars, clubs). In doing so, this paper provides fine-grained
52 insights into the doings, complexities, and contradictions of masculinity in the context of
53 drinking. For instance, some young men in this paper present themselves as caretakers, and
54 risk-managers for others, whilst other young men display emotional vulnerability and
55 homoeroticism, bound up with the consumption of alcohol.

56

57 This paper is structured as follows, first: we engage with literature surrounding gender and
58 alcohol consumption. We then bring together literature on performing drinking identities,
59 before going on to discuss performances of masculinity. Following this, we provide an
60 overview of the case study locations, and discuss the methods used to conduct the research.
61 After this, we present two themes surrounding young men's drinking practices: hegemonic
62 masculinity; and threatened masculinity, respectively, before drawing the paper to a close.

63 **Gender and Alcohol Consumption**

64 Drinking has typically been labelled a "male domain"; that is, male dominated, male identified,
65 and male-centered (Capraro, 2000:307). Handling the effects of alcohol without showing signs
66 of intoxication is, from this perspective, an expression of male identity (Mullen et al., 2007).
67 The consumption of beer with male friends is a means through which men enact standard
68 hegemonic masculinity (Willott and Lyons, 2012), and being noisy, urinating in the streets, and
69 passing out on the street are often deemed acceptable behaviours for men, by men (Mullen et
70 al., 2007).

71 According to Mullen et al. (2007), the social context of male drinking is changing, and
72 masculinities are being redefined. Recent changes to the drink industry, alcohol advertising,
73 marketing and the retail trade have contributed to a movement towards "female-friendly"
74 alcohol products, such as flavoured gins, and drinking spaces, such as bars (Bailey et al.,
75 2015:747). Mullen et al. (2007) assert that the increasing diversity of drinking locations and

76 alcohol products are instrumental in achieving new expressions of male identity among young
77 men.

78 Findings from de Visser and Smith's (2007) study show that men can have strong masculine
79 identities that are characterised by an explicit reference to not drinking, or drinking in
80 moderation (for instance, if they are successful at playing sports). Moreover, the authors
81 contend that men can drink excessively without endorsing traditional masculinity. In Mullen
82 et al.'s (2007) study, most participants preferred drinking in mixed-sex groups, which contrasts
83 with the experiences of their fathers and grandfathers. This leads Mullen et al. (2007:162) to
84 assert that there is a shift away from the conventional hegemonic masculinity to a more
85 "pluralistic interpretation". Having engaged with literature on alcohol and gender, this paper
86 now discusses Butler (1990) and Goffman (1959), to explore how drinking identities are
87 performed.

88 **Performing Drinking Identities**

89 Writing in the context of class in the 1950s, Goffman (1959:79) deploys the perspective of
90 "theatrical performance"; that is, the ways in which people present themselves and their activity
91 to others, with a focus on the means by which people guide and control the impression others
92 form. According to Goffman (1959:17), people sometimes act in "thoroughly calculating"
93 manners, projecting versions of themselves in order to communicate a certain impression to
94 others, to provoke a desired response. Goffman (1959) argues that the impression of 'reality'
95 fostered by a performance is delicate and fragile, and can come under discredit because of
96 minor mishaps. Goffman (1959:109;114) distinguishes between a "front region" and a "back
97 region". 'Front region' refers to the space in which the performance takes place. 'Back region'
98 is where performances are openly constructed, and where performers can relax and drop their
99 fronts (Goffman, 1959).

100 According to Johnson (2013), teenage drinking activities are simultaneously backstage
101 performances, secluded from the adult gaze, and frontstage performances, in which young
102 people stage an impression for the audience of their peers. The author advances three forms of
103 performance authenticity, bound up with the consumption of alcohol: “over-claiming”,
104 “pretending”, and “acting hard” (Johnson, 2013:747). Regarding “over-claiming”, Johnson
105 (2013:747) argues that young people in his study heavily criticised those who exaggerated their
106 alcohol consumption, or embellished their alcohol-related activities. When discussing
107 “pretending” to be drunk, Johnson (2013:747) notes that this performance was viewed as much
108 more socially damaging than attempting to ‘pass’ as a drinker (e.g. by consuming non-alcoholic
109 drinks which share a visual resemblance to alcoholic drinks, in order to present oneself as a
110 drinker). Finally, Johnson (2013:747) describes acting “hard”, as an example of performance
111 authenticity. Acting ‘hard’ can refer to acting ‘older’, ‘mad’, ‘nuts’, or ‘cool’. The author
112 claims that drinking alcohol in an attempt to gain the approval of others, or as a means of
113 replicating the behaviour of ‘older’ young people, is considered a major transgression to peer
114 group norms.

115 In the 1990s, queer theorist Judith Butler deployed a linguistic definition of performativity,
116 departing from Goffman’s (1959) theatrical account of performance, in an attempt to disrupt
117 the dominant understandings of sex, gender, and sexuality (Gregson and Rose, 2000). Butler
118 (2011) argues that being a man/woman is not internal - gender is not innate or natural, we are
119 assigned a gender at birth; this is not a natural ‘given’. Rather, gender is continually produced
120 and reproduced. Butler (2011) claims that gender is performative; that is, it produces a series
121 of effects. The ways in which people act, walk, speak and talk consolidate an impression of
122 being a man or being a woman (Butler, 2011). The body becomes its gender through such
123 bodily gestures, movements and enactments, which are renewed, revised, and consolidated
124 over time (Butler, 1988).

149 The abiding gendered self will then be shown to be structured by repeated acts that seek
150 to approximate the ideal of a substantial ground of identity, but which, in their
151 occasional discontinuity, reveal the temporal and contingent groundlessnesses of this
152 “ground”.

153 (Butler, 1990:141)

154 By this, Butler (1990) recognises that gender transformations are possible due to the likelihood
155 of a failure to repeat certain acts, or deformities in performances. Gender then, can be seen as
156 an “assignment” which is never carried out precisely according to expectation, and
157 consequently one never quite inhabits the gender ideal s/he is compelled to approximate
158 (Butler, 1993:231). This performative conceptualisation of gender is a useful means of moving
159 away from an understanding of gender as prescribed, fixed and static, to a reconceptualisation
160 of gender as “a constituted *social temporality*” (Butler, 1990:141, emphasis in original).

161 Whilst Goffman (e.g. 1959) and Butler’s (e.g. 1990) approaches to performance have typically
162 been deployed individually in the alcohol studies literature, Demant and Järvinen (2006:590)
163 combine their theoretical perspectives when seeking to show how alcohol experience and
164 positive attitudes towards drinking are used to symbolise maturity; the teenagers who consume
165 the most alcohol construct themselves as “socially older” than others. Further, Malbon (1999),
166 with a focus on clubbing, fuses Goffman’s (e.g. 1959;1967) recognition of the role for
167 territorialisations and regionalisations, with Butler’s (e.g. 1990;1993) understanding that social
168 identity and self are concurrently performed. Malbon (1999) suggests that utilising both
169 approaches can enhance understandings as to how the consuming experience of the crowd can
170 simultaneously be expressive (Goffman), and constructive (Butler). Performative
171 conceptualisations of drinking identities are beneficial for understanding that drinking
172 identities are not fixed and static, but take different forms, at different times, and in different

173 spaces; this paper works at the intersection of both Goffman (1959) and Butler's (1990)
174 approaches to performing identities.

175 **Performances of Masculinity and Alcohol Consumption**

176 Drawing on Butler's (1990) theory of gender as constituted performatively, Campbell (2000)
177 examines how hegemonic masculinity may be achieved in the context of a pub. The author
178 contends that, through the public performance of masculinity, dominant understandings of
179 legitimate masculine behaviour are both reinforced and defended. Campbell (2000:562) coins
180 the term "pub(lic) masculinity" to recognise the specificities of the performance as it relates to
181 pub drinking, and the ways in which the practice is display-oriented and under constant public
182 observation. The performative enactment of pub(lic) masculinity contains theatrical elements,
183 which Campbell (2000:565, emphasis in original) terms "*conversational cockfighting*". The
184 author argues that, at such times, hierarchies of knowledge and legitimacy are established, in
185 which other drinkers scrutinise men's performances. Further, Campbell (2000) contends that,
186 for male drinkers, it is important to have discipline when consuming large quantities of alcohol,
187 in order to ensure the appearance of self-control is maintained. The performance thus requires
188 that a man controls both the social and bodily aspect of pub(lic) masculinity.

189 According to Connell (1995), there is a hierarchy of masculinities. At the top of this hierarchy
190 is hegemonic masculinity, with qualities including heterosexuality, whiteness, physical
191 strength, and the suppression of emotions, such as sadness. Below this, is complicit
192 masculinity. This phrase refers to men who may not fit all of the characteristics of hegemonic
193 masculinity, but equally they do not challenge it, as they receive some of the benefits of being
194 male. We then have marginalised masculinity, in which men cannot access all the features of
195 hegemonic masculinity, due to factors such as their race or disabilities, but still withhold
196 emotions and may display physical strength (Connell, 1995). At the bottom of the Connell's

197 (1995) hierarchy of masculinity is subordinate masculinity, in which men exhibit qualities that
198 are oppositional to hegemonic masculinity, such as being physically weak, and showing
199 sadness. Effeminate and gay men are considered exemplars of subordinate masculinity
200 (Connell, 1995).

201 David and Brannon (1976) outline four types of masculinity that they believe are guidelines
202 for male sex roles, and which men must perform in order to be considered hegemonic males.
203 First, “no sissy stuff”, which suggests a distanced self from femininity, homophobia, and
204 avoidance of emotions, appreciating the stigma of all stereotyped feminine characteristics and
205 qualities, including openness and vulnerability. Second, “be a big wheel”, where an individual
206 strives for achievement and success and focuses on competition. Third, “be a sturdy oak”,
207 which is concerned with avoiding vulnerability, staying composed and in control and being
208 tough. Fourth, “give ‘em hell”, where an individual acts aggressively to become dominant.
209 David and Brannon (1976) presented these themes in recognition of the role society encourages
210 men to play; that is, men are required to perform a false front in order to ‘make it’. This paper
211 engages with these typologies of masculinity when analysing young men’s stories of their
212 drinking practices and experiences. Having cohered literature surrounding the performances of
213 masculinities when bound up with the consumption of alcohol, this paper now outlines the
214 methodology.

215 **Methodology**

216 In this section, we first provide an overview of the case study locations, before detailing the
217 methods deployed in this study.

218 Wythenshawe was created in the 1920s as a Garden City in an attempt to resolve Manchester’s
219 overpopulation problem and ‘depravation’ in its inner-city slums. Wythenshawe continued to
220 develop up to the 1970s. However, the 1980s and 1990s saw steady decline, high

221 unemployment, decaying infrastructure, crime and drug abuse problems (Atherton et al., 2005).
222 Wythenshawe was the outdoor filming location for the Channel 4 series *Shameless*, which
223 showed various shots of the local tower-blocks and housing estates. However, in 2007
224 production moved following disruption to filming caused by local young people (Manchester
225 Evening News, 2007). The town centre - known as the Civic Centre - was built in the 1960s,
226 and was renovated between 1999-2002 to include new stores. The main shopping area now
227 includes gates that are locked at night to prevent vandalism. The Forum centre, which opened
228 in 1971, has a library, leisure centre, swimming pool, and cafe. Wythenshawe is a district eight
229 miles south of Manchester city centre, and faced with relatively poor transportation links
230 (Lucas et al., 2009).

231 Chorlton is a residential area approximately five miles from Manchester city centre. Chorlton
232 is a cosmopolitan neighbourhood with traditional family areas alongside younger, vibrant
233 communities. The area has good road and bus access to, and from, the city centre, and is
234 situated within easy access to the motorway network. Drawing on Manchester City Council's
235 (2012) data, from close to when data collection took place, Chorlton has a higher proportion of
236 minority ethnic residents in comparison to Wythenshawe, and compared to the national average
237 (19.1%, compared to the national average of 11.3%). As of November 2011, private residential
238 property in Chorlton accounted for 90.3% of all property in the ward, much higher than the city
239 average of 68.7%. Chorlton has three secondary schools; a shopping precinct; library; and is
240 home to Chorlton Water Park - a local nature reserve comprising of a lake surrounded by
241 grasslands and woodlands.

242 These case study locations were chosen due to their differing socio-economic status, and their
243 varying drinking micro-geographies; that is, different spaces and places for alcohol
244 consumption. The analysis teases out similarities and differences in how class matters in

245 relation to drinking practices, the doing of masculinity, and displays of affectionate care for
246 young men in this study.

247 *Sampling / recruitment*

248 This paper draws on findings from a larger study, conducted by the first author, which aimed
249 to explore young people's (aged 15-24) alcohol consumption practices and experiences (see
250 removed for anonymity). This paper engages with findings from 16 young men, eight who live
251 in the middle-class area of Chorlton, and eight who live in the working-class area of
252 Wythenshawe (six aged 15-17; five aged 18-21; five aged 22-24). All participants were able-
253 bodied, and all identified as heterosexual. Moreover, all participants bar one identified as
254 White. All participants were either in education (ranging from secondary school to University),
255 or employed in some capacity, at the time of the study. The findings from this study thus derive
256 from a specific group of young people. The first author recruited the majority of participants
257 through non-coercive gatekeepers at local schools, community organisations, youth clubs and
258 universities. In order to recruit participants, the first author also distributed flyers and business
259 cards to houses and businesses in both case study locations; posted on discussion forums
260 concerning both areas; used Twitter and Facebook to promote the study to locals from each
261 area; and arranged to be interviewed by the host of a local radio station in Wythenshawe.

262 *Methods*

263 The first author had a 'palette of methods' to utilise (see removed for anonymity) and made it
264 clear to the young people that they could 'opt in' to whichever method(s) they wished. The
265 methods we draw on in this paper include: in-depth individual and friendship group interviews;
266 diaries; and participant observation of young people's nights in/out involving alcohol.

267

268 Individual and Friendship Group Interviews

269 14 young men opted into the interview method; 11 young men individually and three young
270 men as part of friendship group interviews. Individual interviews enabled us to gain insight
271 into the participants' perceptions, which are subjective in nature. Questions asked included:
272 what are your motivations for drinking?; how do you feel when you drink?; where do you
273 drink?; what would a typical night in / out entail?. (Kaar, 2007). Whilst the individual interview
274 has its benefits, there are also drawbacks. Despite the first author's relative closeness in age to
275 participants, some young people did not feel comfortable participating in a one-to-one
276 interview with an adult researcher, and asked to be interviewed with their friends. To address
277 this, the first author allowed a friendship group style of interviewing. She had not intended to
278 use this method; this illustrates the agency of participants to shape the research design, and the
279 need for researchers to be flexible.

280 There are advantages of conducting interviews in friendship groups for substance use research.
281 Friendship group interviews create a non-threatening and comfortable atmosphere for
282 participants to share drinking experiences (Renold, 2005). Moreover, friendship group
283 interviews provide access to interaction between participants (Miller *et al.*, 2010) - this helped
284 tease out the importance of friendship and care to young men's drinking practices. Overall,
285 friendship group interviews allowed the first author to collect data that otherwise may not have
286 been accessible (Miller *et al.*, 2010).

287 Diaries

288 Five young men opted into the diary method. Diaries are a method through which young people
289 can express themselves, perhaps with less embarrassment, or fewer feelings of being judged,
290 than in interview scenarios. The first author asked participants to complete unstructured
291 solicited written diaries, regarding their alcohol consumption experiences, over a minimum of

292 three weeks. Leyshon (2002) contends that utilising a written diary method with young people
293 is challenging, as they perceive it to be time-consuming, and it may feel like a form of
294 homework. However, far from a tedious homework-like task, for some young men in the study,
295 keeping a diary was novel and exciting.

296

297 Diaries yield considerable benefits for substance use research. First, as the diary method was
298 not undertaken face-to-face, it made it easier for young men to be more candid about their
299 drinking practices and experiences than in face-to-face methods (Milligan, 2005). Second, by
300 enabling participants to document their own drinking practices, in their own space and time, a
301 more empowering research relationship emerged between young people and the researcher.
302 One of the drawbacks of using diaries is that several young people opted to participate in this
303 method, yet never returned their diaries. An additional downfall of using diaries for research is
304 that they depend on the participant's writing skills (Buchwald *et al.*, 2009). Relatedly, the first
305 author was often disappointed by the limited detail some of the completed diaries contained.
306 This is why it was important to use the diary method alongside other methods, including
307 interviews and participant observation.

308 Participant Observation

309 The first author conducted participant observation over a period of 12 months, in a diverse
310 range of spaces, including: pubs, bars, clubs, casinos, streets, parks, and homes, and for a
311 variety of occasions, including routine nights out, to more celebratory occasions, such as an
312 18th birthday party. She went on 21 nights in/out in total, lasting a minimum of three hours, and
313 up to a maximum of twelve hours. In total, she undertook approximately 96 hours of participant
314 observation with 10 groups of young people. By “hanging out” with participants (Kusenbach,
315 2003:463), the first author was able to explore young people's drinking experiences as they
316 moved through, and interacted with, their surroundings. By joining young people as they

317 moved in, and between, different spaces, the first author acquired an understanding of young
318 people's embodied drinking practices, and the multi-sensory nature of drinking experiences
319 (Langevang, 2007). Such visceral insights are not easily obtained through other methods.

320 Data analysis

321 With regard to analysing interviews, diaries, and field notes, the first author adopted the manual
322 method of coding by pen and paper, perceiving that computer-assisted qualitative data analysis
323 can distance the researcher from the data (Davis and Meyer, 2009). Initially, following Miles
324 and Huberman's (1994) three stage model, a process of data reduction occurred, whereby the
325 first author organised the mass of data and attempted to meaningfully reduce this by identifying
326 key themes and sub-themes. Key themes include: intergenerational drinking practices; the role
327 of siblings in drinking experiences; the importance of drinking atmospheres; and gendered
328 drinking performances. The focus of this paper is on the doings of masculinity bound up with
329 alcohol consumption. Second, the first author undertook a continual process of data display
330 in the form of a table. Third, the first author undertook a process of conclusion drawing and
331 verification. Participants feature in this paper through pseudonyms, so as to conceal their
332 identities. Yet, in order to contextualise quotations, genuine ages and locations are given.

333 **Findings**

334 Herein, we discuss two thematic areas arising from the data: hegemonic masculinity and
335 threatened masculinity, respectively. The juxtaposition of these sections shows the
336 complexities and contradictions of masculinity in relation to drinking. The section on
337 threatened masculinity provides a much needed corrective to the hyper-masculine 'caricature'
338 that male drinkers are sometimes reduced to in scholarly work.

339

363 pride. Indeed, there may be an element of “over-claiming” in this account, in which Rex is
364 embellishing the alcohol-related activities of his peer group (Johnson, 2013).

365 Alongside recounting stories containing fights, other young men in the study downplayed the
366 care they undertake for friends on their nights out. This applied to both middle and working-
367 class young men. Take the comments from Tim and Scott below:

368 I don't think boys care. I think boys try to be a bit more macho, or they're in control.
369 So no. I mean, sometimes your mate can tell you're getting a bit too pissed and try and
370 stop you. So that probably just starts to make you drink a bit more.

371 (Tim, 19, Chorlton, interview)

372 I could be twisted as I want yeah, I could be stumbling, and not one person has helped
373 me. I would always keep up. I could fall over, and stand back up

374 (Scott, 18, Wythenshawe, friendship group interview)

375 In the above quotations, young men claim to assert autonomy and independence on nights out,
376 citing a lack of need for care, and can be seen to draw on notions of “hard masculinity” (Lyons
377 and Willott, 2008:706). Indeed, for Tim, attempting to help a drunken male friend can be
378 counterintuitive - as it may serve to spur them on to drink more. Drawing on David and
379 Brannon's (1976) typology, Tim and Scott are displaying traits that may be associated with
380 “sissy stuff”; they claim that boys do not care, and thereby distance themselves from care work,
381 which is stereotypically a feminine pursuit. Rather than displaying emotions, the young men
382 are positioning themselves as “sturdy oaks” (David and Brannon, 1976), as they are presenting
383 themselves, and other men, as being tough and in control, despite the impacts of alcohol
384 consumption.

385 When young men did speak about caring for friends, sometimes it served to emphasise their
386 physical strength. This was particularly applicable for working-class young men from
387 Wythenshawe, as John and David demonstrate:

388 My mate passed out in the bath tub, I had to lift him out of the bath tub, and bearing in
389 mind he's six foot two, and built out here, it wasn't the easiest thing to do, and then I
390 had to walk him home.

391 (John, 22, Wythenshawe, diary)

392 My flatmate got so drunk that his legs couldn't support his weight, so I had to carry him
393 home and put him into bed, so I had him over my shoulder.

394 (David, 21, Wythenshawe, diary)

395 In the above excerpts, John describes lifting his drunken "six foot two", well-built friend, whilst
396 Dan describes carrying his intoxicated friend over his shoulder. Both John and David, by
397 conforming to hegemonic, heterosexual standards for identity can be seen to be operating
398 within the "heterosexual matrix" (Butler, 1990:151).

399 In addition to using the discussion of care to make explicit their physical strength, some young
400 men, particularly middle-class young men, produced their masculine identity *relationally* in
401 their role as protectors of women. By positioning women as in need of care, men
402 simultaneously establish their own masculinity (see Day, 2001):

403

404 I think if you go out in a mixed gender [group], or I certainly drink less cos I think,
405 especially when there's girls, you know, if some of the girls wandered about by
406 themselves, you know, you want to sort of make sure they're alright and nothing
407 happens to them. Whereas if it's just all guys then you're all just encouraging people to

408 get drunk, so I think especially when it's mixed you sort, or I think the guys I know all
409 try and stay less drunk to sort of make sure everyone's alright, cos I know a lot of my
410 friends go out clubbing have tried to be touched up by random men in clubs, and some
411 of them can't really, you know, say no to them.

412 (Tim, 19, Chorlton, interview)

413 Tim moderates his alcohol consumption when in the front-stage of a night-out (Goffman,
414 1959), and in female company (consistent with findings in Harnett *et al.*'s, 2000 study). This
415 is because he considers that young women may "wander" off by themselves, or be "touched up
416 by random men" in public spaces. By positioning public spaces as dangerous, and young
417 women as endangered in such spaces, Tim creates a stage for his performance of masculinity
418 (see Day, 2001). Along with supporting socially ascribed ideals of masculinity, this paper now
419 explores how drunkenness can also threaten them (Thurnell-Read, 2013).

420 **Threatened Masculinity**

421 The notion that that drunkenness can threaten the performance of hegemonic masculinity can
422 be explained by drawing on Butler's (1988:519) contention that gender is not a stable identity;
423 rather, gender is constituted in time through a "stylized repetition of acts". As gender is
424 performative, and gendered identities do not pre-exist performances of them, identities are, for
425 Butler (1990), profoundly uncertain. In the below quotations, we can see that in opposition to
426 some of the contentions made by participants in the quotations above, young men, both middle
427 and working-class, *do* care for their friends on nights in ways that go beyond displaying
428 physical strength:

429 There's a friend a couple of years ago who was really drunk and he was saying that he
430 was going to jump in Platt pond and go for a swim, he was that drunk, and he was
431 crawling on the floor, so I had to take him aside, sat him down, got him some water,

432 and I just sat with him there for an hour and a half, just trying to talk to him. It was
433 winter as well, so it was a good job I was there or it could have been a bad way for him.

434 (Lewis, 20, Wythenshawe, interview)

435 I've had friends when they've been at house parties and they've fallen asleep in the
436 bathroom, been sick on themselves, or they've fallen asleep by the toilet, or some of
437 them get too pissed in the nightclub and you have to get them home. But I mean they
438 do it for you so you've just got to look out for each other. I think that's why it's probably
439 best to go out drinking with your friends because if anything happens they'll look after
440 you. At house parties I've been a bit worse for wear and they've had to put me to bed.

441 (Thomas, 19, Chorlton, interview)

442

443 I'll just be like standardly drunk, and everyone else will just be like mortal, like properly
444 bad. Cos I normally look after people when they're drunk, cos it's not nice when you're
445 not getting looked after.

446 (Rik, 15, Wythenshawe, interview)

447 In the above quotations, Lewis, Thomas, and Rik emphasise the importance of looking after
448 friends during nights in / out involving alcohol consumption, including: sitting with them;
449 talking to them; encouraging friends to drink water; and assisting friends to bed. Indeed, Rik
450 claims to moderate his alcohol consumption, and only get "standardly drunk", in order to look
451 after heavily intoxicated friends. By undertaking caring duties for friends, Lewis, Thomas, and
452 Rik fail to distance themselves from the feminine activity of care, and are thus engaging in
453 "sissy stuff" (David and Brannon, 2979). Moreover, through the above quotations, the young
454 men position their friends as vulnerable, and in need of care. The presentation of the behaviour
455 of their friends thus departs from the "sturdy oak" ideal of masculinity, detailed by David and
456 Brannon (1979).

457 There is a stereotypical dichotomy in which self-disclosure and emotional intimacy through
458 talk are thought to be key elements of female friendship styles, whilst men's friendship styles
459 are characterised by inarticulate companionship and practical support (Bowlby, 2011).
460 Richardson (2015:158) posits that deep-seated emotions are rarely articulated by men; if they
461 are, the man may be accused of being "in touch with his feminine side". However, the excerpt
462 below demonstrates that alcohol can facilitate "slippage" and transgressions in gender
463 performances, particularly for working-class young men (Butler, 1993:122):

464 I get a bit gushy when drunk, like my mate, he's dead clever, and he's dead hard-
465 working, and he's really down on himself, he was going on about it the last time we
466 were both drunk, and I just said "do you know what? You're brilliant" just, went on for
467 about twenty minutes, and everyone was just sat there like "Jesus, are you two going to
468 kiss, or what?" Yeah it was, I think it's just that, just saying things I wouldn't usually
469 say.

470 (David, 21, Wythenshawe, interview)

471 When sober in the car park at the start of the night, Carl and Danny were very quiet,
472 and appeared to be relatively devoid of emotion, they weren't particularly physically
473 affectionate towards one another. However, later in the night, and multiple swigs of
474 whisky later, Carl told Danny he "loved him", and that he was "perfect", his "best mate
475 in the whole wide world".

476 (Field diary, 6/12/2013, night out with Vera, Milly, Danny, Carl, 15-16, Wythenshawe)

477 From the above, one can see that alcohol enabled David and Carl to exhibit a lack of control
478 and restraint over their emotions (see Thurnell-Read, 2013), getting "gushy". Here, one can see
479 the fragility of the "heterosexual matrix" (Butler, 1990:151). The consumption of alcohol opens

480 up spaces of resistance to the ‘heterosexual matrix’, enabling David and Carl to carve out
481 distance from heteronormative practices.

482 As the above demonstrates, Carl practiced what may be termed ‘transgressive’ masculinity, by
483 failing to comply with the “masculine norms” of “controlling and restricting expression of
484 emotion” (Iwamoto and Smiler, 2013:371). Further to this, Carl fails to conform to the
485 masculine norm of “striving to appear heterosexual” (Iwamoto and Smiler, 2013:372), by
486 kissing his male friend on the lips. This can be seen in the following extract from the first
487 author’s field diary:

488 Carl started stating that he loved his mum and his little baby brother and that he wanted
489 to go home and kiss him. Carl then kissed Danny on the lips, just a little kiss, but
490 something I got the impression he wouldn’t have engaged in without the influence of
491 alcohol. Vera and Milly remarked that Carl was very sweet, and Vera stated that she
492 wished Milly was this affectionate when drunk.

493 (Field diary, 6/12/2013, night out with Vera, Milly, Danny, Carl, 15-16, Wythenshawe)

494 From the above, it is evident that embodiment of drunkenness helped Carl to articulate and
495 express his emotions - both in talk and touch - thereby simultaneously threatening the male
496 body, which is typically identified as being associated with control and boundedness (Thurnell-
497 Read, 2013). Drinking with friends allowed Danny to ‘turn a blind eye’ to Carl’s non-
498 hegemonic practices, such as kissing him (see Emslie et al., 2013). This closeness, touching
499 and physicality between men is an act associated with transgressing the performance of
500 normative gendered expectations (see Waitt *et al.*, 2011). These findings support Thurnell-
501 Read’s (2013) contention that, for younger drinkers, the ties between drinking and maintaining
502 a bounded, controlled, male body may not be so clear.

503

504 **Conclusions**

505 As this paper has argued, there is typically a dichotomy in the literature, between those who
506 are ‘out-of-control’ ‘binge drinkers’ and those for whom alcohol contributes to friendship fun.
507 Likewise, the media and policy bodies often fail to acknowledge the nuances in the diverse
508 drinking practices of men. This paper thus aimed to provide fine-grained insights into the
509 doings, complexities and contradictions of **masculinity** in the context of drinking. For instance,
510 some young men positioned themselves as caretakers, and risk-managers for others, whilst
511 other young men displayed emotional vulnerability, and homoeroticism, bound up with the
512 consumption of alcohol.

513 This paper brought to the fore the boundaries of masculinities, from conforming to the ideal of
514 hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995), right through to engaging in “sissy stuff” (David and
515 Brannon, 1979). In doing so, this paper has highlighted how both conscious (Goffman, 1959)
516 and unconscious (Butler, 1990) gender performances shape, and are shaped by, drinking.
517 Moreover, we highlighted that some young men’s, both working and middle-class, front stage
518 performances of their masculinities written in diary entries, and verbally articulated during
519 interviews, served to promote the notion that they are hegemonic males (Connell, 1995), and
520 as such that they do not need care on nights out, and nor do they care for friends on nights out.

521 When young men did speak about caring for friends, we noted that often, particularly for
522 working-class young men, it sought to emphasise their physical strength, or to position
523 themselves as protectors of women. However, for other young men, care was a fundamental
524 constituent of their nights out with friends, and took a variety of forms, such as: talking; sitting
525 with; obtaining water; and putting to bed. It was largely through participant observation that
526 insight was gleaned into what David and Brannon (1979) would term “sissy stuff”; that is, the
527 emotional care, both through talk and touch, that, particularly working-class young men

528 provide for their friends on nights out. This finding goes against Campbell's (2000) contention
529 that, for male drinkers, it is important to have discipline when consuming large quantities of
530 alcohol, in order to ensure the appearance of self-control is maintained. Instead, this paper's
531 findings thus lend credence to Emslie et al.'s (2013) contention that, whilst drinking with
532 friends is often thought to promote excessive drinking, consuming alcohol with friends can
533 also have health-promoting behaviours, by enabling young people to share emotions, thereby
534 potentially safeguarding their psychological wellbeing.

535 This paper thus brought to the fore a much more complex image of young men's drinking
536 practices than has hitherto been conceptualised in the existing literature, and highlighted
537 alternative doings masculinity. This supports Mullen et al.'s (2007:162) assertion that there is
538 a shift away from the conventional hegemonic masculinity to a more "pluralistic
539 interpretation". This has important implications for alcohol interventions targeting men, in that
540 the complexities and contradictions of masculinity in relation to drinking must be taken
541 seriously.

542

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544 **Submission declaration:**

545 The work described has not been published previously; it is not under consideration for
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548 published elsewhere in the same form, in English or in any other language, including
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