

# **Games that Adults Play: Sport, Alcohol Usage and University Students**

A study of alcohol usage at a national university-sporting event

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## **Abstract**

This study examines the influences that shape the way alcohol is used by university students who attend a major sporting event. It investigates the reasons participants value a type of behaviour involving alcohol which will be argued can be best understood as a form of play.

Investigating a university sporting event which involves more than 7000 participants provides a unique opportunity to research the complex organisational and symbolic domains that contribute to both the conditions and behaviours associated with alcohol use amongst university students.

This thesis uses play theory to interpret the alcohol-induced behaviours and consumption patterns of participants and seeks to provide a new perspective on alcohol usage amongst this cohort. This approach provides a unique research agenda, one that will encourage a much wider perspective than what currently exists and will increase our understanding of the complexities associated with alcohol use within different recreation and leisure settings.

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I declare that the work hereafter has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution and that where the work of others has been utilised acknowledgement has been made.



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## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>List of Appendices.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>List of Tables and Figures.....</b>	<b>10</b>
Tables.....	10
Figures.....	10
<b>Chapter 1 - Introduction and Overview of the Study.....</b>	<b>12</b>
Research Context .....	12
Rationale and Research Aims .....	21
Objectives of the study.....	22
Thesis Overview .....	23
Summary .....	26
<b>Chapter 2 - Perspectives on Alcohol Use .....</b>	<b>27</b>
Introduction.....	27
Social Environments .....	28
Australia and Its Relationship with Alcohol.....	28
A New Culture of Intoxication .....	31
The Gendering of Alcohol .....	34
Policy .....	35
The Alcoholic Economy and the Sophistication of the Alcohol Companies.....	35
Behaviours .....	39
University Students and their Relationship with Alcohol.....	39
Conclusions.....	45
<b>Chapter 3 - The Politics of Alcohol .....</b>	<b>47</b>
Introduction.....	47
Government Alcohol Policy .....	47
Harm Minimisation.....	49
Australian Alcohol Pricing and taxation.....	53
The Role of the Alcohol Industry .....	56
Alcohol and Sport Sponsorship .....	57
Conclusions.....	61

<b>Chapter 4 - Developing A Theory of Play.....</b>	<b>63</b>
Introduction.....	63
Sport.....	63
Leisure.....	65
Recreation .....	66
Play .....	67
Adult Play .....	70
Conclusions.....	72
<b>Chapter 5 - Determining the Existence of Play at the AUS Sporting Event .....</b>	<b>73</b>
Introduction.....	73
Attributes of Play at the AUS Event.....	74
Team Sports - Participant Expectancy .....	75
Team Sports and Alcohol Expectancy .....	77
Historical Factors .....	77
Cognitive Factors .....	78
Situational Factors .....	78
Alcohol Behaviour .....	79
Alcohol and Social Conformity .....	80
The Formation of Play .....	83
Symbolic and Organisational Aspects of the AUS Event.....	85
Conclusions.....	87
<b>Chapter 6 - Design of the Study.....</b>	<b>89</b>
Introduction.....	89
Understanding the Meaning of Social Behaviours .....	90
Mixed Methods .....	92
Surveys.....	94
Interviews.....	95
Observations .....	96
Observations and Story telling.....	98
Informants .....	100
Validity and reliability in Observational studies .....	100
Credibility .....	101
Transferability.....	101
Dependability .....	102

Conformability .....	102
Methodology – Data collection.....	102
Surveys.....	102
Interview Methodology.....	103
Observational Methodology.....	105
Establishing Rapport with Participants.....	106
Interpreting and Reading the Notes from Interviews and Observations.....	107
Coding of Data.....	108
Computer Assisted Data Analysis .....	109
Ethics.....	110
Data Storage.....	111
Limitations .....	111
Conclusions.....	113
<b>Chapter 7 - Survey Results.....</b>	<b>115</b>
Introduction: The University Games .....	115
Sports Competitions Played at the Event.....	116
Alcohol Consumption Rates 30 Days Prior to the AUS Event.....	117
Alcohol Consumption Rates During the Event.....	118
Percentage of Risky Drinkers by Sport.....	119
Binge Drinking Comparative Analysis of Team and individual Sports .....	120
Consumption Rates by Gender During the Event.....	121
Perception of Teammates Drinking .....	123
Perceived Reasons for drinking and Not Drinking at the AUS Event.....	127
Consumption Rates and Reasons for Drinking.....	129
Gender and Reasons for Drinking.....	130
Risky Alcohol Consumption and Reasons for Drinking.....	132
Participant's Expectations of the Australian University Sports Event .....	133
Consumption Rates and Reasons for Drinking.....	135
Reasons for Drinking and not Drinking Alcohol Post Event Survey .....	137
Gender and Reasons for Drinking.....	138
Consumption Rates and Reasons for Drinking.....	139
Reasons for Not Drinking Alcohol .....	140
Differences in Drinking Patterns .....	141
Risky Drinking Amongst Team Mates .....	142

Reasons for Changes in Alcohol Consumption .....	144
Alcohol Education Programs Prior to Event.....	145
Overall Analysis.....	146
Conclusions.....	147
<b>Chapter 8 - Observational Analysis .....</b>	<b>150</b>
Introduction.....	150
Ritualistic Play .....	151
Physical Play .....	163
Creative Play .....	164
Social Play .....	166
Spectator Play .....	172
Storytelling Play.....	173
Risky Play .....	175
Conclusions.....	177
<b>Chapter 9- Discussion and Conclusion .....</b>	<b>178</b>
Introduction.....	178
Alcohol and Social Connectedness.....	180
Our Desire as Adults to Play.....	181
A Multi-Dimensional Approach to Understanding Alcohol and Play.....	182
Conclusion .....	184
The Link between Alcohol and the Play Experience.....	185
Minimising Risky Alcohol Consumption at the Event.....	187
Practical Implications.....	189
Concluding Remarks.....	191
<b>References .....</b>	<b>193</b>



## **List of Appendices**

Appendix 1. Information Sheet.....	215
Appendix 2. Pre Event On Line Questionnaire .....	216
Appendix 3. Post - Australian University Games On Line Questionnaire .....	220
Appendix 4. Information and Consent Form .....	223
Appendix 5. Interview Questions .....	224
Appendix 6. Ethic Approval .....	225

## List of Tables and Figures

### Tables

Table 6.1 Summary of McCormack's (2000a) multiple lenses.....	99
Table 6.2 Positivist and Naturalistic Analyses of Validity and Reliability .....	101
Table 7.1. Male and Female Respondents by Sport.....	117
Table 7.2. Percentage of Self-Reported Risky Drinkers by Sport .....	120
Table 7.3. Percentage of Perceived Alcohol Consumption of Teammates on a 4-point scale .....	124
Table 7.4. Stated Reasons for Drinking and Percentage of Respondents agreeing with each statement. ....	128
Table 7.5. The Participants Perceived Reasons for Not Drinking and Percentage of Respondents Agreeing with Each Statement .....	129
Table 7.6. Participant Expectancy of the AUS Event.....	135
Table 7.7. Reasons for Drinking.....	138
Table 7.8. Reasons for Not Drinking.....	141
Table 7.9. Reasons for Changing Alcohol Behaviour .....	145
Table 7.10. Alcohol Education Messages.....	146

### Figures

Figure 2.1 Spheres of Influence- Alcohol Behaviours amongst Young People .....	28
Figure 5.1 Attributes of Play.....	74
Figure 5.2 Team Sports - Participant Expectancy .....	75
Figure 5.3 Team Sports and Alcohol Expectancy .....	77
Figure 5.4 Alcohol Behaviour.....	79
Figure 5.5 Alcohol and Social Conformity.....	80
Figure 5.6 The Formation of Play.....	83
Figure 6.1 Mixed Methods.....	92

Figure 7.1 Percentage of Self-Reported Drinking rates on a Typical Day 30 days Prior to the AUS Event .....	118
Figure 7.2. Percentage of Self-Reported Daily Drinking Rates During the AUS Event .....	119
Figure 7.3. Percentage of Self-Reported Binge and Non-Binge Drinking Sports .....	121
Figure 7.4. Percentage of Self-Reported Male and Female Respondents Consuming Between 0 and 10+ Drinks During a Typical Day at the AUS Event .....	122
Figure 7.5. Percentage of Self-Reported Male and Female Respondents Consuming between 0 and 10+ Drinks on a typical day during the last 30 days .....	123
Figure 7.6. Differences in Teammates Perception of Levels of Drinking .....	125
Figure 7.7. Differences in Averages Ratings of How Many Teammates Drink and Get Drunk .....	127
Figure 7.8. Reported Consumption Rates and Reasons for Drinking .....	130
Figure 7.9. Differences in Male and Female Reasons for Drinking .....	131
Figure 7.10. Differences in Binge and Non-Binge Drinking Groups .....	133
Figure 7.11. Gender Differences in Average Importance Scores of Aspects of the AUS Event .....	137
Figure 7.12. Differences in Male and Female Reasons for Drinking .....	139
Figure 7.13. Differences in Male and Female Reasons for Drinking .....	140
Figure 7.14. Differences in Teammates Perception of Levels of Drinking .....	142
Figure 7.15. Differences in Averages Ratings of How Many Teammates Drink and Get Drunk .....	144

## **Chapter 1 - Introduction and Overview of the Study**

### **Research Context**

This study examines the environmental influences that shape the way alcohol is used by university students who attend a major sporting event. It investigates the reasons why participants value a type of behaviour involving alcohol that is subsequently acted out as a form of play. Play itself has been studied widely and is normally considered as a natural and necessary part of childhood growth (Erikson, 1985, p.668), however there has been very little to explain why adults seek out the fundamental benefits of play and why often it becomes associated with the consumption of alcohol amongst youth.

We are still grasping to fully understand alcohol use amongst our youth, despite extensive research. There is an ongoing and increasing interest in the community at large about the issue, with daily reports of alcohol-fuelled violent behaviour, sexual assaults and serious accidents occurring as a result of its use. Medical professionals, governments and the community at large have been constantly challenged by these behaviours, which have led to an array of interventions, including services and programs being introduced by governments. Yet it appears we are no closer to fully understanding why it is such an integral part of the recreation and leisure experience for so many young people. This dissertation will begin to explore further the complexities of the issues by studying a single domain in which Australian youth are engaging in alcohol consumption.

Previous research has demonstrated that the issues associated with alcohol use amongst youth is part of a complex social process that sees drinking as a relaxing, relatively carefree enterprise. Scholars have often referred to this drinking behaviour as a form of time out. (Szmigin, Griffith, Mistral, Bengry-Howell, Weale and Hackley 2008; Schulenberg and Maggs, 2002; Presley, 2002 and Lindsay, 2008). This view suggests that alcohol in many social settings provides the drinker with a brief respite from the everyday stresses that they might be experiencing. However, this thesis will argue, within a specific university sporting setting alcohol consumption is more helpfully understood in the context of play. Moreover, it will be demonstrated that collective drinking behaviours in this setting are part of an unpredictable adventure that culminates in a form of play.

More than sixty years ago, prominent sociologist Selden Bacon called for a systematic sociological approach to studying alcohol use that would treat drinking not just as a harmful or abnormal practice but as a constellation of rituals and activities that is deeply embedded in social life. Despite his insightfulness most studies undertaken within a university setting understand alcohol use as a story of pathology. That is, researchers have focused almost exclusively on the harms and tragedies related to university student drinking behaviours. Although this research is warranted and justified, if we are to better understand why young people persist in such high-risk drinking behaviours, even after experiencing significant alcohol-related troubles, we must explore the allure, joy, collective celebrations, bonding rituals and playfulness that is often associated with alcohol consumption.

This thesis will therefore utilise the work of Erikson (1985) to investigate the social rituals of drinking through a lens of play. In order to best analyse the nature of social ritual a multi-disciplinary approach is used to frame and understand the complex set of behaviours evidenced at a major university sporting event. By exploring the notion of play within this context, I present a number of interdisciplinary models that describe how play is enacted through an array of social and organisational elements. Drawing on the works of Bolman and Deal (2013) I develop an interpretative framework in which to assemble the data collected from the participants. The potent symbols of socialization of alcohol at the event is then framed by drawing on the works of Hayes et al., (2004); Ellis et al., (1986) and Lindsay (2005) to explain the way alcohol is used to create a level of intimacy and belonging amongst the participants.

The study was undertaken at an annual Australian University sporting event, in which thousands of university students from around Australia participate each year. This event serves as a sort of natural laboratory, providing a near ideal setting to investigate youth alcohol behaviours and their link to sport, team behaviours, games and play. As I will demonstrate in this dissertation, sport and alcohol use in Australia have long been closely linked, reflecting a history in which public policies on alcohol and, more recently, drugs, have served to promote a popular culture in which sport and collective celebration through ritualised drinking, often associated with team behaviour, are brought together, even valued, as a form of culturally sanctioned group behaviour. Yet because excessive alcohol use is often understood as an indicator of a lack of education, it appears that policy makers and many others regard excessive alcohol use as a problem confined to those with limited education. Young, educated people with a demonstrated commitment to healthy activity such as sport are thought to be better informed about its use. To

understand alcohol, use in Australia and its link to sport, I argue, it is necessary to examine the specific factors that have strengthened the link between alcohol and sport, and the university environment provides an ideal setting within which to do that.

A university sporting event was selected as the setting to investigate this aspect of youth alcohol behaviours for a number of reasons. Firstly, sport and alcohol within Australian society is so inextricably linked and the AUS event provides a unique setting in which to observe and understand more fully why it has become so integral to the sports experience of students. Secondly, it provides an opportunity to test the broader community perception that young, educated people should be better informed about alcohol use. Thirdly, it provides an opportunity to understand the specific factors that have strengthened the link between alcohol, sport within the university environment by investigating the use of alcohol within the context of Australian history.

The specific setting for this investigation is an annual Australian university sporting festival culturally shaped by thousands of university students from around Australia for more than two decades. The event is managed by Australian University Sport (AUS), a membership organisation involving 29 Australian Universities. Approximately 7000 participants from across Australia attend the event each year. This sporting event is wholly managed on behalf of the 42 member universities by (AUS) Ltd and is a weeklong multisport competition played in different regional and city locations around Australia. The mission of Australian University Sport is stated as “Building the environment for success and wellbeing through sport and education” (Australian University Sport Limited, p.7, 2007). The charter of AUS is not only to provide opportunities for participation, but also to promote the benefits of sport through improved health and fitness, which in turn assist participants in their academic pursuits through the connection of a healthy body and mind.

Over a six-year period from 2002-2008, I attended the AUS events as an official, and during this time I was increasingly observing that the mission of AUS was not being realized, as alcohol use rather than competing in the sporting activities, appeared to have become the more dominant motivator for attending the event. This was purely a perception; I had not given any consideration to what lay beneath these thoughts. I recall three particular moments in which I began to appreciate the complexities associated with my views and I became motivated to gain a much deeper appreciation of the issues at hand. The first reflection occurred after observing what was being played out as part of the sporting competition itself. As one would expect when

watching a sporting competition, there were many examples of physical expression, personal challenges, disappointments and an endless desire to beat the opponent. It was highly competitive at times and generally very patriotic in nature. This often led to considerable banter between the universities. Songs and team initiations were being used to create a type of social hierarchy, both within each team and amongst the different universities. It appeared to be highly organised and contained, and was influenced by the rules and regulations of the various sports. The following narrative captured during the observations provide an example of the behaviours.

When you are competing in sport, it can get pretty serious, and you have such a sense of responsibility to your teammates to do your best. You just don't want to let them down, as you have worked so hard at training to give yourself every chance of winning. I know what it feels like to lose and it's just not fun. On the other hand, when we get together after sport, we just let our hair down. We are equal; no one is any better than anyone else. We never really know what to expect; it's never certain where you will end up and what you will be doing. Not knowing, and just letting go for a while to just see what happens, is just fun. I always feel safe around my mates.

Men's Basketball Team Member

The second opportunity for reflection came after observing the level of alcohol that was being consumed during the discretionary recreation and leisure periods available once the sporting competition ceased each day. During these times the alcohol industry through its heavy marketing appeared to both influence the consumption patterns and behaviours of the participants. They would do this by constructing most of the entertainment spaces in which the participants would frequent, and this was because they knew that the sheer numbers of participants would be able to sustain audience levels in pubs and night clubs across the Gold Coast. This pre-constructed cultural discourse was where I believed that the rituals of the participants were being both learnt and reinforced.

Stocked up ready to play...I am so looking forward to having a few big nights with the team...Our team will win the gold medal and every drinking game this week because we have a reputation to uphold...

AFL Team member

Alcohol consumption during this discretionary/leisure period was a very profitable enterprise for the many business owners who opened their doors during the week- long event, with some regularly providing cheap alcoholic drinks, theme nights, popular music and competitions. It was a place in which participants seemed to be further connecting with each other, having fun, being playful and frivolous, making new friends and enjoying the company of their peers. There did appear however to be a dark side in which many participants were drinking alcohol to excessive levels which in turn increased the potential for accidents and assaults. It was not unusual on every night of the week- long event for support staff to be called to the police station because of the behaviours of some of the participants. Despite this some participants still interpreted these behaviours as fun.

The third observation was the alternative way in which the participants themselves had structured their discretionary time. These behaviours were seen predominantly amongst team sports participants, who appeared to be engaged in activities driven by a strong sense of symbolism that they had created and were organised around a range of different gatherings. During these activities the participants appeared to be consuming high levels of alcohol with consumption determined by an established set of rules and membership. It was a popular social performance repeated on a daily basis throughout the week-long event. I witnessed a number of these activities across a range of sports and observed participants being either rewarded or reprimanded for not adhering to the established rules. It appeared to be all in jest, but did have a serious side when it came to following the protocols laid out by the peer group from each sports team. Most of the reprimanding was playful for both the recipient and the onlookers. To an outsider, the participants appeared to be engaged in meaningless activities, which included the wearing of funny hats and other paraphernalia, as well as alcoholic challenges that required both physical and cognitive skills, including the use of motor skills, strength, flexibility and decision making.

The best part of the week for me is when we get to play with each other. I don't mean on the field, I mean what we do at night...We finish competing each day, the Gold Coast becomes, it's one big playground. I think I look forward to that more than playing my sport...The other night I starred in a play. There is no way I would have been able to do this unless everyone else was with me.

Women's Softball Team Member



As my reflections and interest grew, so did my desire to understand why these symbolic aspects of the event had become so meaningful to the participants, and in particular, how alcohol appeared to have become such a dominant feature. The nature of the event being sport, one might have assumed there may have been less alcohol being consumed, or even abstinence. Surprisingly this appeared not to be the case. I also recall the media were actively focusing on drinking amongst youth in the broader community at the time. Although I was interested in understanding the wider implications, my curiosity was drawn to the specific setting of the AUS Event. In appreciating that a much deeper analysis of the event was required, I began to listen to what other university colleagues had to say. I discovered a significant debate had already been underway over the role and use of alcohol, by team sports participants in particular. Most of my colleagues had also observed similar experiences to those that I had witnessed. Some viewed it as participants just being frivolous and creating their own fun by controlling and changing their environment to suit themselves. Alcohol was simply a mechanism for this to occur. Others were not so philosophical, believing the increased alcohol consumption was having a negative impact on the creditability of the AUS event. Wasn't the mission of AUS to Promote Health and Fitness? Some university colleagues felt the participants' behaviour was making a mockery of the purity of sport. Although a minority opinion, it still had a strong voice amongst the University peer group. There were also concerns about the potential for increasing violence, accidents and sexual abuse. I enquired more about the later statements and found there was limited data available to support these views, although many colleagues did present considerable anecdotal evidence. A quick review at the time revealed no formal studies had been undertaken on the AUS event. There had been some research into sport and alcohol use in professional sports, but nothing in the context of an Australian University-sanctioned event, and none that considered the behaviours in the context of adult play. As the debate continued, there were higher education institutions considering their ongoing participation in the AUS event. They agreed there was an increased escalation of risk to both the participants and to the reputation of their universities, arising from the inappropriate behaviour of some participants fuelled by alcohol.

In 2005, the AUS organisers began investigating a number of options to mitigate some of the risks. They began a review of their sponsorship arrangements with a major alcohol company and were considering extending the competition schedule into the evening to interrupt the social programs created by the participants. At the time universities were unable to continue to subsidise participant attendance at the games as the Federal Government had abolished the 'participant amenity fees', which up until then enabled some universities to subsidise

participation fees, coaching costs, uniforms and so on. This subsidy provided the opportunity for some universities to mandate certain behaviours of the participants. With the subsidy removed, students paid for the right to participate, arguably meaning they had broader expectations of the event than just participating in sport. For some, it became their annual holiday.

The debate around alcohol use was heightened following the alcohol-related death of a student. I witnessed what Cohen, Richardson and LaBree (1994) refer to as a moral panic, when alcohol use went from participants having fun, too it becoming a very contentious and central issue for the AUS Board and the general public. My own view at the time was one of sadness that a young man's life had been taken as a result of attending a sporting event in Melbourne Victoria. Without dismissing the seriousness of the fatality, I was driven by a desire to understand intoxication and drunkenness through a new focus. I felt it was not the time to follow the dominating focus on personal responsibility for alcohol use, but rather to better understand intoxication and drunkenness through a new focus. I wanted to know less about the study of alcohol as a disease, and more about its use within the social domain. In particular, how it was influencing the behaviour of participants at the AUS event, and why it had become so uniquely important to them during their recreation and leisure. It was also my intent from the beginning to collect evidence and document contestable facts and observations that may lead to further understanding the interface between the way in which the AUS event was constructed and how it was influenced and shaped by the participants.

Over the past seven years during which this study was planned, conducted and recorded, the AUS governing body has been attempting to find the best approach to ensuring the appropriate level of governance around this issue without interfering with the symbolic nature of the event, created by the participants themselves. It is these symbolic and complex issues, I argue in this thesis, that enable the event to engage more than 7000 participants. In my early observations I saw the use of alcohol by participants creating a new order, one that appeared to be self-regulated, spontaneous, pleasurable to them and indulgent. The term pleasurable within this context I describe as the non-compulsive and casual nature of the behaviour observed that appeared to be a strong motive for the presence of a kind of behaviour that resulted in a social experience that was a desirable outcome for the participants.

My personal view is that the liberal access to and use of alcohol at sport events as problematic. I believe that the misuse of alcohol at sporting events such as the one being studied has the potential to negatively impact the future of the event and the overall intention of the nature of sport itself. Alcohol use at an event such as the one under investigation is seen as either positive - essentially unproblematic, and a matter of personal choice; or sinful, unhealthy or even criminal, correctable only by prohibition, bans or rigid regulation. The thesis advances a more nuanced form of moral realism, which is informed by, the arguments presented as part of harm reduction approaches to drugs and alcohol. Conscious of my personal support of harm minimisation, the intention of this study is not to theorize about whether alcohol plays a negative or positive role in the AUS event, rather it is seeking to understand the way alcohol has become such a central part of the participants' narrative, to the extent they have continued to gather a collection of stories about their perception of the event and the role they have played in creating the culture of play.

In this study I take issue with the any perspective that sees alcohol use, especially the overconsumption of alcohol, as purely the result of individual psychological traits. Instead I argue that in the context of a University sporting event it is necessary to go beyond the psychological realm. As Gusfield (1981) purports, any ideas and consciousness of alcohol as a problem needs to involve both cognitive and moral dimensions. The cognitive side consists of our preconceived beliefs and the moral side about our own experiences. We form an opinion based on both our cognitive and moral judgements which results in viewing alcohol use as either undesirable or desirable. For this reason, it is necessary to understand its use as a broad social phenomenon shaped and influenced as a cultural practice, that incorporates government, the alcohol industry and the social environment. Drawing on the theories from the social, behavioural, political sciences and the sociology of sport and play, I will be able to bring the beliefs about reality to the surface. This will also help frame the scientific inquiry of this study so that it will advance the knowledge that is relevant to both the discipline and the profession.

I therefore support the notion that to gain an understanding of such socially laden behaviour one must take an inter-disciplinary approach and utilise an interpretative framework which is sensitive enough to assemble a range of data in a coherent way. This multi-disciplinary approach allows the investigation to encompass the way in which government may influence the nature and use of alcohol through the development of its policies including both supply and demand and the way in which it may shape the alcohol taxation system and ultimate the

behaviours of individuals. These political influences cannot be underestimated nor can the ongoing role of the alcohol companies in influencing and shaping the government agenda on alcohol use, and the way it manifests into social behaviours. To explore more fully these behaviours I will conceptualize the nature of sport, leisure, recreation and play as a way of taking a unique lens on the social behaviours of participants involved in the AUS event.

Sport is a collective activity that binds individuals together through a common set of goals. (Coakley 2009) which in turn establishes both the on and off field behaviours that influence the way in which individuals engage with one another. The collective cohesiveness experienced within a team sports environment I argue is a dynamic process that is held together by the pursuit of its goals (Paskevich, Estabrooks, Brawley and Carron, 2001). It is only maintained when players are united in a common purpose (Cashmore, 2002). Individual and group aspects of cohesion are based on the beliefs and perceptions of individual group members, including attraction to the group and its social cohesiveness (Jarvis, 2006). The more time players spend together on shared common interests outside their chosen sport, the stronger the cohesiveness. During this engagement I argue characteristics of play are created that test the boundaries of what is possible and acceptable to the participants. Expressed through drinking games, storytelling, initiations, competitions, and dressing up amongst other activities and in this context culturally distinguishes the groups and teams by creating a unique set of characteristics that create an identity that sets them apart (Eys et al., 2006).

This thesis explores how these characteristics of play are enacted, accepted and negotiated by the participants and how this helps to reduce the complexities of the world for a period of time, creating new frames that serve the narcissistic needs of individuals (Huizinga, 1955). I argue that in the context of the AUS sporting environment that drinking is at the core of the play experience providing an opportunity for creativity, fun and frivolity and that alcohol is a potent symbol of socialisation, (Lindsay, 2005) one that sees individuals drinking to fit in or be accepted and achieve a sense of intimacy and belonging (Hayes et al., 2004; Lindsay, 2005). I will argue that often these playful experiences absolve participants from any consequences, and that it provides them with a rare opportunity to play and consume alcohol without political and moral interference.

## **Rationale and Research Aims**

The study seeks to fill a gap in the scholarly field of alcohol research. It seeks to contribute to this field by identifying and exploring the connection between play and alcohol within a distinct setting, the AUS sporting event. When it comes to defining the term play, the study identifies there are few subjects that have had investigation by as many disciplines, each having different conclusions about the nature of its origin. The theoretical nature of play will therefore be conceptualised utilising a number of domains to help explain the subtle and complex differences that exists in defining the concept. This will provide a framework in which to understand the structural and symbolic elements of the setting this thesis is investigating and the consequential alcohol behaviours they create in the formation of play.

This setting, I argue, needs to be understood within the broader context of the higher education sporting sector. One of the potential implications of this study will be to open up a new way to examine why alcohol and team sport are so inextricably linked. The approach I develop seeks to do this by going beyond the pathological and moralistic realm to one that creates a different focus and lens for understanding its use within a specific sporting setting. By seeking a new understanding and perspectives on the use of alcohol within a specific environment, we may begin to develop an even deeper understanding of what drives different population groups to engage in excessive alcohol use.

In this thesis I set out to develop a picture of the level of alcohol consumed at the AUS event and to determine the perceived motives and consequential alcohol behaviours of the participants who attend. In chapter 5, I present a number of models in an attempt to explain the nature of alcohol use within the AUS setting. In chapter 7, I test these models using data collected from the participants to interpret their alcohol consumption patterns and motives for drinking. Finally, the data is further analysed using the elements of play theory (Erikson, 1985). This theory is important in determining whether the behaviours exhibited by the participants is in fact a form of play and to understand how it has become part of the narrative of the event.

I also aim to contribute to new knowledge by examining the complex organisational and symbolic elements that create the environment that is linked to the AUS event, by examining the influences that shape the way alcohol is used by university students and the value that they place on this behaviour and how this is subsequently acted out as a form of play. Using an interpretative approach to examine the data and observations, (Dewalt et.al 2002) and (Bryman

and Burgess 1994) I illustrate the validity of the argument that participants play behaviour is shaped by the environmental influences involving the consumption of alcohol.

### **Objectives of the study**

To this end, the study has two objectives: The first is to document the alcohol behaviour of participants who attend a major University Sporting Event and to determine to what extent the level of alcohol consumed influences their behaviour.

The second is to determine how the consumption of alcohol can create a culturally driven play experience that is both symbolically and organisationally organised. In resolving this problem, a unique model of play will be presented that I believe will enable a more systematic and empathic understanding of the behaviours of participants as characterized by their consumption of alcohol at the event.

By approaching the examination in this way, I seek to make a systematic and original research-based contribution that will help foster a new understanding of the culture and behaviours of people who organise, as well as those who attend specific events such as the AUS games. By understanding the role that alcohol plays in specific environments, such as sport, and expanding the way in which we view its use, a different perspective emerges which may influence the way the broader community interprets alcohol use within specific settings. By further understanding the desire for adults to play, we are able to problematize to the current literature and consequently disrupt the way in which we view alcohol use within a number of social settings.

As mentioned earlier, the topic of alcohol and young people, particularly within the higher education setting, has been studied predominately through a health and pathology lens. Research has focused on the negative consequences and has created decades of statistics examining alcohol and crime rates, fatalities, violence and other social dysfunctions. Although this approach has been significant for reinforcing the need for services, programs, and influencing government policy, it has done little to expand our understanding of what may lie behind the motivation to consume alcohol in different social settings and how it has come to be so inextricably linked to our leisure experience. This continued focus on the pathological, psychological, physiological and social implications of the misuse of alcohol remains important, but we need to move beyond this approach to more fully understand what shapes drinking behaviour within different settings and why, as adults, we have a strong desire to play.

It is not the intention of this thesis to engage in debate about the rights and wrongs of alcohol use, nor is it to investigate the psychological and physiological consequences of its use/abuse. Rather it is to use a different lens to come to new insights and understandings about youth and alcohol consumption which can make a contribution to policy and practice in university sports settings. The analysis presented is conceived of as demonstrating the greater explanatory usefulness of the use of social sciences in particular how the theories of play, sport and recreation can be considered as a means of further understanding behaviours. Although these theories cannot account for the cause of all behaviours observed at the event. They do provide an explanatory way in which to analysis the data collected and test this to construct arguments that support the notion that alcohol is contributing to the formation of play.

### **Thesis Overview**

By way of summarising the structure of this thesis, each chapter is designed to provide an understanding of the various issues shaping the way alcohol is used within a particular setting. The sequential way the thesis is presented begins with a broader analysis of the history of alcohol use within Australia and how it has been given symbolic meaning that has become part of the narrative and political landscape of Australia. A number of theoretical models are then presented as a way of interpreting the alcohol behaviours within a particular university sporting setting. These models explore the use of play theory to provide an alternative way of understanding the behaviours of those who attend the event. Each chapter is designed to contribute to the overall outcome of the thesis.

The following chapter examines the inextricable link alcohol has with the dominant Australian cultural paradigm. One which Australian society has engaged in since colonization. The way it is infused in Australian culture are examined, including an in-depth investigation of the landscape of alcohol consumption and the way in which it is still embedded in the social fabric of Australia today. Given the diverse nature of the subject at hand, this chapter will examine the social, historical, economic, governmental and cultural aspects, which are shaping alcohol consumption amongst young people. It will examine a new frame of drunkenness amongst popular youth culture referred to as “binge drinking”. A major focus of this chapter will be the use of alcohol by students within the higher education sector, both within Australia and internationally, and will be the central theme establishing that alcohol is a major contributor to the culture that exists within this setting.

Chapter Three examines the 'Politics' of alcohol. I explore the role of both the Australian state and federal governments in shaping supply and demand of alcohol through policies and regulations. The chapter also discusses the impact of a deregulated market on supply and demand and the inherent paradox of alcohol taxation, which is both complicated and fragmented. It also addresses the tensions and role of the alcohol industry in shaping youth alcohol consumption, and the methods used by the industry to influence the leisure space of young people. Finally, it will examine the specific population of sport as evidence for demonstrating why sports sponsorship has been inextricably linked with alcohol. This is particularly relevant given the setting being researched.

Chapter Four begins to explore more fully the notion of how play can become part of the narrative of the AUS event. It defines individual experiences by examining the concepts of sport, leisure and recreation before presenting an in-depth analysis of play. This investigation, which incorporates the works of (Huizinga 1955) and (Sutton-Smith 1997), begins to explore the nature and conditions in which play may exist at the event. It is at this juncture we can begin to identify how recreation, leisure and play form part of the event, and how participants choose to pursue various activities, including consumption of alcohol. Through this exploration we begin to understand the formation of adult play and how it contributes to the overall experience of the participants who attend the event.

Chapter Five presents a number of theoretical models incorporating the use of Integral Theory (Wilber 2000), which I argue provides a method for interpreting the complexities of play. This comprehensive and nuanced description enables a more detailed explanation for how play is constructed at the AUS event. There are a number of elements presented which describe the totality of the play experience as being dynamic and interconnected in nature. The first examines the symbolic and organisational determinants that give meaning to the event. The second is the way in which alcohol can become bound to the historical, cognitive and situational narrative of the event. Both contextually bind the participants' peer group and contribute to a culture of drinking at the event.

Chapter Six outlines the design of the study and positions it within an epistemological and methodological framework that provides an explanation and justification for the methods and approaches used to investigate the thesis questions. The focus of the epistemology lies in the realm of Constructionism and presents a theoretical perspective that aligns to Symbolic Interactionism. The research design outlined will explain the different methods used in this



thesis, including online surveys, interviews and personal observations. This mixed-methods approach utilises both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies allowing for both objective and subjective elements to be analysed. The research design begins with the use of quantitative means before incorporating qualitative methods, including interviews and observations. The ethical issues related to the research design, and the steps taken by the researcher to address these, form part of this chapter.

Chapter Seven examines the quantitative data from both the pre and post-online surveys that were completed by the participants. An analysis of these data sets provides a clear indication of the level of drinking behaviour of the participants and how these patterns have changed as a result of attending the AUS event. It will incorporate a review of the historical, situational and cognitive expectancy as a method of examining and interpreting the environmental influencers. Consumption rates will also be presented and examined by sport and gender.

Chapter Eight provides an analysis of both the interviews and observations from the participants. Using the theoretical model presented in Chapter Five, the observations and interviews are analysed through a lens of play. This approach captures the way the historical narrative of the sports team has contributed to the behaviours observed, and the way these behaviours have become expected, which is then translated into the creation of play for both the spectator and the participants engaged in the play activity. A framework will be presented that shows the formation of the play experience and how this is reinforced and strengthened.

Chapter Nine revisits the research problem and attempts to assess the theoretical contribution this study makes to our understanding of alcohol behaviours and the experience of play within a specific population. A discussion of the implications of the research findings will be presented with emphasis on the conditions in which alcohol is culturally embedded within a setting through symbolic and organisational constructs; the way in which alcohol is used to create an environment of play; the implications of the findings on future research.

The concluding chapter, Chapter Ten outlines the main conclusions of the study. I return to the research problem and discuss a response based upon the study findings, outline the theoretical contributions and suggest possible future research.

## Summary

In this introductory chapter I have provided an overview of the study upon which this thesis is based. The problem this thesis seeks to determine is the way alcohol consumption is given symbolic meaning by the participants who attend a university sporting event and to investigate if their behaviour can be defined as a form of play. By examining the role alcohol plays in specific environments such as sport and expanding the way in which we view its use, a different perspective can begin to emerge. Examining the behaviour of participants through a lens of play will add uniqueness to the current literature and disrupt the way in which we are viewing its use within a number of social settings.

In the subsequent chapter, I begin to examine the complex nature of alcohol use within the Australian context. In particular, how alcohol has become such an integral part of the culture of Australian society. I start by examining the relationship that Australia has with alcohol and present the beginnings of a new culture of intoxication being experienced by many young people. This culture has been influenced by the gendering of consumption through the sophisticated involvement of the alcohol industry. It will explain how this has occurred and is framing a new form of drunkenness amongst popular youth culture referred to, as “binge drinking”. A major element of this chapter will be an intellectual focus on the use of alcohol by students within the higher education sector both within Australia and internationally.

I begin by examining the relationship between Australia’s early history and alcohol consumption. It is not possible to address the research question without an understanding and investigation of how Australian history has been shaped by alcohol use, and the role it has played in popular culture.

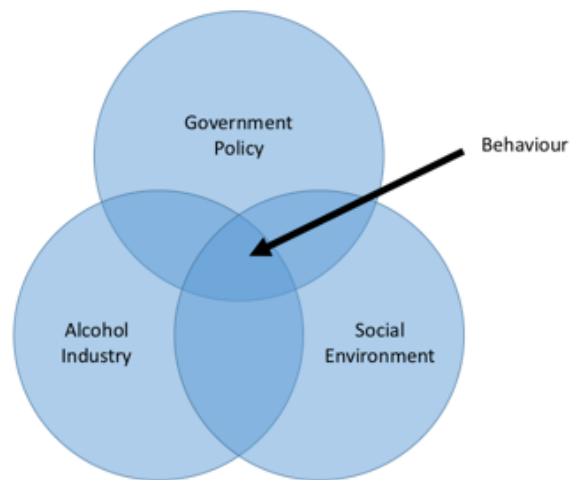
## **Chapter 2 - Perspectives on Alcohol Use**

### **Introduction**

As mentioned previously to understand the complex nature of alcohol use it is necessary to go beyond the pharmacological and physiological effects. The consumption of alcohol, I argue, cannot be reduced to the chemistry or psychology of individuals who use it, but rather it is important to understand it as a social phenomenon shaped as a cultural practice. To date much of the literature on the topic of youth alcohol consumption has been empirically based which in turn has influenced government policy and harm minimisation strategies. What the literature has failed to achieve is take a different lens on the issue so that the discussion can go beyond the current ways in which we interpret its use. This includes being more critical about the role of the alcohol industry in shaping the cultural discourse that embeds and reinforces alcohol behaviours. I will also argue that the existing legislative framework has been developed to accommodate the alcohol industry, providing commercial opportunities to promote its use as a desirable feature of a successful and fun filled life. Its link to sport, in particular, also deserves particular scrutiny and will be discussed later in the chapter. I will begin to examine the literature from an historical perspective within the Australian context.

The following two chapters will incorporate a review of relevant literature to help explain how government policy, the alcohol industry and the social environments interact to shape the way alcohol behaviour is influenced. (see figure 2.1) The intersection of these three domains will form the basis of the development of a model which will be presented in chapter 5. The model will demonstrate how alcohol behaviours of participants who attend the AUS event are influenced by both symbolic and organisational elements.

## Spheres of Influence- Alcohol Behaviours Amongst Young People



**Figure 2.1 Spheres of Influence- Alcohol Behaviours amongst Young People**

I begin by investigating alcohol use by early white settlers in Australia, and will consider how the drinking culture of this era was shaped. I will address a number of themes: that the culture of alcohol currently being experienced amongst youth is just a new type of drunkenness; that the consumption patterns of alcohol users are inextricably linked to the economic and social influences associated with any given point in our history; that the current examination of drunkenness referred to as binge drinking, or drinking to get drunk, are terms used to describe the changing nature of drinking amongst today's popular youth culture. Finally, in this chapter I will examine alcohol consumption within the university sport setting. In order to understand the historical antecedents of alcohol consumption, I now turn to examine the relationship between Australia's early history and alcohol consumption.

### **Social Environments**

#### *Australia and Its Relationship with Alcohol*

Since its establishment as a penal colony in 1788, the use of alcohol has been part of how Australia celebrates and commiserates: births, deaths, marriages, sporting wins and losses, retirement and other life events. Social historians Lewis (1992), Butlin (1983) and Powell (1988a) have consistently argued that since colonisation white Australian culture has been influenced by excessive consumption of alcohol. Similarly, Conway (1985) claims that from the very outset, the first Australians' dominant desire was to soften the environment which they

had found themselves in rather than respond to its many challenges. The consequence, according to Lewis (1992), resulted in a complex phenomenon where alcohol had many cultural meanings and uses. “Historically, it has been used as a beverage, a food, a medicine and a psychoactive drug. It may be consumed as a sacrament, a toast, a fortifier, a sedative, a thirst-quencher, and a symbol; of sophistication” (Lewis, 1992, pp 231). In fact, Powell (1988a, p. 403), argued that, “No people on the face of the earth ever absorbed more alcohol per head of population”. It is estimated that by the 1830s, each inhabitant of the colony of New South Wales consumed 13.6 litres of pure alcohol each year (National Drug Strategy, 2001). Whilst Lewis (1992) claims the consumption patterns were just transplanted from early settlers’ Irish and English drinking cultures.

The most popular source of alcohol during this period was rum. It was so valued during colonization that it was used as a form of currency, exchanged for those who undertook labour. Australia’s alcohol historians Fitzgerald and Hearn (1988) argued that the scarcity of water also contributed to the value of alcohol/rum, as it was a relatively non-perishable form of currency. Such was the power of alcohol at the time, and in particular rum, that in 1808 Governor Captain Bligh attempted to cut the supply of rum in order to curtail and mandate consumption, and to stop it being used as a form of currency. It was this strategy that led to the first and only civil war in Australia’s history, known as “The Rum Rebellion” (Fitzgerald and Hearn, 1988). Whether alcohol consumption was shaped by the harsh environment of the day or lack of alternative leisure pursuits, or was already culturally embedded, is not really pertinent to this research. What is important is the way it continued to shape Australian culture and the norms of social behaviour.

Save for a small increase during the economic boom of the gold rush era of the 1850s, alcohol consumption exhibited a downward trend through the rest of the nineteenth century. Overall consumption in New South Wales dropped from eight litres per capita in 1851-1860 to just over four litres in 1891-1900 (Lewis, 1992; Powell, 1988a). By World War I (1914-1918) and the Great Depression (1929-1939), overall alcohol consumption rates had fallen to their lowest since the earliest white settlement (1788-1850). From the 1800s to the mid-1900s, consumption of alcohol in Australia was predominantly a male pursuit and it paved the way for an array of male cultural rituals that continue to this day. Various terms from this period in time included “shouting”, or sharing payment for drinks, and the term “work or bust”. It was an era (1788-1850) in Australia’s history when the use of excessive alcohol was a symbol of mateship and social solidarity. According to Dingle (1980), this well documented tradition of ‘work and bust’

and 'knocking down the cheque' is one of the neglected consequences of the 'tyranny of distance', often resulting in long spells of continuous drinking. This drinking behaviour did not show up within any collected drinking data patterns, but in today's terms this would have been measured in terms of the rate of "binge drinking". These early times in Australian history were also periods of difficulty for those who did not to drink alcohol. Those who abstained from drinking were termed "wowsers" and were not trusted by friends and work associates (Sargent, 1973). They were therefore omitted from the storytelling that went alongside the drinking and must have led to them struggling to connect and belong to their fellow workmates and peers. Many of these stories, to which they were not privy themselves, would go on to become the unwritten, expected behaviours that sustained an embedded culture of drinking (Sargent, 1973).

The early 1900s saw government regulators intervening by introducing mandatory closure of hotels in an attempt to manage the unruly drinking habits. A 6 pm closing time was introduced in 1915 in South Australia, and then in other states in 1916, as a way of curtailing alcohol consumption during World War 1. It was during this mandatory closing time that the "six o'clock swill" began. Knowing closing time was an hour away, men would race to drink as much as possible in the limited time available. By the 1950s, hotels were remaining open until 10 pm. Economic prosperity saw consumption levels rise until a peak in the late 1970s of 9.59 litres of pure alcohol per capita (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2000). This period witnessed a dramatic change in the type of alcohol consumed, with beer consumption reaching its peak in the late 1970s at 140 litres per capita. By 1999 this had dropped to 93 litres (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2000, p. 8). Wine largely replaced beer drinking, with wine consumption increasing either three-fold (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2000, p. 8) or four-fold (Selvanathan and Selvanathan, 2004).

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012) reported 183.5 million litres of alcohol was produced in 2012-2013, consumption patterns in these two years showed 41.2% beer, 37.8% wine and 12.6% spirits and 6.8% (ready to drink) RTD. These figures demonstrate that in Australia 10.5 litres of pure alcohol are consumed annually per person. In comparison 13.6 litres was consumed during the period of early settlement in Australia. The overall consumption of alcohol steadily declined through the late 1980s-early/mid 1990s, but the way in which we drink changed. Selvanathan and Selvanathan (2004), Dingle (1980) and Room (1988), noted that assigning specific causes to drinking trends is fraught with difficulty and can only be, at best, speculative.

Notwithstanding, there are key events in Australia's history which can go somewhat toward explaining Australian consumption habits changing. Commonly noted in the literature is the fact that alcohol consumption trends generally follow economic movements; relative wealth increases generally correlate with increased consumption and vice versa. Drinking increased in times of economic prosperity, as evidenced in the 1830s, 1850s, 1870s, 1880s, 1950s and 1960s, and slumped in periods of economic depression – the 1840s, 1890s, 1930s, 1980s (Dingle, 1980). It would be overly reductive to explain alcohol consumption in terms of economic indicators alone. Aggregate patterns of consumption not only reflect economically determined individual propensities to drink, but embody culturally derived “collective understandings” (Lewis, 1992, p. 14), citing Makela, Room, Single, Sulkunen, and Walsh (1981, p. 28). Alcohol consumption may also be explained as an inherently social and situational practice, an integral part of the process of socialisation, particularly amongst young people (Lindsay, 2005). The elevation of peer importance in modern times may hold the answers to the changing nature of alcohol consumption amongst young people (Lindsay, 2005). This view is also shared by Hayes, Smart, Toumbourou and Sanson (2004), who suggest the peer group exerts significant influence and young people drink to fit in, or be accepted and achieve a sense of intimacy and belonging. The desire to create this environment is associated with terms such as binge drinking or drinking to get drunk.

#### *A New Culture of Intoxication*

In Australia, risky drinking or binge drinking has been described by the National Health and Medical Research Council (2009) as consuming as many as five or more drinks in a row, or seven to ten drinks for men and five to six drinks for women on any day. It is commonplace to refer to this as “loading” and is the act of speed drinking at the beginning of a night out. This phenomenon is what is now referred to as binge/risky drinking or drinking to get drunk (Lindsay et al., 2008). Kypri, Bell, Hay, and Baxter (2008) take a more critical position when they argue that binge/risky drinking is a consumption of 60 grams of ethanol in at least one episode in the last 30 days, noting that the base in alcohol is the poison ethanol. According to Ann Roche (2009), an Australian Public Health researcher, and her colleagues, young people in Australia aged 20-29 show the riskiest drinking profiles, with 60 percent of this cohort drinking at risky levels (binge drinking), with males preferring to consume beer and females, wine. Females aged U/20 years are more likely to consume premixed drinks (RTD) and spirits. (Roche, Bywood, Freeman, Pidd, Borlagdan, J. and Trifonoff, 2009). The question is why has the nature of the drinking patterns continued to change, especially amongst young people, when the overall consumption patterns across the general population is declining within Australia?

The answer may lie in how the social context inhabited by many young people has changed. This may be reflected in the patterns and level of alcohol consumption that are now being witnessed (Lindsay, 2005) and Griffith, et al. (2009b). Changes such as the advent of the “night-time economy” refer to the rapid development of inner cities, the creation of entertainment precincts and the substantial increase in the number of pubs, clubs and restaurants (Hayward and Hobbs, 2007) have altered the leisure time frames for young people. This new culture, according to Kelly, Advocat, Harrison and Hickey (2011) and Hubbard (2013) and Griffith et al. (2009b) has been ushered in by social changes including: the normalisation of illicit drug use; the transformation of the alcohol industry to respond and compete with psychoactive drug use; the commodification of alcohol and sessional consumption, including the changing types of drinks and the way they are marketed as lifestyle makers; the increase in the strength of alcohol-based drinks and the changing styles of venues, such as from traditional pub culture to vertical drinking in bars and clubs. They claim all these influences are contributing factors to a new culture of intoxication. (Hernandez, Leontini, and Harley, K. 2013).

For young people, in particular, alcohol is seen as being integral to their maturation and recreation (Makkai, 1997). Accordingly, drinking in Australia is socially structured, culturally defined, environmentally influenced, (Griffin, Bengry-Howell, Hackley, Mistral and Szmigin, 2009b) As well as being the result of individual risk factors (such as family situations, socioeconomic status, psychological state and so on (Whelan, 1999). Schulenberg and Maggs (2002) on the other hand, argue that conceptual models relating to developmental transitions in young people are possible reasons for the changes in drinking patterns amongst young people. Of particular interest is the Overload Model, which takes the view that when a young person is experiencing multiple developmental transitions over a short time span, they may have difficulty in coping and turn to alternative mechanisms such as alcohol to mask the challenges. For example, when a young person commences university, moves away from home and begins to reside in university accommodation, he/she will need to establish a new peer group and develop a status as a university participant. Just how they deal with this challenge, according to Schulenberg and Maggs (2002), is dependent upon a range of personal attributes and skill sets, resulting in some embracing the challenge and building on their coping mechanisms, and others needing to turn to coping mechanisms such as alcohol. This point raises the challenge that many young people face when their individual characteristics and their ability to understand and adapt to a new environment don't match. Social practices, such as drinking, can be difficult to manage. This is particularly evident when young people are attempting to fit into a group where norms may already be established.



Other reasons cited include physical changes that occur during this stage of a young person's life. Spear (2002) claims that in adolescence the physical attributes of young people are heightened and they often attain full adult height and reproductive capabilities. These changes can elevate sexual relationships and a tolerance for undertaking risky pursuits (Spear, 2002). Physical functioning is also developing, making it possible for some to cope with an increase in the physical consequences of excessive drinking. This new sense of adulthood and a perceived lack of a cultural rite of passage create a desire for them to self-determine the behaviours and risks they choose to undertake. The choice to drink to excess among many young people is simply viewed as a desired privilege of adulthood (Schulenberg et al. 2002; Schulenberg, O'Malley, Bachman, Wadsworth and Johnston 1996). Interestingly, Kelly et al. (2011) shed further light on the ritual process by suggesting it is often only understood as youth creating a public nuisance requiring intervention, rather than appreciating that these drinking behaviours are often linked to various symbolic meanings. These symbolic meanings can be best understood, according to Beccaria and Sande (2003), through ritual, separation, liminal and aggregation phases, which had previously been identified by Van Gennep (1960).

Each phase is an important part of a perceived rite of passage in understanding consumption patterns of young people. The first phase could be described as a separation from personal identity, social structure and social categories, enabling a transition into the liminal phase where games are played and rituals formed that are outside the normal order of society, and finally into the aggregated phase where new identities and status are formed. Drawing on this theme, Kelly et al. (2011) argue that the process of intoxication itself creates the rite of passage that makes way for individuals to discover and develop new cultural codes, meanings and values, because during the process of intoxication, young people are provided with an opportunity to experience close friendships and belongingness, and to momentarily create a different social order. Herring, Berridge and Thorn (2008); Tutenges et al. (2009); Waitt, Jessop and Gorman-Murray et al. (2011) and Leontini, Schofield, Brown., Hepworth and Germov (2015)

There is also evidence that this rite of passage is beginning much earlier in the adolescent lifecycle and at riskier levels than previous cohorts (Desousa, Murphy, Roberts and Anderson, 2008). Research conducted by the Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation Ltd. (2007) found that approximately one in five of the drinkers surveyed had consumed their first drink aged thirteen or younger. Overall price, availability, taste and image appear to be contributing to this behaviour and drinking culture. The interplay between these factors and other variables, such as attitude, cultural norms among peers, expectancies and context, are all

playing a role in shaping drinking behaviour in young people. McCreanor et al. (2008) support the significance of cultural norms in identity formation when they argue alcohol companies use an inordinate amount of marketing resources to tap into this rite of passage concept and therefore can have an influence on shaping the drinking behaviour of young people. These marketing messages can include the images that are used to promote alcohol, creating a type of expectancy of behaviour: the sweet taste of some mixed drinks that they argue are purposefully targeted at young people; the availability, including price and the way in which it is inclusive of both genders, that has played a role in influencing the drinking behaviours of young people (Kelly et al., 2011). In particular, this is evident when considering the changes in drinking behaviours of young females.

### *The Gendering of Alcohol*

Although long thought of as male activity, drinking to risky levels is also a pattern of behaviour now seen amongst young women. Research into Australian women aged 18-23 years found that the level of consumption and frequency of intoxication. (Roche and Deehan, 2002; Stanley, 2008) and Hutton, Wright and Saunders, 2013). The emergence of drinking amongst young women may be explained by the changes in the way males and females socially engage particularly in the western world. This together with social and financial emancipation, have led to shifts in alcohol practices of women. (Hutton et al. 2013)

Australian Public Health researchers such as Roche and Deehan (2002) have also shown that nightlife participation and drinking venues where considerable drinking takes place now accept young women as the norm. The design of venues has created a much more conducive environment in which women feel welcome. The most obvious change is in venues, which arguably have feminised their drinking spaces. Once the domain of males, drinking establishments have become much more engaged with the female population, resulting in an increased number of women consuming alcohol at the same risky levels as males (Roche and Deehan, 2002). The feminisation of nightclubs, access to new communication technologies, including mobile phones and Apps, and the shift from pubs to nightclubs and hybrid venues has all contributed to the current drinking culture and the rapidly changing drinking behaviours amongst our youth (Lindsay, 2006). This is also the case now in a wide range of cultures where alcohol consumption was seemingly regarded as the stuff of men, not women, and drinking a mark of masculinity, not femininity. Currently, on any given night of the week, in fashionable urban venues around the world, there are many women drinking alcohol and it has become an important part of women's social worlds (Killingsworth, 2006). Similarly, Stanley (2008)

believes the changes in young women's drinking patterns might be part of them simply taking advantage of more opportunities and embracing that they are accepted into what was traditionally a male domain.

The sophisticated marketing strategies of the alcohol industry may have also significantly influenced female drinking patterns, but the question still to be answered is why so many young women have decided to drink like their male counterparts rather than create their own patterns of behaviour. The answer may lie in how male and female groups interact within different settings. This will be discussed later in the research. The branding and design of the alcohol products themselves has taken on an increased level of importance as liquor companies create clever labels and designer drinks targeted at young women. These types of drinks typically have high volumes of alcohol with a sweeter taste and are referred to as Alco pops (a portmanteau of alcohol and pop) (Lindsay, 2005). These ready to drink (RTD) products typically incorporate sweet flavours with white spirits and bright colours to attract young female consumers (Roche et al., 2009).

For Atkinson, Elliott, Bellis and Sumnall (2011), alcohol is often represented in magazines as highly gendered in nature. Specific alcoholic drinks appear to hold symbolic meaning; in that some are portrayed as more masculine or feminine than others. In female-targeted magazines, drinking is portrayed as glamorous in the context of celebrity, yet at the same time the consumption of alcohol is depicted as harmful to stereotypical feminine ideals such as beauty, appearance and women's role as mothers. In men's magazines, female drinkers are often portrayed as unfeminine (e.g. 'ladettes'), vulnerable and emotional, and as individuals engaging in sexual activity when drunk. For men, however, the consumption of alcohol, particularly beer within the pub context, was presented as a key aspect of masculine identity.

## **Policy**

### *The Alcoholic Economy and the Sophistication of the Alcohol Companies*

I argue that the existing legislative framework has been developed to accommodate the alcohol industry, providing commercial opportunities to promote alcohol use as a desirable feature of a successful life. This a view supported by McCreanor, Casswell, and Hill (2000) and McCreanor et al. (2008) who also believe that the alcohol industry is in a campaign to capture the hearts and minds of alcohol researchers and public health people, and they continue to play a part in shaping alcohol policy at a state and national governmental level. Driven by the imperative for

sales and profit (which is often a fundamental conflict with the public health agenda of reducing hazardous drinking and alcohol-related harms), this is a tension that cannot be argued away (Miller et al., 2009).

I argue that the power of these companies, through their multi-faceted commercial mediums, continues to influence the leisure space of young people through sophisticated consumer marketing, media and advertising mechanisms, a view also shared by Wheaton (2007). As young people attempt to understand themselves and connect with the world around them, complex advertising messages are consistently repositioning their lives towards a socially driven economy. A leisure market that convinces young audiences that the purchase of a product such as alcohol, will fulfil a perceived need to be playful and have fun. It is argued that leisure may no longer be a self-determined activity, rather it has become increasingly manipulated by market forces. McDonald, Wearing, and Ponting (2007) support this notion, believing that the alcohol industry is narrowing the potential for young people to broaden the way in which they explore their leisure options. This once traditional environment for self-exploration and identity, is now being driven by consumerism, fostering self-indulgence in the pursuit of pleasure and narcissistic behaviours.

As Bauman (2005) and Smith (2013) claim, modern societies are being manipulated by the increasingly organized consumption of goods and leisure and this is especially evidenced in the role that the alcohol industry plays. As these market forces continue to influence the habits, individualism and social interaction of young people, it is creating what Smith (2013) refers to as “Liquid Friendships”, where young people bond together through shared experiences using alcohol. Linking this manipulative commercialization of leisure time suggests the alcohol industry has tapped into this unique space that was once self-determining. On an annual basis, the alcohol industry is currently spending billions of dollars globally on marketing alcohol to youth. The social connectivity and sense of belonging that is achieved through the use of alcohol is mounting to a new cultural wave of intoxication which young people choose as their preferred tool to socialise (Measham and Ostergaard, 2009). According to Measham and Ostergaard (2009) the alcohol industry is always repositioning itself to compete within the new “Night Economy” and weekend leisure market. New types of drinks, or buzz drinks, are emerging into the market constantly, containing stimulants such as caffeine and guarana. In 2000 the strength of products such as wine changed to appeal to different niches, a form of manipulation of youth leisure which Measham and Ostergaard (2009) claim has been ruthless and extremely targeted.

The Australian Federal Government supported the introduction of the alcohol industry lead organisation DrinkWise, formed in 2005. Their role included running alcohol awareness campaigns and the provision of advice to government on alcohol policy directions. DrinkWise is an independent, not-for-profit organisation whose activities are governed by a Constitution, and Board consisting of six community representatives (drawn from health, legal, communications and public policy fields) as well as six industry representatives. The organisation was established after 18 months of consultations between leaders of the beer, wine and spirits industries, and hotels and liquor stores. Foster's is one of three founding sponsors. Since its inception, it has been continually criticised by academics and health professionals who claim it is ludicrous to use people who are deriving profits from the sale of alcohol as part of the education and awareness campaign (Sharp, 2009). This view is also shared by the National Preventative Health Taskforce (2008) and Miller et al. (2009)

The effectiveness and success of DrinkWise, according to Hall and Room (2006), can only be measured by demonstrated supportive evidence that they have influenced the government to increase taxes on cask wines, and that they have directly supported the introduction of tougher penalties against hoteliers who breached Responsible Service of Alcohol (RSA) and of outlet density regulations. However, there is a definite conflict of interest when involving the alcohol industry in the development of policies or guidelines on alcohol use. The current deregulation and liberalisation of alcohol licensing laws and sales contribute to the drinking frequency, volume and styles amongst young adults. Thus, paradoxically, government and regulatory institutions contribute to the 'problem' of excessive alcohol use. (Bacchi 2015) and (Borlagdan et al. 2010)

The polarised view on whether the alcohol industry should be involved in assisting government with alcohol policy and strategies is to be expected, according to Baggot (2006). The adversarial world of alcohol politics and partnership with industry creates substantial tension. I strongly support the notion that this tension will increase until such policies clearly outline what role alcohol companies need to play in combating the problems associated with the misuse of alcohol, rather than the current practise of engaging them in policy associated with supply and demand. Baggot (2006) supports this notion arguing that caution needs to be exercised around whatever role the industry should play, he supports the industry focusing on changing their marketing practices and product development, rather than advising on government policy. There is no indication, as yet, that supports alcohol industry preparedness to change their

product development, although they have contributed significant funds to social campaigns that are yet to be measured (Baggot, 2006).

I believe that although the alcohol industry has the power to alter its product development, they choose not to, and this is one of the main reasons why the critics have such a strong argument against their involvement in government policy. One of the restrictions to industry addressing this issue is they are not a homogenous group. The alcohol industry has a free trade attitude where one company may be driven by pride and professionalism of products, whilst others may not (Grant and O'Conner, 2005). Although the product appears to have a common form to the consumer, Baggot (2006) claims this is not the case when it comes to influencing alcohol use. A further challenge faced by the alcohol industry, is the tendency for them to criticize each other over the problem of alcohol misuse. For example, the producer blames poor retail practices, whilst the hotel landlords blame the off licenses for selling cheap alcohol and the off licences see risky drinking as chiefly a “problem for pubs and clubs” (Baggot, 2006). The industry is not homogenous and this is making it difficult to challenge the issue of risky alcohol abuse with any degree of collectiveness. Government policy must therefore spell out clearly their expectations of the alcohol industry as a whole in order to address the current faced by our community.

As the debate continues, Nixon (1998) notes the social terrain young people navigate is continuing to be influenced consistently by mass production and commercialization of product messages, these messages often promoting the use of alcohol as a major source of leisure enjoyment. Over the last decade, the focus has been on the association between leisure and alcohol consumption, but we need to investigate further its interrelationship (Kunz, 1997), particularly because it has been observed that no other substance has been integrated more into our social fabric than alcohol (Akers and Lee, 1996). One such environment is within the university sector. This environment according to Chatterton (1999) sees traditional student spaces such as housing and pubs nurturing and perpetuating specific student dispositions that set them apart from the non-student world. This traditional student life often extends beyond the formal university environment into the wider city. It is here that students play a significant role in sustaining audience levels in pubs, cafes and night clubs and is an environment which is heavily marketed by the alcohol industry.

## Behaviours

### *University Students and their Relationship with Alcohol*

Learning the rules of the student's relationships with alcohol is mediated through rituals that many first year students are introduced to in their first week of university. In fact, within the space of a few weeks or months of leaving school, many young people are granted legal permission to drink, drive, vote and enrol in university. According to Roche and Watt (1999), there are few other major life landmarks that cluster together within such a relatively short space of time. The transition into university often requires change in every domain of a young person's life and it is believed risky drinking habits increase during this period. According to O'Brien and Kypri (2008) and Andersson, Sadgrove and Valentine (2012), alcohol misuse during these years is the leading cause of mortality and morbidity, and is ranked alongside smoking in terms of disability-adjusted years. During this phase, young people do not generally understand the potential impacts of their use of alcohol and have been reported as believing excessive unhealthy drinking will have little impact on their roles in either university or employment. This is despite risky drinking often being associated with life-changing consequences that may have adverse effects on the individual and the family, friends and the wider community. (Babor et al., 1992)

Risks and harm associated with risky drinking can range from verbal and physical abuse to serious life-threatening accidents. (Roche, Pidd, Berry and Harrison, 2008; Kypros, Paschall, Langley, Baxter and Bourdeau, 2010) Participants who partake in risky drinking are more likely to engage in unplanned and unsafe sex, and experience health-related problems including hangovers and blackouts. (Wechsler and Isaac, 1992) University administrators in Australia have traditionally either ignored or have been ambivalent towards participant drinking behaviours. Jessor and Jessor (1975) argue that universities view alcohol consumption as a rite of passage and conclude that, if left alone, participants will pass through this phase of their lives without harm or injury. Furthermore, Freidman, Meyers, and Gaughan (1975) also found it is accepted this cohort often behave in an unconventional manner which may be viewed as deviant by others. According to Bourdieu and Passeron, (1979) these behaviours are part of the wider process of socialisation into a particular way of life. They are learnt from friends, siblings and even parents who have experienced student life and are just passing it on.

This is a view shared by Presley, Meilman, and Leichliter (2002), who also believed that university students are at a higher risk of problematic alcohol consumption than peers who do

not attend university. They believe it may be due, in part, to some of the deep-rooted cultures that are often associated with alcohol in many of the university clubs and societies. Therefore, the need to belong to these groups requires actively engaging in alcohol use. Research is now necessary to examine the factors, unique to the university college population, that contribute to these patterns of behaviour. (Dowdall and Wechsler, 2002) This view is also supported by Faulkner, Hendry, Roderique and Thomson, 2006 and O'Malley and Johnston, (2002), who discovered university environments are instrumental in contributing to increasing risky alcohol consumption. Presley et al. (2002) argue that the college environment, rather than individual participant characteristics, influences drinking, although research supporting this view surprisingly remains scant. On the other hand, Chatterton (1999) argues that alcohol industry also plays a role by offering products and placing advertisements in student magazines and in orientation packs all with an aim of enticing customer loyalty. This activity he believes often begins during the student orientation which is a significant component of the learning process. This learned behaviour is then extended into first years asking second years where to go to meet people. According to Chatterton (1999) it is here that the alcohol industry focuses its attention on creating different segments in which to meet the student's changing needs.

The drink-related sports culture can be seen in the long-standing phenomenon of sports-related initiation ceremonies, or 'hazing', as they are known in North America. In a US national survey, Hoover (1999) investigated the incidence of athletic hazing within collegiate-level sports and found that, of the 325,000 athletes who participated in the study, over a quarter of a million had experienced some form of hazing as part of the process of joining a team; significantly over half had been required to participate in drinking contests or alcohol-related hazing. A study of athletes at a British university found initiation ceremonies have become normalized within sports clubs at the university and ceremonies were common among both male and female athletes. Although initiation ceremonies were, in some respects, gendered (for example, men's initiations more frequently involved nakedness, drinking urine, physical abuse and encouraging novices to vomit on one another), ceremonies for both males and females tended to involve the excessive consumption of alcohol. (King, 2000a)

Among the first researchers to investigate alcohol-related problems within the university sector were Straus and Bacon (1953). They reported that alcohol consumption on college campuses in the United States of America (USA) was a very serious problem. Their extensive research is regarded as having been significant in creating a better understanding of alcohol issues within colleges across America (Dowdall and Wechsler, 2002). In the 60 years since Strauss and



Bacon's research was completed, there are now over 2,200 referenced articles located in the US National Institute on Alcohol Abuse database that refer to college participant alcohol use. It is clear the misuse of alcohol continues to be a significant problem among American university participants. A review of intervention programs conducted within the US college system in 1994 found 25% of participants reported having experienced alcohol-related problems (Fromme, Marlatt, Baer and Kivlahan, 1994). A more recent study found approximately 40% of college participants were engaging in heavy episodes of alcohol consumption (Goldman, 2002).

The three most commonly cited studies in the US that discuss the prevalence and trends amongst college participants are College Alcohol Study (CAS), CORE survey and Monitoring The Future Survey (MTF). According to Boyd, McCabe, and Morales (2005), they are considered to be the benchmark of all studies undertaken in this area (e.g. Wechsler, Dowdell, Davenport and Castillo, 2002; Presley, Meilman and Cashin, 1996; Johnston, Bachman and O'Malley, 1986). Throughout the 1990s, US colleges identified that the misuse of alcohol by participants had become the single greatest threat to the quality of campus life (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1990). Perkins (2002) notes alcohol is still viewed by researchers and college administrators as the single most misused substance on university campuses across the United States. Hingson, Heeren, Zakocs, Kopstein and Wechsler and Isaac (2002) estimated that more than 1,400 US college participants died in 1998 due to unintentional alcohol injuries. According to Giancola (2002), activities such as "keg parties" have created an environment that exposes participants to high-risk behaviours such as violence and excessive drinking within the college environments.

As Wechsler and Isaac (1992) observe, participants who partake in risky drinking are more likely to miss class, get involved in unplanned sex, experience health-related problems, including hangovers and blackouts, and get into trouble with the police. The decision to drink to unhealthy and risky levels is often very clearly defined to the point of determining when, with whom, and how much to drink. Unfortunately, the quantity of alcohol to be consumed is often determined when individuals are not sober enough to make a sound decision and hence the volume consumed leads to risky levels of consumption (Schulenberg et al. 2002). Despite research continuing to demonstrate the negative and immediate consequences of alcohol misuse among university participants, negative outcomes including death, injury, sexual and non-sexual assault, risky sexual behaviour, property damage and violence are still apparent (Hingson, Heeren, Winter and Wechsler, 2005) and (Rickwood, Parker and Mikhailovich,

2011). There are also an increased number of reports from those who have been affected by the alcohol of others. Langley, Kypri, and Stephenson (2003) for example, randomly sampled some early 2000 participants from the University of Otago in New Zealand and found one-tenth of men and one-fifth of women experiencing assault and/or theft as a result of the risky drinking behaviour of others. They concluded that many moderate drinkers and non-drinkers are harmed by the behaviour of risky drinkers and that the environmental influences on a university campus should be investigated further.

In 1998, the National Advisory Council to the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) in the US established a task force to investigate the magnitude of college alcohol-related mortality and morbidity (Hingson et al., 2002). During the three-year process, more than 24 college presidents and scientists reviewed epidemiological data in an attempt to advise administrators implementing campus programs to tackle the problem and to advise the NIAAA on future research directions. The final report (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 2002) indicated that annually there were approximately 1,400 alcohol-related motor vehicle fatalities amongst college-aged participants. There were also 1,100 non-traffic related alcohol fatalities amongst college-aged participants. Research conducted by Hingson et al. (2002) and Hingson et al. (2005) found the nationwide number of alcohol-related deaths amongst 18-24 year olds continued to rise. The Inter-Association Task Force on Alcohol and Other Substance Abuse Issues (IATF), located in the US, is a coalition network that encompasses representatives from 21 Higher Education Institutions. The Task Force has asked members of these associations, government agencies and researchers to refrain from using the term “binge drinking” to describe participant alcohol use. They argue that the current definition fails to consider the time period of consumption, Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) levels, the size of drinker, or any of a number of other important factors. In the IATF Proclamation signed by its members in August 2000, the member associations agreed to refrain from using the term “binge drinking” and to introduce the terms “high risk”, “harmful risk”, “low risk” or “less harmful use” to describe the range of risk related to alcohol consumption. They also agreed to use definitions objectively defined by health research data that take into account quantity, frequency, individual differences and duration of alcohol consumption. Finally, they agreed to become familiar with methods of determining college participant BAC, a measure widely used by health and legal professions throughout the US. Recent changes effected to the (NHMRC, 2009) alcohol guidelines focus on reducing the risk of harm from alcohol and state that men and women should not consume more than two standard drinks per day to reduce alcohol-related health risks. Yet other researchers, such as Hanson (2007), have contended we should

define binge drinking as an intoxicating drinking action normally occurring in an accelerated way leading too certain harmful or destructive behaviours.

Gill (2002) reported that 18 studies investigating the drinking behaviour of undergraduate participants in the UK had been completed over a 25-year period. One study found that 48% of female university participants and 61% of male university participants who drank alcohol, exceeded “sensible” limits of 14 and 21 units per week respectively (Webb, Ashton, Kelly and Kamali, 1996). The study also found that 15% of the drinkers surveyed engaged in hazardous drinking. Findings indicate that although males are more likely to engage in risky alcohol behaviours, a pattern is emerging demonstrating an increasing shift by females towards risky behaviour (Gill, 2002). This is supported by research undertaken by O'Brien, Ali, Cotter, O'Shea, and Stannard (2007), who propose we are now seeing the convergence of female and male drinking sanctioned and even endorsed within a sporting environment.

Other studies from, Australia, Brazil, Ecuador, Egypt, Germany, Hong Kong, Ireland, Lebanon, New Zealand, Nigeria, Sweden, The Netherlands and Turkey have all shown that college participants have a higher prevalence of alcohol drinking and alcohol-use disorder than non-college participants (Karam, Kypri and Salamoun, 2007; Kypri, Paschall, Langley, Baxter and Bourdeau, 2010; Chatterton 1999; Holton and Riley 2013; Leontini., Schofield., Brown., Hepworth and Germov 2015) Although the problem of alcohol use is evident in most countries, most of the research has been undertaken in North America, with a comparatively small amount of research in Europe and Australia.

Research in Australia prior to 1984 is limited and accordingly results tend to focus on the late 1990's to the present (Roche et al., 2008). In a series of surveys on young people aged between 16-24 years and published in 2005, the Premier's Drug Prevention Foundation Council in Victoria found that there was an increased level of binge drinking since 2002. Similarly, research carried out in Australia by the Salvation Army, (2005) concluded that young people aged 14-24 years were increasingly involved in unhealthy drinking habits. Stanley (2008) found that 61% of males and 43% of Australian females were drinking alcohol excessively by age 17 and that 19% had been in a car with a drunk driver in the six months prior to the survey June 10 (Stanley, 2008). Using the data sources from the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing (2002), Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2005), Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2008), and the National Health and Medical Research Council (2009) Report, Roche et al. (2008) claims the 20-29-year-old males and females are the highest cohort of risky drinkers. This is supported by White and Hayman (2004) who state that alcohol is the most

socially acceptable drug in Australia. In another report produced by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, entitled *Australia's Young People: Their Health and Wellbeing* (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2003) young Australians aged 14-24 years believed that heroin and cannabis are problem drugs, but alcohol, amphetamines, tobacco and ecstasy are not.

The Victorian Drug and Alcohol Use survey of 6052 young people aged 18-24 years revealed 20 per cent of young people intended to get drunk when they drink (Premier's Drug Prevention Council, 2003). Further, (Chikritzhs, Catalano, Stockwell, Donath, Ngo, Young and Mathews (2003) suggest the percentage of adolescents who intend to get drunk might be considerably higher than these rates. Research undertaken in Australia by the Alcohol Education Rehabilitation Foundation (Livingstone, Laslett and Dietze, 2008) showed almost one in four people aged between 18-24 years regularly drink so much alcohol that they pass out. A national survey involving 500 people in an online poll found a third of participants classed themselves as binge drinkers (defined as having more than 10 drinks in one sitting). Over a twelve-month period in 2010 the Australian Education and Rehabilitation Foundation (2008), found, 23% of male Victorian drinkers aged 16-24 years regularly consumed more than 20 standard drinks in one day and 19% of female drinkers regularly consumed more than 11 standard drinks in one day.

Cultural influences may also appear to be important to the study of the phenomenon of binge drinking. It was found UK teenagers were far more likely than their French counterparts (Ledoux, Miller, Choquet and Plant, 2002) to have consumed five or more drinks in a row in the last 30 days. Although the research highlighted that France has historically been more of a wine culture, the consumption of wine has decreased among adolescents during the past decade and has been replaced with spirits and beer. In France, drinking associated with binge drinking is far more likely to occur in males than females (Ledoux et al., 2002). Data emanating from ESPAD (European Schools Survey Project on Alcohol and Drugs) suggests just two per cent of Armenian participants reported being intoxicated in the last 30 days but that this figure jumped to over 50% among Danish participants (Hibell, Guttormsson, Ahstrom, Balakireva, Bjarnason, Kookkevi and Kraus 2007). Despite gaps in the research, the current studies show a higher prevalence of risky drinking in universities than within the general population.

Karam et al. (2007) argue that consumption patterns could be influenced by changes in a young person's environment; for example, as they move from high school to university, this transition can be problematic for some as the environment can be characterized by considerable peer

pressure and promotion of aggressive forms of alcohol consumption by a large proportion of young people. They propose that interventions during these formative years may present an opportunity to impact the risk of long-term drinking problems. One of the more recent risks identified is Foetal Alcohol Syndrome, which can affect the size and development of an unborn baby (Streissguth et al., 1991). Cognitive functioning, memory loss and social isolation have also been identified as at risk from long-term drinking during adolescence (Brown, Tapert, Granholm and Delis, 2000; Faulkner et al., 2006; Felitti, 1998). Despite the increase in the number of studies conducted in the US and elsewhere, there has been little done to influence the broader economic, political and organisational factors that impact on the use of alcohol by college participants (Dowdall and Wechsler, 2002).

Using international data as a way of identifying the factors influencing alcohol use within the Australian university sector has limitations, as most participants do not live in on-campus residences. More often they commute to campus, thereby creating a different campus environment. Of the almost 1 million tertiary students within Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008), less than 10 per cent live within colleges, therefore the sub-cultures that surround the ritual of risky drinking need to be explored beyond the halls of residence. Despite this subtle difference, much can still be learnt from the extensive research conducted to date across the American university sector. When applying research undertaken in American colleges and universities, it is important to bear in mind these institutions vary considerably and this may not be captured fully in the research undertaken to date (Dowdall and Wechsler, 2002). Issues such as location, traditions, customs, and the role of residential colleges have not been fully explained. Differences in terminology may also prove problematic. In much of the research in the US, the word college refers to the institution. In the Australian context it refers to residential on-campus accommodation. Despite the depth of international research, when interpreting results within the Australian university context, a cautionary approach is suggested.

## **Conclusions**

It is evident that government policy, the alcohol industry and the social environment inhabited by young people all play a role in shaping alcohol behaviours. Since colonisation Australia has built a strong symbolic connection with alcohol consumption, it is the symbolism of mateship, the journey of emancipation, the hardship of a depression, and sense of social solidarity that has been continually reinforced through alcohol and has defined the fabric of Australian society.

The desire to belong and to connect seems somewhat made easier when consuming alcohol. These bonds are evident in most of Australia's leisure environments, particularly sport.

While the role of government policy and the powerful alcohol lobby groups have also helped to shape the different settings in which young people consume alcohol. The next chapter will undertake a further analysis of this issue by examining the politics of alcohol within the Australian context, investigating the way supply of and demand for alcohol is influenced by public policy and how it drives harm reduction campaigns, taxation, gendering of use, and more specifically, sport sponsorship.

## **Chapter 3 - The Politics of Alcohol**

### **Introduction**

I have shown in the previous chapter that alcohol consumption amongst young people is a complex issue that is shaped by government policy, the alcohol industry and an array of social environments. This chapter will examine the literature associated with alcohol use and public policy and will demonstrate that they are both inextricably linked and therefore warrant consideration in the context of this thesis. The chapter analyses government alcohol policy development, harm minimisation strategies, including pricing and taxation, before investigating the role of the alcohol industry and the media in influencing consumption. It concludes with an examination of how alcohol companies have become increasingly involved in financially supporting Australian sport, a setting important in the context of this thesis. The chapter also reinforces the notion raised in the previous section of the thesis that the neoliberalist approach to of alcohol licensing laws and sales is having a profound impact on the drinking patterns amongst young adults. Reinforcing the notion that Governments and regulatory institutions are indeed contributing to the ‘problem’ of excessive alcohol use. (Bacchi, 2015; Room, 2011; Szmigin et al., 2008)

### **Government Alcohol Policy**

Most governments across the world view alcohol consumption as risky, if not problematic (Babor et al., 2003), and that the heavy cost to society necessitates some form of regulation beyond the invisible hand of market forces and the supply/demand of the ordinary commodity market. Whilst there is no agreed definition of what governments’ involvement should be Grube and Nygaard, (2001) and Loxley, Dennis, Wilksinson, Chrikritzhs, Midford and Moore, (2005) have provided a useful starting point, proposing governments should be involved in establishing a set of goals and procedures that “regulate the supply of, modify the demand for or reduce the harms associated with alcoholic beverages in a population” (Loxley et al., 2005, p. 559). The definition encapsulates three broad areas of consideration for the development of government policy: supply reduction, demand reduction and harm reduction (Stockwell, 2006). Supply reduction strategies are intended to achieve social, health and harm minimisation benefits by reducing the physical availability of a particular substance. Examples of this include minimum drinking/purchase age, restrictions on trading hours, enforcement of mandatory responsible

service of alcohol schemes and restricting retail/drinking outlets. Demand reduction strategies are created to encourage and motivate users to consume less by restricting the number of venues, the opening hours, pricing discounts, and increasing education (both school and mass-media) programs. Harm reduction strategies are aimed at reducing the likelihood of harm to health or safety without necessarily requiring a change in the pattern or level of substance use. Examples of this include random breath testing (RBT), lower blood alcohol concentration—which refers to the amount of alcohol present in the bloodstream (BAC)—for younger drivers, plastic glassware and staggered trading hours for licensed premises.

Compared globally, Australia's policy response is robust, being ranked fifth overall in a comparative analysis of the 30 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) nations (Brand, Saisana, Rynn, Pennoni and Lowenfels, 2007). This ranking does not take into account enforcement or implementation factors, but only a policy vs. consumption comparison. The Index generates a score based on policies from five regulatory domains: physical availability of alcohol, drinking context, alcohol prices, alcohol advertising, and operation of motor vehicles. The Index was applied to the 30 countries that compose the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and regression analysis was used to examine the relationship between policy score and per capita alcohol consumption. Countries attained a median score of 42.4 of a possible 100 points, ranging from 14.5 (Luxembourg) to 67.3 (Norway). The National Preventative Health Taskforce (2008) concedes that this is indicative of poor international policy making.

The integrity of Australia's alcohol policy framework is hampered somewhat by Australia's political structure, with powers divided between Federal and State and local jurisdictions. There is an inherent tension between what constitutes Commonwealth responsibility and those of the States. Only the Federal Government has the power to tax alcoholic beverages. The States and Territories are prevented from doing so by a High Court ruling in 1997. States have responsibility for law enforcement, licensing regulation, treatment services and education. Coordination between jurisdictions is therefore required. (National Drug Strategy, 2011) Australia's main contemporary alcohol policy document is the National Alcohol Strategy, first published in 1989 and more recently in 2011. Its aim is to minimise and prevent alcohol-related harm and to develop a healthy and safe drinking culture in Australia (Stockwell et al., (2001).



## **Harm Minimisation**

Consistently the Australian Government's agenda has been to reduce incidents of intoxication, enhance public safety in areas where alcohol is served, improve health outcomes associated with the consumption of alcohol, and engender the development of a community understanding combined with the regulation of availability of alcohol. As mentioned earlier, this agenda drives policy for the Federal Government and the State Government that control the regulations relating to liquor licensing, drink-driving offences and driving licences, awareness and training, and the development of social marketing campaigns (Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy, 2006). Individual States and Territories also have their own policies, viewed by the Preventative Health Taskforce in its overall assessment of success as merely 'modest' in changing consumption levels. The disconnect of the policies, agencies and interventions creates an uncoordinated and disconnected approach to driving harm minimisation.

On 28 March 2008 the Federal Government announced a \$53 million strategy aimed at reducing the level of risky drinking by young Australians. The campaign offered support for community initiatives including sports, early intervention programs and a national advertising campaign. An important part of this campaign was the raising of excise taxes on Ready to Drink (RTD) alcoholic beverages by 70 percent in response to the rise in popularity and influence of pre-mixed drinks or 'alcopops', as they are also known, particularly amongst females. A key component of this campaign was to place a blanket limit on alcohol advertising between 9:00pm and 5:00am, thereby closing the live sports exception. Whilst the Bill was not recommended by the Standing Committee on Community Affairs, they expressed particular concern on the live sports exception, recommending that the Ministerial Council on Drugs Strategy, the Monitoring of Alcohol Advertising Committee and the Australian Beverage Advertising Code (ABAC) Scheme Management Committee consider additional safeguards to ensure alcohol advertising during sports coverage does not adversely influence children and young people.

The New South Wales Government also addressed the issue of youth alcohol consumption in their Youth Alcohol Action Plan 2001-2005 (NSW Health, 2002). The plan was devised using a health promotion framework and identified four key policy priorities. The first element of the plan aims to reduce consumption and frequency of intoxication, as well as alcohol-related crime and anti-social behaviour. In addition, the policy aims to engage in the debate relating to alcohol and culture, and to challenge existing norms. The Government aims to reorient programs to be responsive to young people and to create supportive community environments. To achieve these

policy aims, several policy actions were identified. The plan requires the creation of action plans by area health services, the provision of treatment centres and counsellors, the supplying of training, information and support via websites, telephone help-lines and information kits, mentoring programmes, the provision of funding for primary intervention programmes and a national advertising campaign. Previous efforts by the Australian Government targeting the young have focused on educational advertising campaigns such as “Drinking Choices” and “The Drug Offensive” (National Drug Strategy 2001 and 2006). The efficacy of this approach was called into question due to the contradictory messages, through advertising and the like, that young people are receiving from society (Economus and Elliott, 2007). To date there is no national youth plan that provides an insight into youth alcohol strategies (Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing, 2002).

The complexities arising from the social phenomenon of alcohol use cannot be reduced to government policy and regulation alone. (Baggot, 2006). Government policy can influence behaviours indirectly by the tax placed on alcohol, and more importantly, through the licensing laws that determine the number of alcohol licenses’ outlets and trading hours. In some cases, this has enabled certain areas to be saturated by pubs, clubs and bars that trade twenty-four hours a day. (Baggot, 2006). The multi- faceted complexities and nature of these issues appear to have resulted in a tension between all levels of government, academic and health professionals, as well as the alcohol industry itself. Although challenging, the ability for government to influence this conflict through policy could be achieved, according to Baggot (2006), by creating a tripartite social responsibility strategy that could include the promotion of good practice in product development, branding, advertising and packaging, with independent evaluation of organisations such as Drinkwise, and the promotion of good practice down the supply chain. For organisations like Drinkwise to be involved, Government policy would need to clearly mandate their roles and responsibilities (Baggot, 2006) and Borlagdan et al. (2010)

An example of this level of co-operation has been demonstrated in Newcastle on the central coast of NSW. In 2010 the local authority instigated an alcohol Management Strategy called “Safe Newcastle”. Its main aim was to reduce alcohol-related harm and anti-social activities by engaging all relevant stakeholders. The strategy included changes to infrastructure, education, transportation and enforcement, the development of a liquor accord, community services and police and community engagement activities. Local government clearly defined their role in reducing the negative consequences of alcohol consumption and collaborated with stakeholders to ensure their roles and accountabilities were also clearly measureable (Safe Newcastle

Alcohol Management Plan, City of Newcastle, 2010) Since its implementation, the impact of these strategies has continued to be monitored and evaluated, and has clearly shown a reduction in all alcohol-related harm, including crime, anti-social behaviour, domestic violence and substance abuse (Safe Newcastle Alcohol Management Plan Management Plan, City of Newcastle, 2010). One of the more recent initiatives introduced has been the “lock-out laws” introduced in Kings Cross in 2015.

The saturation of the alcohol night economy has also led the New South Wales Government to introduce changes to liquor regulations in the central district of the City of Sydney, the so-called party precinct. (Fulde, Smith and Forster, 2015) These legislative changes were enacted in response to community outrage after a series of adverse events reported in the media, particularly the deaths of two young men associated with alcohol-fuelled violence. Many of the changes were based on successful strategies in Newcastle, which had experienced similar alcohol-related serious injury problems. These changes are referred to as the “lockout laws”. These laws include no entry to venues after 1.30am, last drinks’ laws that require all venues across the Sydney Central Business District to cease trading at 3am and a NSW-wide ban on takeaway alcohol sales after 10pm. The impact of the “lockout laws”, according to Fulde, Smith and Forster (2015), have included a significant reduction in the number of alcohol-related serious injuries and trauma being presented at the emergency department of St Vincent’s Hospital in Sydney. Whilst the serious incidents may have diminished, the NSW Government is continuing to review the “lockout laws” whilst the Federal Government is investigating the overall impact on the night economy, including restaurants and nightclubs. The Queensland government moved to its own “lockout laws” in February 2016 in a bid to curb similar violence within their highly populated nightclub areas.

The industry argues that self-regulation is far more sustainable. Self-regulation has been defined as a means by which members of a profession, trade, or commercial activity are bound by a mutually agreed set of rules that govern their relationship with the citizen, client or customer. Such rules may be voluntarily or may be compulsory (Miller et al., 2012). It has the advantage of harnessing knowledge, expertise and solutions driven through a consensus. It can also be a less costly approach to Government regulations and an opportunity for the community to create and monitor the types of behaviour they would like to see mandated by the alcohol industry. The disadvantages could include complacency of enforcement, legitimacy and compliance (Miller, Kypr, Chikritzhs, Skov and Rubin, 2009).

Federal, State Governments and Territories within Australia have been fragmented in their approach to driving an agenda of harm minimisation; the most recent example is the shift of reducing trading hours. In Kings Cross, Sydney, nineteen venues operated twenty-four hours until January 2014 when the State Government introduced new bills to mandate closing of these venues at 3am and introduced a lockdown policy from 1.30am. This was in response to an increased level of alcohol-fuelled violence within the highly populated youth drinking environment of Sydney. Other states and territories have not introduced venue lockdown times. This is despite the significant relationship between density and assault rates and other ongoing harms associated with alcohol abuse that lead to long term health issues. According to Donnelly, Poynton, Weatherburn, Bamford and Nottage, (2006 ) it has been found that people living within 0.5 kilometres of licensed establishments had the most problems with anti-social, drunken behaviour and property damage. In 2006 inner Sydney outlets with 24hr trading accounted for 74% of assaults within licensed premises. This compares to other state government and territory harm minimisation initiatives, including the liquor enforcement and the licensed premises laws. The liquor enforcement laws are aimed at improving enforcement of liquor licensing regulations by increasing the capacity of police, local government and liquor licensing authorities; examining the liquor licensing laws in each jurisdiction against the current penalties for breaches; supporting the refinement and improvement of possible alcohol trouble spots so appropriate policing can be provided; and coordinating local government, alcohol industry bodies and health programs (Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy, 2006). The licensed premises laws are aimed at reducing the outcomes of intoxication and associated harm in and around late night (extended hours) licensed premises and outlets; developing and implementing additional specialised Responsible Service of Alcohol (RSA) training in conjunction with the alcohol distribution industry; establishing nationally consistent RSA training programs across the country; improving and enhancing the knowledge base of the extent of drink spiking and associated criminal victimisation; and increasing capacity to effectively prevent, reduce and manage the incidence of drink spiking (Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy, 2006).

The Australian Federal Government has introduced national drink-driving countermeasures in all states and territories and has mandated a maximum Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) of 0.05%. Provisional drivers have a restricted BAC limit, between 0.00% and 0.02% whilst different states and territories have differing limits. Many commercial operators of machinery, aircraft and automobiles also follow both employment codes for BAC limits and those under law (National Preventative Health Taskforce, 2008). The lowering of the provisional driver

maximum BAC to 0.02% was also introduced following Swedish studies that showed a reduction of 9% in alcohol related accidents (Ministerial Council on Drug Strategy, 2006).

While Australia utilises one of the most effective deterrents against drink driving—licence suspension (Babor et al., 2003)—enforcement of the suspension is still poor, with up to 70% of those who have lost their licence still continuing to drive unlicensed (Loxley et al., 2005). While many State governments offer education programs for drink drivers, they have not been shown to be particularly effective (Loxley et al., 2005). Interlock devices are now being fitted in some states (Royal Automobile Club of Victoria Ltd, 2005).

The structure of the government system within Australia makes it difficult to implement a national strategy that can provide proper community dialogue on the issue of youth alcohol. Governments alone should not and cannot be responsible for the morality of our youth and the current pathological approach to understanding the issue makes it difficult to interpret whether the misuse of alcohol is a problem that can be tackled by government intervention alone. The data on alcohol misuse, although disturbing, could be partly a moral panic or part of a shift in popular culture. One area that Federal and state governments can control is in pricing and taxation. Measham (2006a) argues that although governments have continued to deregulate the alcohol industry, they still continue to regulate elements of drinking, including the legal drinking age in some countries, and the tax levy. She goes on to argue this has directly facilitated the supply and demand challenge that has led to the excessive consumption of alcohol by young people. Pricing and taxation has an enormous influence on access, and on the level of economic conflict faced by governments when they change or alter any taxation on alcohol.

### **Australian Alcohol Pricing and taxation**

Understanding the nature of alcohol taxation and pricing is important to this study as it demonstrates the levels of taxation generated, and supports the argument by health practitioners that not enough is being transferred into health and education (Roxon, N., 2009). The Australian Government's "alcopops" legislation has been criticised as a "tax grab". This criticism could perhaps be mitigated if the generally large disparity between government revenue from alcohol taxes and government expenditure on alcohol harm-prevention and treatment programs was reduced (Doran, Vos and Cobiac, 2008). Despite this, it is argued that controlling price through taxation is considered highly beneficial (Collins and Lapsley 2008). In other research on taxation revenue drawn from underage drinkers, Doran, Shakeshaft, Hall,

and Petrie (2009) found that over 506,000 adolescents aged 12-17 years consumed approximately 175.69 million standard drinks in 2005. The total revenue generated from this consumption was estimated at approximately \$218 million that year, of which the Federal Government received \$107 million, the equivalent of 49 per cent in taxation revenue. Wagenaar, Salois and Komro (2009) concluded, after reviewing 100 studies, that alcohol pricing and taxes are related inversely to drinking. The impact is significant compared to other prevention policies and programs. These studies included undertaking literature searches involving major databases in all fields of academia from across the globe from the years 1926 to the present. There were ten studies that related to price and/or taxation. Australia's taxation framework is complicated, as it involves different levels of government in Australia. Each type of alcoholic beverage is taxed at a different rate, and within each type of alcoholic beverage, apart from wine, taxes are levied according to a volumetric system, with lower alcoholic content attracting lower excise rates. This encourages consumption of lower alcoholic beverages. As a result of this policy, low-alcohol beer captured 20% of the beer market (Stockwell, 2001). Wine is taxed on an ad valorem system, which is taxation according to the value of the retail price of the product. A rebate for the first \$500,000 of wine tax is available for a single producer. As this tax is not alcohol-content based, its use to combat consumption is limited. It has opened a market for inexpensive cask wine, creating problems for many at-risk groups (Vandenberg, Livingston and Hamilton, 2008).

One change proposed for the taxation model is an across-the-board volumetric approach. In Australia this would increase the price of lower-strength alcohol and decrease the price of spirits (Vandenberg et al., 2008). What is alternatively proposed is a tiered volumetric approach taking into account consumption incentives and disincentives (Loxley et al., 2005; National Preventative Health Taskforce, 2008). It has also been proposed to regulate the 'floor price' of alcohol, which is aimed at the cheapest alcohol available (National Preventative Health Taskforce, 2008; Vandenberg et al., 2008). This would prevent any increases in taxation, resulting in a mere shift to lower priced alcohol. Whilst hypothecated, or earmarked, taxes have been successfully trialled in Australia, no other attempts at this type of taxation have been made (Vandenberg et al., 2008). Hypothecated taxation enables government to influence the price, and therefore consumption, of certain drinks. An example of this is with RTD. According to the National Drug Strategy (2011), placing tax on these drinks influences the consumption patterns of young people (Babor, Caetano, Casswell et al., 2003). In its initial Discussion Paper on the potential overhaul of the taxation system, the Commonwealth Government conceded that in regard to alcohol taxation, the objective is about "more closely targeting potential public

health costs and reinforcing other social policy objectives around alcohol consumption” (Australian Treasury, 2008, p. 281).

Australia’s first attempt in decades to use taxation as a health lever resulted in the introduction of an excise tax on RTD. Despite the Bill failing in the Senate in 2009, some six months later the Bill was passed. The Bill created much controversy. The “alco-pops tax” closed a loophole in the goods and services tax which had meant RTD were taxed at a much lower rate, and therefore were cheaper to buy than spirits. The tax was also driven by ongoing concern on increasing alcohol consumption by young people (Brain, Parker and Carnwath, 2000). This tax initiative caused much controversy amongst a number of interest groups, including health practitioners, the alcohol industry and academics. In theory, the measures did reduce the sales of RTD by 54% but increased spirit sales by 7% from the period April to June 2008 (Oakes, 2008) and sales continued to decline by 30% over the full year (Skov, Chikritzha, Kypri, Miller, Hall, Daube and Moodie, 2011). Some suggest that despite the impact on sales, it still doesn’t capture the bigger picture where effective use of taxation as a measure to reduce consumption demands a volumetric alcohol taxation system. (Oakes, 2008) This would result in a minimum price being introduced and special measures for particular products that some felt may result in disproportionate harm (Skov et al., 2011), and at the same time would require comprehensive reform that covered pricing, availability, promotion and education, and treatment services.

There has been much debate about taxation regulation and its influence on alcohol consumption. There has been little debate about what should be regulated, and more importantly, why? Answering the why is critical to influencing the current alcohol challenges amongst our youth. The why question means we need to understand how these policies will influence the decision making process of young people. Importantly, it may result in the government needing to find new ways of generating revenue from alcohol taxes. It may also mean confronting the liquor industry, who are currently cleverly socialising our youth to see alcohol as a major connector to having fun. Policy alone, without dealing with the industry, will have little impact (McCreanor, 2000).

## **The Role of the Alcohol Industry**

I argue that the existing legislative framework has been developed to accommodate the alcohol industry, providing commercial opportunities to promote alcohol use as a desirable feature of a successful life. According to Homel and Clark (1994), it is not the use of alcohol per se that is the problem, but rather the way it is managed by the industry. Pressure is continually being placed on the alcohol industry to take some responsibility for alcohol (Barry and Goodson, 2009), and as a result, the alcohol industry has shifted its messaging to meet the public dissent by recreating an old marketing message of “responsible drinking”. This concept first originated in 1969 at a symposium by North Conway Institute in the USA, a not-for-profit organisation working with religious and secular groups. The symposium was addressing alcohol abuse as a theme of the symposium (Engs, 1981).

Lindsay, (2006) argues that in Australia, there is evidence to suggest the “decade of dance” is over, the use of party drugs such as ecstasy is declining, and young people are turning back to determined drunkenness as their preferred mode of intoxication. Measham (2006a, p. 30) agrees, claiming this determined drunkenness in young people, “is part of the broader cultural context of risk taking and hedonistic consumption-orientated lifestyles bounded by location and occasion” (Measham, 2006a, p. 17). A claim also made by Szmigin et al. (2007) and Room (2011). There are also claims the excessive use of alcohol by young people may not be their property alone to influence. According to McCreanor, Barnes, Kaiwai, Borell, and Gregory (2008), in the background are alcohol companies purported to be key in shaping the alcohol social conditions of young people. A new form of advertising is emerging, which Dejong (1992) claims, enables the industry to continue shaping its sales and marketing drive for consumption whilst doing little to address conceptualising and practising responsible alcohol consumption (Barry and Goodson, 2009). The liquor industry is a heterogeneous group whose focus is on a business perspective. Pub owners versus distributors of alcohol therefore have a different view of their role in responsible and sustainable business practices. A paradoxical message is sent to young people about alcohol as a rite of passage, with little responsibility on the shoulders of the providers of alcohol venues to create safe environments, and on the broader community with respect to alcohol consumption attitudes. (Mazerolle and Roehl, 1999) and (Tonry and Farrington, 1995). The main driver is to produce youth orientated night economies. This is according to Hobbs et al., (2000), has contributed to escalated concerns around violence, crime and other related harms.



The next section of this chapter will focus on one particular area where government policy has provided an avenue for the alcohol industry to successfully sponsor sport. The government has intervened to stop smoking sponsorship in sport and has created some regulations around gambling and sport. but is absent from the debate on alcohol and sport sponsorship.

### **Alcohol and Sport Sponsorship**

Alcohol is one of the most prominent substance and beverage portrayed in the media that is directed towards young people and depicted as a normal social activity. The role that the media therefore plays is significant in the lives of young people, and is due in part to their access to a variety of media devices (Livingstone, et al., 2008). Young people are constantly exposed to a range of information on alcohol which may influence their alcohol-related attitudes and behaviour (Grube and Waiters, 2005; Harewinkel and Sargent, 2009). This is especially the case when reinforcing normative positive messages.

The relationship between alcohol-related messages transmitted by the media and young people's alcohol-related attitudes, beliefs and behaviour may be significant, yet should not be considered as straightforwardly causal. Factors such as sex, differences in cognitions, and socio-cultural influences often mediate this relationship. Early research on media effects assumed audiences were passive in their media consumption (Baillie, 1996). Bryant and Zillman (2002) and McQuail (2005) believe the media reinforces existing attitudes and audiences are active in their media consumption, with the capacity to reject, negotiate and modify the messages they consume. Alcohol-related attitudes, beliefs and behaviour are also acquired through an accumulation of media messages over time (Roberts, D. and Christensen, 2000). As such, media messages do not always produce uniform messages.

Media, in all its forms, is just one of the influences upon young people's drinking behaviour. There are limits to the extent current alcohol advertising regulations can prevent young people from being exposed to alcohol advertising. Online alcohol advertising and depictions of alcohol pose particular challenges to policy-makers and the alcohol industry. Regulation and self-regulation face strong challenges from the very nature of the Internet, where content is easily shared and globalised. It is one of the great values of the Internet that users can produce and share their own content. However, informal 'advertising' techniques initiated by Internet users challenge industry or regulatory body attempts to control exposure to alcohol marketing. The industry needs to clearly differentiate its own marketing activities from that of consumers and

support activities that seek to reduce the impact of ‘informal’ advertising. As mentioned earlier, young people are active media consumers and often reject simplistic and normalised messages about alcohol and related harms. Such scepticism and critical media literacy may have implications for the degree to which images of alcohol use can actually shape young people’s attitudes towards alcohol. Despite the arguments regarding the negative influence the media has in shaping young peoples’ alcohol behaviour, it continues to have a strong association with sport in Australia.

Australia has been described as a model case where alcohol and sport are united in close partnership (Munro, 2000). According to McGufficke, Rowling, and Bailey (1991) and Jones (2010), alcohol use within Australian sport is an important component of the post-game celebrations and part of the general ethos of being part of a team. Alcohol companies know this and capitalise on the desired sporting image of mateship and camaraderie, a view supported by Ellickson, Collins, Hambarsoomians, and McCaffrey (2005) and Wyllie, Zhang, and Casswell (1998).

The commercialization of alcohol in Australian sport is common practice and is observed when the winners of sports such as the Melbourne Cup, Cricket, Tennis, Horse Racing and most codes of football stand on the podium and thank alcohol companies for sponsoring them (Jacobsen, 2003). One of the major reasons that sports give for seeking alcohol sponsorship is that is they have had difficulty obtaining it from other industries and that this is particularly the case after Australia began to phase out cigarette advertising 1970s -1990s (Jones, 2010). Several Australian states did introduce legislation in the 1990s to replace tobacco sponsorship of sport by establishing public health foundations such as Healthway in Western Australia and Vic Health in Victoria. These Foundations sponsored sport, racing and the arts through funds raised from a legislated 5% increase in tobacco taxation (Chapman and Wakefield, 2001).

The sports sponsorship market in Australia is estimated to be worth more than \$600 million annually, with \$50 million of this coming from alcohol companies alone and 80% from three companies: Fosters, Lion Nathan and Diageo (Lee, 2008). According to McCreanor et al. (2008), advertising drives consumer behaviour because alcohol use is, more often than not, depicted as pleasurable, fun, identity-creating and part of youth culture. Furthermore, as Stanley (2008) argues, this type of psychographic marketing, or the selling of an image, blurs the line between reality and myth and is negatively influencing alcohol amongst young people. There is considerable debate about the appropriateness of the association between sport and alcohol

sponsorship (Jones, 2010) given there is increasing evidence that exposure to alcohol advertising influences health and patterns of alcohol consumption, particularly in adolescents (Nicholson and Hoye, 2009).

As Hanstad and Waddington (2000) proposes, there is a strong argument for supporting the need to critically analyse the relationship between sport and health, and in particular, some aspects of sports sponsorship, such as tobacco and alcohol. It is fundamentally the promotion of sport as health that justifies the need to consider banning alcohol sponsorship of sport. Alcohol and sport is currently inextricably linked and deeply ingrained in Australian society at various cultural levels. Despite the impact of alcohol consumption on athletic performance, alcohol is the most commonly used drug by sports people (O'Brien and Lyons, 2000). Interestingly, levels of consumption differ across sports, with athletes competing in sports such as rugby and cricket more likely to consume alcohol than their counterparts in other sports.

In the sport of cricket, for example, Jones (2007) claims there is an unhealthy co-dependence on alcohol sponsorship. The debate centres on the fact cricket openly promotes alcohol-driven and the message of a strong drinking culture is one that is transferred to spectator behaviour.

Cricket's partnership with alcohol was accelerated after the government banned tobacco advertising in The Tobacco Prohibition Act 1992 Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, 2007) and since that time it has become synonymous with the game. It is fundamentally the promotion of sport as health that justifies the need to ban alcohol sponsorship of sport. Sport itself does not support this line, given they depend so much on the financial support gained from the alcohol industry. Since the 1970s, sports sponsorship has grown rapidly. Tobacco companies used sport to circumnavigate the banning of advertising of cigarettes on television and continued to do so until it was banned in 1992.

Jones and Donovan (2002) investigated Australian cricket to support the claim this co-dependence on alcohol sponsorship is unhealthy, given the sport has a potential impact on underage drinkers as a result of its extensive television coverage. The debate centres on the fact it is now well known that attitudes towards alcohol consumption are strongly influenced by social and cultural norms. In the case of cricket, historically this sport has been part of promoting the binge-drinking behaviour of their cricketers by actively promoting alcohol branding on uniforms, and showing highly charged alcohol celebrations as part of its winning culture. Not all sports choose the alcohol industry as major sponsors. The Australian Soccer

Team has been sponsored by Qantas and Weet-Bix cereal, whilst its domestic A- League competition has financial partnerships with energy drinks, Nike, Hyundai, Foxtail, PowerAde, Optus, and the National Australia Bank. The 2008 Beijing Olympics sponsors included financial services, electronics and computer products, personal care products, car manufacturers, telecommunications, and transport services (Felt, 2002). Income linked to alcohol advertising is now seen by many as crucial for sustaining the current levels of profits and player payments in many sports at the professional levels (McDaniel, Kinney and Chalip, 2001; O'Brien, Hunter, Kypri, and Ali 2008)

In the United States, the beer manufacturers Anheuser-Busch sponsor 'gridiron' football and were also major sponsors of the 1998 soccer World Cup. Dealy (1990) has drawn attention to the relationship between the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and breweries in the United States, and in the light of the problems associated with alcohol abuse and the widespread practice of underage drinking among American youth, has expressed concern at the closeness of this relationship. Sponsorship of sport by breweries is similarly widespread in the UK. In soccer in England and Wales, Carling were until recently sponsors of the FA Premier League, while the Worthington Cup is currently sponsored by Bass-Worthington. In Scotland, Bells and Tennents have been major sponsors of the round-ball game. In the two forms of rugby, league and union, recent and/or current sponsors of club competitions include Stones, Courage, Tetley, and Heineken, while Heineken also sponsored the Rugby Union World Championship hosted by Wales in 1999.

In 2008 the AUS Board approved the involvement of alcohol companies as a way of generating revenue and reducing the costs of running the event. The board has since rescinded this decision at a cost of nearly \$500,000 annually. This loss has been partly assisted by an annual grant from the Australian Sports Commission and a shift in the sponsorship strategy of the board to generating sponsorship from non-alcohol companies.

## Conclusions

This chapter investigated factors that influence alcohol behaviours and identified two contributing players involved in framing alcohol usage within Australia. The first is the government at a federal, state and local level. The second is the alcohol industry. Both are generating millions of dollars annually in tax and profits. The politics associated with this cannot be underestimated nor can the ongoing role of the alcohol companies in influencing the government.

The fragmentation and inconsistent approach by government across Australia, with different regulations and laws, including alcohol taxes, licencing of venues, supply and demand, is making it easier for the alcohol industry to set the tone, giving them free rein to influence and shape the leisure interest of many young people. The level of influence is still not fully understood and is a current gap in the literature to date. However, what is known is their capacity to spend millions of dollars on marketing and advertising and sponsorship of sporting clubs and teams which results in a tangled web of involvement that is not easy to unravel.

Sponsorship of sporting events by the alcohol industry is commonplace in Australia, perhaps even more so than in other countries. However, the Australian government has chosen not to play a role, despite the intrinsic relationship between sport and alcohol. They have also remained silent on alcohol advertising despite increasing pressure from public health advocates. The reasons for this require further research. It is also unknown just how much influence politics and alcohol collectively contribute to the alcohol behaviours and motives of young people. There is a definite impact on supply and demand, but there are other important issues requiring investigation. Including when policy, the alcohol industry and the social settings together influence alcohol behaviours in particular the role that it has in contributing to the formation of play as part of the alcohol experience of young people. It is the intersectional point in which these three areas meet that requires further research.

In order to begin to dissect the above in the next chapter I will begin to develop a lens with which to analyse later in the thesis some of social behaviours that are exhibited by the participants who attended the AUS event. I will start by defining a number of terms often associated with play, including sport, recreation and leisure. These three concepts are part of how young people utilise their free time and are therefore important to understanding the formation of play.

As mentioned in the previous chapter alcohol consumption amongst young people is shaped by government policy, the alcohol industry and an array of social environments. This chapter examined the literature associated with alcohol use and public policy and demonstrated that they are both inextricably linked and therefore warranted consideration in the context of this thesis. The chapter analysed government alcohol policy development, harm minimisation strategies, including pricing and taxation, before investigating the role of the alcohol industry and the media in influencing consumption. It concluded with an examination of how alcohol companies have become increasingly involved in financially supporting Australian sport, a setting important in the context of this thesis. The chapter also reinforces the notion raised in the previous section of the thesis that the neoliberalist approach of alcohol licensing laws and sales is having a profound impact on the drinking patterns amongst young adults, which reinforces the notion that governments and regulatory institutions are indeed contributing to the ‘problem’ of excessive alcohol use. (Bacchi 2015) and (Room 2011) and (Szmigin et al. 2008)

## Chapter 4 - Developing A Theory of Play

### Introduction

To explore more fully the notion of play as part of the AUS event experience, in this chapter I will begin to conceptualize the theoretical nature of play by first providing an analysis of difference between a number of concepts that determine the way in which we use time away from paid and volunteer work. These concepts include sport, leisure and recreation. While it may appear on the surface that these terms are synonymous, I argue that there are subtle theoretically and complex differences. Therefore, each warrants an analysis in order to define the nature of play. I will begin to elaborate on these concepts before providing an in-depth examination of play itself. An examination of these terms provides a framework in which to understand the structural and symbolic elements of the setting this thesis is investigating and the consequential alcohol behaviours they create in the formation of play. The first of these concepts is sport.

### Sport

Cashmore (2010) argues there are mixed reactions in the literature as to when sport, as a term, actually began. Some assert it was during the revival of art and literature known as the Renaissance, beginning in the fourteenth century, while others maintain sport, as we know it today, started in nineteenth-century England. It depends on how you define sport. According to Cashmore, “Most historians tell us to guard against exaggerating the similarities between ancient and medieval contests and contemporary competitions” (Cashmore, 2010, p. 91).

The actual activities may resemble what we now recognize as sport, but cultural milieus were completely different and the meanings given to the activities were quite unlike today’s (Cashmore 2010). The boundaries we use to separate sports from other areas of life “have been indistinct and not worth noticing in other cultures,” writes Mandell (1971). Ancient Greeks, for example, believed winners of events were chosen by gods, and the competitions they held were of profound religious importance: as such, athleticism was all-pervasive.

While the first Olympiad took place in 776 BCE, it was animated by the same spirit that guided the intellectual inquiries of Pythagoras (580–500 BCE), Hippocrates (c. 460–377 BCE), and Socrates (469–399 BCE): to explore the boundaries of human possibilities. Evidence of this

can be discerned in the dramas of Sophocles (496–406 BCE) and Aeschylus (c. 525–456 BCE) (Cashmore, 2010). Similarly, Pre-Meiji (before 1868) Japan held archery and equestrian contests, but these were linked to military purposes, rather than being purely athletic competitions (Mandell, 1971).

Coakley (2009) who formed a definition that allows for constructive dialogue between sport and play. He describes sport as a “well established, officially governed competitive physical activity in which participants are motivated by internal and external rewards” (p.6). He acknowledges there are play elements involved whilst participating in sport, including both intrinsic rewards and spontaneous expression. This is a view also shared by Sutton-Smith (2001) who argued the rhetorical nature of play and sport demonstrates both pursuits at times can be a kind of contest that reflects the struggle for superiority between two groups of people, communities, tribes, social classes, ethnic groups, and two or more nations (p.75). Perhaps the interesting observation is that of Sutton-Smith (2001) who points out that when these groups compete, they typically have one thing in common- their enthusiasm for the contest, whether this is in the act of competing in sport or participating in play. It is what may unite, rather than divide them as individuals (Sutton-Smith, 2001). Sport, according to Huizinga (1955), refers to the “mechanistic world”, one that serves more than just the development of physical and mental skills and strength of individuals. It is also the spiritual form of stylizing what it feels like to be youthful and full of life where the competitive ideal of competition is of a high cultural value.

I argue that the above perspectives provide a useful definition of sport that can be used to define it in the context of the AUS event. The event is well established, officially governed, offering competitive activities that are highly valued by the participants, with behaviours that have become culturally embedded. The act of competing in sport is the fundamental motive for the event being organized by AUS, participants coming together as an expression of the art of sport itself. Sport, in this context, is structural, bound and imposed by a set of rules. Often these rules transpose into another set of rules freely chosen by the participants, expressed as they use their physical attributes and compete at different levels to their opponents. Sport is therefore defined as an activity constrained by a set of rules and regulations, as opposed to leisure that is freely chosen through an expression of self.



## Leisure

As Gove (1993) argues, the word leisure is derived from the Latin *licere*, meaning “to be free.” Leisure is carried out in a relatively unconstrained and uncoerced manner. Leisure is freely chosen because the activity or the companions, or some combination of the two, promises personal satisfaction. According to Kelly (2012), it is the personal and social orientation that makes leisure activity something else. Leisure, he argues, is defined by the use of the time, not the time itself. It is distinguished by the meaning of the activity, not its form.

Rackham and Cambridge (1944) point to the intrinsic pleasure or happiness that distinguishes leisure from lesser activity. Leisure is activity that is chosen more for its own sake than for ends related to survival or necessity. There may be more to defining leisure, but choice for its own sake is central (Kelly, 2012). The Ancient Greeks (Hellenes) and the Romans are said to have believed leisure and sport were activities that helped (rich and free) people live their lives in a good way (Spracklen, 2013). The study of modern leisure has, at its beginnings, the work of Veblen (1889), who described leisure as a form of conspicuous consumption that was only available to those who could afford to engage. He associated leisure with the accumulation of wealth and a leisure class. A slightly different view is taken by Gist and Fava (1964), Patmore (1983) and Parker (1976), who suggest leisure is a concept of time rather than consumption. It is when individuals have free time for the purpose of relaxation, diversion, social achievement or personal development. Williams (1960, pp. 926-927) held a similar view:

*“The real dividing line between the things we call work and the things we call leisure is that in leisure, however active we may be, we make our own choices and our own decisions; we feel for the time being our life is our own”*

Modern historians and theorists of leisure, Borsay (2005), Bramham (2006), Blackshaw (2010), and Roberts, K. (2011) identify the growth of modernity as being essential to the construction of leisure as we know it. This is because people have a focus on individual freedom and work which allows us to see leisure as something universal that all humans have a right to engage in. While leisure, as we understand it today, is shaped by modernity, the meaning and purpose of leisure is not something unique to this era. It is only the shape and nature of leisure that differs across historical periods and cultures. The very nature of it is influenced by the rational choices we make about what to do in our free time and by structural controls such as economics (Spracklen, 2013).

The definitions above provide an understanding of leisure as an element of time and choice, but more explanation is required to understand the cognitive experience associated with leisure, a view shared by Parker (1976); Pieper (1965); Murphy (1974); Hamilton-Smith (1985) and Cushman and Laidler (1990). Their perspective is that leisure is a state of mind enabled through the participation of an activity or pursuit that is freely chosen. This view, according to Murphy (1974), is a restatement of Aristotle's definitions of leisure as a state or condition, one we seek as a way of breaking free from our daily routine. I believe that these views on leisure become beneficial for creating a perspective, important in framing the way leisure is experienced within the context of the AUS event, and believe that for the purpose of the research leisure should be defined as "A state of mind experienced as a result of freely choosing to participate in an activity or pursuit", rather than as consumption, or as a concept of time. If sport is the organised, structured element of the AUS event and leisure the state of mind experienced whilst engaged in a freely chosen activity or pursuit, then what is recreation?

## **Recreation**

As I have explained above, if leisure is the condition or state, then recreation can be considered the activity or pursuit that enables leisure to be experienced and enjoyed (Cushman and Laidler, 1990; Torkildsen, 1986; Yukic, 1970). This definition assumes it is voluntarily chosen by the participant primarily for pleasure and satisfaction (Kraus, 1978; Pigram, 1983). Kelly (2012) found recreation is rooted in the Latin recreation, referring to the concept of refresh and restoration, implying one needs to regain energy after heavy work. In modern society with less physical labour, this definition has become limiting. Contemporary definitions describe recreation as an activity that may include, for example, games, sport, travel and hobbies. The choice of the activity should be voluntary and free from obligation, and provide intrinsic value to the participant. In conceptualizing a definition of recreation within the AUS event, I argue that it can be explained as the social activities participants engage with during the event, for example, dancing, watching other teams compete, playing their sport outside the sanctioned competition, going out to pubs and clubs, eating out, and experiencing the array of activities associated with the location. A more in depth discussion on sport, recreation and leisure is outside the scope of this thesis but what is in scope is an in-depth examination of the concept of play, I begin with the common misconception that it is only a pursuit by children.

## Play

Play is considered to be a natural and necessary part of childhood growth and is at the heart of all learning and development (Erikson, 1985). But what is play? When it comes to defining the term, there is a great dispute, as there are few subjects that have had investigation by as many disciplines, each having different conclusions about the nature of its origin (Gordon and Esbjörn-Hargens, 2007). In the social sciences, the modern study of play can be traced back to the publication of Dutch historian Johan Huizinga's ground breaking study (Huizinga, 1955). In his book *Homo Ludens*, he explains play as freedom from the segregated requirements of practical life and an act that is bound by a system of rules that are held absolute. The word play is from the Latin word "Luden" and has been studied by biologists, psychologists, anthropologists, philosophers, educationalists, historians and others. Each of these disciplines has been searching for a unique meaning in which to understand, interpret and appreciate play.

Rodriguez (2006) believes that a superficial reading of *Homo Ludens* might suggest Huizinga views play as a purely "subjective" phenomenon. His more detailed interpretation of Huizinga's work is explained through the actual player's experience, which essentially unfolds within a structured situation where play is dependent in part on the organization of the player's actions around a cluster of rules. Accordingly, he believes the cultural study of play consists of a careful description of the individual's players' experiences, which often involves the consciousness of risk, unpredictability, intensity, chance and competition. Huizinga himself believed investing in this sort of tension meant players become invested in an outcome not yet settled. He also rejects the functional explanations common in the anthropology of his day by proposing it is misleading to describe play as a means to strengthen, for example, the moral values and social cohesiveness of the community.

During pre-industrial periods, identifying play, as opposed to non-play, was much more delineated. Play was described by Huizinga (1955) as an exact distinction from work as obligation: serious and not fun. These definitional debates on play began with early ancient Greek society between the Apollonian views of play as rational and the Dionysian views as irrational. These descriptions take on a similar meaning in today's society, with the individual either consciously or unconsciously defining acceptable play and non-acceptable play. The societal and mainstream view of play is often driven by powerful and dominating societal groups; these views can be meaningless to those devotees of trivial play.

In the late 18th century, biologists and psychologists provided only deterministic and utilitarian views of play (Sutton-Smith, 1997). By the late 1930s, Huizinga (1955, p. 3) proposed a radical shift in thinking when he stated: “The fun of playing resists all analysis, all logical interpretation”. Huizinga (1955) believed play only occurred when one was fully consumed in a pursuit or activity in which one was suspended in time. This state of mind would set the players apart from others and had, as its essence, fun. Play would be undertaken outside ordinary life for its own sake, involve a sense of illusion or exaggeration, and most importantly, players would be conscious of the fact that the play is not real. He argued play was only possible when the influx of mind broke down the absolute determinism of the cosmos.

Sutton-Smith (2001) argues that if a definition of play is sought at the level of cosmology and physics, then it can never be proven scientifically (Sutton-Smith, 2001). What he is referring to here is that play involves the study of the universe as a whole. If scientific method incorporates this, then we can understand the origin, evolution and ultimate definition of play. So scholars search for metaphors that will deepen and broaden our concept of play. For Millar (1968), play is an attitude where one throws off constraints, which can be physical, emotional, social or intellectual in nature. When these constraints are removed, greater freedom, interactivity and creativity result. This shift from reality to a play-specific space allows for new rules of engagement to be created. The segmenting of real life from a new, illusionary world is an important construct that delineates the attitude of play from the attitude of the real world. The hallmark of play is the freedom to do this (Gordon and Esbjörn-Hargens, 2007a).

Today, according to Gordon and Esbjörn-Hargens (2007b), the view of play sees most researchers still agreeing that play is intrinsically motivating and occurs in a distinct space and reality often transcending both rational and irrational worlds. Play, in this context, is about reducing the complexities of the world for a period of time, creating new frames that serve the narcissistic needs of the player. Leaping in and out of these frames is a survival instinct and a source for all creativity and health, for both children and adults.

“A voluntary activity within fixed limits of time and space, according to rules freely accepted but absolutely binding, having its aim in itself and accompanied by a feeling of tension, joy and consciousness that it is different from normal life, not serious, producing nothing and opportunities for creating illusions” (Huizinga, 1955, p. 38).

The play experience can be intrinsically motivating, challenging, fun, relaxing, risky and tense whilst providing opportunities to escape reality (Sutton-Smith, 2001). The latter is what Csikszentmihalyi (1975) refers to as flow, or suspension from reality, where a player's experience disconnects them from the outside world, and the player becomes totally engaged in the pursuit of losing a sense of time and connection to the outside world. Csikszentmihalyi (1975, 1978, 1990, 1994, 1996) helps us to explain play more easily. Through his life's work, he concluded play cannot be separated from the concept of a state of mind obtained through the act of participating, either collectively or individually, in a voluntary activity or pursuit.

For Sutton-Smith (2001), play is often observed in specific communities such as celebrations and carnivals. Bonding with others as a result of these events gives one a sense of identity leading to the creation of a sense of belonging. This is evident when a collection of individuals is celebrating their sporting success and what is observed is that identity can be created, and even sanctioned. Strong bonds can be formed validating parity of membership and traditions. This view provides a separation between the use of sport as an expression of competitive power and the celebration that follows as an expression of group identity.

When a group identifies with excessive alcohol consumption, play-like activities expressed by the group can, according to Sutton-Smith (2001), escalate into bacchanalian enjoyments or alcohol-fuelled parties. This discourse is pertinent to the current research, as it is central to understanding how the organisational constructs of the festival influence the activities being pursued. The festival atmosphere created in a major university sporting event may provide answers for the relationship between drinking and sport, as it unknowingly provides a stage for frivolity. A festival atmosphere allows for two types of groups to co-exist, the conventional and uncontrollable body both creating a realm enabling folk-like characters to be created (Turner and Turner, 1978). "Play is the fool that might become king" (Sutton-Smith, 2001, p. 213). The repeated, frivolous rituals involving alcohol during the university sporting event are enacted purely on the basis of foolery in a team or tribe. Accordingly, there is a guarantee that in this type of play there is no loser (Sutton-Smith, 2001). The greater the frivolity, he believed, the greater the transcendence that allows it to become a common form of behaviour.

Rhetorical use of play has provided an opportunity for the researcher to consolidate a framework that acknowledges play as both a child and adult activity. Despite the influences of political or other controlling institutions, play remains an intrinsically motivated and self-determining pursuit entangled with an expression of fun and freedom.

What is also essential to a definition of play is an “attitude of throwing off constraint” (Millar, 1968). These constraints might be physical, emotional, social or intellectual. In her book, *The Psychology of Play*, Millar (1968, p. 21) prefers to define play not in terms of activities or mood, but under what conditions the act of play is performed. Play, she believed, detaches messages—experiences of objects from their origin—creating new frames that allow greater freedom, interactivity and creative possibilities. For Gordon (2014), playfulness is the attitude that makes the shift possible. For both of these authors, the hallmark for play is freedom: spontaneity of the total self to move as a whole in relationship to the total environment. As theatre luminary Spolin (1999, p. 11) explains:

In spontaneity, personal freedom is released, and the total person, physically, intellectually and intuitively, is awaked. This causes enough excitement for the participant to transcend himself or herself - he or she is freed to go out into the environment, to explore, adventure, and face all dangers unafraid... Every part of the person functions together as a working unity, one small organic within the larger organic whole of the agreed environment, which is the game structure.

Bermant, (2013 ) claims that Spolin captures the main elements of the spontaneity, participation, intimacy, delight, flexibility, freedom, risk and harmonious relationships that make play possible. Whilst Sutton-Smith (1997) argues, adults, as well as children, are always engaged in play in one form or another, either simple or complex. This distinction is a cornerstone to this thesis and warrants its own section within the literature review.

### **Adult Play**

Sutton-Smith (1997) supports the notions that play is not only an integral element of our childhood but can be equally be experienced as an adult. Why else, he claimed, would adults play crosswords, and other games like teasing and hazing, which are all part of play being valued in ontological terms (p.100). Play was always intended as a healing function, whether for a child or adult. “It remains a major method of becoming reconciled with our being within our present universe” (Sutton-Smith, 1997, p. 124). Chick, Yarnal, and Purrington (2012) also support Sutton’s perspective that most theories on play are outdated because they fail to acknowledge that play occurs amongst adults. When adults play, they are driven by a reward system both intrinsic and extrinsic in nature. Just like a child, adults seek out intrinsic rewards

that both spark pleasure, feelings of achievement, self-worth and personal development, and external rewards that may involve prizes or trophies (p.409).

DeKoven (2002) adds a critical dimension to the debate when he asks what is play for? He believes some authors cover everything in depth about why play exists, except the possibility that it might be fun. He concludes that play is fun for children and remains so for most adults. Accordingly, adults do play adults (Yarnal, Chick and Kerstetter, 2009; Yarnal and Qian, 2011).

Adult play is often just an extension of child's play (Elkind, 2007; Piaget, 1962) insofar as children play games with rules from around age five or six and may continue these activities into late adulthood. Play can become more complex in nature, according to Chick et al. (2012), and more cognitively challenging. For example, teasing and joking, as an adult, might involve more linguistic manipulation and is often followed by more physical play, referred to as "horse play" (p.415). Whether experienced on the sports field, cooking, gambling, or in pursuit of the make-believe (Winnicott, 1971) or magical thinking (Huizinga, 1955), or in the moments when groups create improvisation, bantering, and pursuits of intimacy and happiness, adults are at play (Boyd, 1991; Cavell, 1981; Spolin, 1999). Gordon (2014) identifies two categories of play; the first is attuned and the second exploratory play. For the purpose of this research, adult play will be categorised using the definition of attuned play, or play that requires more than one person and leads to a myriad of forms of more complex social play: social games including rough and tumble play, joking, mimetic play, agnostic play, contests, festivals, celebrations and rituals (Fredrickson, 2001).

Fredrickson and Joiner (2002) claim this type of play enables an upward spiral of well-being that results in contentment, enjoyment, and engenders a sense of safety amongst those who are engaged. The benefits conferred include a reduction in stress and enhancement of coping strategies in adults. Adult play therefore constitutes the primary formative element in human culture, As Huizinga argues, we are, after all, *Homo Ludens*, an inherently playful species, and this is why humans play throughout their life span, creating elaborate cultures, ingenious inventions and artistic expression (Huizinga, 1955). Play is often seen as a cherished part of childhood and is important for development, but as we become adults, taking time out to play feels like guilty pleasure, according to Brown and Vaughn (2009, p. 8). They argue adult play is a biological drive and is as integral to our health as sleep and nutrition. In fact, actively engaging in play can contribute to our sense of happiness and is hard-wired in our brains, a mechanism by which we become resilient, smart and adaptable people. It could be argued that

play in adults is a holistic experience. It invites our total being into the process and may be a natural and enduring behaviour in adults that we are only just beginning to appreciate.

## **Conclusions**

An examination of the terms Sport, Leisure, Recreation and Play I believe, permit an analysis of the nature of the AUS event itself. Sport for an example, is sanctioned within a clearly defined set of activities that are governed by the organisers, although often, during the act of competing, one can also be at play as competitors create their own unique way of showing their physical prowess. The boundaries are not always black and white. Despite how play can interface with sport, for the purpose of this thesis, I define sport as the twenty-two activities offered at the AUS event, each having its own set of well-established rules that are officially governed. In comparison, the leisure and recreational opportunities I argue, are experienced during the non-sporting activities and are often not sanctioned by the organisers, but freely chosen by the participants themselves. The ability for the participants to create their own environments in which they can experience recreation and leisure is an important element of the event.

During recreation and leisure, participants begin to enter another sphere of experience. The non-competition period provides a time to regain energy to pursue activities freely without obligation. The pursuit of various recreation activities provides a sense of freedom where participants may experience play. In the context of the AUS setting, play is defined as an opportunity for participants to experience something intrinsically motivating to them because it is freely chosen and occurs in a distinct space which often permits a shift from a rational to an irrational world. It is a way for participants to reduce the complexities of the AUS setting by creating new frames that serve their needs and provides an opportunity for creativity, fun and frivolity, a desire that is not just beneficial for children, but healthy for adults. Determining the existence of play at the AUS event will therefore be the focus of the next chapter.

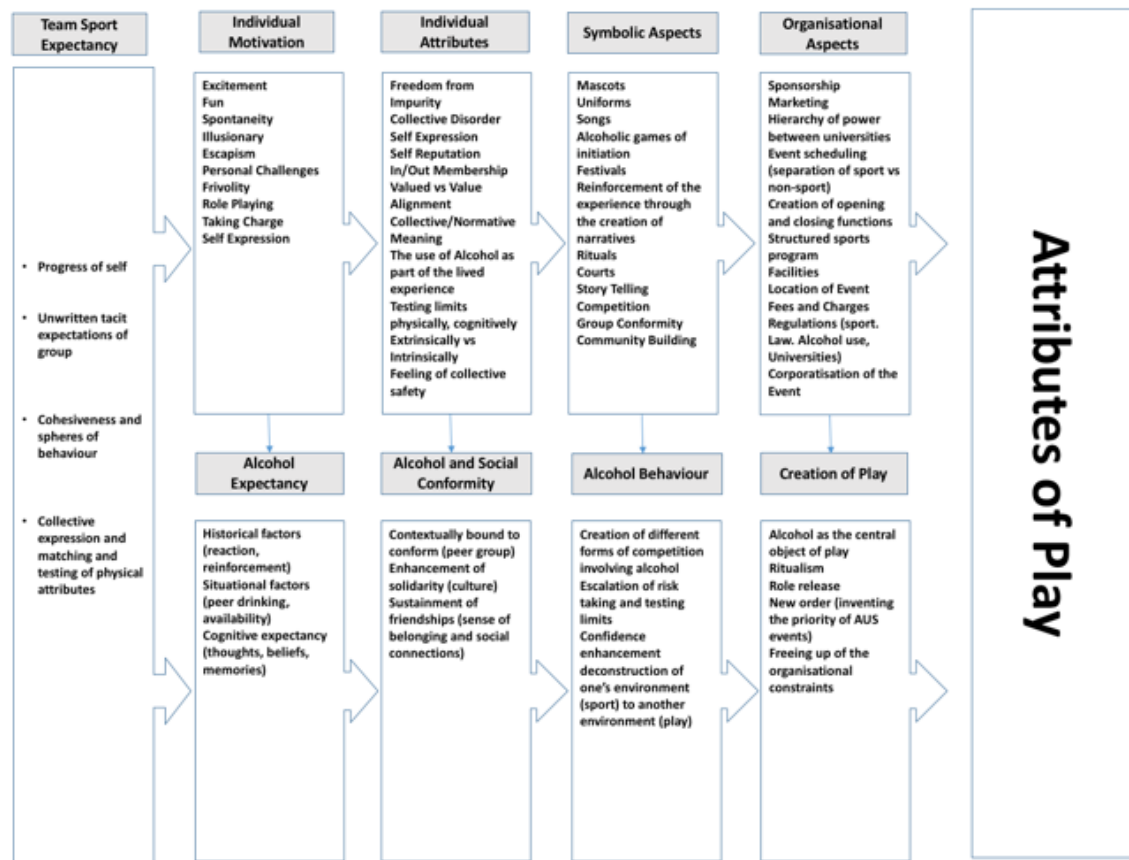


## **Chapter 5 - Determining the Existence of Play at the AUS Sporting Event**

### **Introduction**

In this chapter I will present a number of models that I have developed to enable the interpretation and existence of play at the AUS event. Through this lens I will be able to interpret the types of behaviours collected from the quantitative, qualitative and observational data and demonstrates the existence of play at the event. As discussed in the previous chapter, it is easier to define children's play, but it is far more complex to define in adults. This is partly because the boundaries in adult play are more complex and more difficult to frame. Subsequent frameworks developed in this chapter will demonstrate the complexities associated with the enactment of adult play at the AUS event. Play within this setting is created as a result of a complex array of symbolic and organisational aspects and behaviours. Through the use of alcohol, participants create a new order for themselves, one that is self-regulated, spontaneous, pleasurable and indulgent. I will begin by presenting the overall model describing the elements associated with the formation of play at the AUS event

## Attributes of Play at the AUS Event

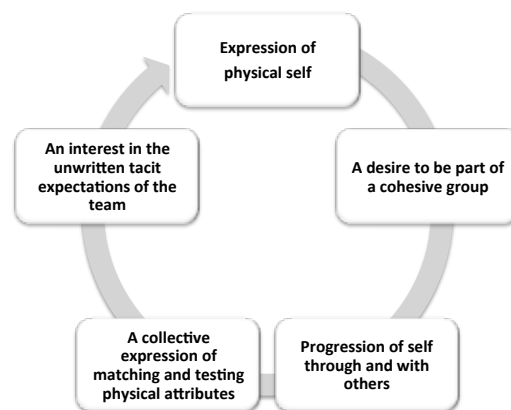


**Figure 5.1 Attributes of Play**

I support the notion that to gain an understanding of any behaviour one needs to take an inter-disciplinary approach. For Bolman and Deal (2013), using an inter-disciplinary approach and developing an interpretive framework enables the assembling of perceptual data to be presented in a coherent way. I developed Figure 1. by reviewing the themes in the literature and creating a schematic approach as a way of understanding the elements of play involved in both sporting activities and alcohol consumption. It is comprised of a number of elements, which together contribute to the understanding of the enactment of play at the event. Team sports expectancy involves a desire to express themselves as part of a collective, such as a sports team. Individual motivation participants seek out personal gains, such as fun. Individual attributes participants can test themselves physically and cognitively. Symbolic aspects create a narrative of the event, including uniforms and mascots. Organisational elements created by the event managers include the nature of the sports offered, the location, and the rules and regulations. Alcohol expectancy includes the way participants believe they will engage with alcohol at the event as a result of past experiences or stories they have heard from others. Alcohol as a social

conformity is the way alcohol is used to deconstruct the highly structured daily sports routine to one that is created by the participants themselves. Alcohol behaviours collectively create an environment in which play is enacted. While figure 1.1 would suggest a linear relationship between these elements, the more important assertion is they are interconnected, but not necessarily in a linear fashion. To better understand how they are linked, each element will now be presented and explained separately.

### Team Sports - Participant Expectancy



**Figure 5.2 Team Sports - Participant Expectancy**

It could be argued that participants are often attracted to being part of a team sport because it enables them to focus on a collective set of goals, fosters an environment that upholds a set of rules and spheres of behaviour, and fulfils a need to be part of a cohesive group. It permits the opportunity for collective physical and emotional expression and provides an opportunity for these to be matched against others in the team. I support the notion that Individuals who are attracted to a team have an unwritten and tacit expectation of the team as a collective. Underpinning this desire is a need to know what it feels like to be part of an environment that may be capable of fulfilling a number of motivations, including a strong need to socialise, belong and connect, to make new friends and to experience what it means to be part of a collective group (Anshel, 2003; Eys, Burke, Carron and Dennis, 2006).

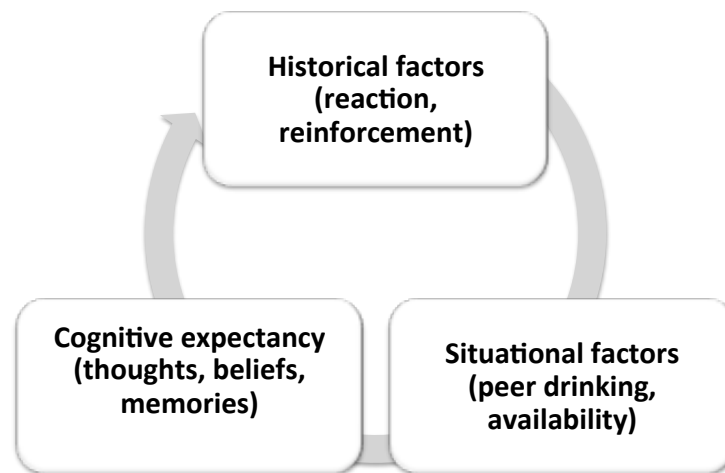
A collective group such as sports teams plays an important role in shaping human relationships. Firstly, it culturally distinguishes them from other groups and teams through a unique set of

characteristics that create an identity that sets them apart (Eys et al., 2006). Secondly, it provides a clear set of roles, positions and interactions allowing a person to feel part of a collective group. Zander, cited in Eys et al. (2006), describes a group as a set of individuals who interact and depend on each other. The level of cohesion within a team sport is often determined by the level of personal satisfaction/dissatisfaction they receive from each other's presence (Cox, 2006). The collective cohesiveness experienced within a team sports environment is a dynamic process that is held together by the pursuit of its goals (Paskevich, Estabrooks, Brawley and Carron, 2001). It is only maintained when players are united in a common purpose (Cashmore, 2002). Individual and group aspects of cohesion are based on the beliefs and perceptions of individual group members, including attraction to the group and its social cohesiveness (Jarvis, 2006). The more time players spend together on shared common interests outside their chosen sport, the stronger the cohesiveness.

Four factors affect the way the cohesiveness in a team develops. They include a clear role for team members, a willingness to make personal sacrifices for the team, the quality of communication between team members, and the shared goals of the team (Jarvis, 2006). These factors create an effective climate that fosters the atmosphere, environment, conditions and interrelationships amongst the team members, and sets the level of trust and the level of risk they are prepared to take for the team (Anshel, 2003). There are several correlates of cohesion in sport, according to Anshel. These include: (1) environmental factors, such as normative pressures; (2) personal factors, such as a sense of responsibility for negative outcomes; (3) leadership factors, such as the task versus person orientation; (4) team factors. Environmental factors that may affect the team include the level of the competition and the size of the team, personal factors such as not contributing to the shared team goal, and leadership factors, including style and behaviour. The way cohesiveness is socialized is the process by which individual players become members of the team culture (Cashmore, 2002). Individuals learn the accepted behaviour from other team members and adopt their behaviours and the norms of that team. Socialization includes not only the specialized skills, but the behaviours exhibited both on and off the field.

Taking the above into account, it could be argued that the motivation for engaging in team sports could simply be a desire to connect and belong through a shared set of goals and behaviours. I begin to explore this further by presenting a model that considers how alcohol becomes part of the sports team experience.

## Team Sports and Alcohol Expectancy



**Figure 5.3 Team Sports and Alcohol Expectancy**

The concept of drinking alcohol is based on an assumption that certain valued outcomes will be achieved. This expectancy provides a subjective assessment and justification for the decision to drink alcohol because it predisposes a particular outcome. There are three factors that lead to this conclusion: historical, situational and cognitive expectancies.

### *Historical Factors*

Historical factors relate to the previous reactions and reinforcement that participants experienced. For example, was it personally enjoyable? Did it contribute to positive reinforcement of self? Did others provide positive responses, or did alcohol lead to a negative experience? What were the stories that I heard about the event? Do I want to share in these experiences? If the stories are more about positive expectancy then the motivation to attend the event will be underpinned by the desire to engage with alcohol behaviours, and will become the dominate motivation for attending, as opposed to the sporting event itself.

### *Cognitive Factors*

Cognitive factors are our beliefs and memories, and provide the basis for how we choose to contextualize our expectations about being involved in activities and how we will choose to respond and behave towards others. The thoughts, beliefs and memories about experiences create a level of expectancy about how participants will choose to engage in activities. Alcohol expectancy, for example, may be associated with lots of fun, connectedness and bonding with others, and these beliefs become the cognitive expectations we have about consumption of alcohol. The more positive the experience, the more it becomes desirable.

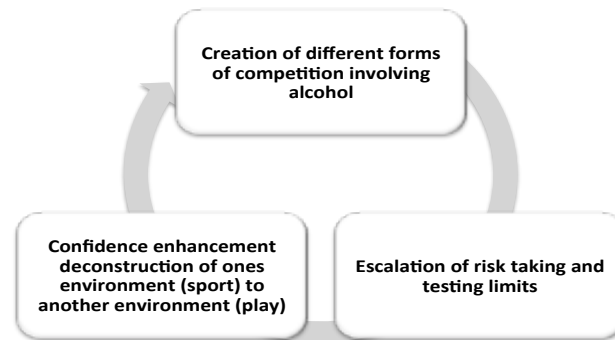
### *Situational Factors*

There are pertinent situational factors that contribute to the expectancy to drink at sporting events.

- The gathering of thousands of young people into one location creating a festival atmosphere.
- A location that is set up for tourism where supply of and demand for alcohol is high,
- A highly developed night economy including venues and clubs.
- The delineation of one's responsibility to their sport, recreational play environments.
- The scheduling of the sporting competitions during the day.

Historical, cognitive and situational expectancy contributes collectively to the choices made to both attend the event and to engage in alcohol behaviours. Both the historical and cognitive expectancies provide the reinforcement and narrative for both the event and the behaviours. The situational expectancy is reinforced by the choice of location and atmosphere that is created within that environment. The culmination of these three elements results in supporting alcohol behaviours. I will present a further model to explain the elements which contribute to the alcohol behaviours.

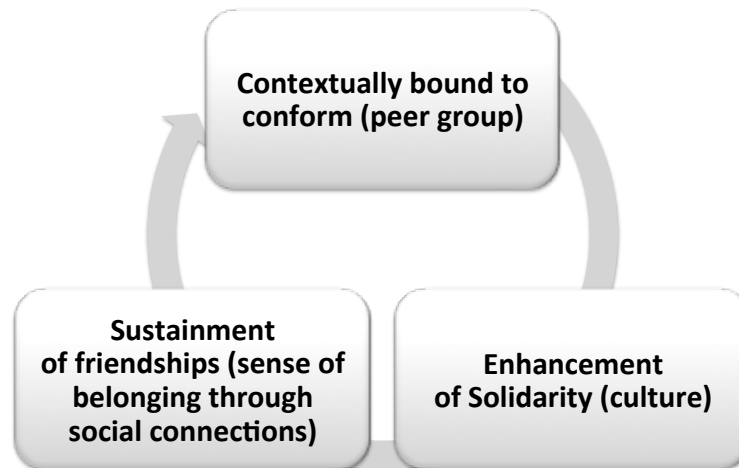
## Alcohol Behaviour



**Figure 5.4 Alcohol Behaviour**

Figure 5.4 explains that drinking alcohol lends itself to creating different forms of behaviour that engage participants in activities associated with the escalation of risk taking, creativity, exploration of self and others through games of chance, competition and individual role creation, all of which provide an enhancement of confidence as they deconstruct one environment whilst creating an alternative one. The ritualistic nature of drinking games amongst university students involved in sport is a long standing one. Elias (1996) made an important contribution to our understanding of drinking rituals in sport, or sport-like contexts, in Germany. The drinking rituals he describes grew up alongside the development of the Bestimmungsmensur (the practice of ‘duelling by appointment’), which emerged in that context and which formed, in effect, a subculture. This subculture, as it relates to the team sport setting, endorses a type of alcohol behaviour that is acceptable only within a specific environment. Games involving alcohol permit participants to behave in ways condoned through the membership of the team which in some way give participants the rite to deconstruct their environment into one that enables risk taking, fun and frivolity. This deconstruction from one reality to another, aided by alcohol use, becomes the norm. Much of this deconstruction relates to contextually binding the participants beyond just their competition to one that is strengthened further through social conformity. I will now explain how alcohol influences social conformity

## Alcohol and Social Conformity



**Figure 5.5 Alcohol and Social Conformity**

As mentioned earlier, alcohol is a potent symbol of socialisation, in many societies associated with the “rite of passage” for young people (Lindsay, 2005). Within the social settings in which the peer groups meet, young people drink to fit in or be accepted and achieve a sense of intimacy and belonging (Hayes et al., 2004; Lindsay, 2005). (The) “apparently fairly ubiquitous needs of human beings for forms of stimulation which can only be provided by other human beings can easily be neglected if one looks primarily...at the individual organism as a self-contained system. It is for that reason that medical attempts at explaining drinking...are apt to be somewhat inadequate. It is not quite enough to point to the fact that the ‘depression of the inhibitory centres of the brain’ due to the consumption of alcohol ‘produces a transient feeling of well-being’ if one tries to explain the social functions of drinking. If it were merely a feeling of well-being which people were seeking from the use of alcohol, they could just as well stay at home and drink their alcohol there. It is much more likely that people drink alcohol in company because, by depressing the inhibitory centres of the brain, it facilitates the friendly reciprocal stimulation on a relatively high level of emotionality, which is the essence of leisure sociability. A glass or two enables people to loosen relatively quickly the often rather deeply ingrown armour of restraints and thus to open themselves to the mutuality of playful arousal which serves as a counter-agent to the relative loneliness of the fully armoured individual and



to his or her commitments and routines in non-leisure spheres, including that of family life. Thus, leisure-gemeinschaften reinforced by drinking provides, like many other leisure events, opportunities for raising the level of overt emotionality...in the presence of others. The excitement thus generated is usually expected not to go beyond certain limits. As in other leisure events, it can get out of hand. The risk is always there. It may well be that 'playing with fire' in this case too is part of the pleasure...Approaching the border of what is socially permissible and sometimes transgressing it, in short a limited breaking of taboos in the company of others, probably adds spice to these gatherings" (Elias and Dunning, 1986, pp. 123-124).

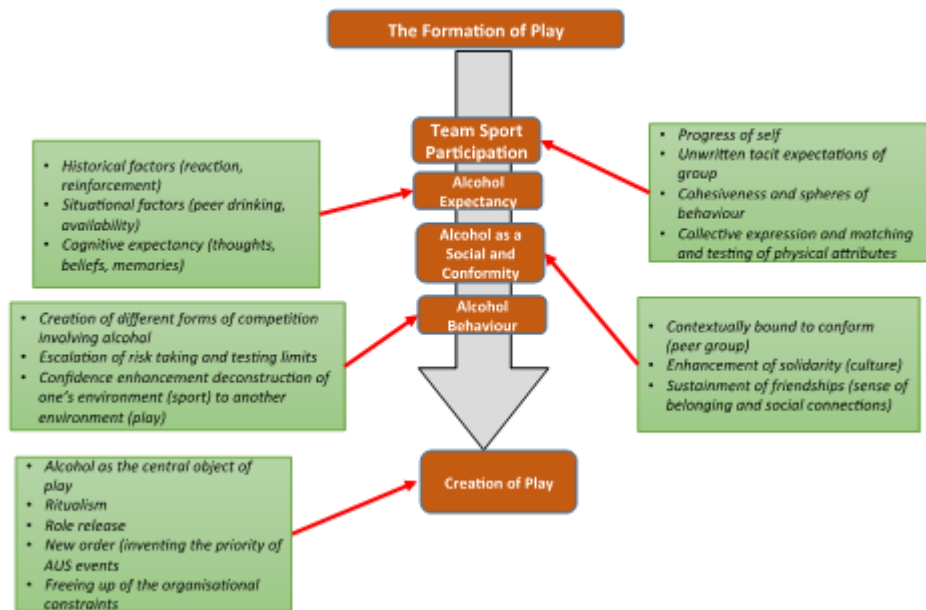
Elias (1996, p. 122) also hypothesised that parties, pub communities, works outings and office parties can be described as 'leisure gemeinschaften' because such gatherings counteract 'the routinization inherent in the relatively impersonal contacts which are prevalent in the non-leisure spheres of (industrial) societies', and hence that it is important to research the functions of the drinking of alcoholic beverages in such contexts. Accordingly, they developed (i) a brief critique of what was, at that time, and perhaps is still today, the dominant medical view of alcohol consumption; and (ii) a sociological hypothesis concerning the functions of alcohol in leisure. Humans have strong needs for stimulation in and through the company of others as an 'end-in-itself', and the consumption of alcohol helps in breaking the socially instilled inhibitions characteristic of the majority of people in complex, relatively impersonal and highly routinized societies (Dunning and Waddington (2003). By using phrases such as 'a glass or two' and 'a limited breaking of taboos in the company of others', they implied that the dominant norm regarding alcohol consumption in the societies of the present-day is one that involves moderate drinking as a means of reaching out to others and making emotionally meaningful and enjoyable contacts with them.

For Akers (1992), the purpose of alcohol within the social setting is to enjoy the presence of friends, rather than the alcohol itself, and the importance of these social settings sees some individuals constructing an identity that reflects the activities of others, and in some cases provides an identity for themselves within the social group (Donnelly and Young, 1988). Figure 3 presents three elements of how alcohol and social conformity occur while figure 2. suggests participants are attracted to team sports because of the shared purpose and the desire to belong to a group. By belonging to a group, participants become contextually bound to conform to the peer group. This enables friendships to be sustained and social connections to be strengthened, resulting in a conducive environment where collective behaviours can be expressed. If alcohol contributes to social conformity, then being part of a team sport further fosters the environment.

Identity is developed through, “An accretion of the composite meanings individuals attach to the roles they typically play in interpersonal situations, meanings that to some degree frame our interpretations of social reality and guide our behavioural expectations” (Miller and Kypri, 2009). Identity then is about the relationship between self and society (Mead, 1934), whereby identity plays out in ways both internal (the individual’s self-reflective evaluation) and social (others’ evaluations of the individual). Moreover, role identities may be organized hierarchically in terms of their relative salience. The more salient an identity is relative to other identities, the more likely that it will be invoked across a variety of contexts (Stryker, 1968; Stryker and Serpe, 1994) to the extent that some of the participants may gain their identities through behaving in certain ways, and at times be afforded a higher salient identity from other team members. The excessive predominance of one social self over others can lead to identity foreclosure, or a premature commitment to a certain lifestyle to the exclusion of other unexplored alternative types of behaviour (Miller and Kypri 2009). The relationship between behaviour and identity is circular, and as Miller and Kypri (2009) claim, an individual may construct an identity that creates a subculture within a sports team as a means of connecting and belonging to the group.

The model and consequential framework presented thus far in this chapter have identified the influences and legitimate meanings associated with the use of alcohol within a specific environment and how this behaviour can result in the creation of a play experience. I will now draw together all the elements presented thus far in this chapter to explain the formation of play.

## The Formation of Play



**Figure 5.6 The Formation of Play**

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the formation of play is created as a result of a complex array of symbolic and organisational consequences and behaviours, and through the use of alcohol, participants create a new order for themselves, one that is self-regulated, spontaneous, pleasurable and indulgent. The shifting of behaviour both within and between the symbolic and organizational frames enables the art of play to be created. The introduction of alcohol makes this switch to different realities much faster and becomes the object of play itself. It fast tracks opportunities for adrenalin-seeking, risk-taking, and release of excessive emotional and physical energy, which when discharged, leaves the participant with a positive sense of self, a feeling of satisfaction and achievement. It is a euphoric experience motivated by social, psychological, physiological and cathartic outcomes. Play and alcohol use is part of the social conformity that is contextually bound within recreation and leisure. The factors contributing to the participant's decision to engage in alcohol use within this context relates to the level of social reinforcements, such as peer pressure, the desire to contribute to the solidarity of the culture within a team, and the need to enforce an enhanced sense of belonging. In understanding play and alcohol use, one cannot overlook the obvious motive, that drinking might be as simple as a desire to speed up the process of experiencing the euphoria of play. Through chemically inducing states of make-believe, participants can create social play, including liquid friendships and situational mateship between and across the genders with

expediency, quickly setting the mood for play and suspension of serious life. Paradoxically, it is a narcissistic way of freeing oneself and being in control of being out of control. It creates liquid friendships that are based on alcohol and play combined. The play experience is determined by how one reacts to the alcohol consumption. The experience can be one of aggression, more playful, unified or individualistic. The use of alcohol makes it safer to surrender to playful urges, take chances, and it adds to the intensity of play. If play is primary to and a necessary condition of the generation of culture, then what is proposed and supported through the literature is that alcohol use is also part of the culture within some settings, and therefore forms part of the enactment of play itself.

The selfish tendencies of some individuals may be in response to the knowledge that often their leisure and recreation time is limited and their desire to engage in the freedom to act out can only occur within a limited space of time. Within a sporting event, it is against the bureaucratic backdrop of the event itself, the structured and ordered sporting competition separated so clearly from the unstructured social program that underpins the nature of play. Play is not generally observed so openly during the sporting competitions. The participants appear to make a deliberate choice to activate their playfulness when they have the opportunity of combining this with alcohol during and outside of the sporting competition. Alcohol during play creates even more unpredictability and at times unglues the social structure that surrounds play. Consuming alcohol in pursuit of faster pleasure is not totally without boundaries. If participants engage in excessive consumption of alcohol during play, their behaviour may be re-coded by the participants as disruptive, and therefore play ceases to exist. If the combination of alcohol and play becomes too intolerable for the participants, they will disengage. Once alcohol consumption during play becomes problematic, so does enjoyment, a key element of the play experience. An example is when the disorder that is play results in participants being thrown back into reality because of serious accidents.

The characteristics of these playful experiences often absolve participants from any consequences, and it is a rare opportunity for them to play and consume alcohol without political and moral interference. When play forms part of the team culture, participants are given a collective opportunity to surrender to these playful urges, to take chances, try new roles within the team and attempt tasks they may not otherwise have engaged in or avoided. It provides a collective way to participate in frivolous and enjoyable experiences that allow for time out of one's self within the safety of others.

## **Symbolic and Organisational Aspects of the AUS Event**

Symbolic and organisational elements define the nature of the AUS event and include both the opening and closing ceremonies. The opening ceremony combines a formal event involving dignitaries and sponsors, and a festival atmosphere for participants involving music, alcohol, dancing and games. The formal component of the event involves acknowledgment of supporters and sponsors, including government and officials, and is used to convey the sports rules, regulations, and behaviours expected. The symbolic influence becomes important when participants give meaning to the organisational elements. Settings such as the AUS event become more important to the participant because of what is expressed (symbolic), rather than for what is produced (organizational). The participant's involvement weaves a tapestry of myths and heroes, rituals, ceremonies and stories to help them to find a purpose and passion. Within this uncertainty and ambiguity, participants find a place to anchor and connect, one that binds and unites them.

The symbolic elements within any organisation carry powerful intellectual and emotional messages about an organisation, and are often speaking to both the hearts and minds of the organisation. According to Gottschall (2012, p. 1), human life is so bound up in symbolism as it offers comfort, reassurance, direction and hope, and can perpetuate values and keep dreams alive. Symbolic stories, on the other hand, are deeply rooted in the human experience and are told repeatedly. Whilst rules can be intimidating, stories, according to Armstrong (1992), are invariably inviting, funny, and sometime inspiring and recognized. Rituals provide the basis against which these suppositions are enacted. Humans create both personal and communal rituals daily (Bolman and Deal 2013). The wearing of uniforms, singing of songs, the drinking games, are all ritualistic in nature. Accordingly, it's not always known how important these rituals are until they are gone. Campbell (1988) states that when you lose rituals, you lose a sense of civilization, making life seem out of kilter. A ritual also delineates key relationships.

The ceremonies that are often associated with rituals serve four major roles (Bolman and Deal 2013); they socialise, stabilize, reassure, and convey messages to external constituents, both ceremonies and rituals release creativity and transform meanings, but they can also cement the status quo and block adaption and learning (Bolman and Deal 2013). The ceremonies that participants are involved in at the AUS event have evolved over many years, are held by each of the universities and repeated each year. The various symbolic elements embraced form part of its culture. According to Schein (1992;1996) some argue organisations are cultures, whilst

others believe organisations have cultures. For Sinclair (1993), culture is both a product and a process. As a product, it embodies wisdom accumulated from experience. As a process, it is renewed and recreated as newcomers learn the old ways and eventually become teachers themselves. It may be the stories told by participants involved that often keep the symbolic elements of the experience alive. Any sporting event, as a whole, is made up of many symbolic determinants established by the stakeholders involved, each providing examples that resonate with the participants and reinforce the group law existing within the team sports. Berger, (1972) describes this as “ways of seeing”, which he argues becomes our explanation of what we see. These images create a story in our mind that we then explain to the world. It becomes storytelling, the art of transfer; our perception of what we see. It’s a dynamic process as it begins with recognition of what we see, develops into a system that integrates with our past experience/knowledge, and then changes the way we actually see things (Berger 1972).

When people engage in recreation, leisure and play, they may see images of what the activity might be like long before they have an opportunity to engage. This can be transferred through photographs, posters and the like. Looking at these images creates a level of expectancy about being involved. Berger (1972) argues that sometimes our perception of images is often about something we want to believe exists. Sales of products are impacted by these images, including clothing, alcohol and local tourism. The level of consumption of these products is part of our desire for pleasure (Berger 1972): a promise for happiness and to be envied for having the opportunity to be part of the experience. Elias and Dunning (1986) argue leisure, sporting and recreation events provide a level of excitement, joy, spontaneity often missing or constrained within normal daily lives. Our desire for emotional stimulation and pleasurable play excitement is often therefore fulfilled through our leisure activities. These pursuits accordingly interrupt the staleness of the routine of life by representing an unreal fantasy.

Elias and Dunning (1986) purport that children are not the only ones to seek out pleasurable excitement; the difference between playing as adults is it is often not regarded as normal behaviour. It is usually embarrassing for the onlookers to watch and is sometimes regretted later by the participants for allowing themselves to get carried away in the excitement. As adults, we are expected to check our levels of excitement and to be somewhat in control of this desire. Play may often permit an upsurge of strong emotions, spontaneity, newness and joy without any restraints, which is a good, as we need to be intermittently flushed with exciting experiences that take us out of the routine nature of our lives (Elias and Dunning 1986). Excitement is the core of most play experiences and is the antithesis to the “rational routines of Life” (Dunning,

1969, p.54). The structural and symbolic determinates presented in Figure 5.1 provide insight into the nature of how play can become part of the lived experience when engaging in sporting events.

## **Conclusions**

This chapter sets the framework to resolve the thesis question as to why alcohol consumption is given symbolic meaning by participants who attend a university sporting event, and how the behaviour exhibited can be defined as a form of play. Play, in this context, is complex and may appear to be everything that is not sport, recreation and leisure. Clearly they interface at different stages. Given the nature of the many ways play can be experienced, a definition of play within the event needs to be considered, in line with understanding how alcohol and play are organized, replicated and reinforced through systems, culture, experience and behaviour. The models validate the transformative powers of play and how it provides an opportunity for individuals to move from the real world to the world of play. The theoretical framework also provides a way of interpreting drinking behaviours and the construction of play. The intrinsic world of play is a complex one that is often overlooked in the adult world. The conscious and unconscious desire for adults to play is motivated by the desire to produce an altered state of self. This is a dynamic situation driven by both the collective and individual motivational determinants of the participants. The desire to socially connect through play is simply associated with fun, enjoyment, trust, self-expression and freedom. Alcohol consumption is not play, more a stimulant for encouraging an alternative state not necessarily permitted within the adult world.

Participants engage in play because it allows them to expose their vulnerabilities safely and to possibly master an activity. When this occurs within the context of the social environments, a variety of cognitively complex activities can be experienced. When combined with alcohol, these experiences are play-like and fun, creating an atmosphere where there is little impunity for those who do not achieve the desired outcome. It can be chaotic as players become aroused and excited by the different mastery of skills or chaos that ensue as a result of introducing alcohol. There is also a degree of capability required by the participants to navigate the complexity of play, as they must interpret and explore new avenues for development needed in order to partake in the play activity. An inability to meet both complexity and capability challenges during play impacts the overall play experiences and may determine whether the participants are passively or actively engaged.

The next chapter will outline the research design of the study and explain why the use of a mixed methods approach was considered appropriate for the examination of both a specific population and the environment of the university sporting event.



## Chapter 6 - Design of the Study

### Introduction

In this chapter the research methods and methodology are presented to justify the approach used to determine why participants who attend a major university-sporting event consume alcohol and why the behaviour they exhibit is enacted as a form of play. Specifically, the study aims to investigate the environmental influences that shape the way alcohol is used by university students, and examine the reasons why they symbolically value the behaviour experienced. It draws on both social psychology and sociology as a means of interpreting behaviour.

In any study the selection of methodologies and research design does not happen in isolation. It is linked to the way in which the researcher approaches central questions of ontology and epistemology. This requires the researcher to first ask some critical questions about the methods to be used, the ways in which things can be interpreted; the types of approaches that can be taken before critically assessing personal knowledge and beliefs about the reality of the topic. Guba and Lincoln (1994) capture the essence of the research project by asking, “What is the form and nature of reality and therefore, what is there that can be known about it?” Within the context of this thesis, a quantitative and qualitative approach is required.

Before specifics can be decided, I interrogated my own beliefs about the reality of alcohol use. My basic contention is that reality is socially constructed and, as such, is my ontology. My intent is to ultimately investigate what can be learnt as knowledge about this reality, and therefore this study examines a number of different realities experienced by individuals who attend an event and investigates the assertions made by the participants about their experiences. How these are transmitted and maintained in social situations becomes the knowledge I am seeking, and with appropriate analysis, how this social construction becomes one’s reality.

Berger (1972) argues the epistemology requires the relative determination of accumulative evidence of human thought and action. This is a challenge, given the researcher has his/her own knowledge and beliefs about the community being investigated. As a consequence, within the context of this thesis I needed to come to terms with my personal beliefs before developing the research paradigms and selecting the research methodology for this study.

This is aligned with Guba and Lincoln's (1992) proposition that researchers need to reflect, articulate and act upon the values, axiology and beliefs that inform their research at the outset. The assumptions that underpin the particular ontology and epistemology of this research have been shaped by historical, social, and political factors constructed and experienced in different ways by individuals and communities, and that knowledge is contextual and can be emancipatory in nature. The cornerstone of this thought lies in the realm of Constructionism as it comfortably applies to the social cultural world, in that “reality is socially constructed” (Merton, Mongardini, and Tavvoni 1998) and Berger, P., et. al (1966). It suggests that all manner of objects and phenomena are in some way socially constructed. At one level an object's existence is determined through an individual's sensory perception; through communicative acts, both intra- and interpersonally, they are defined and eventually embody meaning. To have meaning accurately predicts and creates our social reality, which becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, leading to biased judgments regarding one's social reality.

### **Understanding the Meaning of Social Behaviours**

The truth or meaning of social behaviour, according to constructionist accounts, comes into existence as a result of engaging with the realities of one's world. It is therefore constructed, not discovered, with different people creating meaning in various ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon. An underlying assumption with constructionism is that the social world is without meaning prior to one's experience of it. From this paradigm, the individual is not a passive recipient of a set meaning, but an active, resourceful and reflective participant in the construction of the meaning (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). It is believed that within this encounter an individual develops their social construction of reality and through this journey defines a view of the world, one's construction of reality (Berger,J., 1972; Mead,1934). This places a focus on gaining interpretations of reality derived from social interaction and interpersonal relationships. In many instances there is an interaction between the researcher and those taking part in the research as a participant. Using this approach requires the use of triangulation, with two or more methods, to compare the results against each other.

Triangulation is a powerful technique that validates and strengthens data through cross verification from different sources: a valued process. The core premise of triangulation as a design strategy is all methods have inherent biases and limitations, so the use of only one method to assess a given phenomenon will inevitably lead to biased and limited results (Green, Caracelli and Graham, 1989). Triangulation will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Alongside constructionism, the theoretical perspective that frames this study is Symbolic Interactionism, an interpretive theoretical perspective from which to examine individuals' actions and behaviours within social settings. This theoretical approach lends itself to this the thesis objectives as it is about developing a desire to understand society, particularly the influence culture plays in human behaviour (Mead 1934). This theory includes consideration of the society in which people are born, the historical development and social interaction of people within it, and the meaning given to a society through symbols and culture conventions. In each of these areas, the interactions with other people within the society contribute to the social construction of reality (Manis and Meltze 1972). Symbolic interactionism takes place in many directions within and between societies and carries with it the accepted norms, rules, values and conventions. Through this process, individuals develop an understanding of how they believe the social cultural world in which they live operates, and they gain an appreciation of where they, as individuals, fit into this understanding of the world. They develop a concept of themselves and their understanding of the roles they play in their social world.

The practical demands associated with investigating this complex research problem warranted the use of symbolic interactionism utilising a mixed methods approach to data collection. This provides a way of negotiating, investigating and analysing the social reality of a specific setting using a set of procedures and techniques involving both qualitative and quantitative data analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994). It was premised on the assumption that the multiplicity of methods would achieve a deeper understanding of the setting being investigated, and increase the scope of the inquiry by allowing different methods to be used that were most appropriate to the setting. For example, large volumes of ethnographic data could be collected online and more personalised feedback could be obtained through interviews and observations. The methodology selected is a classic deductive methodology utilising qualitative and quantitative research methodologies, or mixed methods.

## Mixed Methods



**Figure 6.1 Mixed Methods**

A mixed methods approach was considered to be most appropriate as its central premise permits the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination and provides a better understanding of the research problem than either method can achieve in isolation. Mixed methods also provide more comprehensive evidence for studying the research problem and helps to investigate questions that can only be answered using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. According to Lincoln and Guba (2000), the mixed methods approach is one that seeks to understand human experiences by making assumptions about individual meaning, while testing emergent understandings against reliable and robust sample sizes. Taking this pragmatic approach, the research design drew liberally from both the quantitative and qualitative methodologies. This method of enquiry allowed for multiple perspectives from participants, rather than a single reality and allowed the antecedent conditions to be examined, including both structured responses via a website survey, interviews and observations (Denzin et al., 2005).

Driscoll et al., (2007) argue that there are some disadvantages to this methodology. They note in particular that ‘when you quantitize qualitative data it loses its flexibility and depth, which is one of the main advantages’ (p.25). Accordingly, they advise researchers who quantitize qualitative data to avoid focusing on the quantitative dataset to the exclusion of the original qualitative data. A further challenge raised by both Roberts, (2000) and Driscoll et al, (2007) is mixed methods can cause corruption of the data unless the coding strategy separates clearly the open ended questions in the statistical analysis. This requires the researcher to analyse,

code and integrate the data from unstructured to structured data and it is important from the very beginning to think about the integration of the qualitative and quantitative results.

In accordance with this advice, I have chosen to avoid any attempt to quantize qualitative data, but instead used the two sources in a complementary fashion. Used cautiously, in this way, a mixed methods approach achieves a number of important outcomes. Firstly, information can be analysed and interpreted across a number of formats. Secondly, it allows the research question to be considered from any relevant angle using more than one investigation perspective. Specifically, in this study the use of the quantitative survey data provided an indication of the magnitude and prevalence of the alcohol behaviours and attitudes by analysing quantitative data, whilst the qualitative data provided an opportunity for more detailed exploration of the shared social values and the symbolic meaning attached to particular alcohol behaviours.

Green, Caracelli and Graham (1989) argue there are five general purposes of mixed methodology: triangulation, or seeking different methods that study the same phenomena; complementary, which seeks to clarify findings with results from others methods; development, using findings from one method to help inform the other method; initiation, identifying contradiction; expansion, expanding the breadth of enquiry by using different methods. Mixed methods studies can have one or more of these purposes. In this study the use of mixed methods is used to validate and better inform quantitative results by linking the information from qualitative data. Mixed methods can enhance the interpretation of significant findings, such as statistical indices, and practical value of findings (Green, Caracelli and Graham, 1989). Overall, combined quantitative and qualitative methods enable exploring more complex aspects and relations of the human and social world and encourages the employment of multiple paradigms, rather than a single perspective. It is not an easy approach to take, as it requires more resources to collect and analyse the data, and requires a theoretical understanding of both forms of enquiry

The use of qualitative research as a key element of the research design provides a measurable way to analyse observational and interview data deemed important within the setting being researched. The goal of qualitative research is to obtain insights into specific settings, processes and practices. It is used to study phenomena in natural settings and strives to interpret meanings that people place on these settings. It is an approach used to explore and understand social problems among individuals and within groups. This process of research involves collecting

data within the participants' setting and deductibly building and analysing general themes and making interpretations. Equally important is the use of quantitative data, as it enables the testing of objective data, examines the relationship amongst variables and enhances the statistical significance of findings. The use of this method is essential in collecting and analysing data required enriching the research outcome.

In order to conduct a successful mixed method study, three conditions should be in place: different sets of data should occur separately; neither type can build on the other during the data analysis stage; the results from each type of analysis are neither compared nor consolidated until both sets of analysis have been completed (Green, Caracelli and Graham, 1989). The study gathered information, using online, surveys, interviews, observations and discussions, and the convergence of these multiple sources of evidence at different stages and times of the event provides the appropriate research design for achieving the objectives of the study.

## **Surveys**

In this study the application of survey research is used as a means of gathering both qualitative and quantitative data. The quantitative data provides important background on the participants and the qualitative data allows participants to express their thoughts and feelings more generally. Online surveys allowed the researcher to collect data from a large number of participants from various settings and locations. The data collected from the surveys included both the participants' perceived level of daily consumption of alcohol prior to the event, the reasons for participants attending, and their motives for drinking and behaving in a certain way. When variables such as the above are collected at different intervals, changes in amount, quantity and motivation can be clearly measured. The surveys also resulted in a large number of participants being engaged, enabling a higher volume of comparisons to be made.

To enable a large sample size to be reached, two survey instruments were developed and utilised. The first was a pre-event online survey containing closed questions and the use of Likert scales, each question providing an understanding of alcohol usage of participants who were to attend the event. The completion of the survey was voluntarily undertaken as part of the registration process commencing three months out from the event. The pre-event questionnaire involved seven questions designed to identify the importance participants placed on attending the event: how important they perceived various aspects of the event to be; whether or not they drank alcohol, and their perceived related reasons for drinking or not drinking;

whether the participants had received any alcohol education from their university prior to attending the event, and if so, what was the main message.

The second questionnaire was a post-event survey and also contained closed questions and Likert scales. It was uploaded onto the AUS website one week after the completion of the event and remained on the site for two weeks. Participants were made aware of the survey via a link sent to all the participants using a mobile app. The questionnaire contained twelve questions, and included identification of gender, sport participation, alcohol consumption patterns, reasons for consumption patterns, and perception of teammates' drinking patterns. Online surveys were chosen as the preferred methodology as participants live all over Australia. Those who completed the survey did so voluntarily, with no supervision or involvement from the researcher, and each participant had anonymity. In all, 858 participants completed the pre-event survey and 773 the post-event survey.

## **Interviews**

According to Fontana and Frey (1998), interviews capture life experiences and are one of the most powerful tools researchers can use to try and understand another's reality. Although there are a number of ways to conduct interviews, including structured individual and group interviewing, for this research a semi-structured individual interview approach was considered appropriate, as I was trying to trace the network of influencers by studying a group of individuals who were interacting at an event.

I set out to use interviews in my approach to the research as I wanted to maintain an almost transactional question-and-answer approach, knowing the data was being complemented by a multiplicity of other sources that provided an avenue for storytelling. I quickly learnt the process of interviewing was not nearly as neat and tidy as I had expected. In practice, I allowed participants to add examples where needed, rather than be driven by the interview framework. Fortunately, most of these examples were pre-coded, allowing the research assistants to note the key words only, and did not interfere with the need to respectfully listen to the participant responses. The interviews were carried out on the last two days of the AUS event, with 1631 participants interviewed, about 23% of the total number competing ( $n=7003$ ). The final two days of the five-day event were chosen to ensure all potential participants in interviews had an opportunity to experience the event and be fully engaged as a participant.

Participants were asked a series of closed questions, including responding to a Likert scale questionnaire. The interviewer asked participants to indicate his/her chosen sport they were competing in during the week. They were asked whether they had consumed alcohol, and if so, under what conditions, and whether they're drinking habits had changed whilst at the event, and their perceived reasons and motives for the change. Those participants that had been drinking were asked to report how many drinks they consumed on an average day during the event and to estimate their perception of their teammates' drinking habits and behaviours.

The questions for the face-to-face interviews were different to the online survey, as they sought to discover whether the participants' alcohol consumption had changed throughout the week and the reason(s), if any, for these changes. The Likert scale format was used as a metrics, where participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with various statements. If necessary, at the request of the participants, they were able to complete this themselves, providing additional privacy to attempt a more illicit, honest response.

### **Observations**

Observations involve engaging in activities that enable the researcher to fit in with the environment in order to actively see what is happening, and require patience (DeWalt, K and DeWalt, M., 2002). It involves prolonged engagement within the setting, capturing subtle factors such as informal, unplanned activities, symbolic meanings, nonverbal communication and physical clues, all of which needs to be recorded and analysed (Merriam 1988). Unlike the interviews, this form of data collection has been described as an even more effective method of understanding specific settings, as it does not intrude or disrupt routine activities, which is sometimes the case with interviews (Carspecken, 1996).

As the observer, I was not positioned as an outsider, but more a participant, and therefore was able partake in informal conversations that were entered into willingly. The observer as participant enables the researcher to participate in the group activities whilst collecting data, and the group being studied is aware of the researcher's observation activities. This approach provides the researcher with a unique view of the setting and permits the researcher to become part of the overall experience, which provides a level of insightfulness that cannot be captured in most other data collection sources. The time spent in these different settings enables more opportunities to observe and to enrich the quality of the data collected and to explain the meaning such activities hold for the participants.



Capturing the symbolic representation of the sentiments, involving person, place, time, conception, thing, or occasion, is referred to by Kutsche (1998) as “ritualistic observations”. The AUS event has many such rituals of symbolic expression that required analysis through observation. In understanding the best method to undertake this observation, I drew on the works of Schensul, LeCompte, and Schensul (1999), who suggest the following:

- A count of attendees, including such demographics as age, gender, and race
- A physical map of the setting and description of the physical surroundings
- A portrayal of where participants are positioned over time
- A description of the activities being observed, detailing activities of interest

By following this process, I was able to gain a better understanding of the social setting in which many of these rituals were taking place, the dress and decorative accoutrements, the play and leisure activities, unique language patterns, storytelling, games and alcohol usage taking place. I used field notes as the primary way of capturing the data collected from participant observations. Notes taken included records of what I observed, including informal conversations with participants, records of activities and ceremonies, during which the researcher is unable to question participants about their activities, and journal notes that are kept on a daily basis. DeWalt, K., DeWalt, B., and Wayland (2000) describe these types of field notes as both data and analysis, as the notes provide an accurate description of what is observed and are the product of the observation process. As they note, observations are not data unless they are recorded into field notes.

Using the suggestions of De Munck and Sobo (1998), I used notebooks for keeping field notes, one with questions to be answered, and the other with more personal observations, including the casual and quirky comments, the conflicts, the jokes and quotes, religion, types of self-expression and the order in which they occurred, challenges that the participants took on and off the field, the way in which they experienced fun and excitement, and the engagement with alcohol in all that was deemed play. I had to summarise the notes from each day to maintain some degree of sanity over what I was taking in. Coding was used to select and emphasize information important enough to record, enabling the researcher to weed out extraneous information and focus the observations on the type of information needed for the study. De Munck and Sobo (1998) describe coding as:

"Rules for organizing symbols into larger and more meaningful strings of symbols. It is important, no, imperative, to construct a coding system, not because the coding system represents the 'true' structure of the process you are studying,

but because it offers a framework for organizing and thinking about the data"  
(p.48)

### **Observations and Story telling**

Patton (2002, pp. 432-433) points out the challenge of qualitative analysis lies in making sense of massive data sets, and how to construct these into a framework that is communicated effectively to reveal what the data is saying. He goes on to argue there are no strict regulations in how one should do this, but does advise it requires the researcher to ensure the data is analysed and communicated according to the objectives of the research. With this advice in mind, I maintained a method of analysis that supported the data analysis principles described in narrative research literature. This meant being open to and aware of all of the stories the participants shared, even if some of those fell outside my framework of relevancy for the study. The flow of analysis considered Kohler-Riessman's (2002) stages of narrative analysis, and also concepts of analysis from McCormack's (2000a) approach to interpretive story development, and Richardson's (2001) notion of writing as a method of inquiry.

I pre-coded the expected responses from my observations to allow the creation of an overarching theme, or themes, to emerge. This allowed the story or stories each participant shared during our conversations and observations to be captured. In some instances, a narrative thread was strikingly evident through an initial reading and listening. In other cases, multiple passes and detailed notation of the notes, guided by McCormack's (2000a) multiple-lenses approach to analysing narratives to organize ideas, were required before a narrative thread emerged.

Once I identified a narrative thread, I began to craft the interpretive stories (McCormack, 2000a) and the experience narrative (McCormack, 2000a) that would become the representation of the stories either shared or observed. This enabled me to engage in a primary mode of analysis and served as a means of cross-checking that the narrative thread identified in my early reading was, in fact, the best descriptor of the rich complexity of the stories I had heard or observed. Table 2 provides a summary of my understanding of McCormack's (2000a) lenses.

**Table 6.1 Summary of McCormack's (2000a) multiple lenses**

Lens	Summary	Analysis
Active Listening	- Recursive listening and reading of, with delayed notation for meaning making, so as to privilege listening in earlier rounds.	Descriptions of how and when? Relationships, situations and events? Perceptions of motives?
Narrative Processes	- Identifying strategies used to give shape to the story. Specifically: stories, description, argumentation, augmentation, and theorizing.	Coding and framing of narratives and themes.
Language	- Identifying the ways particular uses of language affect the way stories are interpreted.	What did the participant say? How did s/he say it? What didn't get said?
Context	- Identifying how the cultural context and situational context of the interview impact the stories told, and how they might best be interpreted given those contexts.	What cultural assumptions are at play? How do these affect what each person says? Do the notes reveal situational factors that aid interpretation (short vs. long answers, tone of researcher/participant interaction, what was/wasn't probed further?)
Moments	- Identifying points of interest that demand explanation.	Correlation to themes.

McCormack's (2000a, 2000b) method of developing interpretive stories resonated strongly with me, specifically in the sense that:

*Ethical and accountable research demands that when we write these stories we do not write research participants out of their lives... we need to write in a way that does not inscribe our writing with a narrative authority that rewrites a participant's story in such a way that it becomes our story only. (McCormack, 2000b, p. 312)*

I maximised the weeklong observations effectively by arming myself with a multitude of questions. Bernard (1994) refers to this as rapid assessment technique: "...going in and getting on with the job of collection data without spending months developing rapport. This means going into a field situation armed with a lot of questions that you want to answer and perhaps a checklist of data that you need to collect..." (p.139). I did experience some of the stages of observational research outlined by Bernard (1994), including initial contact challenges, shock on discovering the obvious, the breakthrough of what it all meant, the sheer exhaustion of

observing for 18-hour days over a week-long event, and the strangeness of leaving it all behind and re-entering a normal life.

### **Informants**

A crucial point for effective participant observation is the use of an informant. An informant is used to assist to further understand the observations by explaining language and historical issues, and to some extent participate in the research itself. The selection of the informant is obviously important as they can provide entry into the social environment within the event. The informant is usually well known and has experienced the event on multiple occasions. I found the informant through word of mouth, and through personal networks, and just by “hanging out”. Hammersley and Atkinson (1989, pp. 116-117) state there is no such thing as a perfect key informant, but in general they may have one or more of the following characteristics:

- Someone who, while part of the culture to be observed, is able to stand back - either by having come in from another culture, being new to the culture (the ‘rookie’), having recently changed status, or someone whose nature is reflective or observant.
- Someone who likes and is willing to talk, either someone who is naive and does not realise the import of her/his talk, or is frustrated or rebellious, or who is on the way out in terms of power once held, but now forfeited, or who is a victim of power games in the setting.
- Someone who needs to talk to others for their own emotional sustenance.
- Those with specialist knowledge.

In choosing a key informant, I realised no informant’s explanation can be given absolute privilege, and sometimes their accounts also needed to be tested against others’, and my own, observations. This validation of what is being said, against what one is seeing and hearing, is an important part of triangulation.

### **Validity and reliability in Observational studies**

In terms of strengthening the reliability in qualitative studies, Merriam (1988) suggests researchers provide a rational explanation of the study, seek to triangulate data from various sources, and leave an audit trail so the research process is transparent and clearly delineated. Guba and Lincoln (1992) prefer instead to use a more appropriate measure of trustworthiness, or what Bassey (1999, p. 75) refers to as “the ethic of respect and truth”. He proposes eight

critical questions designed to guide trustworthiness in qualitative research, including prolonged engagement with the data source; persistent observation of emerging issues; adequate checking of raw data; sufficient triangulation of raw data that lead to analytic statements; a challenge of the findings by a critical friend; research detailed enough to give the reader confidence in both the findings and an adequate audit trail. This framework, according to Guba and Lincoln (1992), requires asking the following questions: how truthful are the findings (credibility); can the findings be generalised (transferability); could the findings be replicated (dependability); can we rule out research bias (confirmability). These four questions relate too traditional (positivist) notions of study as outlined below.

**Table 6.2 Positivist and Naturalistic Analyses of Validity and Reliability**

Naturalistic	Positivist
Credibility (Are the findings believable?)	Internal Validity
Transferability (are the findings applicable elsewhere?)	External Validity
Dependability (If the study were repeated, would the same findings emerge?)	Instrument Reliability
Conformability	Intra-observer Reliability

### *Credibility*

Credibility requires that I concern myself with the accuracy and description of the qualitative research. The precise parameters of the study need to be stated, including for whom, where and when, and by what methods. In observational methodology one can add a further level of validity by using an informant. This will ensure that what I am observing is not misunderstood. As Guba and Lincoln (1992) argue, the credibility of findings can be further enhanced using this approach. Using other survey methods intended permits a triangulation of sources from which to draw valid conclusions.

### *Transferability*

In a major divergence from the positivist approach, Guba and Lincoln (1992) believe researchers should be cautious about claiming transferability across different locations. They argue the original researcher should make no claims, instead the onus should be on other researchers who wish to generalise across other settings. This is an important point that requires

consideration before claiming the findings from this research can be transferred to other similar sporting competitions.

### *Dependability*

The dependability of this study relates to a capacity to make sense of the particular setting that is the AUS Event. The measuring instrument in which this is enabled is through the researcher herself. I should be able to draw the same conclusions from similar observations (internal reliability), while in theory, more than one observer should be in agreement when observing the same thing (inter-observer reliability).

Dependability in observational research can be problematic because we cannot ensure that if we observe ‘the same thing’ on different occasions, it actually means ‘the same thing’ for the people involved. As Guba and Lincoln (1992) suggest, in such a changing world, all an observer can do is to try to predict as much as possible of what these changes may be, and account for them by casting widely for data within the setting. To this end, there is a need to collect multiple examples because they give some evidence of continuity or consistency.

### *Conformability*

Conformability or objectivity means the instrument (the researcher) will not have an in-built bias such that some kinds of observation are treated differently from others. In a naturalistic paradigm, I will need to accept that I will have a bias, which is predictable given we all have values that can colour the way we interpret data. I will seek to minimise any bias by using an informant, and other colleagues, to offer alternative readings and feedback on my analysis of data.

## **Methodology – Data collection**

### *Surveys*

Two online surveys were conducted and were uploaded as a link to the AUS website. This site is accessed by more than 8,000 students and is used as the closed platform for students attending all AUS events. The first survey was uploaded onto the website as part of the registration for the event and the second survey was sent as a link to all event participants at the duration of the event. Coding for all survey questions was undertaken prior to the survey circulation and was analysed using NVivo software. Participants engaged in the online component of the study did so anonymously. There was no engagement between the participants and the researcher and

therefore no ethical considerations were required. More than 8000 students had access to the AUS website.

### *Interview Methodology*

The researcher advertised for volunteer research assistance from postgraduate students from the Psychology Department at Macquarie University, Sydney. There were six student volunteers who responded to the request. Approximately three weeks before interviews began, the research assistants attended a two-hour workshop in which the overall objectives of the research were explained, and their role in undertaken interviews. The workshop was facilitated by the researcher.

The interview was not recorded, as it was not practical to do so within the environment. The development of a guide for the student interviewers was necessary to ensure the interviewers' methodology and ethics were consistent. A degree of flexibility was encouraged so the interviewers were able to change the format to elicit the information. Some of the reasons that justified a degree of flexibility included: if the respondent preferred the interviewer to write down their responses rather than to do it for themselves; if they wanted to complete the survey, but the timing was not suitable, they were able to reschedule an alternative time with the interviewer; if the participant wanted to write further comments down, they were also encouraged to do so. There was a balance of both male and female interviewers. All interviewers were on location during the event with the actual interviews being held during the final two days of the five-day event. This timeframe was chosen to ensure all potential participants in the survey had an opportunity to be fully engaged, or not, as a participant in the event.

The week-long AUS event was scheduled across six venues. Each interviewer was given a venue in which to roam. Participants interviewed were randomly approached and asked to participate in the interview. The questions for the face-to-face interviews were different from the online survey, as they sought to discover whether the participants' alcohol consumption had changed throughout the week and the reason(s), if any, for these changes. The interviewers randomly approached participants during the daytime competition program and requested their involvement in a five-minute interview, transcribed and coded according to responses. When participants were approached, they were requested to leave their group for the period of time required to complete the survey. This was to ensure peer group pressure did not influence their responses.

The interviewers read out each question to the participants and recorded their responses using the scales provided to them by the researcher. The only exception to this procedure was determining the reasons for drinking or not drinking. These responses were more open-ended. The pre-coding helped to categorise the responses quickly for this metric. The participants were handed the questionnaire and asked to indicate their level of agreement with various statements, to give the participant some additional privacy to attempt to elicit a more honest response

Participants were interviewed presenting about 23% of the total number competing at the event (n=7003). The interviews were undertaken during the final two days of competition, and eleven short questions were asked. First, the participants were asked to indicate the main sport they had participated in during the AUS Event, and if they had consumed alcohol during the event. Participants who indicated they had been drinking were asked if they felt there had been any alteration in their consumption habits while attending the event. If so, what were the reasons for that change? Additionally, drinking and non-drinking participants were asked to indicate their reasons for drinking or not drinking. Those participants that had been drinking were asked to report how many drinks they consumed on an average day while at the Games. Participants were asked to estimate how many of their teammates drank and got drunk, and were also asked what their motives were.

Participants were asked a series of closed questions including responding to a Likert scale questionnaire. The interviewer asked participants to indicate their chosen sport they were competing in during the week. They were asked whether they had consumed alcohol, and if so, under what conditions. They were also asked whether their drinking habits had changed whilst at the event and their perceived reasons and motives for the change. Those participants that had been drinking were asked to report how many drinks they consumed on an average day during the event, and to estimate their perception of their teammates' drinking habits and behaviour.

The questions for the face-to-face interviews were different to the online survey as they sought to discover whether the participants' alcohol consumption had changed throughout the week and the reason(s), if any, for these changes. Whilst the Likert scale format was used as a metrics, where participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with various statements. If necessary, at the request of the participants, they were able to complete this themselves, providing additional privacy to attempt to elicit a more honest response. The following provides analysis of the interviews. They were also able to add any further comments they perceived were relevant.



### *Observational Methodology*

The event was held over numerous locations, began early in the morning and sometimes did not finish until the wee hours of the morning. The settings observed included the sporting competitions during the day, on transport links to and from the competition, sports teams' meetings, activities and night-time recreational events including night clubs, restaurants and bars.

One of the challenges quickly realised when recording my observations was determining what should be included and what should be left out. The setting observed was filled with a myriad of situations all unfolding in front of me. It was neither desirable nor possible to note them all. As in real life, I had to be selective about what I was observing and focus upon what question I wanted to answer. It was therefore critical to frame my observations within the context of the research question. Even so, the complexities of the setting still made this challenging at times. I chose to use handwritten notes, which were taken at the time of the observations, and immediately afterwards. I found having some time to reflect on the observation provided further insights when I was reading through the notes. These insights also formed part of the overall field notes.

I did consider the use of audio and video techniques, but felt both may impact the authentic nature of the participant observational process. Given that note-taking was daunting, due to the richness of the setting, in order to help focus my attention I utilised the following framework developed by Spradley (1980):

- Space: the physical place or places.
- Actor: the people involved.
- Activity: a set of related acts people do.
- Object: the physical things, which are present.
- Act: single actions that people do.
- Event: a set of related activities that people carry out.
- Time: the sequencing that takes place over time.
- Goal: the things people are trying to accomplish.
- Feelings: the emotions felt and expressed.

### *Establishing Rapport with Participants*

Before attending the AUS event and entering into observational mode, there are several activities I needed to address: selecting which site to attend at the event; gaining permission; selecting key informants; familiarizing oneself with the setting or culture (Bernard, 1994). The latter was not difficult given my personal affiliation with the event.

My objective was to collect the most appropriate data in which to answer the research questions. To assist in gaining permission from the participants, I had personal identification, letters of introduction from AUS, and the planned length of time engaged in officially observing (Appendix 2). I needed to become familiar with the social organization of AUS and undertake a cultural exercise to make sure I captured the various social settings. This exercise enabled me to identify what to observe and from whom to gather information.

"Hanging out" is the process through which the researcher gains trust and establishes rapport with participants (Bernard, 1994). De Munck and Sobo (1998, p. 41) state that "only through hanging out do a majority of villagers get an opportunity to watch, meet, and get to know you outside your 'professional' role". This process of hanging out involves meeting and conversing with people to develop relationships over an extended period of time. There are three stages to the hanging-out process, moving from a position of formal, ignorant intruder to welcome, knowledgeable intimate (De Munck and Sobo, 1998).

During the first stage I had to learn the social rules and language, and make myself known to the participants. The second stage resulted in me merging into the participant's circles, or what De Munck and Sobo (1998) refer to as the "acquaintance" stage. During this stage, I became very aware of the unique language used by the participants to explain their experiences, but I was not confident in using it. Following Bernard (1994, p. 145), "the most important thing you can do to stop being a freak is to speak the language of the people you're studying and speak it well". Fluency in the cultural language helped me to gain access to sensitive information and increased rapport with participants. Learning to speak the language showed the participants I had a vested interest in them and assisted me in understanding the nuances of conversation, in particular what constitutes humour.

The final stage, referred to as the "intimate" stage, was when I began to establish relationships with participants to the extent that I felt comfortable interacting. I appreciated there was more to participant observation than just hanging out, and therefore I found myself involved with

participants in different ways each day, still always persistent in observing questioning to gain clarification of meaning of what I was observing.

I began to build trusting relationships with the participants, and the more this occurred, the more I felt secure they were sharing sensitive information with me. Maintaining this level of rapport meant maintaining active listening, showing respect and empathy, being truthful, and showing a commitment to the well-being of the participants.

Bernard (1994) suggests that gender affects one's ability to access certain information and how one views others. What is appropriate action in some cultures is dependent upon one's gender. Gender can limit what one can ask, what one can observe, and what one can report. For example, when observing all-male sports teams, it was more difficult to interpret meaning. The way my questions needed to be framed was very different to what was used within the female teams. In the example of males, it was less about how something made you feel and more about what motivated you to do something.

### *Interpreting and Reading the Notes from Interviews and Observations*

The creation of the experience narratives was guided by methodologies, including: multiple lenses approach which inspired iterative reading of the text from different perspectives McCormack (2000a); writing as research which emphasized analysis is not a discrete undertaking, but ongoing from the time of the interview and observations until beyond the time the results are “fixed” in text (Kohler-Riessman, 2002 and Richardson, 2001). Finally, I frequently relied on Patton's (2002) advice beyond specific methods: to treat data as fairly as possible to the best of the researcher's ability.

It is Patton's advice which reminded me that as researchers we are curators of what we investigate. My role was to showcase the ideas shared by each participant and to highlight key ideas that arose from my interpretations of the stories and observations. To a certain degree, the process imbues my own assumptions on the final product.

Rather than hide or explain this away, I embraced it, along with Patton's (2002) data-fairness maxim, and on top of this I added a healthy dose of personal reflexivity. By including my own voice in the experience narratives, I hope my own reflection holds a place within each experience narrative. As Iannacci (2007) notes, even after naming biases and situating one's self within the research, these factors cannot be eliminated from the research. He suggests, though, that through reflexivity and rich description, higher degrees of trustworthiness in

research texts may be achieved. Throughout the experience narratives, I have attempted to imbue my own reflexivity and provide rich description—in many cases in the speakers' verbatim words—in order to achieve a greater degree of trust with readers.

### *Coding of Data*

According to Saldana (2009), coding provides the researcher with an analytical lens to interpret what is happening within the data. With this in mind, coding was completed prior to both the survey and observations commencing. This step afforded me the ability to affix and align meanings and concepts being both observed and surveyed (see Appendix 8, 9 and 10). By developing nominal and operational definitions, De Vaus (2002) believes it assists to identify possible connections, making analysis more meaningful.

Despite pre-coding, when it came to the observational data, I found myself continually reading the notes over and over again in their entirety and manually sorting the transcripts, despite completing pre-specified codes, just to make sure I had applied the right data sets. By immersing myself in the data, I gained greater familiarity with it and I was able to better compare, contrast and integrate a diverse source of data. It also reaffirmed the most appropriate clusters that would address my inquiry, and I refined them into master categories and sub-categories creating descriptors/operational definitions (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 63).

The second stage of coding involved multiple chunking of sentences and synthesising data into a coherent whole. At this point analysis became abstracting from the data and dependent upon my interpretation of factors that might explain the various reasons for the participant's behaviour and their consequential experience. It was at the injunction that I realised meaning was now a function of the interaction between the researcher and the research, and that my subjective reactions could cloud the qualitative data.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), the researcher is aware that selecting, interpreting and analysing the experiences of others is affected by our own histories, disposition and circumstances. In the case of this project, the most obvious was judgment of my own beliefs and preferences about alcohol and sport. Being conscious of this potential bias, and adhering strictly to the aims and intent of the study, enabled me to address the potential for bias.

### *Computer Assisted Data Analysis*

The data analysis is more about determining what the researcher considers as data than making sense of, or interpreting, the information gathered (Goodson, 2001, p. 43). This is a complex process when undertaking qualitative research because it requires the researcher to use an intuitive process that leads to the consolidation and interpretation of evidence, and ultimately the outcome of new knowledge and insightfulness (Merriam, 1988, p. 155). Accordingly, Merriam (1988) proposes three levels of data analysis, namely description, category construction, and theory building.

After carefully considering the features of the above various software packages, including The Ethnography, NVivo and Atlas.ti, I took the decision to use NVivo for the computer-assisted analysis of the data. There are many different computerized approaches to qualitative data analysis and these have been widely debated in the social sciences literature (Bryman and Burgess, 1994; Coffey and Atkinson, 1996; Dey, 1993; Mason, 1996; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Silverman, 1993; Strauss, 1987).

The use of data software serves to facilitate increased rigour, accuracy and transparency in the analysis of the large data sets, whilst providing an efficient and effective form of counting—who said what and when—which in turn gives a reliable general picture of the data obtained from the interviews (Richards and Richards, 1994).

The choice to use NVivo over other forms of computer software was its simplicity of use, its ability to import documents directly from word processing software and code them easily onscreen. This ease of visibility within the margins of documents makes it simpler to view at a glance which codes are being used and where. The newness of the product, and user-friendliness, also contributed to the decision to use NVivo, as did the opinions of other colleagues. Using NVivo enabled large amounts of data to be managed relatively easily. Data was coded more generously than would have been possible with a pen-and-paper method.

Percentage, means, and standard deviations (SD) were calculated for the responses to each item, and these were used to apply a number of tests, such as t-tests, analysis of variance, and Pearson Chi Square Tests, to examine the influence of variables on the issues associated with the questions. The significance level applied to the statistical calculations was at 0.05 level ( $p, 0.05$ ). Responses to the interviews were tabulated according to each item of the survey instrument. After tabulating the items, prominent themes and issues arising from these comments were

identified. The diary entries from the observations were also tabulated. The results of these qualitative and quantitative analyses of the data collected, and the results and interpretations of these analyses, were used as evidence to offer responses to the specific research questions posed in the study.

## **Ethics**

There were two considerations that needed to be addressed to meet the ethics requirements for this thesis: first was to safeguard the rights of the participants; second, to ensure purposeful data collection. Prior to engaging in any data collection, approval was sought from the Macquarie University Ethics Committee (Appendix 3).

A primary consideration in any research study is to conduct the research in an ethical manner, letting the participants know one's purpose for observing is to document their activities. There was no covert observation method used, field notes being taken publicly to reinforce the collection of data was for research purposes.

Another ethical responsibility was to preserve the anonymity of the participants in the final write-up, and in field notes, to prevent their identification should the field notes be subpoenaed for inspection. Individual identities were described in ways that would not aid identification of participants. I provided broad descriptions that lacked any specific details about their sport, university, or other personal details.

I was aware of the issue surrounding cross-cultural research and was respectful of cultural norms that existed to avoid the potential exploitation and inaccuracy of findings, or other actions, that may cause damage to AUS or the member universities. I included AUS members in the research process, beginning with obtaining culturally appropriate permission to conduct research, to ensure the research addressed issues of importance to the AUS and its members. The findings of the research will be provided to both AUS and the member universities as required or requested.

Participants in this research were informed at the outset of the purpose of the study and my presence as an observer. Sufficient information was provided to the participants about the research topic and any questions about the research and the researcher's presence were addressed immediately. This required me to constantly introduce myself as a researcher.

Research is generally value-laden and bias is always present, therefore this needed to be acknowledged. Accordingly, my observations at the AUS event over a number of years had shaped the initial narrative of this thesis. It was my determination to maintain the democratic and ethical knowledge of this research by framing the research questions and engaging informants carefully so axiological assumptions or personal values limited any bias. The research methodology aimed to take my interpretation of what I had observed, in conjunction with the interpretation of other participants, and shape a narrative that allowed different perspectives and themes to be presented.

### **Data Storage**

The storage of data relating to the survey, and narrative information obtained during the interviews and observation, was held on a password protected, personalised drive and was password protected. Confidential coding was used with the field notes to ensure the anonymity of the participants.

### **Limitations**

Undertaking a study from an interpretative view lends itself readily to gathering understandings from a constructionist perspective. The critics of this approach come mainly from those who don't believe it provides sufficient scientific knowledge, particularly those with an objectivist and positivist perspective. Using the notion of triangulation, and gathering data from a number of subjects using various sources and means overcome this criticism. Researchers using one-off survey methods and interpretive approaches still require a cautionary approach to making generalisations about their findings beyond the sample and the context of the setting.

Patton (2002) points out that, in the field of naturalistic inquiry, it is rarely possible to plot a detailed course of action before a study begins, because it is "in the moment" when many of the most important details to be studied become evident. Although this may be true, the intention with the interviews was to collect data from a set of questions that were predetermined, but the research assistants had a degree of flexibility when capturing the responses. During the early stages of the analysing the responses, I returned a number of times to the methodological literature on narrative research in order to give greater definition to my approach to analysis (Kohler-Riessman, 2002). The disadvantage of this method was that there was so much happening, it was impossible to capture everything. However, the observational data contributes to a deeper understanding of the environment and social structures that make up the

AUS Event and gives strength to the data collected through other sources. Observational research has been criticised for having failed the objectivity test (Goodson, 2001). Although in this study scientific data has also been collected, it still may not capture the absolute truth. Guba and Lincoln (2005) believe that, owing to the subjectivity of human perceptions, scientific data collection is still not infallible. An area of concern, according to De Munck and Sobo (1998), is in the selection of observer informant. There is a potential for researchers to select informants who are similar to the observer and therefore do not alleviate the potential bias that may exist. This concern is addressed by entering into a dialogue with potential informants to ensure this does not occur.

In regard to self-reporting of alcohol consumption by participants, studies have shown both males and females provide a reasonably accurate estimate of their own consumption during low to moderate drinking sessions, but they are more likely to underestimate their consumption on heavy drinking occasions (Northcote and Livingston, 2011; Poikolainen, 1985). This has the potential to see participants downplay their drinking due to the perceived stigma from peers (which refers to social factors, rather than cognitive factors).

The surveys were designed to firstly capture the changes in consumption patterns of participants prior to attending and during the event. By gathering this information, I was able to determine the different patterns of drinking. The surveys did not focus on any alcohol-linked harms that some participants may have experienced. Although a clear oversight, at the time of the developing the surveys, I now recognise that omitting to ask participants about harms (suffered or witnessed) it is entirely plausible that a substantial number of participants may have been silenced about potential negative consequences which resulted from alcohol related behaviours. Issues such as uninvited sexual advances, assaults, property damage and risk taking behaviours were not documented and is a limitation of the study, that is recognised as an important issue that requires further investigation. This is particularly important given the higher education sector is increasingly diverse.

In regard to the observations, the behaviours that were acknowledged as play and enjoyment could sometimes be perceived as harmful and risky. A limitation of this study was not observing and capturing more fully these behaviours and not requesting a report from the police about more serious alcohol fuelled behaviours such as sexual assault and other violent behaviours. It would have also been beneficial to have interviewed the nightclub owners and other alcohol industry stakeholders.



A final limitation exists within the breakdown of the participant's and other stakeholder socio demographics. Although the data sets were established to determine the gender, age, domestic or international status of the participants, it failed to include a breakdown of ethnicity, sexual orientation or social class and this is an important issue that may have provided further insights to support the outcomes of this research. This is particularly important given the higher education sector is increasingly diverse. It also did not capture the participation and interaction of other stakeholder groups including coaches, support staff and local night club owners police sports officials and other businesses.

## **Conclusions**

In this chapter I set out the method and methodology used in this thesis. Using a mixed methods approach, I used interviews and observations to gain rich descriptions of how students experienced and made sense of the AUS sporting event. These gave students an authentic voice in the narrative of the thesis. The use of surveys was used to both gain some contextual information, as well as to generalise some of the assumptions gained from the qualitative data. Qualitative data enables answers to research questions that address "how" and "why" whereas quantitative research typically addresses "how often" and "how many". The above therefore suggests that a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods will be beneficial for obtaining profoundly new empirical insights. As quantitative methods need valid conceptual grounding, qualitative methods are probably always a necessity to understand social phenomena.

The study is suitably viewed from the theoretical perspective of symbolic interactionism, as the setting and the people within in it form part of a collective set of norms, rules and conventions that fit neatly with Mead's concept of the generalised 'other' of society. The methodology described in this chapter provided the basis for investigating the problem this thesis is investigating: that students, in their alcohol consumption, exhibit behaviours that can be described as a form of play.

The next chapter will present the analysis of data that was collected to support the thesis question. This chapter provides a context in which to answer the research questions, including what motivates participants to drink alcohol during the AUS event, what are the consequential behaviours of alcohol use at the AUS event, what are the symbolic and organizational constructs that influence alcohol behaviour at the AUS Event, is there a link between consumption of

alcohol and the formation of play, and how is the play experience influenced by alcohol. An analysis of all the behaviours expressed goes beyond the scope of this thesis. What is in scope is an analysis of the alcohol behaviours expressed by participants in the surveys and observations exhibited by participants who attended the university sporting event involving more than 7000 university students.

## Chapter 7 - Survey Results

### **Introduction: The University Games**

This chapter will provide an analysis of the quantitative data and will provide an examination of the alcohol consumption and behaviours of participants who attended a major university sporting event. The data will be presented in two parts. In Part 1, I present an analysis of consumption rates of participants, including the perceived rates of drinking, and the difference between sports, and male and female, drinking behaviours. Part 2 examines the motives and reasons for drinking, expectations of drinking at the event, and reasons for not drinking.

As previously discussed, the AUS event is an annual sporting competition involving over 7000 university students from across Australia. The competition is a week-long event involving 22 different sports. In 2009 the event was held on the Gold Coast (Qld). The event involved extensive engagement with law enforcement agencies, local government, Tourism Queensland and a range of venues and night clubs. Approximately 60 staff from partner universities were in attendance. Over 200 officials from within the Queensland state sporting organisations and over 80 coaches who were either students, alumni or coaches accredited by the relevant state sporting bodies. The event was sponsored by the Australian Sports Commission, Queensland Events, Arrive Alive, Thrifty, and Griffith University. The majority of students fully funded their attendance, although some universities contributed towards the costs. The participants were an even mix of both males and females. Domestic students made up 70% of the cohort with the remaining 30% being international students, their country of origin was not captured in the surveys. Some sports were more popular with the domestic students, including basketball, touch football, netball and hockey. The international students were more highly represented in, soccer, badminton and table tennis. Females in netball, basketball, hockey, water polo and touch football. The most popular sport for males were, soccer, AFL, rugby union and touch football. Of the 772 participants who were surveyed 53 percent (407) were male and 47 percent (365) were female. More than 23 percent of males reported that they drank more than 10 alcoholic drinks each day pre-event compared to 10.4 percent of females. This means that males were twice as likely to have consumed more than ten alcoholic drink per day. Females participants were more likely to drink more regularly, with over 50% of them reporting that they drank at least five drinks per day.

An analysis of the consumption rates from of the pre event and event surveys revealed that 32% of females reported that they drank ten drinks or more on an average day during the event. In comparison to the pre-event survey results which indicated that 10.4% of females claimed to have been drinking ten or more drinks per day. These results show a 20% increase in self reported harmful drinking behaviour during the event.

Over 54% of males reported consuming ten or more drinks a day during the event, which was more than double that reported in the pre-surveys. The reasons for consuming alcohol were similar between males and females with both cohorts motivated to drink to have a good time, and because their team mates expected them to drink. As mentioned in chapter 6 one of the limitation to the study was not collecting data associated with the perceived harms including the potential risks of sexual assaults and other forms of assault and risk taking behaviours as a result of risky alcohol consumption.

The drinking behaviours reported show that over 90% of the participants were drinking alcohol at risky levels. These findings are in line with Presley, Meilman, and Leichter (2002) research which stated that young adults in a university environment seem to be at higher risk of problematic alcohol consumption than peers who do not attend university. Whilst the drinking related sports culture at universities according to Hoover (1999) has been a long standing issue faced by universities around the world. Although his study was predominately within the USA similar findings have been supported by Langley, Kypri, and Stephenson (2003) O'Brien, Ali, Cotter, O'Shea, and Stannard (2007).

### **Sports Competitions Played at the Event**

The following data analysis will be breakdown by sports and gender (see Table 7.1). Of the 1700 of survey respondents, 863 or 51% of were females and 48.6% males. Males were over-represented in rugby 7, tennis, golf and baseball. Not surprisingly, females were over-represented in hockey, softball and netball. Traditional team sports represented 18 of the 22 sports competing. Data from 91 surveys was deemed invalid due to respondents not completing all questions.

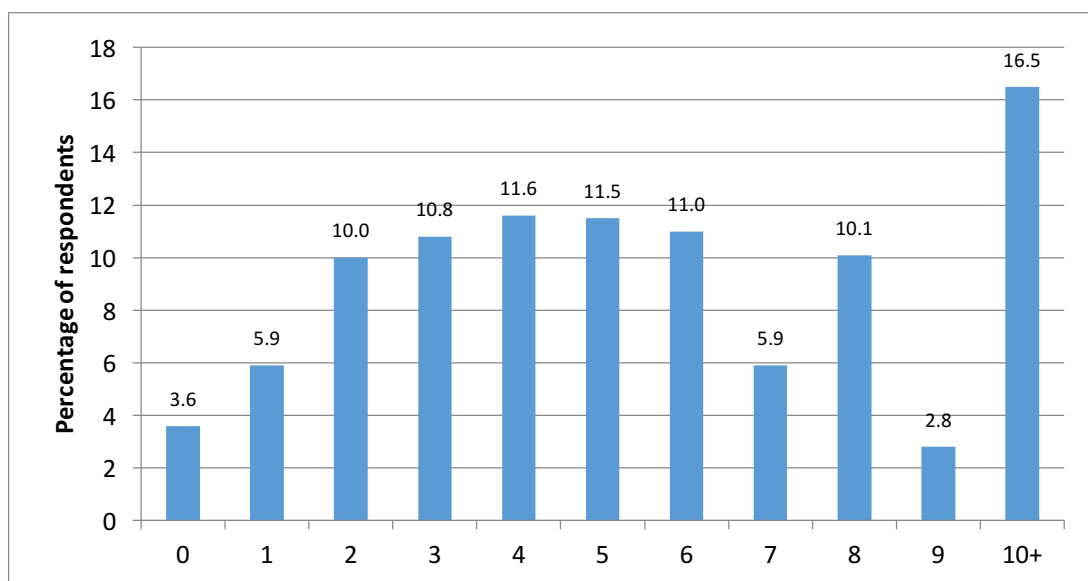
**Table 7.1. Male and Female Respondents by Sport**

Sport	N	Male %	N=Male	Female %	N=Female
AFL	55	54.5.0		45.5	25
Athletics	37	73.3	27	26.7	10
Baseball	24	95.5	23	4.5	1
Basketball	62	51.7	32	48.3	30
Beach Volleyball	47	45.2	21	54.8	26
Frisbee	46	56.8	26	43.2	20
Golf	31	88.9	27	11.1	4
Hockey	45	27.3	12	72.7	33
Netball	76	22.2	17	77.8	59
Rugby 7s	16	100.0	16	0.0	0
Soccer	59	49.2	29	50.8	30
Softball	23	0.0	0	100.0	23
Swimming	40	61.3	24	38.7	16
Table tennis	24	89.5	21	10.5	3
Tennis	26	95.8	25	4.2	1
Touch	45	40.0	18	60.0	27
Volleyball	70	43.9	31	56.1	39
Water Polo	46	61.9	28	38.1	18
Total	772		407		365

### **Alcohol Consumption Rates 30 Days Prior to the AUS Event**

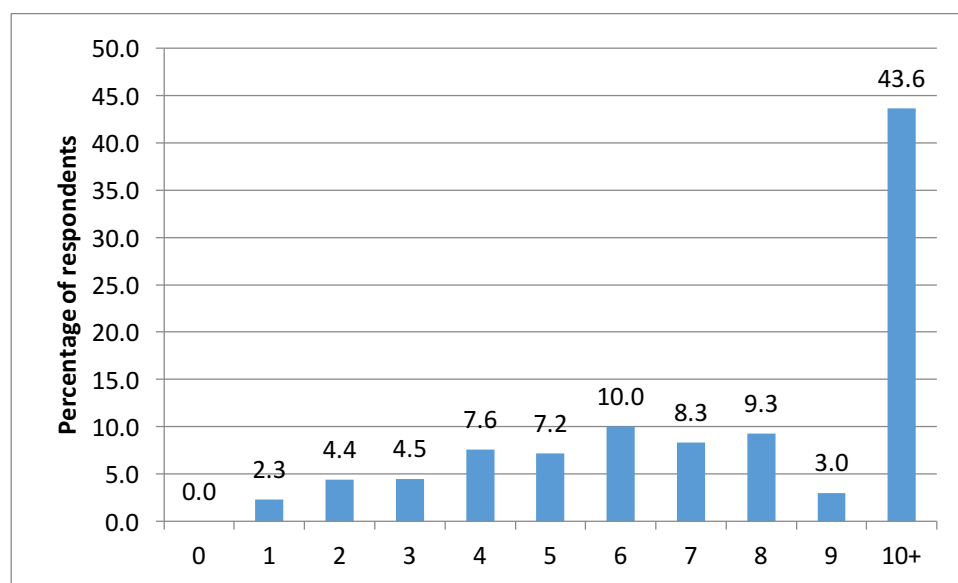
A pre-event survey was completed by participants 30 days prior to the event, an analysis of the data reveals that 74% of participants claimed they had consumed between 2-9 drinks per day, with a further 16.5% reporting they drank 10 or more drinks per day (see Figure 8.1). Only 3.6% of participants reported they had not consumed any alcohol in the 30 days prior to the AUS event. These figure show over 96% of participants who attended the event reported they drank 2 or more alcoholic drinks per day. According to the Australian Alcohol and Drug Foundation Report (2014), these results place more than 50% of participants in the problematic drinkers' category. An examination of the data supports the literature that alcohol consumption patterns within the higher education sector are higher than that of the general population.

**Figure 7.1 Percentage of Self-Reported Drinking rates on a Typical Day 30 days Prior to the AUS Event**



### **Alcohol Consumption Rates During the Event**

Participants who reported they drank alcohol during the event were asked to indicate how many drinks they consumed on a typical day. More than 43% of participants claimed they had consumed ten or more drinks per day, a 26% increase from the pre-event survey consumption rates of 16.5%. Almost 81% of participants reported they had consumed five or more drinks in one day, an increase of 50% on the pre-event survey results. The cumulative data shows that during the event participants' binge drinking increased by over 30%.

**Figure 7.2. Percentage of Self-Reported Daily Drinking Rates During the AUS Event**

### Percentage of Risky Drinkers by Sport

The participant data was separated into two groups according to the number of drinks they had consumed during the event. The accepted definition of risky drinking was used, with those drinking five drinks or more assigned to the risky drinking group, and participants having less than five drinks assigned to the non-risky drinking group (see Table 8.2). The results show a significant number of team sports ( $n=12$ , or 81.3%) were in the risky drinking category, while only 9.5% were in the non-risky drinking group. Only 18.7% of participants were not drinking to risky levels. Note that some participants may have competed in more than one sport. This would be small and would not impact the overall results.

Table 48.2 shows team sports are more likely to have risky drinking behaviours. All sports reported over 90% of their participants were drinking alcohol at risky levels, with similar patterns found for basketball, volleyball, beach volleyball and Frisbee. As tennis and swimming had lower than expected numbers of risky drinkers, one could argue the individual nature of these sports may not foster the same level of symbolic drinking behaviours.

**Table 7.2. Percentage of Self-Reported Risky Drinkers by Sport**

Sport	Binge	Non
AFL	100.0	0.0
Athletics	63.3	36.7
Baseball	57.1	42.9
Basketball	89.8	10.2
Beach Volley	64.3	35.7
Frisbee	72.7	27.3
Golf	81.5	18.5
Hockey	90.9	9.1
Netball	87.5	12.5
Rugby 7s	93.8	6.3
Soccer	94.9	5.1
Softball	76.2	23.8
Swimming	51.6	48.4
Table tennis	84.2	15.8
Tennis	66.7	33.3
Touch	88.9	11.1
Volleyball	83.6	16.4
Water Polo	90.5	9.5

### **Binge Drinking Comparative Analysis of Team and individual Sports**

To test if team-orientated sports had a higher number of risky drinkers, participants were divided into two groups and the differences in reasons for drinking between both types were examined. The first was the traditional team sports group (Water Polo, Basketball, Baseball, Rugby 7s, Softball, Soccer, Hockey, Volleyball, AFL, Netball, Touch Football, Beach Volleyball and Frisbee) and the second included sports that were more individual in nature (Tennis, Athletics, Swimming, Golf and Table Tennis).

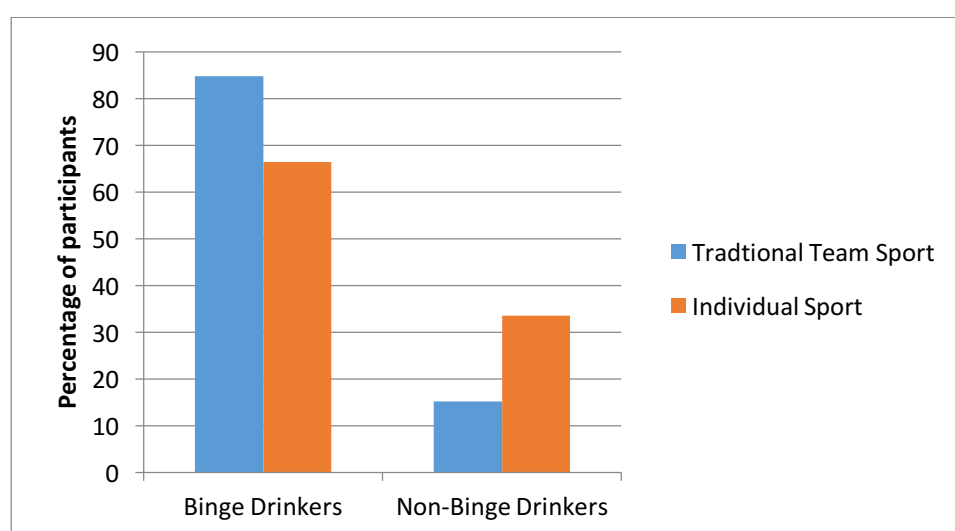
For the purpose of this research, a team sport is defined as one involving a number of players competing simultaneously in the same match or game, where each player's performance is inextricably linked to the next and the outcome relies on each player's performance.

The general drinking patterns of traditional team sports comprised of 84.8% risky drinkers and 15.2% non-risky drinkers. Individual sports comprised of 66.4% risky drinkers and 33.6% non-risky drinkers (see Figure 8.2). The sports of Golf and Table Tennis were considered not to be



team sports for the purpose of the research definition, yet reported over 80% of participants drinking to risky levels. There was no explanation for these high levels, however one could speculate golf and table tennis at the AUS event were more socially orientated and therefore attracted participants who did not want to be engaged in highly competitive physical contact sport. This is an assumption and highlights a gap in the research. The data does confirm participants in team sports were consuming levels of alcohol well above the general population and are more likely to consume alcohol to risky levels.

**Figure 7.3. Percentage of Self-Reported Binge and Non-Binge Drinking Sports**

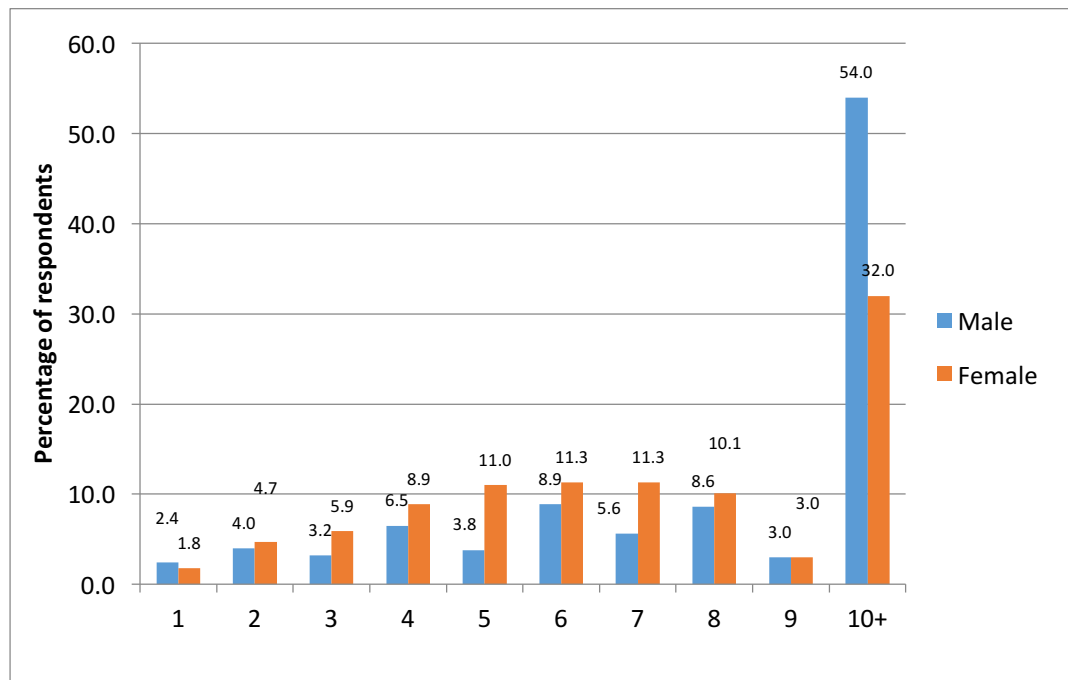


### **Consumption Rates by Gender During the Event**

Gender differences in alcohol consumption during the event indicated that 32% of females reported they drank ten drinks or more on an average day, compared to the pre-event survey where 10.4% of females claimed to have been drinking ten or more drinks per day. This is an increase of over 20%.

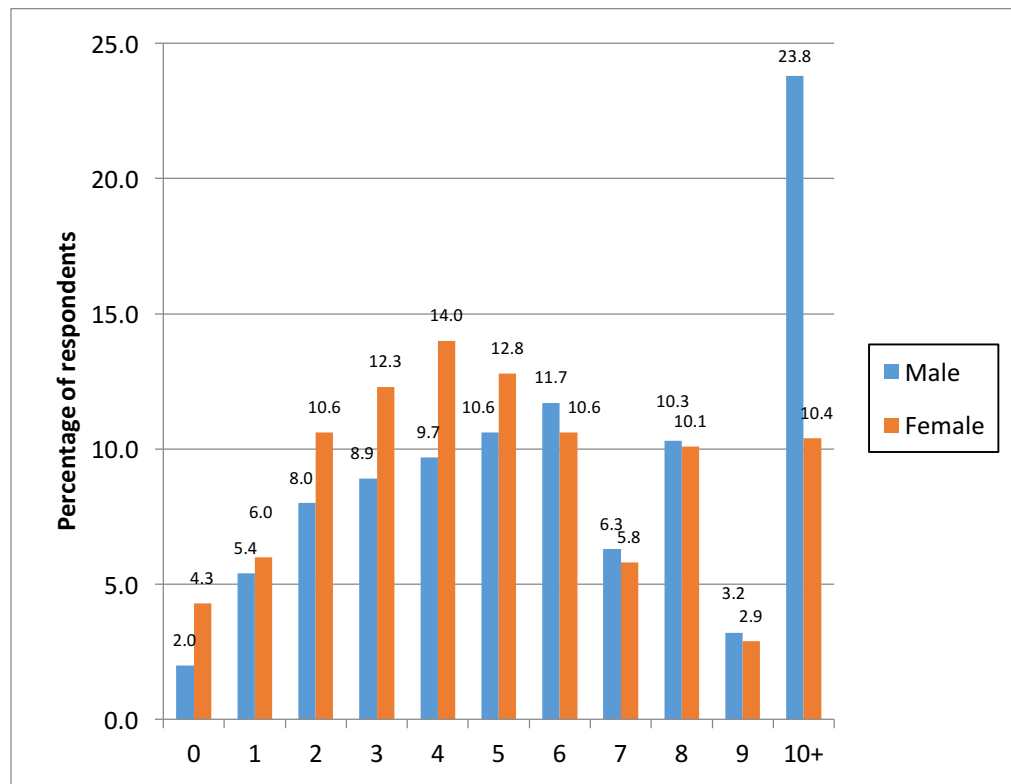
Over 54% of males reported consuming ten or more drinks a day during the event, which was more than double that reported in the pre-surveys. This correlates with the participants' responses from the post-event survey, with over 80% of participants indicating their drinking had increased while attending the event. It is worth noting 16.2% stated their drinking had remained the same and 3.8% reported a decrease in alcohol consumption. When participants were asked the reasons for any alteration to their drinking, 95.3% indicated it was directly due to attending the event.

**Figure 7.4. Percentage of Self-Reported Male and Female Respondents Consuming Between 0 and 10+ Drinks During a Typical Day at the AUS Event**



The pre-event survey reported females were drinking less than males, with 11.4% of females reporting drinking one or less alcohol drinks per day, and 7.4% of males reporting the same (see Table 8.4). Other consumption patterns by gender indicate 23.8% of males reported they drank more than ten alcoholic drinks each day compared to 10.4% of females. This means males were twice as likely to have consumed ten alcoholic drinks each day. Female participants were more likely to drink more regularly, with over 50% of them reporting that they drank two to five drinks per day.

**Figure 7.5. Percentage of Self-Reported Male and Female Respondents Consuming between 0 and 10+ Drinks on a typical day during the last 30 days**



### Perception of Teammates Drinking

As part of the post-event survey, respondents were asked, to estimate the number of their teammates who drank alcohol and how many of them got drunk, using a 0-4 scale (0 =None, 1 = A few, 2 = Some, 3 = Most, 4 = All). Over 93% of respondents reported that most or all of their teammates drank alcohol at the AUS Event and over 70% indicated that most or all of their teammates got drunk (see table 8.5). There was no significant difference in male and female perception of the proportions of their teammates' drinking patterns that were noteworthy.

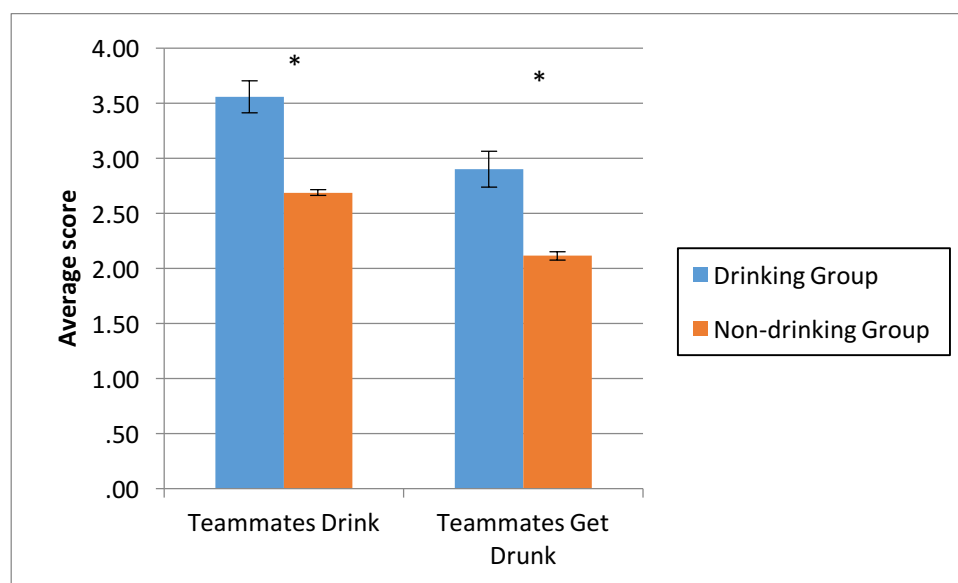
**Table 7.3. Percentage of Perceived Alcohol Consumption of Teammates on a 4-point scale**

How many teammates	Drink	Get Drunk
None	0.8	2.5
A few	2.2	9.9
Some	3.2	17.1
Most	34.8	42.3
All	59.0	28.2

*(0 = None and 4 = All)*

A further analysis was undertaken to examine whether there was a difference in the perception of teammates drinking between those who were drinking and those who were not. It was found the drinking participants were more likely to report higher numbers of their teammates drinking (drinking group mean = 3.56, SD = 0.65; non-drinking group mean = 2.90, SD = 0.97) and getting drunk (drinking group mean = 2.69, SD = 1.13; non-drinking group mean = 2.11, SD = 1.28) (see Figure 8.3). The respective U scores were for non-drinking participants ( $U = 11167$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and the drinking participants ( $U = 14055$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The data shows a consistent pattern emerging between the results of the two surveys.

These findings suggest the collective peer-drinking group have normalised their alcohol use, believing everyone in the group is drinking and that most are getting drunk throughout the event. The consequences of this include that membership expectations contextually bind them to pre-established and subsequent collective behaviours. When perception about others' behaviour becomes the norm, group-think around alcohol use becomes the collective impression of what that sport team may stand for. In comparison, the non-drinking group, who have determined not to contextually bind themselves to the peer group through alcohol use, move beyond their team environment and see an alternative view of the level of alcohol consumed.

**Figure 7.6. Differences in Teammates Perception of Levels of Drinking**

0= None, 4 = All Asterisks represent a significant difference between the groups using Mann Whitney U scores (new alpha = .005, \* -  $p < .001$ ).

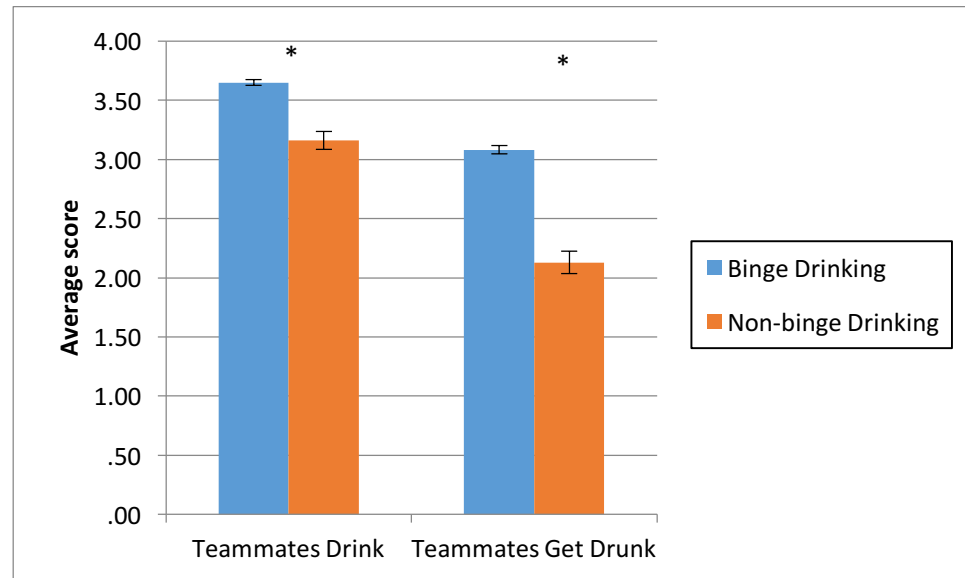
A further analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between reported numbers of friends drinking to risky levels. The average agreement scores for each statement were entered into Spearman's correlations with the amount of drinks the participants had consumed on a typical day at the AUS Event.

Participants' data was once again divided into two groups according to the number of drinks they had consumed on a typical day at the AUS Event. The accepted definition of risky drinking was used, with those drinking five drinks or more assigned to the risky drinking group, and those having less than five drinks assigned to the non-risky drinking group. Group differences in perception of teammate drinking were then investigated. A significant difference between the binge drinking and non-risky drinking groups was found. Risky drinkers were significantly more likely than the non-binge drinking group to report higher numbers of their teammates were drinking alcohol ( $U = 25615$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Similarly, the participants who were binge drinking at the AUS event were significantly more likely than non-binge drinkers to report their teammates got drunk ( $U = 19927$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Results from the data on perceived risky drinking groups also showed they were more likely than the non-drinking group to report higher numbers of their teammates were both drinking and getting drunk (see Figure 8.6).

Results indicated significant positive correlations between level of drinking and perception of the number of teammates who were drinking ( $r$ s range = .26,  $p < .01$ ). The same relationship was also identified for ratings of how many teammates got drunk ( $r$ s range = .44,  $p < .01$ ). The more a teammate reported their teammates drinking and getting drunk, the more likely he or she was to be consuming larger volumes of alcohol themselves. In addition, if the participant was a drinker, he or she was more likely to perceive that higher numbers of their teammates both drank alcohol and got drunk. While males generally appeared to be consuming larger quantities of alcohol, they perceived their team mates to be drinking in the same way. An explanation for this maybe they are adjusting their own behaviour in line with the perceived behaviours of their teammates.

Participants may overestimate the number of teammates who are drinking and getting drunk in order to justify their own alcohol consumption. The opposite may also be the case. If high numbers of team participants were drinking and getting drunk, then certain individuals may be succumbing to team sport norms. Those who were engaged in risky drinking were more likely to offer reasons such as my teammates expected it, or drinking with teammates became a competition. There was a significant positive relationship between the amount of alcohol a participant drank and these statements.

**Figure 7.7. Differences in Averages Ratings of How Many Teammates Drink and Get Drunk**



(0= None, 4 = All Asterisks represent a significant difference between (005, \* -  $p < .001$ )

### **Perceived Reasons for drinking and Not Drinking at the AUS Event**

Participants indicated their perceived reasons for drinking and not drinking. They were presented with 15 statements and asked how much they agreed with each on a five-point Likert scale, where one is strongly disagree and five is strongly agree. Respondents were most likely to agree they enjoyed getting drunk and they drank to have a good time with their teammates (see table 6). They disagreed their drinking was due to poor performances or sport-related stress and that they drank less in the lead up to their spring competition.

Over 72% strongly agree or agree that they would drink alcohol at the event to have a good time with teammates and a further 79% agree or strongly agree drinking is part of the celebration after victory. The data also claims over 60% of participants reported they strongly disagree or disagree with the statement that teammates expect me to drink. This is in contrast to the importance they appear to place on social connection. These results do support the view that participants perceive alcohol as a social enhancer at the event, one that is supported by the need to be part of a team in which celebration and fun is synonymous.

**Table 7.4. Stated Reasons for Drinking and Percentage of Respondents agreeing with each statement.**

Reasons for Drinking Alcohol at the AUS Event	1	2	3	4	5-
I enjoy the feeling of getting drunk	7.8	11.8	29.0	40.7	10.8
I drink to help me deal with poor performances	67.6	20.0	5.7	2.6	4.1
I drink to have a good time with my teammates	5.7	8.0	14.0	48.3	24.0
I drink to deal with sport-related stress	72.8	14.0	6.6	2.2	4.5
I drink to fit in with my teammates	3.7	10.1	20.3	23.9	42.0
After the game/match/sporting occasion it is important for me to go out and celebrate with alcohol	20.2	23.9	34.7	17.5	3.8
To compete with my team mates	2.7	9.9	17.6	26.2	43.6
Because I work so hard at my sport I should be able to drink and have a good time	6.6	20.0	32.4	20.7	20.3
If I've performed well I feel like I can go out and drink a little more than usual	5.4	21.2	29.5	23.5	20.4
After a victory it is important for me to go out and celebrate with alcohol	23.4 4.6	16.5	30.0	25.6	23.4
I drink because I believe in the "work hard, play hard" lifestyle	26.6	26.6	23.1	17.2	6.4
I drink because it's part of the culture of being involved in sport	4.0	4.1	24.9	28.7	28.3
I drink less in the lead up to a game/match/sporting occasion	33.2	35.3	16.0	9.2	33.3
I drink because my teammates expect me to drink	33.2	27.2	22.3	13.4	4.0
I drink because it helps develop team spirit	17.7	20.5	28.7	27.1	5.9

*(1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)*

Non-drinking participants in the pre-AUS event survey were asked to indicate their reasons for not drinking. They were asked how much they agreed with each of nine statements on five-point Likert scale, where one is strongly disagree and five is strongly agree.

Respondents were most likely to strongly agree they had other ways of relaxing and celebrating apart from drinking alcohol, that alcohol was bad for their health and drinking decreased their sporting performance, or they did not like the feeling of getting drunk (see Table 8.4). They disagreed that their teammates pressured them into drinking or frowned upon those who didn't drink. The data supports the notion that past reactions and individual reinforces, either positive or negative, can influence the expectancy to drink, as does the motive for attending the games. It is unknown whether these participants perceive themselves engaging as heavily in the socio-



cultural elements of the event compared to those who intended to drink. This will be examined further in the interviews.

Gender differences in levels of agreement with these statements were examined to determine if males and females gave different reasons for not drinking, but no significant differences were identified in this instance.

The non-drinking participants were asked to indicate their reasons for not drinking. They were asked how much they agreed with each of nine statements on a five-point Likert scale where one is strongly disagree and five is strongly agree.

**Table 7.5. The Participants Perceived Reasons for Not Drinking and Percentage of Respondents Agreeing with Each Statement**

Reasons for not Drinking	1	2	3	4	5
I don't enjoy the feeling of getting drunk	2.0	2.0	38.0	16.0	42.0
I have other ways of relaxing/celebrating/dealing with sport-related stress	10.0	0.0	1.0	14.0	66.0
My teammates frown upon drinking	36.0	20.0	44.0	0.0	0.0
I don't want to undo the hard work I put into my sport	2.0	6.0	26.0	22.0	44.0
I feel pressure from my teammates not to drink alcohol	42.0	18.0	34.0	2.0	4.0
Drinking alcohol decreases my performance	0.0	2.0	32.0	12.0	54.0
It is bad for my health	0.0	2.0	10.0	26.0	62.0
My teammates don't drink	40.0	22.0	32.0	4.0	2.0
My coaches/trainers discourage it	14.0	26.0	48.0	4.0	8.0

*(1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)*

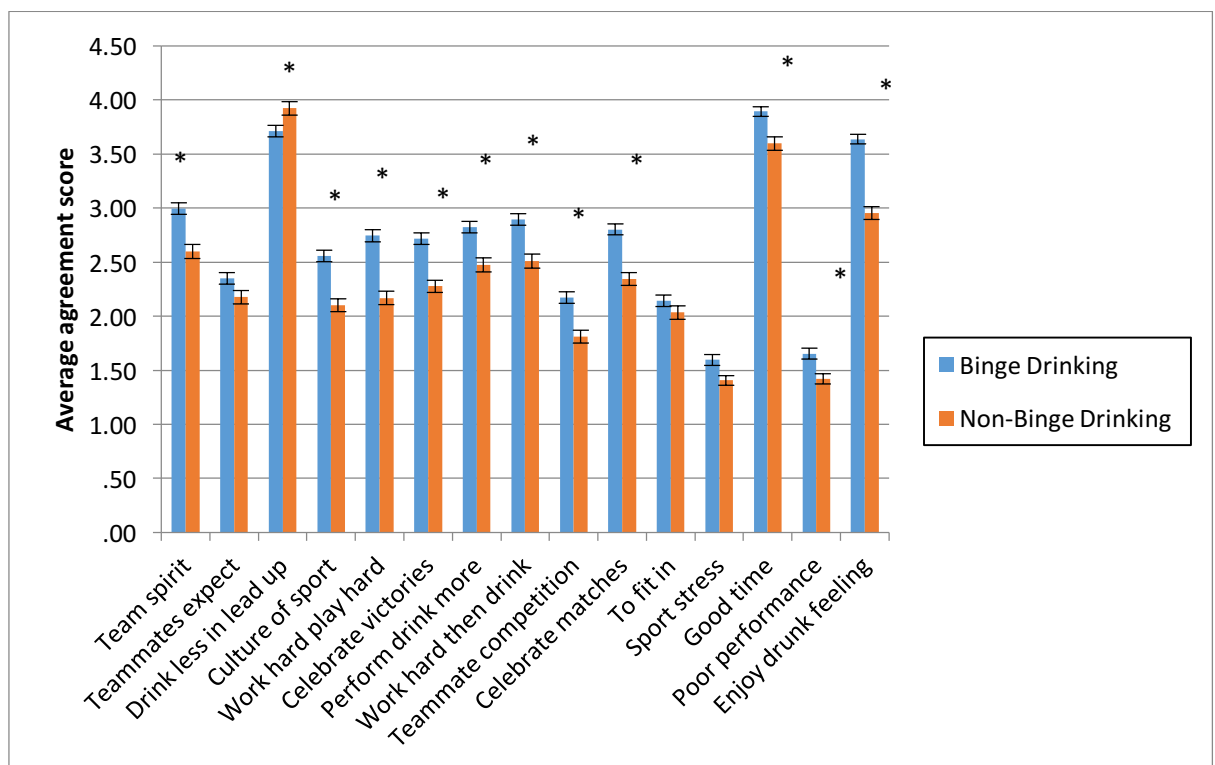
### **Consumption Rates and Reasons for Drinking**

Further analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between reasons for drinking and level of consumption of alcohol. Results indicated significant positive correlations between level of drinking and all categories of reasons for drinking ( $r_s$  range = .182 - .372, all  $p < .003$ ), apart from drinking because teammates expect it or to fit in. This will be examined later in the thesis with a further analysis of the subliminal and normalised expectations of peers. It is plausible to suggest the participants may have responded in this way as they were reluctant to

admit others influenced their drinking, or they felt the need to consume alcohol to fit in or to deal with stress.

There was one significant negative relationship identified between the statement regarding drinking less in the lead up to a competition and participant consumption levels ( $r_s = -.11$ ,  $p < .003$ ). The more participants agreed with this statement, the less alcohol they had consumed. It could be argued these participants were motivated to attend the event for positive sporting performance outcomes, and alcohol may negatively influence this. Alcohol expectancy with these participants may also suggest a historical reaction to alcohol use.

**Figure 7.8. Reported Consumption Rates and Reasons for Drinking**



*1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree (error bars show  $\pm 1$  s.e.). Asterisks represent a significant difference*

### Gender and Reasons for Drinking

Gender responses for drinking alcohol were examined to determine if males and females gave different reasons for drinking. Males were more likely to agree with statements such as drinking helps develop team spirit (male mean = 3.02, SD = 1.16; female mean = 2.69, SD = 0.57), performing well means you can drink more (male mean = 2.89, SD = 1.18; female mean = 2.52,

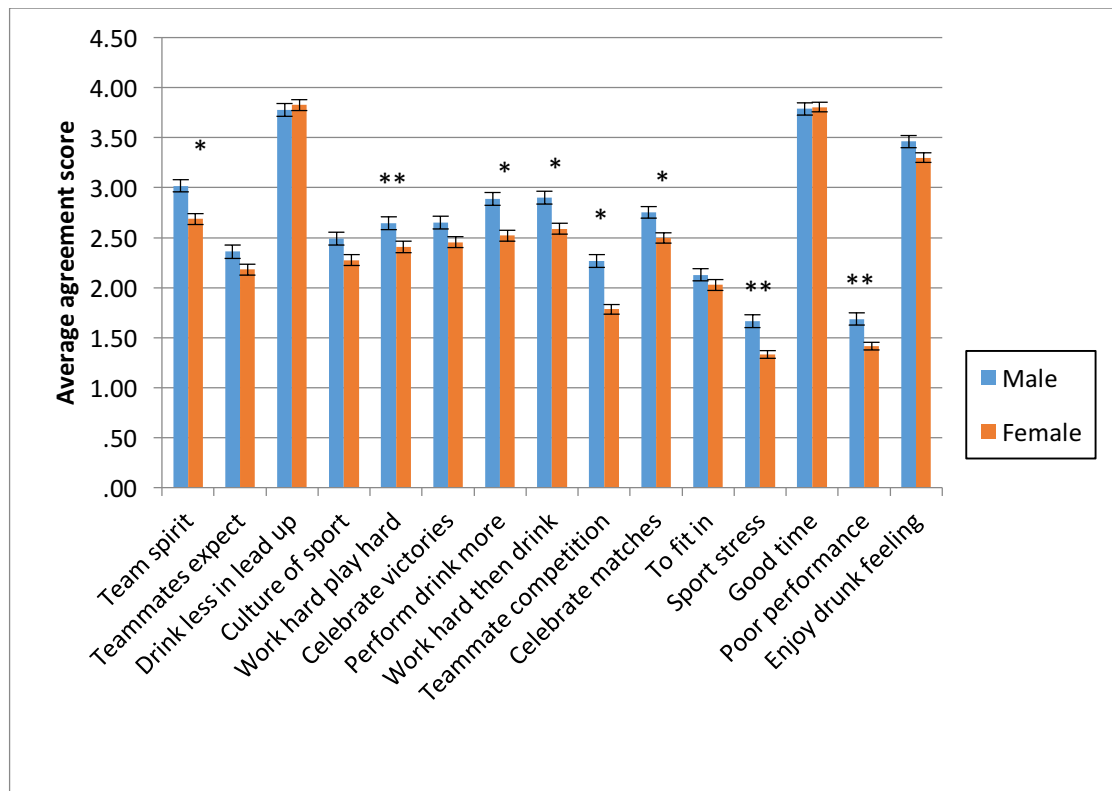
SD = 1.11), and working hard at your sport entitles you to drink and have a good time (male mean = 2.90, SD = 1.20; female mean = 2.59, SD = 1.14) (See Figure 5).

It appears from the data that males are more likely to agree with sports-related reasons for drinking alcohol. This is despite the evidence there was a low level of agreement with the statements that drinking becomes a competition with teammates and that I drink to deal with sport-related stress. In comparison, participants stated they drank less in the lead up to the competition.

Overall there was a low level of agreement with the statements that drinking becomes a competition with teammates and that I drink to deal with sport-related stress. Males were more likely to agree with these statements than females (male mean = 2.27, SD = 1.17; female mean = 1.79, SD = 0.99; male mean = 1.66, SD = 1.19; female mean = 1.33, SD = 0.75, respectively).

While not significant at the .003 level, males were also significantly more likely to agree with an additional three reasons for drinking; the influence of sport-related stress on drinking ( $U = 63736$ ,  $p = .003$ ), drinking to help deal with poor performances ( $U = 65199$ ,  $p = .005$ ), and a belief in a “work hard, play hard” lifestyle ( $U = 64126$ ,  $p = .006$ ).

**Figure 7.9. Differences in Male and Female Reasons for Drinking**



*1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree (error bars show  $\pm 1$  s.e.). Asterisks represent a significant difference*

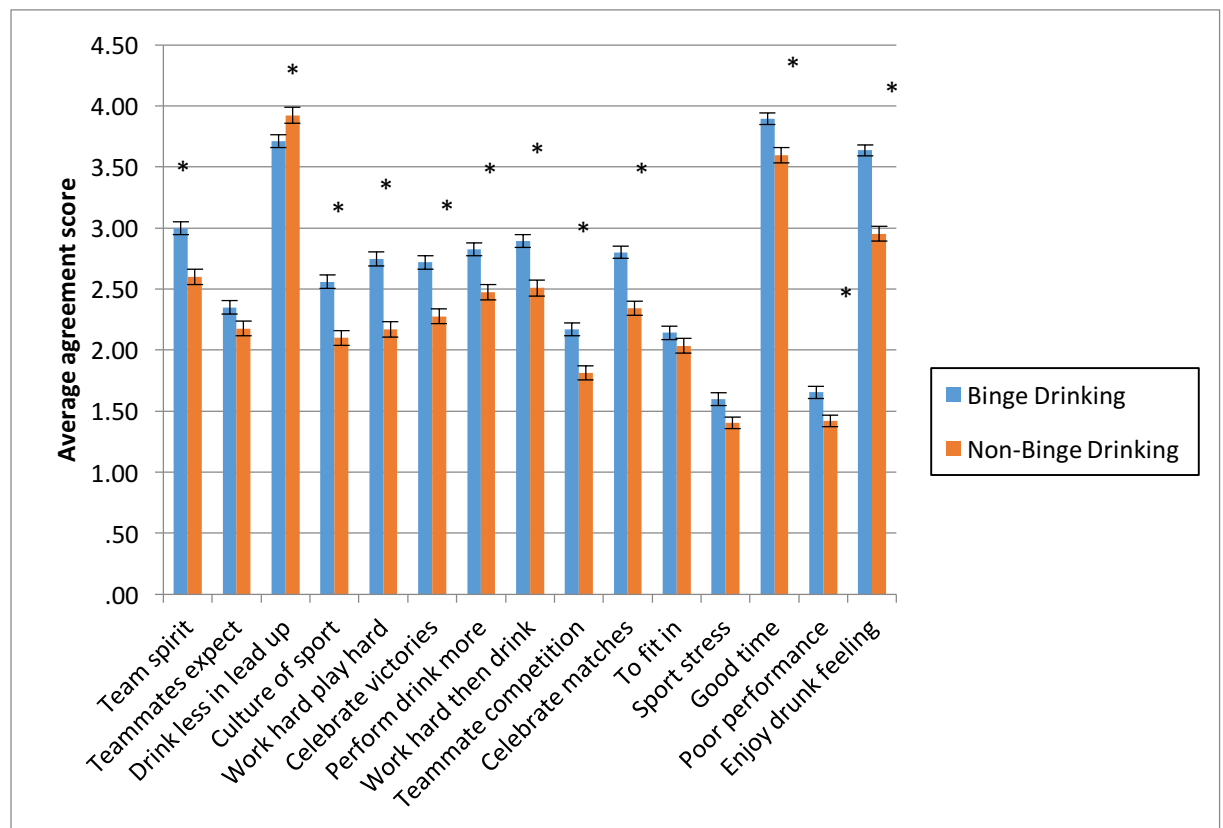
### **Risky Alcohol Consumption and Reasons for Drinking**

Participants were split into two groups according to the number of drinks they had consumed on a typical day in the last 30 days prior to attending the AUS Event. The accepted definition of binge and/or risky drinking was used, with those drinking five drinks or more assigned to the risky drinking group and participants having less than five drinks assigned to the non-risky drinking group. Group differences in reasons for drinking were then investigated.

The risky drinkers were more likely to agree with many of the statements presented in Table 3. These drinkers were more likely to agree with all the statements, with the exception of one; they did not agree they drank less in the lead up to a match or sporting occasion. Although speculation, the participants in this group may have been unaware of the negative aspects alcohol has on sport performance or they may not have cared because sport was not their key motivator for attending the event.

Further analyses revealed some significant group differences in reasons for drinking. The binge drinkers were significantly more likely to agree with all statements (U range = 52142 – 67872, all  $p < .003$ ) except drinking to deal with sport-related stress, drinking to fit in and because it is expected by teammates. A significant difference was also found for drinking less in the lead up to a match but it was the non-risky drinkers that were significantly more likely to agree with this statement (U = 70094,  $p < .003$ ). Interestingly, this pattern is also found in the sample of those consuming five drinks or more (i.e., risky drinking), who also have similar motivations as those drinking over ten alcoholic drinks.

In summary, the risky drinkers were more likely to agree they drank to celebrate and have a good time, they enjoyed the feeling of being drunk, they saw drinking as a reward for performing well and hard work, and they viewed drinking as an integral part of having a good time and enjoying the AUS Event. A level of expectancy that alcohol will play a major part in the enjoyment of the event was evident from the data. The perceived level of engagement in alcohol-related activities as presented in the data is therefore driven by a strong desire for enjoyment and sense of connectedness to the peer group.

**Figure 7.10. Differences in Binge and Non-Binge Drinking Groups**

*1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree Asterisks represent a significant difference between the groups (003, \* -  $p < .003$ ).*

### **Participant's Expectations of the Australian University Sports Event**

Expectancy of perceived socio-cultural and organisational determinants of the AUS event were tested using a five-point Likert scale as part of the pre-event survey. Respondents were asked to state how important (on a scale of one to five; one being not at all important and five being extremely important) certain aspects of the Australian University Sports event were to them.

Results showed elements such as achieving a personal best (29%) and winning (15%) were extremely important expectations of attending. The most significant reason stated was to socialise and interact with new people and to spend time with teammates. Socialising and interacting with new people was perceived by approximately 80% of participants as either a high or extremely high motivator for attending the event. Spending time with teammates and socialising was rated by more than 85% of participants as either a high or extremely high reason for attending. These results show a major expectancy of attending the AUS event is the social interaction and potential for meeting and socialising with new people.

The results indicated significant positive correlations between level of drinking and importance of the event after-parties ( $r_s = .29$ ,  $p < .005$ ), nightly parties ( $r_s = .35$ ,  $p < .005$ ), having a holiday ( $r_s = .13$ ,  $p < .005$ ) and getting drunk ( $r_s = .43$ ,  $p < .005$ ). The more alcohol a participant had consumed on a typical drinking day in the last 30 days, the more likely they were to rate the above aspects of the event as important.

This supports the overall finding that participants who had consumed four to five drinks daily in the last 30 days prior to the event, or who had consumed higher quantities of alcohol in the 30 days' prior, were more focused on the social aspects of the event and rated aspects related to socialising as more important than the sporting elements of the competition. Those who reported not drinking any alcohol in the last 30 days prior to the event tended to place more emphasis on sport-related aspects.

A number of significant negative relationships were also identified. The more the participant consumed in the previous 30 days, the less likely they were to rate athletic development and achieving a personal best as of high importance ( $r_s = -.21$ ,  $p < .005$ ;  $r_s = -.19$ ,  $p < .005$ , respectively).

There was also a significant positive relationship between the amount of alcohol consumed and the importance of time spent with teammates. Males were more likely to agree with statements such as drinking helps develop team spirit (male mean= 3.02, SD= 1.16; female mean= 2.69, SD= 0.57) and working harder at your sport entitles you to drink more and have a good time (male mean= 2.90, SD= 1.20; female mean= 2.59, SD= 1.14). This is interesting given there was no difference in the importance of this aspect for those who had reported drinking and not drinking in the last 30 days prior to the event. There is a link between the importance of time spent with teammates and the number of drinks consumed by drinking respondents. The more important teammate time was to the participant, the more alcohol they reported consuming. This data supports the notion there is an expectation by some that a team environment will create a more conducive opportunity to socialise, and alcohol may allow this to be more culturally acceptable. It is the symbolic nature of the AUS event that may be the attraction to attend the event, rather the sporting competition itself.

**Table 7.6. Participant Expectancy of the AUS Event**

Participant Expectations the AUS Experience	1	2	3	4	5
Achieving a personal best in my registered sport	5.0	12.5	25.3	28.2	29.0
Belonging to a team	0.8	3.0	16.6	30.3	49.3
Winning the competition	10.0	23.9	28.6	22.5	15.0
Athletic development	6.3	19.2	32.4	26.0	16.1
Socialising/interacting with new people	0.5	1.8	12.2	33.2	52.3
Spending time with teammates	0.6	1.7	9.0	33.2	55.5
Getting drunk	22.1	33.8	23.4	12.9	7.7
Having a holiday/break	3.5	10.6	23.5	33.3	29.0
Nightly parties	8.5	17.7	28.2	24.7	20.9
AUS After-party	8.7	22.6	28.1	22.7	17.8
Good sporting venues/facilities	32.1	34.5	25.6	6.1	1.7

*(On a scale of 1-5; one being not at all important and five being extremely important)*

### **Consumption Rates and Reasons for Drinking**

Further analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between reasons for drinking and level of consumption of alcohol. Results indicated significant positive correlations between level of drinking and all categories of reasons for drinking ( $r$ s range = .182 - .372, all  $p < .003$ ), apart from drinking because teammates expect it or to fit in. This will be examined in the later thesis with a further analysis of the subliminal and normalised expectations of peers. It is plausible to suggest that the participants may have responded in this way, as they were reluctant to admit that others influenced their drinking or that they felt the need to consume alcohol to fit in or to deal with stress.

There was one significant negative relationship identified between the statement regarding drinking less in the lead up to a competition and participant consumption levels ( $r$ s = -.11,  $p < .003$ ). The more participants agreed with this statement, the less alcohol they had consumed. It could be argued that these participants were motivated to attend the event for positive sporting performance outcomes, and alcohol may negatively influence this. Alcohol expectancy with these participants may also suggest an historical reaction to alcohol use.

An examination of gender differences reveals there was very little difference between males and females when it came to assessing the importance they placed on spending time with teammates and socialising with new people. Males (see Figure 4) were more likely than females to rate the AUS parties (which were later to be understood as courts) and after-parties. These

are well-attended nightly events which provide dance and theme nights at various venues during each evening (male mean = 3.39, SD = 1.24; female mean = 3.03, SD = 1.20), (male mean = 3.51, SD = 1.24; female mean = 3.20, SD = 1.94). Getting drunk was a more important activity for males than females (male mean = 2.82, SD = 1.25; female mean = 2.28, SD = 1.07). The figures show the event appears to be more important to the drinking behaviours of males than females.

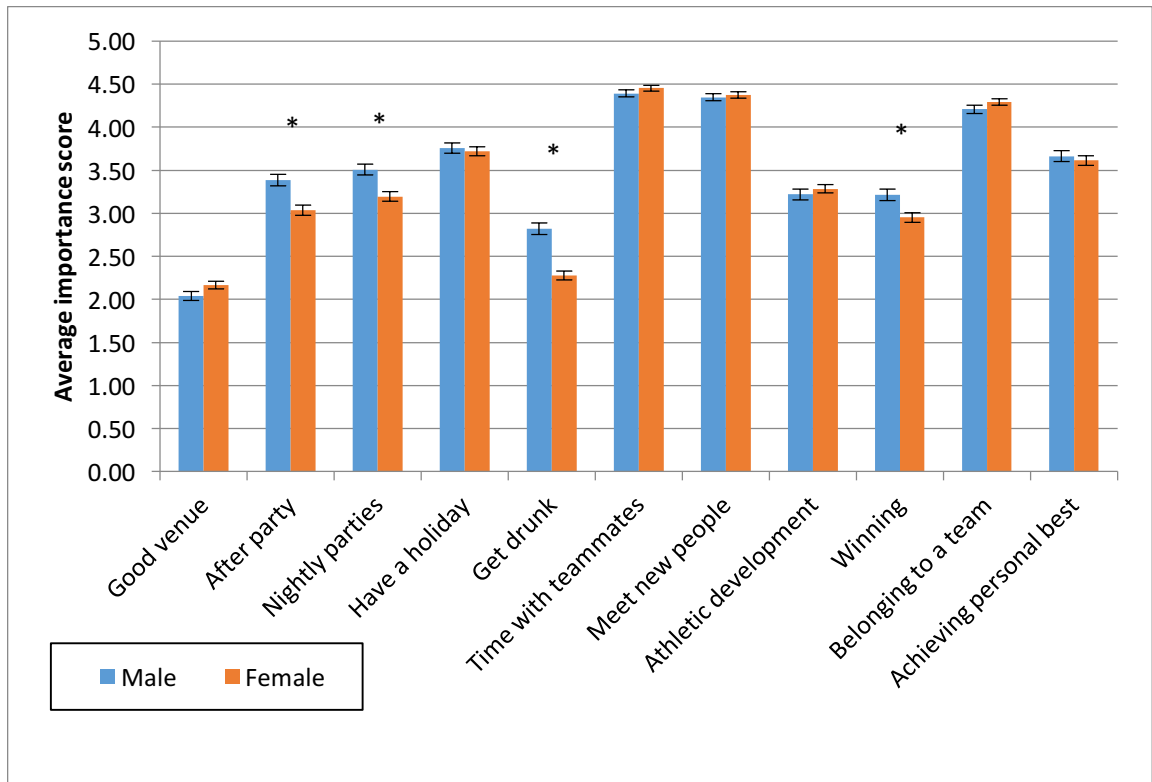
Additional analyses support the above statement, with males rating the after-party, nightly parties and getting drunk as significantly more important than did females ( $U = 67401$ ,  $p < .005$ ;  $U = 68463$ ,  $p < .005$ ,  $U = 60718$ ,  $p < .005$  respectively). These analyses revealed males also rated winning as significantly more important than did females (male mean = 3.21, SD = 1.32, female mean = 2.95, SD = 1.11;  $U = 71063$ ,  $p < .005$ ). Those who did not rate drinking as important were more concerned with sport-related aspects of the AUS event, and rated athletic development and achieving a personal best as significantly more important than did those who rated drinking as very important ( $U = 10551$ ,  $p < .005$ ;  $U = 15026$ ,  $p < .005$  respectively). This analysis revealed that winning was significantly more important to those who did not have a high expectancy of alcohol as an important motivation for attending AUS event (drinking group mean = 3.05, SD = 1.20; non-drinking group mean = 3.62, SD = 1.30;  $U = 15026$ ,  $p = .002$ ).

It would appear from these results that those participants who have a high expectancy of the AUS event as a place for being successful in sport, place less importance on drinking. This was the same result reported by those who did not consume alcohol at all, who also placed a higher expectancy on the sporting and competition aspects of the AUS event. In comparison those participants who have expectancy of the AUS event as a place for drinking alcohol, placed more of their focus on the social elements, rather than the sporting aspects of the AUS event, and the use of alcohol as part of the lived experience for these participants is aided by the corporatisation of the event through the decisions made by AUS on location, competition scheduling and sponsorship.

The difference between male and female responses included that women placed more importance on belonging to a team than their male counterparts. males and wanted to spend more time



**Figure 7.11. Gender Differences in Average Importance Scores of Aspects of the AUS Event**



(1 = Not at All Important, 5 = Extremely Important Asterisks represent a significant difference between the male and female groups using Mann Whitney U scores (new alpha = .005, \* -  $p < .005$ )

### **Reasons for Drinking and not Drinking Alcohol Post Event Survey**

Drinking respondents to the post-AUS event survey were asked to indicate their reasons for drinking. They were presented with five statements (which were a subset of those presented in the pre-AUS event survey) and asked how much they agreed with each on a one to five scale, where one is strongly disagreeing and five is strongly agree. Respondents were most likely to agree they felt it was important to consume alcohol after the sports competition each day (see Table 7.7). They disagreed their drinking was due to poor performances or sport-related stress. While the findings can be compared with the results from the pre-AUS event survey, it must be kept in mind the two samples consisted of different respondents. Direct comparisons cannot be made with individuals. However, for the majority of statements, a similar pattern of agreement can be seen from both sets of data.

Participants interviewed at the event reported they were three times more likely than those surveyed pre-event to agree or strongly agree (60.6%) that alcohol was part of the celebrations and rituals with peers after competitions were over for the day. They reported they were twice as likely to state that drinking with teammates became a competition/ritual (12.6% pre-event compared to 24% during the event). The analysis of the data begins to show there are new experiences of a symbolic nature being sought out by the participants, rather than the structured environment of sport.

**Table 7.7. Reasons for Drinking**

Reasons for Drinking	1	2	3	4	5
I drank because I enjoyed the after-sport celebrations, alcohol competitive rituals, and peer bonding	10.7	10.2	19.3	34.8	25
I drank to help me deal with poor performances and sports-related stress	75	16.7	3.3	3.4	1.6

*(Percentage of respondents agreeing with each statement (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree).*

### **Gender and Reasons for Drinking**

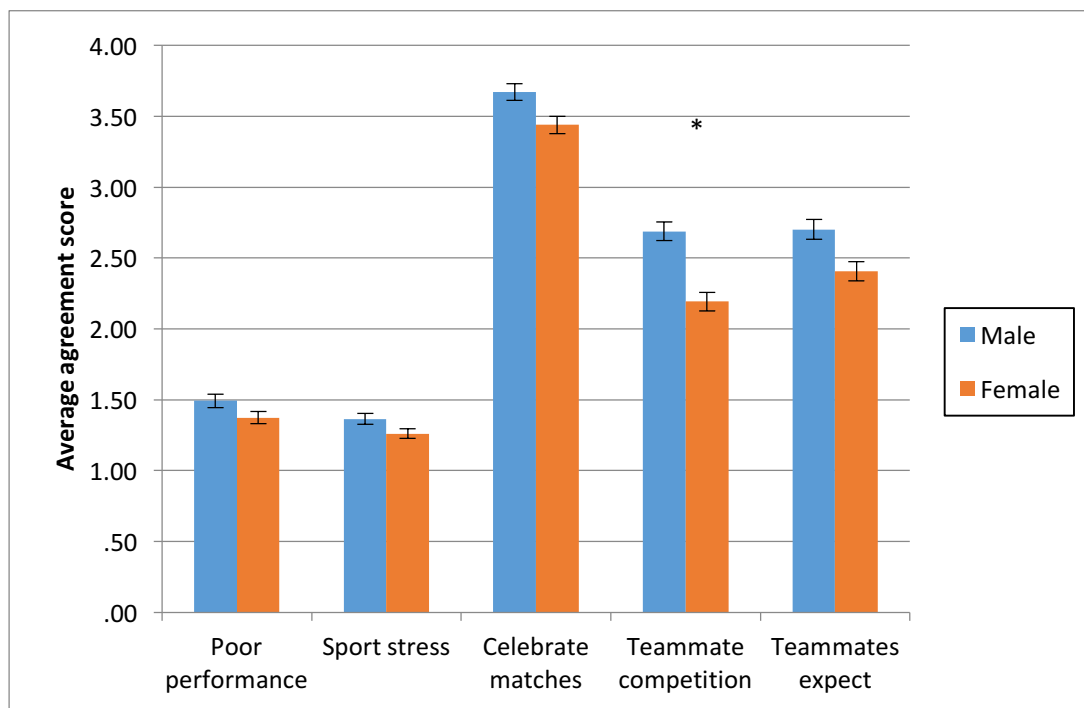
Gender differences in levels of agreement with these statements were examined to determine if males and females gave different reasons for drinking. The average agreement scores for males and females were calculated (see Figure 7.12). Males were more likely to agree with all five statements.

Additional analyses indicated a significant difference for one statement only. Males were significantly more likely than females to agree that drinking with teammates became a competition (male mean = 2.69, SD = 1.29); female mean = 2.19, SD = 1.18:  $U = 63708$ ,  $p = .01$ ). This data supports the literature on the masculinity of play in that physicality of competition is more dominant in males than females. This will be discussed later when observational data is considered.

No other significant gender differences were identified. This is comparable to the findings from the pre-survey. Of the five statements above, only the competitive nature of drinking with

teammates yielded a significant result in pre-survey analysis, and again, males were significantly more likely to agree with this statement.

**Figure 7.12. Differences in Male and Female Reasons for Drinking**



*1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree (error bars show  $\pm 1$  s.e.). Asterisks represent a significant difference between the male and female groups using Mann Whitney U scores (new alpha = .001, \* -  $p < .001$ ).*

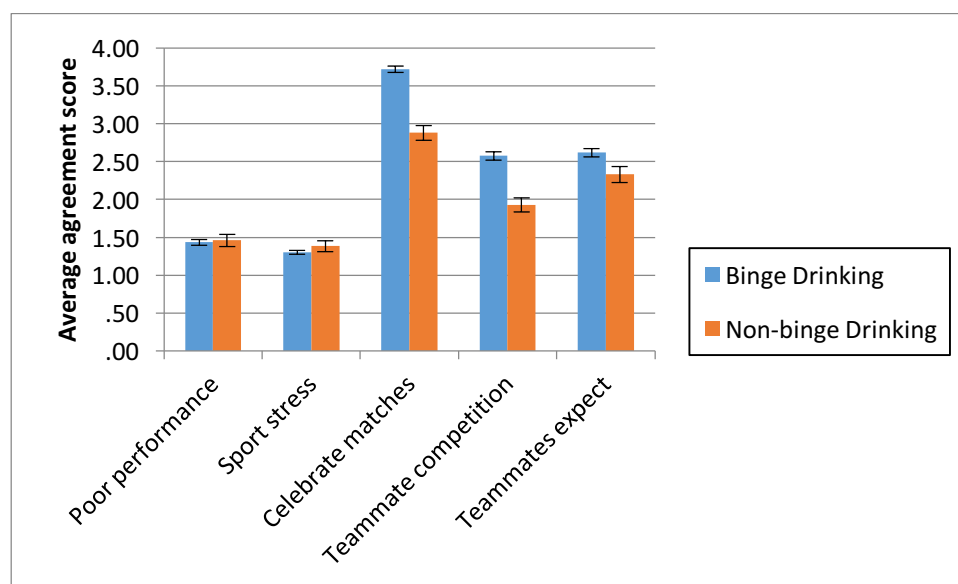
### Consumption Rates and Reasons for Drinking

Further analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between reasons for drinking and level of consumption of alcohol. The average agreement scores for each statement were entered into Spearman's correlations with the amount of drinks the participants had consumed on a typical day at the AUS event.

Results indicated significant positive correlations between levels of drinking and drinking to celebrate ( $r_s$  range = .31,  $p < .01$ ), competitive drinking with teammates ( $r_s$  range = .31,  $p < .01$ ), and because teammates expected it ( $r_s$  range = .01,  $p < .01$ ). The more participants agreed with each of these statements, the more likely they were to be consuming larger volumes of alcohol. These findings are similar to those from the pre-survey analysis, with the exception of drinking because it was expected by teammates. In the pre-survey results, there was no significant

relationship between agreement with this statement and amount of alcohol consumed. It may be that while competing, elements of teammate pressure become more salient for participants than they are prior to the event commencing. Participants may underestimate the ritualistic nature of alcohol use at the event and how it is culturally embedded in the unstructured play environment.

**Figure 7.13. Differences in Male and Female Reasons for Drinking**



*(1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree (error bars show  $\pm 1$  s.e.). Asterisks represent a significant difference between the male and female groups using Mann Whitney U scores (new alpha = .001, \* -  $p < .001$ )).*

### Reasons for Not Drinking Alcohol

Non-drinking participants who were surveyed were asked to indicate their reasons for not drinking. They were presented with seven statements and asked how much they agreed with each on a one to five scale, where one is strongly disagree and five is strongly agree.

As shown in Table 8.8, they were most likely to strongly agree that they had other ways of relaxing, escaping the structured events of the day and celebrating, apart from drinking alcohol, that alcohol was bad for their health and drinking decreased their sporting performance. Over 44% of participants strongly disagreed their teammates frowned on them for not drinking.

Gender differences in levels of agreement with these statements were examined to determine if males and females gave different reasons for not drinking. No significant differences were

identified in this instance. The findings in Table 7 reflect the data from the pre-AUS event survey (See Table 8.8).

These similarities show a consistent pattern emerging amongst the non-drinking participants despite the two surveys being undertaken by different participants.

**Table 7.8. Reasons for Not Drinking**

Percentage of respondents agreeing with each statement					
Reasons for not Drinking	1	2	3	4	5
I had other ways of relaxing/celebrating/dealing with sport-related stress	0.0	6.6	13.1	29.5	50.8
My teammates frown upon drinking	44.3	19.7	21.3	8.2	6.6
I didn't want to undo the hard work I put into my sport	6.6	13.1	19.7	23.0	37.7
Drinking alcohol decreases my performance	3.3	6.6	18.0	29.5	42.6
It is bad for my health	1.6	8.2	9.8	36.1	44.3
My teammates didn't drink	42.6	26.2	21.3	6.6	3.3
My coaches/trainers discouraged it	13.1	19.7	39.3	14.8	13.1

*(1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)*

### Differences in Drinking Patterns

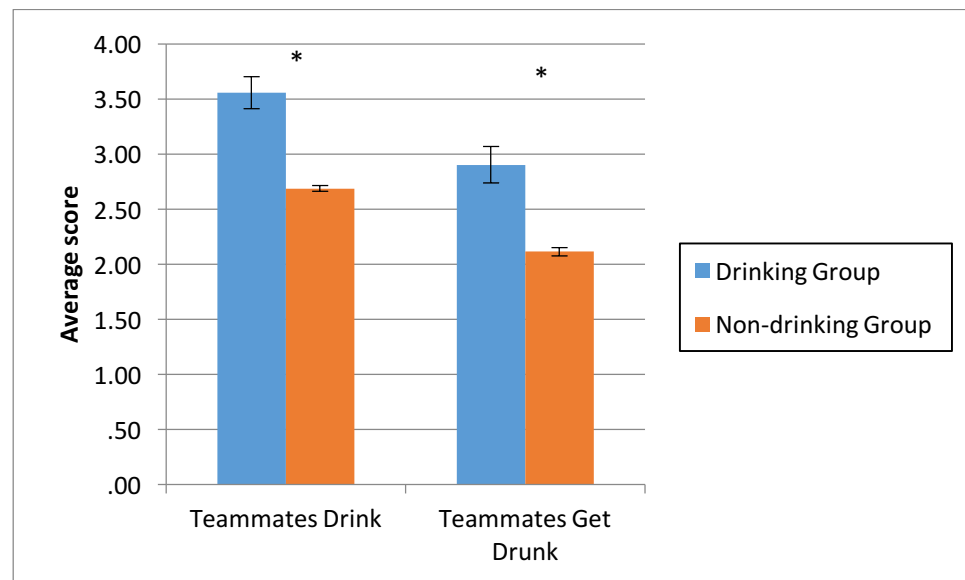
Differences in perception of teammates' drinking and non-drinking groups were examined. The drinking group were more likely to report higher numbers of their teammates were both drinking (drinking group mean = 3.56, SD = 0.65; non-drinking group mean = 2.90, SD = 0.97) and getting drunk (drinking group mean = 2.69, SD = 1.13; non-drinking group mean = 2.11, SD = 1.28).

Corrections revealed significant differences between the drinking and non-drinking groups. Drinkers were significantly more likely than the non-drinking group to report higher numbers of their teammates were drinking alcohol ( $U = 11167$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Likewise, the participants who were drinking at the AUS event were significantly more likely than non-drinkers to report their teammates got drunk ( $U = 14055$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

These findings suggest the collective peer-drinking group have normalised their alcohol use, believing everyone in the group is drinking and getting drunk throughout the event. This drives the membership expectations for new participants and contextually binds the conforming behaviours for existing members and the subsequent collective behaviours.

The level of groupthink around alcohol use creates a strong sense of belonging and collective impression in comparison to the non-drinking group, who have determined not to contextually bind themselves to the peer group through alcohol use. These participants move beyond their team environment and see an alternative view of the level of alcohol being actually consumed.

**Figure 7.14. Differences in Teammates Perception of Levels of Drinking**



0 = None, 4 = All Asterisks represent a significant difference between the groups using Mann Whitney U scores (new alpha = .005, \* -  $p < .001$ ).

### Risky Drinking Amongst Team Mates

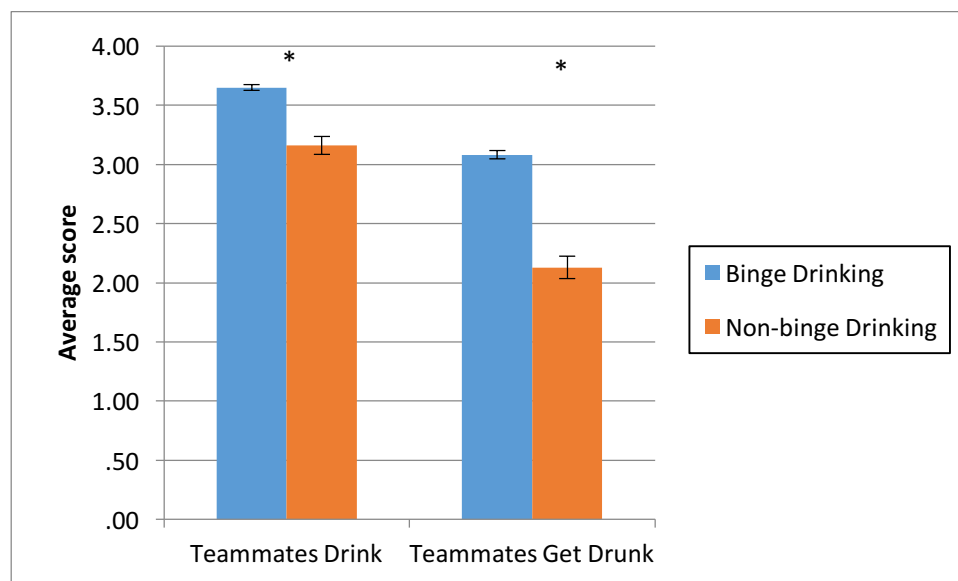
Further analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between reported number of friends drinking and getting drunk and participant alcohol consumption. The average agreement scores for each statement were entered into Spearman's correlations with the amount of drinks the participants had consumed on a typical day at the AUS event. Participants' data was once again divided into two groups according to the number of drinks they had consumed on a typical day at the AUS event. The accepted definition of risky drinking was used, with those drinking five drinks or more assigned to the risky drinking group and those having less than five drinks assigned to the non-risky drinking group. Group differences in perception of teammate drinking were then investigated. A significant difference between the binge drinking and non-risky drinking groups was found. Risky drinkers were significantly more likely than the non-binge drinking group to report higher numbers of their teammates were drinking alcohol ( $U = 25615$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Similarly, the participants who were binge drinking at the AUS event were significantly more likely than non-binge drinkers to report that their teammates got drunk ( $U =$

19927,  $p < .001$ ). Results from the data on the perceived risky drinking group also showed they were more likely than the non-drinking group to report higher numbers of their teammates were both drinking and getting drunk (see Figure 7.14).

Results indicated significant positive correlations between level of drinking and perception of the number of teammates who were drinking ( $r_s$  range = .26,  $p < .01$ ). The same relationship was also identified for ratings of how many teammates got drunk ( $r_s$  range = .44,  $p < .01$ ). The more teammates that reported their teammates drinking and getting drunk, the more likely he or she was to be consuming larger volumes of alcohol themselves. In addition, if the participant was a drinker, he or she was more likely to perceive higher numbers of their teammates both drink alcohol and got drunk.

It is interesting to note that while males generally appeared to be consuming larger quantities of alcohol and were more likely to drink to risky levels, they did not perceive teammate drinking differently. Participants may overestimate the number of teammates who are drinking and getting drunk in order to justify their own alcohol consumption. The opposite may also be the case. If high numbers of team participants were drinking and getting drunk, then certain individuals may be succumbing to social pressure. As earlier findings suggest, those who were engaged in risky drinking were more likely to offer reasons such as my teammates expected it, or drinking with teammates became a competition. There was a significant positive relationship between the amount of alcohol a participant drank and these statements.

**Figure 7.15. Differences in Averages Ratings of How Many Teammates Drink and Get Drunk**



(0= None, 4 = All (error bars show  $\pm 1$  s.e.). Asterisks represent a significant difference between (005, \* -  $p < .001$ )

### Reasons for Changes in Alcohol Consumption

Respondents were asked to give specific reasons for the changes to their drinking patterns. This was an open-ended question and responses were subsequently coded according to the most frequent themes emerging from participant responses (see Table 3). The four most common reasons for changing levels of alcohol consumption was a general desire to be sociable or to be involved in social situations, to have fun being around friends, or part of a large group of people and a general reference to the culture of drinking.

Approximately 81% believed their drinking habits had changed due to symbolic reasons, in particular their desire to have fun through socialising, self-expression, excitement, and experiencing different states of arousal. Given that about 85% of participants reported they were expecting an increase in fun and social opportunities, this data correlates with their expectations (see Table 8.9).

The only participants who reported a decrease in the level of alcohol consumption at the AUS event ( $n = 3$ ) were those who indicated they attended the AUS event to focus on achieving success in their sport. These results are considerably lower than the pre-event determinants. This could be explained simply as the participants underestimating the normative and collective cultural influences associated with the event.



Approximately 18% of participants reported the environment influenced their drinking behaviours, with location being a major contributing factor, followed by the number of parties and availability of alcohol. The images of the Gold Coast as a venue for the event sells an experience that is one of a good time, a holiday atmosphere a place to have fun, drink alcohol and socialise.

**Table 7.9. Reasons for Changing Alcohol Behaviour**

Reasons for changing alcohol consumption N=863	N	%
Symbolic Constructs of the event- Fun, socialising, parties, team culture/rituals and collective sense of belonging	701	81.3
Organisational Constructs of the event- Location/organised parties/availability of alcohol	159	18.4
Other determinates- Take Sport Seriously/Emphasis on Performance	3	0.5

### **Alcohol Education Programs Prior to Event**

Participants were asked to indicate if they had received any alcohol education from their university prior to attending the AUS event. A total of 30.8% stated they had received some education, while 69.2% reported they received none. Those participants who had received education were asked what were the main education messages being relayed. This question was open-ended and responses were subsequently coded according to a number of recurring themes. The main themes are outlined in Table 8.10.

It should be noted several respondents included more than one theme in their answer. As such, the percentages do not sum to 100%, rather it reflects the proportion of the overall sample that mentioned each particular theme in their responses. The four most common educational messages reported by respondents were responsible drinking, drinking in moderation, looking after each other, and safety. Whether the participants had received education or not had no direct impact on their reported consumption levels. It is not clear from the data what the education programs are trying to achieve. One could speculate it is improving the safety of the participants by highlighting the negative consequences of risky drinking, or that facilitating these sessions is purely an organisational element that absolves the universities from any further responsibility.

**Table 7.10. Alcohol Education Messages**

Alcohol Education Messages	N	%
Drink responsibly/be responsible	107	44.4
Drink in moderation/avoid excess/not drunk	73	30.3
Look after self and each other	35	14.5
Safety focus	32	13.3
Sport emphasised as a priority	23	9.5
Representing university/university reputation	14	5.8
Stay together/in groups/don't be alone	11	4.6
Know your limits	9	3.7
Code of conduct signed	1	0.4

### Overall Analysis

In the pre-survey, almost 58% of participants reported they had consumed five or more drinks on a typical drinking occasion. This figure rose to 81% for the post-survey. Over 80% of respondents indicated their drinking had increased while at the Games, and of these, 95.3% indicated it was directly due to attending the Games.

Both prior to and after the Games, males were more than twice as likely as females to have consumed ten or more drinks on a typical day. Males were also more likely than females to rate the after-party, nightly parties, and getting drunk as important elements of the Games. They were also significantly more likely to agree that after a match it is important to celebrate with alcohol, that drinking alcohol with teammates becomes a competition, that they work hard at their sport so should be able to drink, that if they perform well they can drink more, and that drinking helps develop team spirit.

The drinking group rated the after-party, nightly parties and getting drunk as more important. Similarly, the more alcohol a participant had consumed on a typical drinking day, the more likely they were to rate the social aspects of the Games as important to them. Athletic development, and achieving a personal best, received higher importance ratings from the non-drinking group. Non-drinkers were more likely to strongly agree they had other ways of relaxing and celebrating, apart from drinking alcohol, that alcohol was bad for their health, and drinking decreased their sporting performance.

The binge-drinking group were more likely to agree they drink to celebrate and have a good time, and they enjoy the feeling of being drunk. They see drinking as a reward for performing well and hard work, and they view drinking as an integral part of a sporting culture.

In the pre-survey, a total of 30.8% participants stated they had received some alcohol education from their university. This figure rose to 47.7% for the post-survey, suggesting this education was received very close to the actual event. In the case of both the pre- and post-surveys, the four most common educational messages reported by respondents were responsible drinking, drinking in moderation, looking after each other, and safety. Whether the participants had received education or not had no direct impact on their reported consumption levels.

Competitors from 22 sports were surveyed. Sports with higher proportions of risky drinkers, compared with the overall sample, were those sports that could be considered traditional team sports. While there were no group differences in reasons for drinking, there were differences in the proportions of risky drinkers. The traditional team sport group was comprised of 84.8% risky drinkers and 15.2% non-risky drinkers. The more individual sport group had 66.4% risky drinkers and 33.6% non-risky drinkers. A total of 93% of respondents reported most or all of their teammates drink alcohol and over 70% indicated that most or all of their teammates get drunk. Drinkers were significantly more likely than the non-drinking group to report higher numbers of their teammates were drinking alcohol and getting drunk. Risky drinkers were also significantly more likely to report higher numbers of their teammates were drinking alcohol. The more teammates' participants reported were drinking and getting drunk, the more likely they were to be consuming larger volumes of alcohol.

In summary, it appears the influence of both teammates and sport on alcohol-related behaviours is a powerful one. While gender differences indicate males are drinking more than females, the sport in which participants participated and their perception of teammates' drinking behaviour may also have a role to play in mediating drinking behaviours and influencing the decision to drink, and in what volume.

## **Conclusions**

The results presented in this chapter demonstrate that there is a close association between alcohol consumption and team sports with similar findings across both male and female cohorts. The analysis also reveals the behaviour exhibited by the participants whilst not competing and how these behaviours may lean towards the enactment of play. The analysis also highlights that

although the AUS event is positioned as a sporting event, there is evidence to suggest that it is much more than just a sporting event in the eyes of the participants. It is a place where participants are exposed to a range of leisure, recreation and play experiences and that these opportunities may form a large reason for why the participants attend the event. In fact, there is evidence to suggest that there is an expectation that the event will hold opportunities to experience fun, meet new people, drink alcohol and gain a sense of connectedness through others. It is argued that this expectancy of outcomes may be driven by the historical experiences that are either directly known or perceived by the participants.

The use of alcohol by participants during the event, may in fact be a result of a desire to conform to the social aspects which are held during the recreation and leisure periods. It is suggested that this creates a collective norm around alcohol consumption. For participants who already drink to risky levels, the event creates an environment where this can continue. The risky drinking group were more likely to agree they drank to celebrate and have a good time, and those they enjoy the feeling of being drunk. There was a strong delineation between those who attended the event for the sporting competition and those who attended for social reasons. Those who reported not drinking alcohol felt it was significantly more important for them to compete successfully and achieve their personal best on the field. Those who consumed risky levels of alcohol placed more importance on the social programs and getting drunk. This suggests there were two distinct motives for attending, both of which require a commitment to successfully meeting the expected outcomes.

The significant increase in consumption of alcohol was reported predominately within team sports. The participants in this cohort report their motive for drinking was to have fun with their teammates. Interestingly, this motive defines alcohol and fun synonymously. Under the conditions in which the event is run, it could be argued that participants create a range of reasons for drinking, often too risky levels, and this maybe normalised and positively reinforced by team mates. The potency of alcohol as a symbol of socialisation within this setting cannot be underestimated, as evidenced by the drinking group who rated the after-party, nightly parties and getting drunk as the most important reasons for attending the event. The more alcohol a participant had consumed on a typical drinking day, the more likely they were to rate the social aspects of the event as important to them. Risky drinkers were also significantly more likely to report higher numbers of their teammates were drinking alcohol. The more teammates' participants reported were drinking and getting drunk, the more likely they were to be consuming larger volumes of alcohol.

Males were more than twice as likely as females to have consumed ten or more drinks on a typical day both prior to and during the AUS event. Males were also more likely than females to rate the after-party, nightly parties and getting drunk as important elements of the AUS event. They were also significantly more likely to agree that after a match it is important to celebrate with alcohol, that drinking alcohol with teammates becomes a competition, that they work hard at their sport and should be able to drink, that if they perform well they can drink more, and that drinking helps develop team spirit. While gender differences indicate that males are drinking more than females, the nature of the sport and its culture may also play a role in drinking and influencing the decision to drink, and in what volume.

As discussed in chapter 6 one of the limitation to the study was not collected data on the perceived harms associated with excessive alcohol consumption. For example, sexual assault and other forms of assault and risk taking behaviours. In conclusion the level of alcohol consumed prior to the event by those who participated in the survey supports the notion that university sports participants drink alcohol to excessive levels. Why and how this occurs will be examined in the next chapter.

## Chapter 8 - Observational Analysis

### Introduction

In the previous chapter I provided an analysis of the quantitative data as a means to process large volumes of data sources relating to alcohol consumption patterns of participants. To complement the findings reported in the previous chapter, in this section I use qualitative research data to explore individual and collective behaviour more deeply. The qualitative data enhances the understanding of behaviour by providing a richer and deeper description of the people, context, and their motivation than is possible through standardised survey methods.

As mentioned in earlier chapters, this study has used a mixed methods approach to strengthen the reliability of the data enabling triangulation from a number of sources. An important element of my observational data collection was the reaffirming of observations with my informants. This was essential to ensuring that any personal views that I might have could be minimised if not eliminated from the observations made. This became a regular occurrence as I continued to observe and sometimes participate in the social activities of the sports teams. As stated in chapter one of this thesis, I held the view that the misuse of alcohol was negatively impacted the reputation of the event, and as I began to observe the influence the alcohol industry had over the participants, I was increasingly concerned about whether AUS would have the capability to continue to manage the associated risks.

With this in mind I continually faced the dilemma of finding the moment in time when the event shifted from sport to play. The AUS forms part of a much larger sporting institution, the Australian Sports Commission (ASC). The ASC is a major sponsor of the Australian University Sports event. Sports offered usually follow the regime established and supported by the ASC. As a result, the sports offered at the event are predominantly team sports and Olympic sports, or those financially supported by the Australian Sports Commission. The sports include swimming, athletics, basketball, hockey, table tennis, golf, cycling, tennis, football, AFL and netball. There were about equal numbers of males and females involved in the observations, I did not determine ethnicity or other diversity characteristics which has been identified as a limitation of the study.

The data is presented in terms of the elements of play: ritualistic, physical, creative, social, spectator, storytelling and risky play experiences. By categorising the observations and field notes using these elements, the activities and interactions observed within the setting are given meaning and demonstrate the symbolic, informal, and often physical cues that inform the nature of the play experience. As noted in the limitations there is very little acknowledgement in the observations that captures examples where play and enjoyment are perceived as harmful and risky behaviour by some of the participants. A limitation to the study was and not observing and capturing more fully these behaviours and not requesting a report from the police about more serious alcohol fuelled behaviours such as sexual assault and other violent behaviours. A further limitation was also not interviewing the alcohol companies and night club owners

The data also captures the historical narrative of some of the sports teams, how this is translated into the creation of a play experience, and how it becomes the social fabric that creates a unique community in which alcohol behaviours are the norm. This approach also allows the observations to explain how the structural determinants of play described in Chapter 5 influence the type of play experienced. I begin by discussing the observations of ritualistic play.

### **Ritualistic Play**

Following Turner (1986), ritual is a repetitive physical act, often accompanied by sharing an experience through the exchange of information. It can be intensely cultural, and created through patterns of learned behaviour. Rituals often take the form of narratives by either illustrative gestures or evocative patterns of sound and actions. Music often accompanies human ritual, and as play, ritual is probably the source of imitative learning, through drama, dance, sport, and games. Ritualism in play forms part of the human social existence and it is difficult to imagine society without some form of ritual being part of play activities. Turner understands ritual” as the handling of otherwise unmanageable power” (Turner 1988b: 81).

Rituals are undertaken because the act has meaning, and it consequently makes us feel better about our self and others (Cortes, 2001). Culturally, we appear to be drawn towards rituals of consumption, whether it is purchasing gifts, food or alcohol, and the advertising industry plays a role in tapping into the symbolic and emotional value we place on some of our rituals. The play rituals observed throughout the AUS event appeared to contribute to the level of trust created amongst the participants and fostered a sense of community. This was evidenced by the types of play activities observed and the consequential enjoyment. The many rituals observed

provided a sense of bonding that gave participants permission to express their emotions and appeared to remove any sense of individual isolation as they all participated freely in the play activities. There were also many ritual objects, including plastic trophies, hats, badges and the like, that had been used as part of the fun for many years. These objects have both symbolic and emotional value only to the extent they are bestowed in the minds of the participants (Cortes 2001). They are given power because they remind us of good things we have known by capturing a whole set of complex meanings in our minds.

Space also aligns to rituals. In the team courts, the rooms were set up in a certain way and the objects were placed in specific areas. These spaces converted from ordinary function rooms into play spaces created because of the symbolic value placed on the objects within them. In nightclubs and open recreational spaces, participants were able to change the environment just by carefully decorating using ritualistic objects. As Cortes (2001) argues, these rituals soften the awkwardness that sometimes occurs when people come together, as it allows everyone to play a role.

Observations, which exemplify ritualistic play, began at the Gold Coast airport when the participants walked off the plane. They were easily identified by their uniforms and the loud, jovial conversations being shared. It was not the sort of thing you would normally see at an airport, so they really stood out. I witnessed a high degree of excitement and listened to stories about what happened last year and how much fun it would be this year. The stories were about how much alcohol had been drunk, with many of the stories shared being portrayed about other people. I sensed an enormous amount of excitement and anticipation amongst the participants. Some of the narrative threads captured include:

Stocked up ready to play...I am so looking forward to having a few big nights with the team...Our team will win the gold medal and every drinking game this week because we have a reputation to uphold...

AFL Team member

The girls' softball team win on the field and off the field, our reputation is simple, play to win and party all night....

Women's Softball Team Member



The bus journey to the hotel was no different: laughter, banter, and a sense of anxiousness about what the week would hold. When we arrived at the hotel, final alcohol orders were being taken and a group of students were sent out to “stock up”. It was a very organized arrangement involving both the supply and distribution, including the collection of monies, the brands, volumes and types of alcohol. As I waited for the participants to return from the bottle shop, two doors away from the hotel, I noticed a group of participants trekking up the main street of the Gold Coast carry slabs of alcohol on their shoulders. They looked like Sherpa’s trekking through the streets. I wandered amongst them and offered to help. I was given a list and asked to sort it into room numbers. I was then asked to make the deliveries to the rooms. As I knocked on the doors of the participant rooms, I was greeted with open arms, invited in, and the transaction was finalised. I stayed for a while in each of the four rooms to see what would happen and I was surprised to see no one was opening their drinks. One of my informants explained that the drinking would begin when the Team Court commenced later in the day. The Court is a formalised way of playing out many of the ritualistic games that I would observe throughout the week. The nature of the court is somewhat self-explanatory, with a judge handing down sentences expected to be carried out by the participants. Most of the sentences were associated with alcohol and some form of risky challenge. I was permitted to participate in the court, but was knocked out after the first round of a game because I could not keep up with the drinking. Being knocked out early did not preclude me from participating as an onlooker.

A second situation where ritualistic play was witnessed was at both the opening and closing ceremonies. The opening event involves introducing university captain’s sponsors, special guest and dignitaries. Held on a beach at the Gold Coast, it is laden with ritualistic play, beginning with 3,000 participants sending a signal, through song, that the fun has begun and its time to meet new people and let others know which university you belong to. The banter and singing is deafening as they pitch themselves and their mascots against each other, all whilst consuming alcohol.

There is a blatant disregard for the formalities of the opening ceremony. Instead the participants create their own alternate environment. The larger university teams are observed drowning out the formal presentations with their team songs. There is an obvious power differentiation between the rookies, captains, and others, especially noticeable when observing the rookies, or first timers, who obviously did not know the words and were waiting for the chorus to start so they could become involved. The team captains/leaders, and others who had experienced the

event before, knew the rituals and actions associated with the songs, and were able to fully engage in their meaning. The participants were easily identifiable by their uniforms; some had proudly marked each year of attendance on their attire. The mascots were also engaging in their own form of playfulness as they proudly displayed their chants and dances, and tried to demonstrate they were the best mascot. Alcohol was readily at hand and was being consumed by most of the participants during these observations.

The opening ceremony sends the signal that the fun has begun and, it's an opportunity to get to know your team and the people from the other universities. There is lots of banter, and having been to three events previously, I know what to expect; part of my role is to help the rookies (first timers) know what to do. There is still a serious side though, the opening ceremony also being the signal that the battle is about to commence, because after all, it's a sports event, and everything else after that is just play. When you are competing in sport, it can get pretty serious, and you have such a sense of responsibility to your teammates to do your best. You just don't want to let them down, as you have worked so hard at training to give yourself every chance of winning. I know what it feels like to lose and it's just not fun. On the other hand, when we get together after sport, we just let our hair down. We are equal; no one is any better than anyone else. We never really know what to expect; it's never certain where you will end up and what you will be doing. Not knowing, and just letting go for a while to just see what happens, is just fun. I always feel safe around my mates.

Men's Basketball Team Member

I always enjoy the opening ceremony, as it here I leave my other life behind and get a chance to be part of something so special.....We belong to the week, we create how we spend our time and we can just be ourselves and not worry too much about rules and regulations as we create our own.....

Women's Netball Team Member

It was clear the opening ceremony contributed to the beginnings of the social solidarity amongst the participants. It also played a major role in sustaining the normative and collective rituals observed, and the reinforcement of alcohol use and the consequential outcome of play. The informants explained the opening ceremony provided the playground where everyone learnt the rituals that enabled the participants to engage and bond with each other. They explained the

whole event was about fun and sharing stories with mates and new friends. It was about letting go and feeling safe to do so, knowing that you were somehow equal because the sporting competition had not begun. I witnessed a sense of pride that they were representing their university, and this was expressed by their unified non-playing gear and university mascots. It was almost tribal. The various rituals that form part of the opening ceremony, according to one informant, also build a sense of responsibility towards your teammates. It's a reminder of what you have signed up for, and not to let each other down.

The closing ceremony, held on the last day of the event, appeared to have a different set of ritualistic play experiences. Only the successful participant athletes and their respective universities' officials attend. The event begins as a much more sobering and formal affair, celebratory in nature but strongly aligned to showing the success of the teams to sponsors, with lots of photos and hand shaking and congratulations. Once the formalities are over, the ritualistic play begins when the winning banners and trophies are taken back to the team base. Once again the songs, drinking games and banter are observed with repetitious gusto. In some instances, this behaviour continued into the early hours of the evening.

It's usually the same universities who win the big trophies every year, so most of the participants don't bother going to the closing ceremony. They will be off doing other things. On the odd occasion there will be a surprise winner and the whole of that university team will turn up, but as you can see at this closing ceremony, that's not the case. There would be lucky to be a couple of hundred here. You can bet that everyone else is leaving or has already gone. Most of the competition finished yesterday and most will have had a big one last night, celebrating and commiserating.

Women Hockey Team Member

These observations at both the opening and closing ceremony demonstrate how the organisational element of the event contributes to the formation of ritualistic play, and how alcohol impacts the overall play experience. Decisions by the AUS to select certain sponsors impact the messaging to participants, and can influence the beginnings of using certain brands as part of their play rituals. The way in which the organisers created a clear delineation between sport and leisure is by scheduling sport during the day. This has paved the way for many rituals to be framed and sustained within recreation, leisure and play.

Did you see our mascot give it to the other units? This is going to be one hell of a week... I love our kit; it looks so cool compared to the other units... I started off miming the chant because I did not know the words, but one of the girls in my team noticed me doing this and gave me the words. I was so into it...I have only just met my teammates and already they feel like my family... I am a better runner than a baseball player, but I wanted to be part of a team and get to know a few of the lads from unit... I didn't know any of the girls until I got on the plane. I am really looking forward to being a part of this team as they have won for the last three years... Being part of a team means that I don't have to stand out as the best player, but I can still make a contribution... You always get a fair go when you play in a team; you sometimes play well and sometimes not, but it's alright because you know that one of the other teammates will carry you through, and likewise, you will do the same for them...

Mixed Netball Team Member

Sport is laden with rituals, so it's not surprising it should be so prevalent amongst team sports where collective behaviours are socially embedded and reinforced. In intensively observing many sports during the AUS event, one in particular will be reported. The observation began when I witnessed one of the participants knocking on his teammates' doors to make sure they were ready to get on the bus that would transport them to the facilities. I tagged along for the day with the team, travelling on the bus. Upon arrival, each player registered and began warming up. They all appeared to have their own little ritual for preparing. The games I observed were all physically demanding and by mid-week they had won all their games. In order to qualify for the finals, they needed to win the next match. With less than one minute to go, they were in front by a goal. The final whistle blew and they were victorious. Excitement filled the team; they were jumping up and down. It was a like a big release of tension. Now they had a chance to play off for a gold medal, but first they had to win the semi, which was to be held the next day at 9.30 am. When they returned to the hotel, the players freshened up and met as a team to discuss the activities for the night. The captain laid down some ground rules, including a curfew, and the players agreed to be in bed by 2am. As for drinking alcohol, they all agreed not to get drunk. Anyone who did not agree had an opportunity to say so, and no one said a word. I was curious to see whether they would follow the rules my informant told me had been in place within this sport for a number of years. I asked him how this happens. In his opinion, the rituals that exist are played out so repetitively that they become culturally embedded in the behaviours expected of the team.

Later that night I witnessed the team meeting held in one of the player's rooms. The meeting involved participants engaging in a range of ritualistic games involving alcohol. My informant explained that getting drunk and drinking were seen differently, and that the participants were expected to have a few drinks without getting drunk. The combination of alcohol and play activities observed appeared to contribute to how they were interacting and socialising, resulting in much laughter and frivolity. At 9pm on the dot, the whole team headed off to a nightclub within walking distance of the hotel. I spent most of the night disappearing into the crowd, trying to keep my observations sharp. The players pretty much stayed together for the entire night, dancing, drinking and laughing. Occasionally one of them would stray away from the group, only to be brought back by someone. Like clockwork, at 1am the captain rounded them up and they all headed back to their hotel rooms, giggling and sharing stories, and one can only assume they went to bed. When I arrived for breakfast the next morning, the team were once again focusing on the task of winning the game. The bus drove them to the facilities, where they won their match, resulting in them playing off for the gold medal. The same rituals were evidenced after the game; they packed up and were transported back to the hotel for a team meeting. The mood was one of happiness, storytelling about the game, and preparation for the evening activities, only on this night they chose to stay in the hotel. They all met up as a team after dinner and once again I observed alcohol being consumed and games being played. The play rituals of the night activities seemed to act as a type of release, a way of changing the routine of the day. They all appeared to be having fun, taking risks, exploring different possibilities through their games, creating new challenges and just generally being playful towards one another.

The above observations appeared quite a habitual pattern of behaviour repeated each day. The rituals witnessed when participants were engaged in play somehow retained a meaningfulness only known to them and seemed to be just taken for granted. Berger, J., (1972) claims repetitive behaviours, like the ones I have described as rituals, free individuals from the burden of decision making, and therefore take away the tension associated with determining options.

As discussed in Chapter 5, organisational and socio-cultural determinants contribute to ritualistic play. Elements such as the differentiation between sport and recreation, including the opening and closing ceremonies, and alcohol access, mascots, uniforms, reinforcement of narratives etc. can contribute to determining how play is experienced and how alcohol is used. As a means of demonstrating the impact of the socio-cultural determinants that become the

ritualistic nature of the event, I observed a team with the support of an informant who had been involved in attending the event over many years.

I was given the opportunity to engage in the observations with the team from the first day of competition. The team was made up of 22 players and four officials. Ten of the players had been to at least one event previously and the remainder had not attended the event before. All the officials had been involved, on average, for five years. On the first day of competition, the participants arrived at the grounds where I observed a strong sense of solidarity about what they were there to do and what was expected. The rookies, without question, carried the kit bags and drinks off the bus before returning to get their own bags. There was a lot of group discussion about tactics, warm-up, and rotation of players. Their kit bags were lined up in a unique pattern with the rookies at the end of the line. Their uniforms were clean and ironed.

There was quite a bit of banter and historical stories about the competitions and individual competitors. A type of physical contact was apparent amongst the team members—a tap on the shoulder, back and butt—as they started to go through their warm-up routine. Warming up, it was clear they knew how to play the game. They were executing kicks directly to each other, handballing under pressure, and they appeared to be very fit. They described to each other what their jobs on the field were and how they would provide support to each other under different circumstances. It was a very organized group of individuals. They discussed what score they expected for each quarter and who to mark on the opposition. They were here to compete and their aim was to win. The game got underway and everyone did his or her jobs. The coach was vocal and direct with his language; there was little left to the imagination. Players appeared not to be fazed by what was said.

They won their match and the team completed a warm down, doing similar stretches and activities before taking part in a team debrief with the coach. Once that was completed, the players stayed around to watch the other matches, but they did not drink alcohol during the time spent at the grounds on the first day and pretty much stuck together. After about three hours, they returned to their hotels. The second day I observed the same routine prior, except for one major difference. At the end of the game, following a victory, one of the players produced three slabs of beer. Each player grabbed one, shook it, and without consuming any, began to sing a song and deliberately spray the contents over the others. Not one player let the can touch their mouth. My informant explained that each day the team wins, they are allowed to get closer to the alcohol. Because they won yesterday, they were allowed to buy the beer; because they won

today, they were allowed to open it; if they win tomorrow, they will be allowed to drink it. This ritual had been part of the team for years.

On the third day, I was curious, and hopeful they would win just so I could see what would happen. Unfortunately, they didn't win, so the same play ritual as the day before was repeated. On day four, they won. The beer was opened and once again sprayed over everyone. Once they were off the playing arena, half a dozen slabs appeared and a range of drinking games began. One was a type of Russian roulette where some of the cans had been shaken rigorously by the officials and placed on the ground. The players created a circle around the cans and the coach pointed to a player who had to select a can to open. Firstly, he had to place the can up against his ear and pull the ring. One of two things occurred; either the can busted open and sprayed in the ear of the player because it had been shaken, or nothing happened. The players whose cans did not burst sculled the whole can and when finished, were required to place it upside down on their head. The players whose cans busted open were left to clean up the mess, which by this stage was all over them. The game lasted for about an hour until all the beer was consumed. Some of the players were covered in beer; others had consumed about three to four beers. They were laughing and having fun. The game attracted a lot of attention from other universities who were able to join in on the fun as spectators.

Day five was the gold medal game and I was excited to see what the next observation would uncover. The team undertook exactly the same ritualistic and habitual behaviour in preparation for their match. Even though closely contested, they lost the match by a few points. Expecting them to be devastated, I watched closely to see their reactions. They were subdued, to say the least, with very little verbal communication between each other, but they still maintained physical contact with slaps and pats again on the back, shoulders, head and bum. My informant was close by, watching the game, so I asked him what would happen next. He said they would leave the ground quickly and would commiserate tonight with a few beers. He was right. Within ten minutes of the game being completed, they had shaken the hands of their opponents, warmed down, and were heading for the bus.

The ritualistic play activities observed created a level of closeness amongst the players that strengthened throughout the week. I heard more nicknames and banter and observed a different player each day being asked by the captain to wear an oversized pair of sunglasses when they were not playing. My observations were that the rituals of being part of a team had bonded the players beyond what the formal sporting competition was capable of achieving.

Berger, J., (1972) believes the power of these moments is due, in part, to them not being available in everyday life. The meaning given to this socio-cultural nature of this type of play experience creates a level of connectedness between the players that cannot be replicated outside the AUS event, and any attempt to do so will give it a different meaning because the individual relations with each other will have changed.

Throughout the week I continued to observe many ritualistic play activities that were given both an individual and collective meaning, all of which involved the use of alcohol. I witnessed how everyone was part of the experience, even the spectators. I saw smiles, uncontrollable laughter, a sense of safety and freedom. I observed everyone taking turns to voluntarily make him or herself vulnerable, to simply put themselves in situations where they could experience fun.

The bond between those participating in the ritualistic play experience was tight, almost protective in nature. There was little judgment of each other's vulnerabilities. The alcoholic games of initiation, and the dramatic and illusionary behaviour of the Team Courts, set a stage for all participants to be engaged in escaping the realities of the day. The stage was a continuous array of narratives and stories about the day's event, historically recounting past memories and fantasizing about what might lie ahead. This was often associated with participants dressing up in costumes that gave rise to changing the traditional roles they had in the team, creating new identities collectively and individually accepted by their peers. The rules of engagement appeared to be clear to everyone and a deviation from the established protocol did not go unnoticed, and in some cases was referred back to the Team Court for jovial punishment. The alcoholically fuelled games appeared to have no particular consequences but to provide enjoyment, fun, and frivolity, and to strengthen the bond amongst the members of the team.

The existence of the court enabled participants to free themselves from the regulated organisational constraints of the daily sports competition to embrace a somewhat uncertain, unconstructed new order. Alcohol was used as a means to engage more quickly in this unstructured space and appeared to add to a more playful and pleasurable experience. I have termed this the new order, as it was evident that it was role release from the day's events, the better and the worse players becoming equally important in this new environment. There were no favourites observed in this space. A new set of leaders and followers would emerge, often completely different to those who led the day before. A number of games were then begun. Some the games were repeated daily, whilst others just seemed to appear. The court lasted about two hours and came to an end in time for the next part of the evening: the nightclubs. The



participants had loaded up, bonded, escaped, undertaken their rituals, dressed up, had fun, and tested their limits. When they were lining up to enter the venue, the frivolous behaviour stopped so as not to draw the attention of the bouncer. When they stepped inside the venue, they gathered together again and recreated a different experience. Some went to dance and were very physically engaged, others became more observers standing in the one spot, some patrolled the venue looking to engage with others, and a few participants just hung around the bar.

The ritualistic games continued into the night, at the hotel: on the bus, at the nightclub, in the participants' rooms. It was not isolated to a specific space, just wherever they happened to be. The play experience was interpreted through a unique system of languages used to communicate with one another, and included nicknames and titles like The King, The Possum, The Lay-over, and so on. The songs I witnessed were steeped in history and performed with commitment, and the ritualistic nature of the performances involved a pattern of languages the participants were able to interpret in humorous ways. Ritualistic play in this form unquestionably reinforces the sense of community, individual self-concept and self-esteem, essential ingredients of play.

I also witnessed how a collection of people can create a collective and individual identity simultaneously. This was observed when participants wore their uniforms during sport, and then when they dressed up and played different characters during their recreation. These characters had often been part of the team for many years and the clothing had been handed down each year for participants to wear. On one occasion I met The King with his crown, The Court Jester with her hat, and a group of males dressed up as old men playing bowls. This was usually given to the players who had been injured during sport.

I just hope I don't end up down the cop station again; I was lucky to get off last time, so I need to be careful this year...I am giving myself a curfew this year, so I can play well. As soon as court is finished, I am sneaking away. I had heard stories about Mitch; he is a bit of a legend around here. Hopeless in goals, but who cares; he is so much fun and shit, he can put them away...I have heard some stories about what goes on at night, but everybody has told me that your teammates look after each other, no matter how drunk you get. This is my fourth uni games. Every one of them has been a blast, and it usually takes me twelve months to recover, just in time for the next one...If I was honest, it's not the sport that really motivated me to come, it was to see what everyone had been

talking about. It really is so much fun; the drinking, the games, the hanging out with teammates, that's what it's all about. For the last three years my law mates have been telling me about the uni games. It's my last year of study, so I wanted to experience it for myself. I should have come before now. It's going to be so much fun. I was honoured with the "Dork Award" last year. I worked hard for that and now my name is embedded in the polyurethane cup forever. Remember when Johnny had to take off that guy from Sydney University and he was so drunk he fell off the bed and broke his arm. I will never forget that. I laughed for days and still tell the story. It was the funniest thing I have ever seen.... remember when we all dressed up as old men and sat in the bowling club and got trashed. We should do it again this year... What's the theme this year: have fun, play hard, go home... If I had of known last year how much of a hard time I would get for not wearing that jacket all night, I would have glued it to my back. There were a couple of nobs in the team last year, so I really did not enjoy myself as much as I would have liked. They have graduated now, so this year will be so much better.

Men's Football Team Member

Each year we have a different theme.... We dress up and play a role for the entire week.... this year we are school teachers and I am the principal.... which means I get to be in charge of the "Court" This means I have to prepare the drinking competitions which is fun.... I don't normally drink this much alcohol, but it goes hand in hand with be able to get into the swing of the games....

Women's Basketball Team Member

It is not surprising that when 7000 young people descend on one location every year to play sport, over time the event creates ritualistic play experiences. Observations throughout the week-long event included a range of competitive drinking games, and other socio-cultural activities involving initiation ceremonies, team songs, games of chance, physical and cognitive challenges, mascots, role-playing, mimicking, and storytelling about what was experienced. These observations of ritualistic play appeared to create a sense of collective disorder that contributed to the participants bonding and creating a strong sense of belonging, pleasure, excitement, and group conformity. As the observer of these play-rituals, I felt at times I should intervene, just in case. The first time I observed some of the activities, I remember thinking that it reminded me of my nieces and nephews playing when they were small, and their grandmother

saying, “If you keep doing that, someone will get hurt and it will end in tears.” This was particularly the case when I was observing physical play.

### **Physical Play**

Physical or body play has been described by Hughes , B (2002a) as an expression of physicality and the exhilaration of contact with others. Physical play permits participants to engage in physical activities that do not involve or result in someone being hurt. It is less to do with fighting and more to do with touching, tickling, wresting, and expressing strength. Using the body is necessary for many forms of play, and ultimately our ability to do so is influenced by our individual physical capabilities. It is not surprising, given that the setting was a sporting one, that many participants observed were engaging in physical play.

Alcohol was always observed as part of the physical play experience, and was always close by or being held in one hand whilst the physical contest was being played out. Often the challenge was how not to spill the contents whilst wresting your opponent to the ground. For different types of physical play to exist, Wardle (1999) believes there needs to be the right spatial environment. I witnessed different physical play happening when participants were outside in open spaces. The contest was usually between two people and there was a lot more spectator involvement. Cheering one or both of the participants on was a regular observation, different from physical play observed in hotel rooms and other indoor spaces. Indoors I observed less one-on-one contests and more collective physical play involving more than one person. Participants were more likely to engage in jostling and poking, rather than tackling each other to the ground and wrestling, which was observed in the outdoor spaces. I also witnessed the participants getting more aggressive in their activities more quickly than in the outdoor environment. They appeared to be drinking more alcohol. It seems that too much space or too little space can significantly change how participants choose to interact with one another.

One evening I observed the participants in a hotel room drinking alcohol and competing in a group tug-of-war, linking arms to form a game without a rope, and choosing to use their linked bodies to try to pull the other over. On this occasion both males and females were participating, where the prize for the winning group was being given permission to scull the alcoholic beverages. As more alcohol was consumed, I witnessed more males being unexpectedly surprised by the level of physical contact being made towards them by the females. On these occasions I observed the male’s supressing the obvious pain they were experiencing.

Physical play appeared to be a way of testing individual strength without being hurt or hurting the other player. When participants became more intoxicated, the body play moved from being more consciously controlled to one of limited control. The informant explained this was when participants tended to get hurt because they were unable to control their reactions to the physical contact, resulting sometimes in them reacting aggressively and sometimes sustaining an injury. The requirement to sustain a degree of control is an important element to sustaining play. Once this line is crossed, it is no longer deemed to be play. In the examples described, both ritualistic and physical play requires a degree of creativity and imagination to sustain play.

We had an arm wrestling competition at court last night.... and one of the girl's water polo players won....it was not your typical arm wrestle... this one required you to hold a drink in one hand and try and skull it... while you were arm wrestling with the other.... some of the girls are so strong.... amazing

Men's Water Polo Team Member

### **Creative Play**

Creative play allows participants to self-express through any medium they choose, including smell and taste. It creates a make-believe world where the type of play enables one's imagination to run wild and where the conventional rules governing the physical world do not apply. Imaginary play is "an activity framed by metacommunicative messages and it embodies representation of emotionally significant experiences" involving "negotiation at every point" (Göncü, Patt, and Kouba (2002, p. 419). As children we learn to understand how others perceive the world through creative imaginary play, and we also learn how to compromise when we disagree on issues within the stories we create. Lee and Homer (1999) explain that imaginary play experience requires the players to simultaneously process factual and non-real representations, and have a theory in mind about what they are imagining. This is also the case in the adult world of creative play. In adults, imaginary and creative play provides opportunities for generating problem-solving strategies, resolving and dealing with disagreements, developing empathy, flexibility, and compromising.

Creative play, like ritualistic and physical play, appeared to be very well practiced by the participants. I witnessed three males playing on the floor in a meeting room at a hotel. Others were also throwing and catching a ball made of soft materials, a few others playing a music game and drinking alcohol. It was a busy room but on this occasion I was drawn to the three males playing on the floor. I was told by an informant they had been working on their construction project every day during their recreation period. I watched them create small figurines made out of caps from beer bottles and containers that once held packs of beer. One said, "We are building a baseball coliseum." Another responded, "Yeah, we started it at the beginning of the week. See that figure there, that's me." A third male said, "No, it's not. That's you there, sitting with the opposition, pinching their beer." The first male then argued, "Yes, he is always doing that, and see the figure next to him, that's his mother telling him to get one for her."

There was a serious side to what they were doing, highlighted by one of the informants who described the three males as the "Bench Warmers", which meant they had not played a game. This provided a whole new meaning as to why these particular participants may have chosen creative play over other forms of play. Was it in some way allowing them to process their disappointment of not being picked, and as such, giving them permission to resolve this using their imagination and creativity? Was alcohol use providing a way of justifying the childlike way in which they had designed and constructed the project?

I have taken more chances and backed myself more this week than I have in the last twelve months. I have had so much fun. If I told my family what I got up to this week, they would think I was an idiot, a child, but it was the most fun ever, just so exciting...Who would have thought that building a castle out of beers cans could become so important. We all contributed to its construction for the entire week and on Friday we smashed it to bits...I am really going to miss this team when I go back home. It's going to feel weird.

Mixed Netball Team Members

As I continued to observe this play experience over the week, it was clear they were processing their frustration. They had names for all the figurines and would become quite rough in the way they were handling some of them. On one occasion I witnessed them hanging the coach figurine upside down and one of the participants saying this should give him a different view of what's going on in the diamond. The more intoxicated they became, the more physical the play.

They did spend most of the time laughing and expressing a sense of pleasure and pride with their achievements. This activity also provided pleasure to the spectators and they quickly used their imagination to understand the explanations given to them about the construction. The participants had created an imaginary environment where they were free to step outside the reality of the day and the disappointment of not being selected to play, to one that appeared to create a euphoric state. There was a sense they felt both singularly and collectively safe in a state of creative play. I consistently observed that when the participants felt safe to engage in play, they were giving themselves permission to become whoever they wanted to be within the team, and when this happened, each and every one of them were somehow equally valued. I also observed the level of arousal, pleasure, and creativity of the behaviour appeared to escalate when alcohol was present. The introduction of alcohol as part of the play experience also appears to strengthen the ability for participants to engage in social play.

### **Social Play**

Social play is an activity in which the rules and criteria for social engagement and interaction are revealed, explored and amended continuously by those involved. In social play, participants know the expectations and are expected to abide by the rules or protocols. Failure to do this can result in the participant being disengaged from the activity.

Participating in games with rules is an integral part of the social development and the play experience. In adult play we tend to negotiate rules beforehand, rather than establish the rules as they play out (Seifert, Hoffnung and Hoffnung, 1997). I observed this type of play on many occasions, but one event in particular emphasised the importance of playing within the rules.

It was a very hot afternoon and one of the teams had just finished competing. A player was over near the tap at the far end of the field with a hose and a big blue strip of plastic. The player called out to the team members, who raced over, laid the plastic down on the ground, hosing it with water, then began sliding on the plastic. Initially they were taking turns sliding, with two participants making sure everyone was in some type of order; eventually one participant emerged as a leader. He suggested they slide head first, stop in the middle of the slide, and then slide feet first for the remainder of the slide. The participants seemed pleased with this idea and they modified their game as instructed. The game continued for about an hour, with other participants joining in throughout. One or two other participants from other universities were permitted to join in. One of the newcomers to the game, who was obviously intoxicated, jumped in the line and slid feet first all the way down the plastic, hitting some of the other participants

quite hard. The leader said, “Tim, why do you always have to mess up our games?” The male replied, “All I wanted to do was have a go, you dumb ass,” and stormed off frustrated.

Games with rules are helpful for participants looking to enter into a group activity. Entry behaviour involves a great deal of persistence, as participants can often be rejected from a group multiple times before being accepted to join the activity. Phillips, Shenker, and Revitz (1951) established a five-step sequence that is essential for a successful entry and assimilation into a group, involving the development of the same frame of reference of group members (as cited in Putallaz and Wasserman (1990, p. 65)). The participant must first imitate group members behaviours, then attempt to initiate or influence a group activity (usually resulting in failure the first time around), and then try a second and partially successful attempt at influencing some members of the group. This is followed by successful inclusion in group activities, and lastly, they must be able to lead without being rejected (Putallaz and Wasserman, 1990, p. 66). In order for participants to learn about a group’s frame of reference, they must spend some time actively observing the play activity and learning how group members think and act. The importance of developing a frame of reference is further supported by the example where the participant made unwanted physical contact with the other participants and was accused of messing up the game, and who then received an angry response to his inability to follow rules by another participant.

Participants who have activity-oriented goals and who are concerned about their entry into the group activity, rather than their relation to other participants or elevating their status within the group, are more likely to be accepted by the group because they are not disrupting the group dynamics by attempting to change the course of the activity or lead the group (Putallaz and Wasserman, 1990, p. 72). My observations of successful entry into the slide game coincides with this perspective, as the participants who were given access to play and did not try to modify the game were quickly accepted.

Another example, providing more evidence regarding social play, was with two participants who were having an on-going disagreement throughout the week which clearly escalated during the non- sporting activities. My interaction with both of them occurred on the transport, during one of the Team Courts, at a nightclub, and then later at the sports fields. I was observing the behaviour at the Team Court and noticed there was tension between two of the participants. The two males had an interesting relationship: John always seemed to want to hang out and have a drink with Mick, while Mick seemed to want to engage with other people as well. John only drank with other participants if Mick was also included but John did not have to be directly

interacting with Mick while drinking with other people. On the Thursday evening, at about 11.30pm, I was wandering around the hotel and called into one of the rooms. Mick walked into the room, was approached by John, and offered to join in on a game of cards. Mick rejected John's offer and continued to wander around seeking out other people.

John was visibly upset. I walked up to John, who was intoxicated, and asked him what was wrong; he explained to me that Mick did not want to play cards with him and was not interested in a drink. He also told me he and Mick have had some very big drinking nights and they have so much fun together, but when they are sober, he feels like Mick does not want anything to do with him. "It feels like our friendship is fading away." Mick was by himself on the other side of the room playing darts, so I went and asked him if he considered John a mate. He informed me that he did consider John a mate, but he was looking to engage with some other people, because every time he gets together with John, they always end up drunk. John came over, and although intoxicated, appeared to be in agreement with Mick's assessment; he claimed Mick only wanted to hang out with him when he felt like letting his hair down. The conversation ended with them both walking in opposite directions. Later on during the evening in one of the other rooms in the hotel, I noticed them both chasing each other with water pistols. Later I found out these contained vodkas.

Else (2009) describes this type of play experience as play based on intense experiences of a social nature that can be an effective mechanism for avoiding highly charged social situations, especially issues such as falling out with friends. Throughout the week, I observed a number of these friendship interactions where alcohol provided social glue. When reflecting on these interactions I noted one of the most important aspects of the social determinant of play was the subsequent development of friendships within peer groups, and the way in which participants effectively/ineffectively negotiate and manage conflict.

Social play is also created through the rituals that form an important part of the event. These symbolic activities create a vehicle in which many of the social play activities are formed. I observed the long-standing ritual of the Team Court. One of the teams had just arrived back at the hotel. I was on the same bus and overheard the discussions regarding the court. The teams agreed they would go straight to the function room as soon as they left the bus, so they could finish the activity before dinner. Immediately the bus pulled up at the reception area of the hotel, the participants went directly to the room. They quickly created the setting by placing a main table with one chair at the front of the room, and two other tables, with chairs, either side. A



plastic horn was placed in the middle of the main table. It was given pride of place and was very visible for all to see. When everyone had entered the room, the horn was sounded three times. The teams started singing a song. When the horn sounded again, even before the song was finished, everyone went silent. I could see some of the participants trying to hold back their laughter. Someone sitting at the main table activated the horn again, pressing it once, and everyone sat down, including me. The lead person announced to all participants to charge their glasses and toast the court. Then numerous people made toasts about funny things that had happened during the day. I asked how the lead person was chosen and I was told it was a process that took three years. A freshman would be selected as a potential candidate by a vote. The criteria were not really clear, but I distilled it as someone everyone liked, who had some leadership qualities, was very social in nature and highly engaged in the sports competition. The social play I witnessed at the court appeared to bind the participants symbolically, so their social interaction became one of stories and memories of the day, the game, and the alcoholic behaviour of colleagues.

Got to get moving; court starts in 10 minutes...I was a bit worried in the beginning when I was asked to go to the court. Little did I know how much fun it was going to be... I know my role in the team and what is expected of me when I am not playing. I may not be the best player, but I am expected to contribute off the field. I am the court jester; my role is to make others laugh and to activate the start of our play time. I am the barman....I don't really fit in to this team once we leave the field, but that's ok because I am accepted because I am the best player in the team. I am, in fact, the geek because I don't drink...It does not take long to click in to the fun; it so easy to fit in with this team... Last night was awesome, man; I had heard a lot about how much fun this week would be. Last night's court was sensational. I have never drunk so much alcohol and had so much fun in my life, I will need to detox when I get home.

Men's Touch Football Team Member

Through social play, participants are able to subjectively evaluate the image of themselves and how they believe others might see them. As in all human existence, individuals desire to strive and maintain a positive self-concept, and belonging gives us the carriage to behave in certain ways that will likely contribute to the maintenance or enhancement of one's self-image. The development of our social identity through engaging with others provides a constant opportunity to reinforce and strengthen these ritualistic play experiences.

One informant explained the level of social play he had observed over many years had always involved alcohol. As I continued to observe this phenomenon for myself, I realised the way alcohol was being used supported the literature, in that it is a socially conforming agent. I observed its use in social play as creating a deeper shared experience, an all-in mentality. Even those who were aware of controlling their consumption of alcohol were equally aware of their responsibility to contribute to the on-going social play activities that existed.

Some of the narrative threads presented by informants and my observations include:

I only had a few drinks last night and everyone thought I was drunk. I guess I played along a little....

I know I am conforming to the drinking culture, but it is so much fun.

I am prepared to go along with what's happening and I really only drink enough to give the impression that I am in.

I am not being forced by anyone; it's just the way it is.

This innate sense of wanting to belong and connect through conforming to social play was continuously observed. The expressions on the faces of the participants, the peering across the room to test whether they had done enough, the reinforcement through physical contact and narratives, all these sustained a level of friendship I have termed "Liquid Friendships". My observations indicated this level of social conformity was less visible during the day. During the day I observed participants conforming mainly to the rules and regulations of the sporting competition. As the evening unfolded, I entered this new universe; one that was positively expressed and communicated through alcohol use. What I was observing was a level of intimacy between the participants as they engaged in social play involving both physical and mental challenges. The relationships between the participants appeared to be strengthened when alcohol was involved.

I observed alcohol behaviours contributing to the formation of friendships that appeared to bond relationships amongst the participants when they were participating in social play. These friendships, and the consequential desire for social conformity, became key drivers that appeared to be further motivation to drink alcohol. I observed these behaviours being repeated nightly and questioned whether the sporting competition was purely the enabler for the team to experience social play.

I also observed Social Play creating an “In and an Out Group”. The “In” group was the team members only, and their social play contributed to creating a strong sense of belonging and connectedness through their social engagement activities that only they understood. The “Out” group was all the other universities who the team developed a different social playfulness with, using songs and banter in social settings to define and reinforce their own social strength within their team. Social play with the “Out” group reminded them they were not part of the social construction of a particular university and could therefore not partake in the social play activities associated with that team.

I never knew her that well, but after last night she is now one of my besties... When the team is together socially, it's like we are one: no explaining required. It's like a cosmic force that no one else really sees, understands, and we really get to know each other through the games and the stories that we tell... When I am drunk, it's such a great feeling because I can go up to anyone and have a chat when, not sure why, but it feels easy to just be social and participate in all the games we play of a night.

Men's Baseball Team Member

On a number of occasions, I observed a type of social, playful behaviour that extended to the “Out” group. The instigator was always non-aggressive and you could observe this through body language, soft eye contact, fluid body movements and gestures. There were times the social play experience was not understood when it was extended to the “Out” group. The person who had instigated the social contact would be surprised by the reaction of the other person and would normally respond with comments like, “Settle down, I was only playing.”

competing each day, the Gold Coast becomes, it's one big playground. I think I look forward to that more than playing my sport... The other night I starred in a play. There is no way I would have been able to do this unless everyone else was with me.

Women's Softball Team Member

Through a variety of interactions, I also observed a different level of trust that existed within the “In” group social play which, when beyond the team, ceased to have the same meaning. This was especially the case when alcohol was involved. The play signals were not always understood outside the “In” group and often ended up with aggressive consequences. It is the

teams' social homogeneity that creates the boundaries in which they interact amongst themselves, and how they then interface with symbolic elements such as drinking games and other ritualistic activities, which contributes to social play. Social play in this setting appeared to be quite self-centred because it created a specific "In" and "Out" group social experience, which at times was observed to be rather exclusive. I did witness participants not always having to be actively involved to enjoy the experience of play; spectators were equally able to enjoy all forms of play as spectators.

### **Spectator Play**

Spectator Play is self-explanatory; it is when one can experience the joy of being involved in play without actively participating. Like sport and other recreational pursuits, it permits the spectator to feel a part of the overall experience and feel connected to the broad aims of the team. This was particularly observed in the Team Courts where spectator engagement was observed to be equally as important as that of the players. I was observing what I thought was a team briefing in a player's room, a team session that was scheduled. When I entered the room, I noticed a female participant standing at the end of one of the beds. Like the other courts I had observed, there was no hierarchical set-up. The lead girl stood on the bed and called the team to action using a bell. According to my informant, this signalled the beginning of the court. The participants appeared to be very happy and engaged, and there was a lot of banter. Most of the participants were dressed in a white sheet, ready for the toga party held later that evening. The lead girl facilitated a number of games, including those involving alcohol, storytelling, and re-enactments of the players' performances from the day's competition. Not all the participants were involved in the activities, and it was hard to see who was having the most fun, the spectators or those participating. The spectators were seen to be experiencing the joy of being involved without actively participating in the games or activity. During my observation there was no "In" or "Out" group.

I did witness some spectators not sharing in the drinking atmosphere. My informant explained sometimes it was a way for the participants to take some time out, but still be engaged with the play opportunities. As a spectator, there was no real or perceived pressure to drink or be part of the activities either. The informant said despite not being actively involved in the play activity, the spectators still have loads of fun. "You get to take in so much more of what's happening."

## Storytelling Play

Storytelling Play is when participants tell stories and hold the attention of others whilst the narrative is unfolding. The stories can evoke different emotions, including laughter, fear and excitement. My observation of storytelling play began in an unplanned way when I travelled up to the Gold Coast on the same plane as one of the teams. They were the loudest group on the plane and I happened to be sitting across the aisle from a few of them. Almost immediately, I heard and observed an array of stories being told about what had occurred at last year's event: stories about nights out, tough games, getting into trouble with the police, and lots of what you would normally hear from teenagers about other peers. I could see from the reactions on the individuals' faces that some were the storytellers and others were listening with a look a surprise, amazement, and even fear. They knew who I was, and at first I thought they were just trying to impress or scare me with their stories. I checked in with my informant and he explained there was a very strong culture in many of the teams that had been sustained over many years. The coach, team manager and support person were all alumni of the university and would take a week off work just to attend the event. My informant explained many of the stories were sustained as a result of participants being involved for an extended period of time. He maintained that this institutional knowledge kept stories going and created new ones. The following is a snapshot from my notes that describes content of some of the ways in which storytelling becomes play.

Remember when we all dressed up as old men and sat in the bowling club and got trashed? We should do it again this year...What's the theme this year: have fun, play hard, go home?

Men's Hockey Team Member

I heard that one of the unis filled the pool at the hotel with soapsuds and swam nude; they caused thousands of dollars' worth of damage. I heard the whole team ended up in jail; they had to forfeit the rest of their games.

Women's Football Team Member

The above narratives give rise to thoughts and beliefs about the week, and memories and narratives of past experiences that often appeared to create "urban myths". My informant supported this view: "The stories become somewhat an embellished version of events, and become folklore."

I observed first-hand how this is created when I entered the hotel bar. I could hear laughter, and as I got closer, I could see the team standing in group formation surrounding one participant. My informant explained this was the team manager. He also confirmed they were all from the AFL team. The team manager was telling stories with such animation that I could not help but go closer to take in the enjoyment of watching his performance. He captured the attention of not only the team, but also most of the people in the bar, who also shared in the jocularity of the stories. He entertained his team with a range of stories about past players, past wins and losses, and most of the stories involved alcohol: stories of escaping situations while drunk, playing a match with a hangover, and doing risky things while drunk. I have no idea how accurate the stories were. It really did not matter, as it was storytelling.

I was particularly interested in listening to the many stories and witnessed how some participants continued to construct and interpret their play experience, and how when they were relaying a story, their body language was quite upright and regal, as if they were proud of what they had achieved. Narrative threads, as presented below, support this observation.

You are a legend; you suck at basketball but you can drink us all under the table...you really make this team; you remind us all to have fun. Love your work, mate...

AFL Team Member

The participants who drank heavily and shared their stories appeared to have gained notoriety and an identity with the team through their alcohol behaviours. The attention received from the other participants led me to consider that some of the participants connected to their team in this way because they were unable to do so through their sports performance.

Play using words, nuances or gestures (e.g. mime/charades, jokes, play-acting, street slang, poetry, text messages, talking on mobiles/emails/Internet) is all about storytelling. I observed many instances of storytelling, but found myself more formally observing two teams, that according to my informant, had struck up a close relationship with each other. They would regularly attend each other's matches, were seen travelling together, going out together to the after-parties, and just regularly hanging out. This was despite not being located in the same hotel. They had a language of communication that I could not interpret, as it was abbreviated, almost like a text message. For example, they greeted each other "db" or "dg", short for "Hi, Down Boy" and "Hi, Down Girl". My informant explained this just meant "don't get too excited

about seeing me”. Their farewell was usually “lol”, short for “laugh out loud”. What followed from this play communication usually resulted in laughter and an acknowledgement that a strong sense of social cohesion was in existence.

My informant explained that quite a few of the team members were dating so they spent most of their social time together and the jargon I was observing had developed organically over a number of years. I noticed some of the newer members of the team did not initially use the same language when telling a story, but by the end of the week, everyone was consistently speaking and storytelling using the same “In” group language.

The use of mobile devices to sustain story-telling play was also apparent amongst the two teams. Like most people within this age group, they are also regular users of mobile devices, so it was no surprise to observe similar behaviour amongst the team members, with participants regularly being observed orchestrating funny photos and videos of each other. They were all humorous clips of other participants acting out, using different gestures and “In” group language. The photos and clips were sent to the other members of the team, resulting in endless text messages going backwards and forwards from other participants. The fun and banter observed lasted long after the initial photos were sent. It appeared to bond the two teams together and create a stronger “In” group mentality. Often the stories told expressed a level of risk which did not appear to deter the participants from actively engaging. It was hard to observe whether or not participants felt they were at risk when involved in some of the play activities.

### **Risky Play**

Risky Play allows the participant to encounter challenges, or even potentially life-threatening experiences. It is the most difficult observation to engage with, as there were times when my instinct was to intervene, in case the play resulted in serious injury. Despite this desire, my observations uncovered an interesting set of conditions in which risky play unfolds within the studied environment. The consumption of alcohol was an integral part of the play. It appeared never to be planned, provided an enormous amount of group pleasure, required a thirst for excitement for the play experience to be undertaken, and lastly altered the state of play where the boundaries of possibility were explored.

My observations began in the hotel room of one of the players. A balcony joined the hotel rooms, which were not designed for guests to pass from one room to another. The team was on

the first floor of the hotel, three metres above the swimming pool. The participants were gathered in one of the player's bedrooms. They were playing drinking games and generally just breaking down the social barriers between the new and the returning members of the team. One of the participants from the room next door stuck her head around the corner of the balcony and started passing drinks from her fridge. It required the individuals to lean right across into open space. They selected the tallest girl to do the passing and created a safety net behind her, tying together towels that they wrapped around her waist. Each time she was successful in getting a drink across the two balconies, a huge cheer broke out. The focus of attention between the players passing the drinks was intense and it was clear on the faces of the spectators that it was true pleasure for them to watch. As I continued to observe this play, I was reminded of the fact that walking next door and bringing the drinks back would have been a simpler and less risky option.

I play whatever game I want with my mates and they join in when we are drunk: the riskier, the better...When I drink, it feels like I can escape everything, but I need my teammates to play with me, otherwise it's weird...it's so much fun playing with my mates, but sometimes it goes horribly.

Touch Football Team Member

Each night I saw participants testing their limits as they took on a range of physical and cognitive challenges. I observed some gaining more confidence when they successfully mastered an activity that at times was difficult when the levels of alcohol consumed increased. The consumption of alcohol appeared to make the challenges funnier when the participants were unable to master the games. The more they tried, the funnier it became. They were not laughing at their teammate, but at the situation they had embraced. The taking on of risky activities took on many forms. I observed participants taking on physical risks about testing limits of strength, speed, and flexibility, usually undertaken by male participants. The more intoxicated the females became, the more I observed their engagement in these activities. Some of the more personal risks taken on by participants appeared to be when they were putting themselves out there and volunteering to be part of the game. As it was impossible to know just how intoxicated each of the participants had become, I was uncertain about what was real and what playmaking. The only indication I had were the empty alcohol containers that at the beginning of the night were full. There was no doubt alcohol provided a vehicle for escalation of risk to occur.



## Conclusions

In observing the role alcohol plays in the AUS event, I am suggesting it is somewhat normalized amongst the participants, and its use/misuse has relative impunity, and is positively reinforced amongst peers through the symbolic interaction associated with belonging to a sports team. A number of consistent themes emerged through the observations. Firstly, it became apparent the participants desire to pursue play is centred on the hedonic consumption of alcohol, which in some way provides them with a degree of happiness, meaning and fulfilment. Secondly, there is a distinct experience of belonging to a sports team at the AUS event, that includes a level of alcohol expectancy, a set of alcohol behaviours that are consequential and based on the foundation of play, which results in a desire to connect and explore what it means to belong to a sports team. Thirdly, there are structural aspects of the event, as described in Figure 1, that provide both the historical and situational elements of the event, leading to the shaping of the memories and beliefs of the participants that continue to influence behaviour. Fourthly, the behaviour was so embedded because it had to be shared by a significant number of participants, and then behaviourally enacted, physically possessed and internalized. It was intersubjective: shared and passed on to give it permanency through time. Fifthly, alcohol expectancy is reinforced by historical, situational and cognitive factors, and as a result becomes the social glue to ensure social conformity of the event. These influences together enabled adult play to become an acceptable prerequisite to attending the event. I detected amongst these elements a differentiation of power, a social hierarchy that constantly changed, depending upon the play activity. I witnessed a manipulation of things, places and objects in order for participants to create a universal reality. I observed first-hand how storytelling, rituals, improvisation, imagination and fantasy contributes to the building of trust and rapport within a group. I saw participants adapting to different circumstances by behaving foolishly in order to create play. I watched participants being empowered through play as they transformed themselves in the eyes of their peers. I also observed how alcohol is the object of play within the environment studied, and how its consumption contributes to a sense of freeing up the perceived constraints that permit a greater level of social conformity. I saw first-hand that play exists when participants have more fun than purpose. Although as pointed out earlier in chapter 6, for some participant's alcohol related harms either suffered or witnessed did occur during play, and that by not capturing this in the observations it is entirely plausible that a number of participants may have been silenced about their experiences. I now turn to the final chapter of the thesis: the conclusions and discussion.

## Chapter 9- Discussion and Conclusion

### Introduction

Throughout the thesis I have argued that young people's alcohol behaviours are influenced by the way that government policy, the alcohol industry and the social environments intersect. I have strongly suggested that the existing legislative framework has been marginally developed to accommodate the alcohol industry, providing commercial opportunities to promote its use as a desirable feature of a successful and fun filled lifestyle. I have concluded that all tiers of government need to create policies that clearly govern the role they expect industry to play in minimising the misuse of alcohol, a challenge that will be difficult given the heterogeneous nature of the alcohol industry, which sees Hotel owners versus distributors of alcohol having a different view of their role in responsible and sustainable business practices. Underpinning this view was my own personal perspective, that alcohol misuse has the potential to permanently derail the largest university sporting event in Australia. As a leading sports administrator my interest predominantly lay in understanding how alcohol was influencing the behaviours of participants who attended a major university sporting event. In particular, I was curious to unearth whether these behaviours were contributing to the formation of play behaviours. I constructed a multi-disciplinary model in which to interpret these behaviours and have concluded that alcohol use contributes to the formation of play. Although the model developed is designed to interpret a specific setting, it is argued that it could be adapted to suit other environments. It would be recommended though to ensure that any future research investigate further the harms that are often linked to play and enjoyment within these types of settings. As mentioned earlier the complexities associating with this research required the use of a mixed methods approach in order to address "how" and "why" alcohol had become such a part of the lived experience for those who attend the AUS event. The use of this methodology provided profoundly new empirical insights which are always a necessity to understanding social phenomena.

This thesis has contested that play has been made possible at the AUS event through an elaborate set of elements intensely connected to alcohol use, including mascots, rituals, storytelling, drinking games and songs that contextually bind the participants, creating a narrative of experiences that are repeatedly communicated and sustained and have become the blue print for participants' behaviour. Play and alcohol use have been given meaning within

this context and has become closely linked to how the participants interact with each other. The complexities associated with how this has occurred and has become part of the narrative of the AUS event may lie in the way that Australian culture embraces its use. According to Kunz (1997), leisure and drinking share several common characteristics. Firstly, they are both socially created and carried out during non-work hours. Leontini, Schofield, Lindsay, Brown, Hepworth, and Germov, (2015) Secondly, leisure and alcohol both serve as a means of self-expression and stress reduction (Cato, 1992; Gunter, 1987), and according to Carruthers (1993) and Holyfield, Ducharme, and Martin (1995), can contribute to an even more enjoyable leisure experience for some. Thirdly, leisure provides a context for drinking (Colletti and Brownell, 1982; Hughes, Power and Francis, 1992).

I argue that interpreting the data through the models presented in both chapter 3 and chapter 5 provides an insight into the complex nature of how the participants navigate their social environment during the event by absorbing what it means to be at play. In this environment alcohol is a potent symbol of socialisation, and provides a way of achieving a sense of intimacy and belonging which is hedonistic in nature. Drinking alcohol within this environment is inextricable part of this play experience and for the participants appears to absolves them from any consequences, providing a rare opportunity for them to play and consume alcohol without any political and moral interference. For many of the participants, this experience socially connects them to others in ways that provide a lasting sense of belonging. This strong sense of connectedness amongst teammates gives rise to a level of expectation and anticipation about the AUS event which is passed on to others in an enduring way. As in all human existence, individuals desire to belong and consequently this gives rise to behave in certain ways, that will likely contribute to the maintenance or enhancement of how participants connect with each other. Ultimately this leads to the development of their social identity, which is reinforced and strengthened through symbolically activities carried out as part of the lived experience of the AUS event.

The observational data reinforces the intrinsic value participants place on what has been determined as play. The level of commitment witnessed has been referred to by Csikszentmihalyi (1990) as Flow. He explains this concept as creating the feeling of transporting oneself into a new reality, one that is more challenging and complex, that ultimately creates a sense of timelessness and an optimal state of intrinsic reward. This is a feeling of suspension from the reality of life. This suspension in time describes the real essence of play that was observed. The separation from personal identity, to new forms of social

structure and social categories where games were played and rituals formed, gave rise to the formation of new identities and status. The role alcohol has in the play experience, as evidenced through the data, is that it acts as a social agent supporting the social conformity of the sports team. The way in which it is normalized amongst the participants can only be understood by historical, situational and cognitive expectancies, all of which gives rise to its use becoming positively reinforced and part of the symbolic nature of the event itself. My sense from the data analysis is that the participants desire the pursuit of pleasure, which is focused around fun and meaning, and the hedonic consumption of alcohol witnessed has become centred on the search to fulfil this desire. Although not witnessed there is the potential for serious assault and injuries to occur when fun and pleasure are replaced with risk and violence.

### **Alcohol and Social Connectedness**

In previous chapters- both the literature review and the presentation of data – it has been argued that there is evidence to suggest that there has not been a longer or more widely used drug than alcohol (Heath 1987). At the AUS event, I witnessed on many occasions the highly complex and diverse patterns of behaviour that stemmed from its use, and how alcohol affected the expectations of culturally shared values within a specific setting. I also observed the role that the alcohol industry plays in helping to shape behaviour, by creating opportunities for participants to more easily access cheap alcohol in settings that enabled the participants to connect with one another. It is a deliberate and carefully constructed process to maximise the sale of alcohol by selling images that project alcohol consumption as fun, cool and exciting. Consequently, it also influences how play is formed and enacted at the event.

The sharing of alcohol within this environment was a way for participants to build social capital and social stratification. This was particularly evident within the team sports. It is argued participants within this setting are attracted to team sports because they are fulfilling a desire to be part of a cohesive group, while still having a capacity to express their individual physical self. The nature of the relationship between play and alcohol within the team setting can only be interpreted as part of the desire for social conformity, a potent mobilising and identifying symbol of the event. The peer group culture and a strong sense of belonging and social connections are very much the unwritten and tacit rules and expectations of being part of a sports team. The influence of alcohol provides an excuse for behaving in a child-like way, covering up the real desire by some to seek out the true value of adult play.

## **Our Desire as Adults to Play**

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) purports that as we grow older, we need to rediscover happiness by seeking out ways of finding harmony and meaning to our existence. The observed play experience demonstrates we don't stop playing just because we are growing older, and perhaps play may serve higher functions than we want to recognise. The sense of being involved in fun, creative, spontaneous, frivolous, and socially out of the box behaviours during play creates a sense of freedom from impunity and collective expression, in turn giving normative meaning to those involved. The data provided consistent evidence of the participants seeking out opportunities to do new and enjoyable things that provide social engagement. In addition, fun new challenges were an experience often reported by the participants as being freely chosen, in turn giving rise for permission to act out and be more playful. Following Van Genneep (1960), the behaviour observed can best be understood as part of a "rite of passage", giving rise to participants functioning outside the normal structures of society. Or is it that the introduction of alcohol merely provides an excuse to fulfil our desire for playful behaviour?

Seeking out opportunities to do new and enjoyable things that provide social engagement and different challenges was an experience reported as being freely chosen by the participants. The way in which alcohol use became part of the lived experience appeared to allow for more frivolous behaviour and playfulness. The euphoric nature of what was witnessed is best described as "utterly out of hand", and alcohol did not constitute play, but rather become an object within play itself. Observations undertaken showed participants value playfulness, and the consequential alcohol behaviours, because it enabled them to more quickly transport themselves into a new reality, one that creates more pleasure and freedom. Earlier studies Yarnal and Qian, (2011), Amabile, Hill, Hennessey and Tighe, (1994), and Barnett, (2012) have reinforced the notion that play in adults has a close relationship to intrinsic motivators such as a desire to be cheerful and happy, an opportunity to lift one's mood by creating a sense of belonging and companionship through play. As individuals we have all played at some stage in our lives, but as we move towards adulthood, it appears the nature of play becomes harder to explain. Despite this, the powerful drive to repeat playful activities was observed at the AUS event. The uniqueness of observing first-hand how play is embroiled in alcohol provides an interesting perspective on which many researchers will have much to say.

### **A Multi-Dimensional Approach to Understanding Alcohol and Play**

The concept of choice as a focus for interpreting alcohol behaviour led to the utilisation of a multi-dimensional approach to understanding alcohol and play. This approach permitted the bringing together of structural, historical, cultural and behavioural elements in order to understand participants' drinking behaviour as a form of play. This interdisciplinary approach enabled the use of alcohol to be understood through symbolic and organisational aspects and provided the participant's voices as part of the narrative within these elements. The organisational aspects which make up the AUS event were clustered into: location, sports selection and scheduling, opening and closing ceremony, and sponsorship. The symbolic aspects that carried powerful emotional and intellectual messages included: mascots, uniforms, songs, rituals, storytelling and courts.

The influences of alcohol in the above domains was analysed within the experience of belonging to a sports team, alcohol expectancy, perceived social conformity, actual alcohol behaviours and the consequential formation of play. The analysis found participants are motivated to be part of a sports team because they desire to belong to a cohesive group, where they can be accepted and connect both socially and through the expression of their physical self. The more time the group spends together outside the sports competition, the stronger the social cohesion.

The analysis supported the notion the event has created, over time, a contextually bound environment that supports the conformity of alcohol behaviours and consumption patterns. This environment is enhanced by the peer group through the solidarity of the team environment and sustained over time through friendships and social connectedness. The behaviour is embellished through storytelling and narratives shared back within their universities, consolidating a cultural norm that is the event. The consequential reaction to all this is the formation of play where participants free themselves up from the organizational constraints of the event, creating a new order, one that is self-regulated, spontaneous, pleasurable and indulgent. These play behaviours have been described as ritualistic, physical, creative, social, spectator, storytelling, and risky play experiences. The desire to engage in alcohol as part of the above play experiences enhances the sense of belonging and reinforces the solidarity of the culture within each sports team. The problematic drinking sports have recognisable symbolic elements resulting in a systematised way in which the teams behaved and engaged with alcohol. Daily drinking rituals and initiations for first-time participants, including different forms of

competition involving alcohol, at times became the central object of some of the play experience.

The participants were most likely to agree they drank alcohol because it was part of the after-sport celebrations, competitive rituals, and peer bonding. Participants are seeking out new competitive challenges that are less about the structured environment of sport and more motivated by an alternative expression of self and choice. It is the cathartic nature of the team environment that participants are seeking out, and alcohol allows for the rituals associated with the non-sporting environment to be fulfilled. The results showed clearly there was an expectancy rating from participants that the event would provide opportunities to socialise, meet new people, drink alcohol, have fun and spend time with teammates. Sport is embedded into the social framework of Australian culture, so it is no surprise it is also an important part of university life for many participants. The AUS event, although only attended by less than 20% of the total population of university participants, is still a significant statistical sample size that provides a strong argument for demonstrating alcohol is intertwined with university sporting life. It is particularly evident amongst team sports, as it is used to support the solidarity of the group as a whole, and consequently supports the play experience.

The desire to play as adults has been a fundamental issue that has arisen from this thesis. Given we currently only consider play to be a natural and necessary part of childhood growth, it warrants further investigation. Should play be more of an integral part of both the child and adult experience? Most play theories don't incorporate adult play, a current gap in the research to date, which leaves a question about the role of adult play in enriching our society. What is missing in the lives of our youth that motivates them to seek out an alternative place to play? Are we limiting the child experience so much that we no longer know how to play without some automated toy, some instrument like alcohol to aid the experience? Does the use of alcohol within the adult play realm give it a more acceptable status, enabling it to be explained away as just the lads having a drink, masking the real reason for the play; that innate desire to escape, create new roles, have fun and be frivolous, and explore the realms of ourselves in an out-of-control, controlled way. There are many similarities between the nature and patterns of drinking and that of play, including the importance of peer involvement and social connectedness and belonging. It is worth noting that alcohol alone does not create the desire to play; it acts purely as a social agent.

## Conclusion

At the beginning of this thesis I began to ask myself a series of questions, continuing to return to them throughout my journey. What motivates participants to drink alcohol and how does it impact their behaviour? What influences alcohol behaviour at the AUS event, and is there a link between consumption of alcohol and play? I have acknowledged earlier in the thesis that alcohol use has been embedded into the social fabric of Australian society. As a consequence needed to be understood as a broad social phenomenon shaped and influenced as a cultural practice, that incorporates government, the alcohol industry and the social environment. As such I incorporated the theories of social, behavioural, political sciences and the sociology of sport and play to frame the study. This enabled me to bring the beliefs about reality to the surface and advance the knowledge that is relevant to both the discipline and the profession.

Such social and symbolically laden behaviour required an inter-disciplinary approach and the use of an interpretative framework sensitive enough to assemble a range of data in a coherent way. This multi-disciplinary approach permitted the investigation to show the influence of government on the use of alcohol through the development of its policies including both supply and demand and the way in which it shapes the alcohol taxation system and ultimately the behaviour of individuals. One cannot underestimate the role that government continues to play in influencing alcohol behaviour, given they regulate supply and demand. Nor can we ignore the role of alcohol companies who market images of popular youth culture. To explore more fully these behaviours I conceptualized the nature of sport, leisure, recreation and play as a way of taking a unique lens on the social behaviours of participants.

My observational and quantitative analysis showed that excessive alcohol use amongst team sports participants is strongly aligned to social conformity and is sustained through an intricate and complex set of symbolic meanings. The concept of drinking is based on an assumption that certain valued outcomes will be achieved. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, historical, situational and cognitive expectancies play a role in how alcohol is perceived. These expectancies lead to a sense of anticipation, of almost restlessness, amongst the sports teams at the event. From day one, there was a systematic and ordered way in which the participants stocked up on alcohol. It was a highly organized activity involving both the supply and distribution, including the collection of funds and types of beverages to be consumed. It was as though they were preparing the playground and getting the props ready. The stories and narratives began at the airport and new ones were created daily. The uniqueness of bringing



together thousands of young people into locations where alcohol is freely available, and extensively supported by a strong night economy including venues and clubs, became a playground where all the toys were available. There is an expectation of an “all-in mentality”, one that saw most participant engaging in alcohol use and play activities. This innate sense of wanting to belong and connect, through conforming to the culture and peer group, was evident in the observations: the expression on the participants’ faces, the peering across the room to test whether they had done enough, the reinforcement through physical contact and narratives sustained, and the “Liquid Friendships”.

The social conformity witnessed during the recreation and leisure periods was uniquely different from what was observed during the day, which was very structured and driven by the rules and regulations of the various competitions. In comparison, during leisure and recreation periods I observed participants entering the universe of play. Most of the activities were symbolically connected in some way to the team’s history, creating a level of expectancy and a reinforcement of what it meant to be part of and belonging to the team. This provided participants with a level of social capital that would be sustained for lengthy periods.

### **The Link between Alcohol and the Play Experience**

I witnessed participants deconstructing their environment, from one that was regulated and somewhat predictable during the sports competition, to another unregulated and unstructured, called play. This unstructured, playful environment, created by the participants, provided evidence of how alcohol is used to enable them to move from one domain to the other, and why for some it adds to the play experience. The urgency observed when these changes occurred was intriguing; it was not about waiting or pacing oneself, it was like rush hour where everyone was purposefully moving from one space to another. The observations were powerful as they created a visual representation of how the behaviours that exist in a sports team also enabled a collective expression to be acted out within an alternative domain. This new environment is driven by the historical, situational and cognitive expectancies that are known by the team, and as purported in this thesis, the use of alcohol binds and further strengthens social conformity. The development of a play environment, with the introduction of alcohol use, appeared to create a false sense of confidence only visible within this environment.

The structured and ordered activities of sport were deconstructed and replaced with a new order: ritualistic, imaginative, childlike, fun, risky and framed by a different set of rules. It is the

creation of play, with alcohol as the central object. By mapping the complexities associated with my observation, I examined the interplay between the social phenomena of alcohol use and the determinants that enable the enactment of play. To sustain the social and symbolic nature of the play experience, participants needed to engage through the repeated narratives evident in stories, photos, games and rituals. The complex array of these stories and rituals provided both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards for the participants, in turn creating a collective expression, or what it means to belong to a group of individuals who share a common purpose. There is no doubt there was a desire by the participants to clearly delineate the sporting and recreational components of the event. It is a deliberate action to remove themselves from the organisational constructs and predictability of the sporting competition to a specific state of arousal that added a new frame of mind, including excitement, fun and disorder. The consequential alcohol behaviours observed during this transition contributed to the types of play witnessed. I saw participants undertaking physical risks where they would test their limits of strength, speed, and flexibility. The males undertook these more than the females, although when female participants become intoxicated, they also engaged. The expression of self through others, and their desire to be part of a team, is evidence from these observations. I also observed participants risking their reputations by approaching someone they did not know and putting themselves on the line, a risk they were prepared to take to achieve social conformity. I observed the females taking more risks in this space initially, but the males would engage in this behaviour once they became intoxicated. The contextually bound nature of the event, and the strong desire to create and sustain a sense of solidarity amongst the team, lead to a stronger sense of connecting and belonging.

When sports teams compete, they have one thing in common - their enthusiasm for the contest, whether it is the act of competing on the field or participating in the play activities off the field. Both these elements unite, rather than divide them as individuals. It is the art of belonging and connecting. When it comes to the fun of play, it resists all logical interpretation. It is a suspension of time and a state of mind that takes a team from an organised, highly structured sporting competition to an illusionary, over-exaggerated consciousness where all constraints are removed. The hallmark of this is the freedom to do, and to be both independently and dependably connected. The bonding that takes place gives participants a collective and self-identity leading to the creation of a sense of belonging, enhanced through the collective, which then becomes sanctioned and validated by the team. It is interpreted through a unique set of languages that are created by the team and can only be understood fully by them.

This type of play is a fundamental part of the human condition; that as young adults are somewhat constrained due to our image that play is restricted only to children. This marginalizes our ability as adults to take part in play as an acceptable form of free choice and free action. It is therefore not surprising young people are encouraged to hide behind alcohol for their frivolous behaviour and desire to escape and have fun. The consequences of the dangers associated with alcohol use during play have been highlighted in this thesis and contribute to the extensive data on health and pathologic-related issues reported daily in the community. The assumptions about the purpose and necessity of adult play are subject to struggles over power and control of how best to use our time, rather than about exploring the outcomes of play on the human condition. In a world where extrinsic rewards are valued, the intrinsic benefits of play are lost. Adult play is essential. Further research is required enabling an understanding of how the play process works in adults across a range of domains, including in what spaces and situations.

### **Minimising Risky Alcohol Consumption at the Event**

I have concluded that some play behaviours involve risky alcohol consumption which may result in associated harms. Many of these harms suffered are interpreted as fun by the participants and more often than not are associated with team sports. As mentioned in chapter 6 a limitation to the study was omitting to ask participants about harms (suffered or witnessed) that go beyond being interpreted as fun. As such it is possible that some of participant's negative experiences were not heard. Issues such as uninvited sexual advances, assaults, property damage and other risk taking behaviours may have been a silent harm that was unable to be documented. What was a consistent finding from the observations was that participants' involvement in sports teams predicted an increased likelihood of risky/harmful drinking. It is suggested social and team bonding aspects may be responsible. This thesis found the social aspects of team sport were of particular importance, allowing for the development of strong social networks, as well as providing a sense of identity and belonging in a relatively new situation. If the driver of risky drinking for those involved in sports is a social one, then it is likely that the key to reducing risky drinking in these groups lies within the sports teams.

One must be aware that alcohol may play an important role in bonding rituals of sports teams, and may play a large role in the sense of social identity for the individual. Any intervention that takes place with these groups must be sensitive to this fact. Risky drinking behaviours did not appear to be the result of a lack of knowledge about alcohol and its use. Interventions that seek

to increase students' knowledge about alcohol as a substance are unlikely to be successful. Making them aware of their own alcohol consumption and the possible associated negative consequences (e.g. increased health risks) may have some impact. While the participants claimed they had received some education about the risks associated with alcohol, they felt the way this information was delivered was too far removed for them to relate to, and as a consequence, it was not taken seriously. There was a strong feeling that if this education was made more realistic and pitched at their level more successfully, then it might be more effective. For example, instead of being taught by people a lot older than themselves about the dangers of alcohol, it may be better to have someone nearer their age come in and give a talk about their personal experiences.

It is not uncommon for the public (often spurred on by the media) to forgive media icons for their negative, antisocial behaviour because they were drunk. Adages such as "let them off the hook" because "they were drunk and didn't know what they were doing" can drive the deference of responsibility for one's actions. Being drunk can become an excuse to behave in ways not usually socially acceptable and then retrospectively lay the blame with alcohol. In this study, young people who drink to risky levels have been found to engage in a "positive reframing" of their own antisocial and potentially dangerous behaviour.

More alcohol is being consumed in uncontrolled settings than controlled settings in order to reduce costs, including drinking in the hotel rooms and before going out. Reducing this can be only achieved through an intervention resulting in an overall change in attitude that moves away from the "drink to get drunk" culture. A sustainable and successful intervention will be one that leads to self-regulation and increased autonomy, with a shift in social norms such that responsibility for one's own drinking behaviour can increase.

Social norms, or customary rules of behaviour, can coordinate how participants choose to interact with one another. These rules may be explicit or implicit, and failure to adhere to them can result in punishment, including exclusion from the group. There is an implicit rule in the university setting that going out and having a good time is synonymous with getting drunk. Compounding the potency of this behavioural norm, almost all social activities in a university sports setting revolve around alcohol. An effective intervention will need to identify and introduce attractive alternatives in order to fill this potential "void". This may include dry events, or events with less alcohol and an emphasis on taking a healthy approach.

It has been highlighted that peers play a strong role in influencing the drinking behaviour of participants. It is likely the key to a successful intervention lies with the peers themselves, and getting the students involved in its implementation. Whatever intervention scheme is employed, it must be done with the approval and involvement of student groups. One interesting observation was that perceived peer drinking behaviour was notably greater than actual drinking behaviour, suggesting possible pressure experienced by participants to drink in order to conform may be unnecessarily exaggerated, based on falsely over-estimated perceptions of what drinking behaviours constitute the “social norm”. Of particular interest in terms of an intervention was the fact that these perceptions were found to be related to individual drinking behaviours. One relatively easy method to implement as an early intervention, that may be successful in reducing risky drinking behaviours, would be to try to shift the perceived social norm to the actual social norm by making students aware of the correct, more

### **Practical Implications**

The results of this study found that, overall, peer relations are likely to play a strong role in influencing drinking behaviour. It is also likely this peer influence is responsible for shaping the differential drinking behaviours seen in the various sub-cultures in the university context. The influence of these perceived social norms on students’ alcohol-related behaviour is of note because previous research has indicated that these perceptions are often overestimates of actual normative behaviours (Martens, Dam-O'Connor and Beck 2006). This is particularly important, because if these perceptions are what drive excessive drinking (and previous research has found that this is the case) (Berkowitz 1997), exploring this avenue further may provide universities with an opportunity for successful intervention in the future. If this is the case, it should be possible to reduce risky drinking behaviours by shifting the perceived social norm of drinking

towards the actual social norm by making students aware of the correct, more positive aspects of drinking behaviours in their cohort (i.e. the fact that it is not the ‘vast majority of students’ who are drinking to risky levels), rather than allowing the self-perpetuated false notions of high levels of risky drinking to continue.

I have argued throughout the thesis that the overconsumption of alcohol, is not purely the result of individual psychological traits. Instead to understand the complex nature of alcohol use within the AUS sporting setting it is important to understand it as a social phenomenon shaped as a cultural practice. As such a capacity to influence its use lies in both the way in which the organisation creates the environmental enablers and within the participants themselves.

Creating student leaders as cultural change agents and exploring alternative ways of creating play without the overconsumption of alcohol will ensure the sustainability of the event and the ongoing safety of the participants. Given the dynamic nature of the drinking culture, any intervention scheme will need to be flexible, adaptable, and acknowledge the differences between each individual community setting. To this end, it was proposed that AUS introduce a “Be the Influence” campaign in which the student participants lead the changes required. By including participants in the development and facilitation of programs, the student participants could provide the necessary training within and before the event begins. Initially targeting captains and team leaders, this approach is considered to be a more sustainable and effective way of influencing behaviour. In consultation with these participants, AUS could develop and implement new strategies, policies, programs and practices aimed at reducing the alcohol-related harms without the diminishing the participants desire to play.

It is also suggested that AUS consider more carefully, how they organise their social programs and engage with the alcohol industry and other stakeholders. It is recommended that AUS consider the establishment of an Alcohol Accord involving relevant representatives. The accord should include, student leaders, police, venue owners etc. Its aim should be harm reduction. This will be a significant challenge for AUS to address given that the event has become an important part of the Gold Coast night time economy and therefore an important part of the annual calendar for students from around Australia. The alcohol industry and the night club owners have an expectancy that the event will generate significant revenue. The participants have an expectation that attending the event is synonymous with risky alcohol consumption and hedonistic pleasure seeking. It is a complex issue that AUS can only manage if all parties are involved.

## **Concluding Remarks**

The setting of the AUS event has, at its heart, a normalization of drinking as part of the lived experience. Play is also considered an expectation and normal part of that experience. Both elements are independent of one another initially, until the two constructs merge to create a collective attitude and set of behaviours that sees play and alcohol become one. The principles of reinforcement of this behaviour become so repetitious, through storytelling and narratives that it has become culturally embedded in the life of the event. Creating a new social order that is sustained by the participants.

The social order created involves alcohol being used as a way of influencing the speed in which one switches to a new mind state, to fast track the euphoric urges being sought from play, but it is not the reason the participants desire to play. Nor does it contribute to the flow experience, which results from play, but rather it permits young people to act out and gives them an excuse for doing so. It's more acceptable to say you were drunk, than to say you were at play. Play and alcohol are both motivated by a similar desire to break free from what is the norm and to take on new roles. Participants were observed seeking out play opportunities that fulfilled a desire for self-expression, fun, escapism, and other forms of arousal. Alcohol use was observed as a social agent that created "liquid friends". Contemporary cultures embrace and consume the pursuit of pleasure; it is a search for happiness, meaning and fulfilment that may give meaning to why alcohol is embraced as part of the play experience.

As such this thesis has filled a gap in the scholarly field of alcohol research, by identifying and exploring the connection between play and alcohol within a distinct setting, the AUS sporting event. It has also opened up a new way to examine why alcohol and sport particular team sports are so inextricably linked. The thesis has creating a different lens in which to view alcohol use amongst young people and has provided an important contribution to our understanding of the nature of how alcohol is used within a university sporting setting.

The thesis has also contributed to new knowledge by examining the complex organisational and symbolic elements that create the environment where alcohol becomes part of the lived experience for participants who attended the (AUS) sporting event. As well the thesis as providing an analysis of the behaviours of the participants through the realm of play and how and has examined how alcohol has influenced on the overall play experience of the participants

who attended the event. The thesis has thus provided a basis for better understanding the desire for adults to create different play environments.



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## **Appendix 1. Information Sheet**

(On line Surveys)

You are invited to participate in a program of research on attitudes towards alcohol. The purpose of the study is to investigate attitudes towards alcohol in high school student, university student and parent populations. We are also investigating the role that alcohol plays in diverse sporting cultures. Findings may inform the development of education programs, which will be implemented in universities and schools throughout NSW.

This research is being conducted by Deidre Anderson and is part of her PhD program and she can be contacted on 98507638. Deidre is the CEO of U@MQ, the student service provider at Macquarie University, and she is working in collaboration with Australian University Sport on this research. The PhD supervisor for this research is Professor Michael Fine and he can be contacted on 9850-8037.

If you decide to participate, you will need to click on the link at the bottom of the page to complete a short questionnaire. Questions asked will be related to the sport that you play, your general consumption of alcohol and your alcohol related activities before and during the Australian University Games. If you decide to participate, you will be free to withdraw from the survey at any time without having to give a reason and without negative consequence.

The questionnaire will be completely anonymous and you will not be identified in any report resulting from the study.

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Ethics Review Committee (Human Research). If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Committee through the Research Ethics Officer (telephone [02] 9850 7854, fax [02] 9850 8799, email: [ethics@mq.edu.au](mailto:ethics@mq.edu.au)). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any time without negative consequence.

## Appendix 2. Pre Event On Line Questionnaire

### 1. How important are the following aspects of your Australian University Games experience?

Mark one box for each line.

	1 Not important at all	2 Somewhat important	3 Important	4 Very important	5 Extremely Important
Achieving a personal best in my registered sport					
Belonging to a team					
Winning the competition					
Athletic development					
Socialising/interacting with new people					
Spending time with team mates					
Getting drunk					
Having a holiday/ break					
Nightly parties					
The after party					
Good sporting venues/ facilities					

### 2. Do you drink alcohol?

Please place a cross (✕) or a tick (✓) in one box below

☐ Yes

☐ No (SKIP TO QUESTION 4)



3. Below is a list of statements about sport related drinking behaviours and reasons for consuming alcohol. Mark one box for each line.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I enjoy the feeling of getting drunk					
I drink to help me deal with poor performances					
I drink to have a good time with my teammates					
I drink to deal with sport-related stress					
I drink to fit in with my teammates					
After the game/match/sporting occasion, it is important for me to go out and celebrate with alcohol					
When drinking alcohol with teammates, it becomes a competition					
Because I work so hard at my sport, I should be able to drink to and have a good time					
If I've performed well, I feel like I can go out and drink a little more than usual					
After a victory, it is important for me to go out and celebrate with alcohol					
I drink because I believe in the "work hard-play hard" lifestyle					
I drink because it's part of the culture of being involved in sport					
I drink less in the lead up to a game/match/sporting occasion					
I drink because my teammates expect me to drink with them					
I drink because it helps develop team spirit					

(SKIP TO QUESTION 5)

4. Below is a list of statements about your reasons for not consuming alcohol.

Mark one box in each line.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I don't enjoy the feeling of getting drunk					
I have other ways of relaxing/celebrating/ dealing with sport related stress					
My teammates frown upon drinking					
I don't want to undo the hard work I put into my sport					
I feel pressure from my teammates not to drink alcohol					
Drinking alcohol decreases my performance					
It is bad for my health					
My teammates don't drink					
My coach/trainers discourage it					

5. On a typical day during the LAST 30 DAYS when you drank alcohol such as beer, alcopops, wine or spirits, how many drinks did you have?

A drink is approximately a glass/bottle/can of beer (375-425ml), a bottle of alcopop (300-375), a glass of wine (150ml) or a glass of spirits (30ml).

Mark one box.

- ☐ I never drink alcohol
- ☐ I have not consumed alcohol during the last 30 days
- ☐ 1 drink
- ☐ 2 drinks
- ☐ 3 drinks
- ☐ 4 drinks
- ☐ 5 drinks
- ☐ 6 drinks
- ☐ 7 drinks
- ☐ 8 drinks
- ☐ 9 drinks
- ☐ 10 or more drinks

6. Have you received any responsible alcohol education from your university prior to attending the Australian University Games?

☐ Yes

☐ No

7. What was the main message of the alcohol education you received?

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### Appendix 3. Post - Australian University Games On Line Questionnaire

1. What is your gender?

☐ Male

☐ Female

2. What is the main sport that you have been participating in at Australian University Games?

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3. Have you consumed alcohol during the Australian University Games?

☐ Yes (go to question 4)

☐ No (go to question 8)

4. Do you believe your (level of) alcohol consumption while attending AUGs has been different to your (level of) consumption during an average week?

☐ My consumption has remained the same (go to question 6)

☐ My consumption has increased

☐ My consumption has decreased

5. Do you believe this alteration is directly linked to your participation in the AUG program?

☐ Yes. What are your reasons for this answer?

---

☐ No. What are your reasons for this answer?

---

6. Read the statements below and mark one box for each line that best represents your reasons for drinking during the week at AUGs.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I drank to help me deal with my/my teams poor sporting performance					
I drank to deal with sport-related stress					
I drank because I enjoyed the after sport celebrations, alcohol competitive rituals, and peer bonding					
Drinking alcohol with teammates, became a competition					
I drank because my teammates expected me to drink with them					

7. On a typical day during Australian University Games when you drank alcohol such as beer, alcopops, wine or spirits, how many drinks did you have?

A drink is approximately a glass/bottle/can of beer (375-425ml), a bottle of alcopops (300-375), a glass of wine (150ml) or a glass of spirits (30ml).

Mark one box.

- ☐ I never drink alcohol
- ☐ I have not consumed alcohol in the last 7 days
- ☐ 1 drink
- ☐ 2 drinks
- ☐ 3 drinks
- ☐ 4 drinks
- ☐ 5 drinks
- ☐ 6 drinks
- ☐ 7 drinks
- ☐ 8 drinks
- ☐ 9 drinks
- ☐ 10 or more drinks

8. Read the statements below and mark one box for each line that best represents your reasons for not drinking during the week at the AUGs.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I had other ways of relaxing/ celebrating/ dealing with sport related stress					
My teammates frown upon drinking					
I didn't want to undo the hard work I put into my sport					
Drinking alcohol decreases my performance					
It is bad for my health					
My teammates don't drink					
My coach/trainers discourage it					

9. How many of your team mates/ fellow athletes would you estimate do the following?  
Mark one box for each line.

	None	A few	Some	Most	All
Drink alcoholic beverages	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Get drunk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. Did you receive any responsible alcohol education from your university prior to attending the AUGs?

- ☐ Yes (go to question 11)  
☐ No (go to question 12)

11. If yes, what was the main message of the alcohol education you received?

---

12. Do you have any other comments?

---

Thank you for participating. Your time is greatly appreciated!

## **Appendix 4. Information and Consent Form**

### **(Interviews)**

You are invited to participate in a program of research on attitudes towards alcohol. The purpose of the study is to investigate attitudes towards alcohol in high school student, university student and parent populations. We are also investigating the role that alcohol plays in diverse sporting cultures. Findings may inform the development of education programs, which will be implemented in universities and schools throughout NSW.

This research is being conducted by Deidre Anderson and is part of her PhD program and she can be contacted on 98507638. Deidre is the CEO of U@MQ, the student service provider at Macquarie University, and she is working in collaboration with Australian University Sport on this research. The PhD supervisor for this research is Professor Michael Fine and he can be contacted on 9850-8037.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to take part in a 5-minute questionnaire. Questions asked will be related to the sport that you play, your general consumption of alcohol and your alcohol related activities during the Australian University Games. If you decide to participate, you will be free to withdraw from the survey at any time without having to give a reason and without negative consequence.

The questionnaire will be completely anonymous and you will not be identified in any report resulting from the study.

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Ethics Review Committee (Human Research). If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Committee through the Research Ethics Officer (telephone [02] 9850 7854, fax [02] 9850 8799, email: [ethics@mq.edu.au](mailto:ethics@mq.edu.au)). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime without negative consequence.

## Appendix 5. Interview Questions

1. In your view how many of your team mates do you think drink alcohol at “risky levels”?
2. Why do you think they drink?
3. Why do you think some people do not drink?
4. Our research found that University students who were more involved in sport and recreational activities were more likely to drink to risky levels than those who are not.
  - a. Why do you think this might be the case?
5. Alcohol awareness campaigns.
  - a. What would be useful/effective?
  - b. What do you think about how people your age are represented in the media?
  - c. Do you think the adverts or education effect the way that you drink?
6. Do you think that there will be a change in drinking behaviours from university to starting work?
  - a. i.e. what do you expect from work in terms of drinking?
  - b. Increase or decrease?
7. What do you think of drunken behaviour? (i.e. when you’re sober and you see someone people being really drunk, what do you think?)
8. Do you think many people get to that state? How representative is that of your age group?
9. Do you think people use alcohol as an excuse to do something that they wouldn’t ordinarily do (whether it’s positive or negative)?



## Appendix 6. Ethic Approval

Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor  
(Research)

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T: +61 (2) 9850 4459  
<http://www.research.mq.edu.au/>  
ABN 90 952 801 237



13 May 2009

Miss Deidre Anderson

Dear Miss Anderson

**Reference No:** HE27MAR2009-Do6385

**Title:** Drinking as a rite of passage to adulthood.

Thank you for submitting the above application for ethical and scientific review. Your application was considered by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee.

I am pleased to advise that ethical and scientific approval has been granted for this project to be conducted at:

- Macquarie University

This research meets the requirements set out in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007 – Updated March 2014) (the *National Statement*).

This letter constitutes ethical and scientific approval only.

### Standard Conditions of Approval:

1. Continuing compliance with the requirements of the *National Statement*, which is available at the following website:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/book/national-statement-ethical-conduct-human-research>

2. This approval is valid for five (5) years, subject to the submission of annual reports. Please submit your reports on the anniversary of the approval for this protocol.

3. All adverse events, including events which might affect the continued ethical and scientific acceptability of the project, must be reported to the HREC within 72 hours.

4. Proposed changes to the protocol must be submitted to the Committee for approval before implementation.