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a major part of the prescribed program of study.

***WOMEN AND SUBSTANCE USE: A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE***

**by**

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

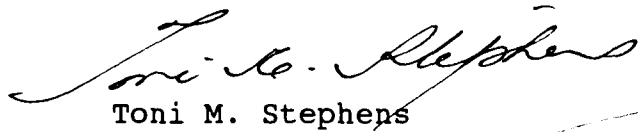
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## SYNOPSIS

In Australia today, as in many other comparable societies, women's use of alcohol and other legal drugs is not circumscribed as it has been in the past. On the face of it, this suggests that there has been a major shift in social attitudes towards use of certain substances by women in line with changes to women's social position that occurred in the last few decades. Despite these changes, however, or perhaps because of them, women's use of alcohol and other drugs still attracts different attitudes and social responses when compared to similar behaviour in men.

The objective of this research is to investigate the reasons why women's substance use behaviour is viewed differently from that of men's, how this has come about, why it is so culturally pervasive, and what are the effects for women. It has involved exploring how the meanings attached to women's use of certain chemical substances have been socially and historically constructed through scientific discourse, and how these meanings continue to be reproduced, reinforced and legitimated within other interlocking discourses. They are reflected too in cultural images as well as in popular attitudes, held by both women and men.

The research has been undertaken using a 'woman-centred' approach, within the framework of feminist analysis. Such approach provides an alternative way of understanding women's experience with substance use.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Although this is virtually the first page of this thesis, it is actually the last to be written. For the past seven years I have worked on this thesis. To sit here and recall all the people who contributed in some way, either directly or indirectly, to this process is quite an overwhelming and very humbling experience. These include colleagues, professional and other acquaintances, students, friends, and family. There are many people I would wish to thank. Some of them, such as librarians, archivists, etc. who will not read this, I have already thanked. Some I possibly did not thank at all. These people did not look for gratitude, seeing what they did as just part of their job. For the research student beaver away alone, it is often a great deal. For those people, my thanks. There are, however, certain people to whom I owe a debt of gratitude for their support and assistance, and in this small way I would like to acknowledge that.

First and foremost, I would like to extend my thanks to two wonderful women, my two supervisors, Sabine Erika and Margaret Sargent. Both of these women are very busy, yet both were most generous in their time and support. They were always available to discuss the progress of the research, and to read sections of the work. Their feedback was constructive and extremely valuable, underpinned by their own particular areas of expertise. I would also like to acknowledge the assistance I was afforded by the Post-Graduate scholarship which assisted financially for part of the research time.

Support has come from many other directions. I would like to thank some very particular friends for putting up with my occupation and preoccupation with this research. Its a long haul for friends to keep hearing that you haven't been in touch because you are 'thesising'. Special thanks go to my dearest friend Moira, who has been so extraordinarily supportive during this time, and to my friend, Louise, who was working with me when the 'seed' of the idea for this research germinated. To all my other friends who have been so supportive too, I extend my thanks. Also I am grateful to my colleagues at TAFE who have helped with printing of drafts of chapters, or who have been happy to toss ideas around with me. My thanks to Stephanie Ferguson for assistance with the final set out of this thesis.

I would like to acknowledge most especially all those women who were willing to share with me their experiences with alcohol and drug use, as part of this research. Their generosity and openness in discussing these oftentimes painful experiences has been, for me, the most valuable and meaningful part of this research. I would like particularly to acknowledge one special person, Sally Black. It was the courage of this woman that planted the seed for undertaking this research.

My family members have been the ones who have lived with this on a daily basis, and to them a very special vote of thanks. My four children, Miranda, Morgan, Sheldon and Kendall, have taken it all in their stride, learning to live with the thesis as though with an additional demanding sibling. I'm sure when they see it all together, they will wonder what all the angst has been about. They have been wonderfully supportive and long-suffering. So has my extended family, especially my father, my brother and sister-in-law. My dear mother, had she lived one more year, would have been proud to see the finished product. And finally, my thanks to Robert. He has provided continuous support and practical assistance for me in this work, and has always been encouraging when I was feeling discouraged.

In addition, I would like to acknowledge Dr. Sue Wills who has committed time, effort, expertise and encouragement over these past difficult six months. I am deeply grateful to her.

*FOR HAZEL*

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