

Who or what do young adults hold responsible for men's drunken violence?

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Background: Men are more likely than women to perpetrate serious violence when they have consumed alcohol, but alcohol does not affect all men in the same way. This paper considers young adults' attribution about agency (the capacity to act) in men's drunken violence. Methods: Interviews about alcohol use in night-time venues, streets or private parties were conducted with 60 young adults aged 18-24 in Melbourne, Australia, and analysed thematically. Participants included seven men who identified as having initiated violence when drunk. Results: Some interviewees stated that men chose to be violent, or that men's violence when they were drunk was purposeful and therefore involved some component of choice. However, much alcohol-related violence enacted by young men was understood (both by men who reported violence and by other young adults) as impelled by forces outside their control. These forces were: diffusely defined effects of drinking alcohol; proclivities of men and masculinity, and the interaction of alcohol and men's bodies to override capacity for judgement and produce an irresistible urge to fight. The latter was at times explained as caused by the mutually reinforcing actions of alcohol and testosterone, providing a particularly persuasive account of men's violence as biologically-determined. Conclusion: These categories encapsulate a set of discursive resources that contribute to the rationalisation, naturalisation and production of men's violence. Participants tended to regard alcohol, masculinities and testosterone as inciting violence predictably and consistently, suggesting that men themselves had relatively little agency over its occurrence. In contrast, research evidence indicates that these actors do not cause violence in any uniform way and that their effects are contingent on changing configurations of factors. Highlighting discrepancies between young adults' understandings of responsibility for men's drunken violence, and those expressed in research, presents additional opportunities for intervention.

Introduction

Young people's net alcohol consumption has declined over the past two decades in western countries such as Australia (Pennay et al., 2015) yet alcohol-related harms such as assault remain all too prevalent. Significant increases in alcohol-related ambulance attendance and hospitalisation, and night time assaults (likely to involve alcohol) were recorded in the eight years prior to 2006/2007 in the state of Victoria, where the study we report on here was conducted (Livingston et al., 2010).

Men are more likely to become violent than women when they are drunk, with violence in drinking venues often directed at other men (Graham and Wells, 2003). There is some suggestion that men's involvement in behaviours such as these is determined by physiological factors such as the action of testosterone on their bodies (Mehta and Beer, 2010), yet the relationship between gender and proclivity to violence is complex. Similarly, drinking does not result uniformly or consistently in violence, for either men or women (Kuendig et al., 2008; Room, 2001). It seems, therefore, that how men and women behave when drunk is produced through a complex interplay of cultural expectations and physiological effects (Heinz et al., 2011; MacAndrew and Edgerton, 1969).

In contemporary cultures with a strong temperance history (Levine, 1992), men's drunkenness is understood to involve rowdiness, aggression and dominance (de Visser and Smith, 2007a; Hart, 2016; Peralta, 2007; Törrönen and Roumeliotis, 2014). Men's aggressive and controlling practices, including drunken violence, are part of what has been termed 'hyper', 'hegemonic' or 'toxic' masculinities. For example, Peralta (2007) argues that men in the United States demonstrate powerful masculinity (involving whiteness and heterosexuality) through heavy alcohol consumption. While hypermasculinity is a model of selfhood which men are understood in relation to, and also through which some men understand themselves (Bengtsson, 2016), masculinities are diverse. Just as testosterone does not make all men aggressive, hypermasculinity is not the primary logic that governs all men's demonstrations of self. It is salient to remember that only a proportion of men become involved in drunken violence, and most do their best to avoid it (de Visser and Smith, 2007a; Lindsay, 2012). Many men are highly ambivalent about whether alcohol's correlates of drunkenness and sometimes also violence make drinking attractive at all (de Visser and Smith, 2007b).

Thinking about men's violence as a function of alcohol consumption, of hormones or of hypermasculinity does not push us to interrogate its complex aetiologies, including the extent of men's own responsibility for it. Indeed, previous studies show that intoxication is used to excuse men's violence (see, for example, Abrahamson, 2006; Graham and Wells, 2003; MacAndrew and Edgerton, 1969; Peralta, 2007; Room, 2001). It is important to understand how these excuses are configured. Extending these studies, we consider young adult's attributions of agency in men's intoxicated violence. In other words, we explore who or what young adults regard as the force or forces which drive, and are hence responsible for, men's violence when they drink alcohol.

In this paper we draw on interviews conducted with 60 young adults aged 18-24, living in Melbourne, Australia. Where most qualitative studies of men's alcohol-related violence focus on the perspectives of those who perpetrate it (for exceptions see Lindsay, 2012; Törrönen and Roumeliotis, 2014), we start, as explained below, from the presumption that men's alcohol-related violence is produced through engagements with discourses that circulate within their social worlds. Hence, we are interested in how men who have themselves participated in violence talk about it, and also how it is understood by other young men and

women who frequent the places where violence occurs. While male violence directed against women is also of great concern, this paper focuses on accounts our participants told of men's aggression in the night time economy, at parties and travelling to social events. These stories usually (but not exclusively) involved fights between men.

Theoretical framework

Agency may be understood in the simplest terms as a capacity to act. The approach we take here is inspired by a sociological conceptualisation where individual agency arises in our encounters with situational, material and discursive forces. Agency is mediated by subjectivity, which reflects cognition, emotions, embodiment and individual experiences. Alcohol and other material forces (such as settings and situations where alcohol is consumed) also have influence, as do discourses (regimes of meaning that frame how we understand the world). For example, using an approach inspired by Actor Network Theory, Demant (2009) shows how teenagers' alcohol use is constituted by networks of forces that are continually formed and reformed. These networks entail subjectivities, the material world around them including places where they live, alcohol, and discourses about drinking and youthful selfhoods.

This argument about the contingent nature of agency does not mean that individuals cannot influence what they do. Waling (2019) proposes that theorisations of masculinities should account for men's capacity for agency and also for emotional reflexivity; the ability to reflect both cognitively and emotionally on one's relations with others. This is something that she regards as largely absent in writing about hypermasculinity, which positions men either as fully responsible for, or unwitting victims of, masculinities and men's unsociable practices. Drawing on feminist and poststructural writers including Gill (2007), she suggests that a man's agency is produced through encounters between his own subjectivity and discourse (in, we would add, the material world):

...agency is a relational process produced under a variety of constraints and relations of force. In other words, agency is a conditional possibility for negotiating discourse and subjectivity. It is produced through encounters with both discourse and subjectivity; it is not preexisting, but rather made possible as individuals interact with the social world. (Waling, 2019, p. 99)

Thus, agency emerges through configurations of actors that are present in any drinking event. These include aspects of our own subjectivities, alcohol's action on bodies, specificities of settings including other people present, and the discourses, often about gender, that are activated through alcohol consumption. It follows that men have some level of control over their actions when they are drunk, albeit that this control, or agency, can only be activated through frames imposed by discourse and material settings.

Consistent with this theory, we understand masculinities not as the property of men or their bodies alone, but as also produced through engagements with wider discourses and settings (Sedgwick, 1995). Gender and gendered practices are therefore mutable rather than fixed. Törrönen and Roumeliotis (2014), for example, show that masculinities constructed around alcohol are closely linked to changes in women's drinking, and Demant and Törrönen (2011) argue that men's drinking practices evolve in response to social and cultural shifts. Micro-sociological studies also provide evidence that situational aspects (e.g. bystanders' behaviour) effects how we react when provoked in nightlife settings (Collins, 2009). Thus, we hold hope that drinking practices that some men engage in, such as violence, can change over time and vary across different social situations.

Method and analysis

Interviews were conducted with 60 people living in Melbourne in 2012 as part of a larger project concerned to understand the cultures and settings that shape alcohol consumption for young adults. Participants were aged 18-24 and had consumed at least one alcoholic drink within the previous six months. Ethical approval to conduct the study was obtained from two universities (details in MacLean and Callinan, 2013).

Participants were recruited via advertisements placed at local tertiary education institutions, at agencies providing services for young people, and through word of mouth. Recruitment was designed to ensure that the eventual sample included equal numbers of males and females, young people from diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds and a range of heavy and lighter drinkers. All except six participants in the eventual sample were either studying or working. Reflecting contemporary Australian multiculturalism, 17 were born outside Australia and 19 spoke a language in addition to English. Although not sampled randomly, participants' demographic characteristics and drinking patterns broadly resembled those in a representative survey sample of young adults of the same age range (MacLean and Callinan, 2013).

Three experienced researchers conducted interviews using a detailed theme sheet, with brief demographic data also collected. Participants were asked to provide stories about their experiences, including to describe a time when they had either become involved in or witnessed violence among intoxicated people in bars or clubs, at parties or public places at night. All could recount at least one incident where they had witnessed such an event. Seven men described fights in which they had actively participated when they were alcohol affected. Names used here are pseudonyms.

Participants were offered the choice of completing interviews on their own (n=35), or with one (n=16) or two (n=9) friends who also participated in the discussions. This was intended to provide us with both individual reflections and also the opportunity to access something of how young adults talk about drinking with friends (Agar and MacDonald, 1995). In saying this, we recognise that interviews are engagements between researchers and the researched. They do not offer a transparent window on agency in drinking, and nor is the 'data' that they produce free of the contexts in which it is generated. Individual and group interviews show, however, something of how agency is *produced, used and presented* by young adults to make sense of drinking, and the discourses that they draw on to do so.

In this analysis we considered all comments made by participants that concerned aggressive behaviour or violence enacted by men while alcohol-affected. Transcripts were analysed thematically and coded in two phases: descriptive and analytic (Wolcott, 1994). The descriptive phase entailed extracting relevant excerpts from transcripts and coding according to the category of person who articulated them (men who had engaged in violence; other young adults in the study). From this, we saw that explanations were not specific to members of each group and that tropes about violence were repeated with different nuance across the sample of young adults. During the analytic phase we sorted and synthesised text according to how participants articulated agency, or the capacity to act, in relation to men's intoxicated aggression.

Excerpts were categorised as four linked explanations of drunken violence. Against the first of these we coded excerpts where violence was depicted as involving some component of agentic choice. The second described violence as primarily an effect of alcohol, and in the third violence was understood as a property of men and masculinity. A fourth category was developed to encapsulate biological understandings of violence as constituted through

interactions between alcohol and men's bodies, bypassing their capacity for deliberate action.

Findings

Through our interviews, both men who had been involved in violence and other participants sought to explain to the interviewer how aggression emerged in their social worlds, without demonising men involved. Thus, while at points they attributed agency to men, more often the attribution was to a range of forces beyond men themselves.

1. Drunken violence as partial agentic choice

Andy, an Anglo-Australian young man interviewed for the study, grew up in a small town. Andy and his friends seem to have used violence to demonstrate their dominant status as Anglo-Australians, enjoying their capacity to provoke boys from southern-European backgrounds. He explained that getting drunk and provoking fights with boys from other ethnic backgrounds was a source of entertainment. In the excerpt below, he replies to the interviewer's question about whether he had ever been involved in a fight when he was drunk, depicting the decision to fight with 'wogs' as deliberate and planned:

It was at the soccer fields. We used to go down there 'cos the wogs [people of Italian or Greek background], they always stick together when they fight and we find it funny going down there in a group of like fifteen to twenty boys and go down and bash, like, twelve wogs. You know ... you say something about their mum, they always stir up.

Other men who had been involved in fights when drunk also regarded violence as involving a more constrained or limited form of agency, although (as we shall show below) provided various explanations through the course of their interviews. Explaining that men have less control than women when they are drunk, Naresh nonetheless suggested that five out of ten men would try 'to create a nuisance', thus implying some degree of collusion between men and the effects of alcohol in producing trouble. While Yusef found violence irresistible in the moment, he also acknowledged that he deliberately put himself in situations where fights were likely to occur by visiting the city on weekend nights to drink with a group of male friends. Farook, who had also been involved in violence while alcohol-affected, was asked whether people who are drunk retain the capacity to think about their actions. He described how alcohol altered his judgement, making violence seem a reasonable response to provocation, while maintaining at least a sense that punching someone was informed by a choice about appropriate responses in specific situations:

They can think but ... the boundaries move so you think that it's fine to just punch someone or else, you know, and just fight with someone, something like that.

Like Yusef and Farook, Naresh, spoke of violence as a choice over which he exercised judgement and some level of rational control. While he suggested that hitting a man whom he disliked was not problematic -- 'if I am drunk and I don't like [a person] then I won't mind, you know, hitting him' -- he went on to clarify that he wouldn't hit a woman.

A small minority of participants who had not themselves been involved in violence provided multi-causal explanations for men's violence that linked it to particular forms of dominant or hypermasculinity, while depicting it as purposeful for some men. Some suggested that those involved in fights do so because they relish the opportunity to demonstrate their fighting prowess to an audience or, as Zara put it, liked 'putting on a show'. Sol thought that alcohol

offered his friend an excuse to be violent, and not as involuntary: 'He can say like "Oh I was drunk, that's why I was doing this"'.

2. Violence as primarily an effect of alcohol

In many participants' accounts alcohol was positioned as the main or anterior force responsible for aggression. Yusef, quoted above, was clear that alcohol was the most significant contributor to the violence that he said occurred most times he went out with his friends, pointing to a spontaneous change that occurred when he drank:

Yeah, but I don't know, there's – it's mainly the alcohol to be honest. I reckon it's just – if it wasn't for alcohol I don't think it will get to [be] a big problem. It'd probably be sorted out before [physical fighting commences].

Thanh told us about a fight among some young men that had occurred one evening near his house. When asked what he thought had caused it he replied: 'Mostly I think, beer'.

In the following quote from Susana and her partner Zain (interviewed together), alcohol also appears as the primary responsible agent in a horrific story of violence where a young woman was repeatedly struck by her boyfriend as they were about to go out for the night. While a range of other factors in the situation are mentioned (such as the girls taking too long to get ready), the story begins and ends with assertions about alcohol, positioning it as dominant among causal factors:

SUSANA: The reason why [the fight] happened was because the boys got drunk and wanted to go out. And because you know, when some people [are] taking too long, like my sister was taking too long to get ready.

ZAIN: The boys are drunk trying to show off to their girls, they're being cool and drunk you know [describes how the young women started to mock the young men and how someone insinuated to her boyfriend that a woman was keeping secrets] ...And then he [the boyfriend] comes up to her and he's slapping her and he's pushing her onto the fence and whatever.

SUSANA: Yeah kicking her on the back [...]

ZAIN: And she's double dropped.

SUSANA: I seen her fall, she – her body went like this, like she's got punched too many times. Her head just smashed like so hard on the concrete, lifted back up again and smashed again. Like it bounced off the concrete twice.

ZAIN: And her little brother also went to help the sister, the other one he hit the brother. Then the dad came to see what's going on, [and someone] hit the dad. So -- and the little kids running everywhere, my son was only a newborn, I was holding him, I couldn't even do anything. And I'm like, I'm not gonna leave my son to go, you know what I mean. So it was everything all because [of] everyone being drunk. Everyone was drunk except for me and my kids.

In some accounts, alcohol is represented not just as causing violence, but as having capacity for autonomous action. Parvani recounted an experience where she went out with a male friend whom she depicted as accurately assessed by bouncers as powerless to combat the effect of 'alcohol acting up' on him. In this account alcohol, and not her friend, is positioned as responsible for the fight that ensued:

... I felt that obviously people were getting a little rough. Especially men, so like our friends and a couple of other friends, like they were getting into a tussle or whatever. So that's when, *obviously it was alcohol acting up*, so the bouncers just asked the [...] guys to leave, 'cos *if they couldn't handle it*, they need to leave (emphasis added).

In this quote Parvani depicts alcohol as having its own agency. Alcohol appears not just as something that reduces people's ability to focus on consequences, but as a protagonist, which the men involved are unable to 'handle' or subdue.

3. Violence as a property of men and masculinity

It is apparent from the accounts above that participants considered alcohol to be more likely to lead to aggression in drunk men than in drunk women. The excerpt from Susana and Zain above describes a succession of explicitly gendered events that led to violence: women getting dressed in preparation to go out; men showing off; women mocking men; insinuation of a woman's sexual infidelity. Here, alcohol acted on both men and women to loosen tongues and incite conflict, yet only men (the boyfriend and another man who hit the brother and the dad) became violent. Thus, the relationship between alcohol and violence in this story plays out very differently for men and women.

Strikingly, young people in the study responded to men's drunken violence by treating it as an unfortunate, but largely inevitable, thing men do (see here de Visser and McDonnell, 2012). Young women described men's violence with a particular sense of resignation. Amy felt that women were judged harshly for getting into fights. The interviewer, also a woman, asked her whether people thought it was acceptable for men to fight, to which she responded bleakly: 'Not alright, it's just like what do you expect, it's a guy.'

We noticed a sense among both men and women that it was futile to try to stop men from behaving badly when they were drunk. In the following conversation, Jamie describes being the victim of a brutal attack by a man who was asked to leave a party. He concludes the narrative by laughing about how he got 'arse whooped'. Through turning this event into a joke against himself he positions men's violence as a normal, even amusing, part of life:

JAMIE: When I was younger – I didn't do it, the other guy who was drunk, I was really drunk and he was even, he was angry, he got kicked out of a party and took it out on me and beat the absolute shit out of me.

INTERVIEWER: And what happened then? Did you, did someone come and –

JAMIE: The police found me on the ground, yeah 'cause I was walking home. He, him and his mate were walking the other way and they came towards me and they're like 'oh you're the one that told the cops', and I'm like 'I had no idea what was going on, I had no idea', and they just absolutely kicked the crap out of me.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, and did you have any friends with you at the time?

JAMIE: No, I was by myself going home [...]. I got absolutely arse-whooped [laughs]. Oh well, shit happens.

Aggression is not a prerogative only of men. Young adults in the study frequently acknowledged that women could also become angry when drunk, but in doing so they tended to emphasise that women would usually express this through tears or shouting. They felt that women's occasional violence usually manifested as milder forms of physical assault

such as hair pulling or scratching. Men's aggression was also understood to escalate more quickly and to have more serious consequences than women's. Honey explains:

I think women are more likely to yell at each other [...] whereas I think men would do yelling but then they're much more likely ... for it to move on and quite quickly to escalate into physical violence. And it might not necessarily be like, they might not get into a full-on punch on where they're punching each other but they will start the shoving, which if someone doesn't intervene ...

Honey's phrasing is interesting here, demonstrating ambivalence about where responsibility for aggression lies. Men in this story 'do yelling' and 'start the shoving' but at the same time an external dynamic around men seems to operate, where 'they're much more likely for it to move on and quickly to escalate', and to require outside intervention to stop the aggression. Honey clarified that when she talked about men she didn't include gay men, who in her experience were unlikely to get into fights. In this she positioned violence as a function of masculine heterosexual orientation and identity, and not so much as something intrinsic to men. Later in the interview, she again proposed that masculinity, rather than men themselves was to some extent responsible for violent outbursts, suggesting that men are discouraged from talking about their feelings, leading to uncontrollable eruptions of feeling which they express through aggression. When they are drunk 'and their inhibitions are lowered and someone shoves them, then all their shit that's been going on that whole week just comes out and they punch or whatever'. At the same time as proposing drunkenness as the explanation for the violence, it is also interesting that Honey expects that others around men might 'intervene' to de-escalate conflict. Here the act of drinking and becoming violent emerges as partly involving the individual (men adopt specific practices), but also as produced a drinking setting where others also act. This provides evidence that settings where people drink are inevitably entwined in any individual's act of violence.

4. Violence as an effect of interactions between alcohol and men's bodies that override men's agency

In the excerpts quoted above participants emphasise the primacy of alcohol or masculinity in causing violence. In this section we consider accounts where these two forces are understood to act, either together or separately, directly on men's bodies to suspend their capacity to act autonomously. This category can be regarded as an extension of the previous two. Yet here violence is articulated as biologically driven or as an irresistible affective urge. It is not described as mediated by socially-framed expectations or situations; but as something that occurs *to* individual men who enact it. For example, Elke explained how her male friend became aggressive when he drank spirits. In her account, the friend tries not to drink spirits, but despite this 'sometimes it happens'. Elke describes her male friend as two distinct selves; the first of whom strives unsuccessfully not to drink alcohol, remembers nothing of being drunk and feels remorse the next morning. His second – alcohol-affected self – emerged not through his action or volition but when 'something went wrong'. This self is obnoxious and aggressive. By imagining that he possesses a trigger that 'switches' without any apparent involvement from her friend, Elke positions him as powerless to resist this metamorphosis:

Yeah, he just, he has like a little trigger that switches and he becomes rude to his best friends. And he's just pushing people round and he can't really, he can't remember anything the next day. ... It's only when he drinks spirits, so he tries to not do it. But sometimes it happens. And yeah, he regrets it the next day because he

knows that something went wrong.

The men in our study who acknowledged that they had been involved in drunken violence credited alcohol with the power to produce eruptions of violence which they experienced as an overwhelming bodily urge. They emphasised that this was out of their control or that they were somehow different when affected by alcohol in ways that impaired their capacity to act with deliberation. Yusef said that 'When there's alcohol you just turn violent'. We asked Cooper about the last time he had been involved in a fight when he was drunk. He described a dramatic shift in mood before he hit someone where: 'you just turn in, turn real bad'. This was usually triggered by a relatively minor event such as when a stranger nudged him.

Dave and Ethan, two friends who also acknowledged that they had been involved in fights when drunk, were interviewed together. Like Cooper, they noted that alcohol 'just changes' them, producing a state where seemingly trivial incidents trigger aggression. Ethan added that alcohol transformed him, making him aggressive and reactive, with Dave linking this to testosterone:

DAVE: Just stupid things, like all it takes [to start a fight] is –

ETHAN: Just alcohol in general [alcohol], just changes ya.

DAVE: All it takes is like a little bump, like an accidental nudge or someone thinks you're looking at them wrong or anything, you know what I mean? Just a lot of testosterone-fuelled bullshit.

Although we didn't ask specifically about testosterone, men's aggression was explained as caused by this hormone in some of the stories of drunken violence we heard. In these narratives, testosterone is activated by alcohol, with both substances intensifying the effects of the other. Scotty, for example, thought that 'the testosterone factor probably kicks in' when drunk men get aggressive, even though he reflected that he himself had never been violent, or felt an urge to aggression when drunk. Steven worked in a bar and had similarly never felt an urge to fight, but he too regarded the combined effects of testosterone and alcohol as wielding a powerful influence on men's bodies, activated by irritations such as being jostled:

I guess it's a combination of testosterone and the amount of alcohol and then just miscommunication generally, accidentally knocking into each other. I don't know, I've never, I've never really been in a fight myself. Oh I doubt I ever really feel like fighting when I'm drunk, but I guess a lot of people obviously sometimes do.

In some instances, testosterone was also understood as inciting violence across groups of men, not just operating on individual male bodies. Seth suggested that men who got into fights were probably not bad people but that when they were drunk in groups they were susceptible to the influence of hormones: 'They mightn't be obnoxious wankers but when they drink [they become obnoxious]; maybe it's just testosterone in a group of five or six men or something'. Here, testosterone is used as a shorthand explanation for violence in a dynamic involving a group of men, as we will go on to consider in the following discussion.

Discussion

Young adults' explanations of men's alcohol-related violence cannot easily be disarticulated; many of our research participants provided accounts at different points through interviews that we coded to more than one of the categories described above. Rather than seeing the categories around which this paper is constructed as distinct, they are better understood as encapsulating a set of linked discursive resources. Alcohol-related violence enacted by young men was often explained by young adults in the study as impelled by forces outside

individual men's agentic control. While some thought that men had a degree of agency in fights, violence was more commonly attributed to *prima facie* effects of alcohol, to diffusely understood properties of men and masculinity or, relatedly, as caused by alcohol and testosterone acting directly on men's bodies. The latter account was particularly evident in interviews with men who had actually perpetrated violence when drunk. Theories that attribute agency to material objects such as alcohol can seem counter-intuitive. Nonetheless, it is striking that alcohol, masculinity and men's bodies emerge as autonomous actors in many of the explanations of men's drunken violence reported here.

In describing our theoretical orientation to this paper, we suggested that men's agency, or capacity to act, is made possible through their encounters within networks or configurations of material and discursive forces (Demant, 2009; Waling, 2019). For drinkers, these are shaped by reflexive choices, aspects of our own subjectivities, alcohol's bodily and emotional effects, specific drinking settings, and, importantly, the discourses that frame alcohol consumption. Butler explains how relatively seamless discourses about what men and women do (such as those evident in our participants' reflections on men's violence), instantiate power relations, making them seem natural or inevitable. Discourses like these obscure other ways of thinking about gender, performing, as she writes, 'a regulatory operation of power that naturalizes the hegemonic instance and forecloses the thinkability of its disruption' (2004, p. 43).

Violence that is associated with alcohol consumption is often referred to in Australian newspapers as 'alcohol fuelled' (Flynn et al., 2016). As others have pointed out, attributing violence to alcohol elides together complex social, spatial and gendering factors (Moore et al., 2017). Referring to violence as 'testosterone fuelled' similarly reduces men's violence to a single cause. 'Testosterone fuelled' implies that violence is incited by the action of chemical substances on the body, either testosterone on its own, or more potently through the interaction of testosterone with alcohol. The notion that alcohol collaborates with testosterone in producing the dominance and aggression associated with hypermasculinity is evident also among participants in a Canadian study, where alcohol was referred to as 'testosterone in a glass' (Graham and Wells, 2003, p. 551). The use of this phrase to imply that violence is a biological imperative for men was particularly apparent in Seth's comment, reported above, where he speaks of how violence was incited by testosterone acting across a group of young men. Here, Seth positioned testosterone as something that not only acts on individual men's bodies but also determines how they behave together, neatly eliding the role of group dynamics among men in conflict.

The discursive resources outlined above do more than just explain, or provide an excuse for, men's drunken violence. They also contribute to our expectations of the dynamics of manhood and therefore what we expect men to do when they drink. They are deployed when men recognise bodily sensations associated with alcohol use in particular settings such as in bars and clubs and on the streets, as an urge to violence. These discursive resources make it hard for men who enact violence, and importantly also for other young adults in the social world these men inhabit, to question its inevitability. Hence, along with other factors, the discursive resources we have described here contribute to the rationalisation, naturalisation and production of men's violence.

Acknowledging the power of discourse does not mean that we must ignore the material effects of men's bodies on the practices they enact. But currently available research points to complexity here. Testosterone, for example, is a substance with effects on the human body that are inextricably material and at the same time always understood through ideas about masculinity (Roberts, 2007). While a relationship between testosterone and violence

may exist, testosterone is unlikely to cause violence in any straightforward way, (Roberts, 2007) and the interaction of testosterone with alcohol in producing violence is even more poorly understood. Studies indicate that basal levels of testosterone in men predict dominance and antisocial tendencies (see McDermott, 2011). Yet a meta-analysis of the relationship between testosterone levels and aggression in humans found only a weak positive effect (Book et al., 2001). Beyond testosterone there are other contributing factors to men's aggression when drunk, for example that they drink to the point of heavy intoxication more frequently than women (Livingston, 2015), as well as differing cultural understandings of the behavioural effects of intoxication (Demant & Törrönen, 2011).

Our exploration of young adults' perceptions of the locus of agency for men's drunken violence opens opportunities for intervention. Men can and do renegotiate masculinities, both as individuals and collectively (Moore et al., 2017). Other researchers have proposed that violence prevention efforts should be focused on changing problematic masculinities (Lindsay, 2012; Mahalik et al., 2015). As part of this endeavour, we need to interrogate the notion that violence is determined unidirectionally by the actions of alcohol, inherent properties of men, or the combined actions of alcohol and men's bodies. Within the explanations our participants gave were contradictions that could be highlighted in prevention efforts to reduce men's violence. Why, for example, did most of the men in the study prefer to avoid fights (MacLean, 2016), even while some attributed other men's violence to testosterone, a hormone that had demonstrably different effects on their own inclination to violence?

Following from this, health information about alcohol should emphasise that violence is not inevitable, but rather that testosterone and alcohol have complex and contingent effects and the presence of either substance does not inevitably lead to or explain aggression. The terms 'alcohol fuelled' and 'testosterone-fuelled' should be called out where they are used in media and discussion for their simplification of complex aetiologies and implicit naturalisation of aggression. Women's views on the relationship between masculinity and alcohol, as much as men's, reinforce the inevitability of men's violence. Challenging how women talk about men's violence may reduce the pervasiveness of this discourse.

While most of the men who had personal experience of drunken violence spoke of the urge to violence as embodied and overwhelming, this is not borne out in observational studies. Analysis of closed circuit television records indicates that violence is highly ritualised -- both generated and constrained through a series of interactions between groups -- suggesting it is not simply a function of individual responses (Bloch et al., 2018; Levine et al., 2011). In other research, men reported that they gave careful consideration of the appropriateness of violence in any situation at least retrospectively and often also at the time (Ravn, 2017). To develop interventions we need to consider existing literature on when and how men move in and out of different roles in relation to conflict (as bystanders, aggressors or by distancing themselves) (Bloch et al., 2018). Men who enact violence might be encouraged to build in opportunities to slow their response, such as moving away from a scene, so they become more aware of the processes involved in conflict and can reframe it as involving an element of choice in the moment.

A further response is to align policy with attributions about the locus of agency in men's drunken violence. If it is indeed the case that violence is an inevitable consequence of men's drinking, it is reasonable to control their access to alcohol and limit their capacity to cause harms. Restricting alcohol access in areas where drunken violence occurs, is one approach to limiting assaults. Situational crime prevention strategies include local exclusion policies associated with liquor accords and closing hour changes in entertainment precincts of

Newcastle and Sydney in Australia (e.g. Kypri et al., 2014). Harm reduction strategies such as use of plastic glasses in places where violence occurs are also warranted (Luke et al., 2002).

A more targeted option is simply to ban individuals who become violent when drunk from drinking (Room, 2012). The fact that this policy option is not so often implemented suggests that as a society we do not actually believe that violence is an inevitable outcome of men's drinking (or that drinkers should not be curtailed). A notable exception at the policy level in Australia is the Northern Territory's banned drinkers registry, albeit a measure that is disproportionately applied to Aboriginal men (Northern Territory Government, 2018). Alongside population-level efforts to reduce alcohol supply, further alcohol restrictions targeting individuals with a history of drunken aggression may make others safer.

There are inevitably limitations to this study. Interviews for this and another Victorian study with a similar focus (Lindsay, 2012) were conducted some years ago. New research could explore whether perceptions of alcohol and violence are changing. Perhaps more importantly, this paper does not consider the critical impact of material forces such as urban streetscapes and venue design (Graham and Wells, 2003) or how violence emerges in engagements with other contextual elements (Collins, 2008; MacLean and Moore, 2014). We do not investigate the effects of bouncers or police, or of representation of violence in media, which others have shown to influence some men's actions when intoxicated (Flynn et al., 2016; Suonperä Liebst et al., 2019).

For future research, epidemiological and biomedical studies that unpack the interactive effects on violence of alcohol, masculinities, testosterone and men's bodies, would be strategically useful. Along with a better understanding of the situational, discursive and individual factors involved in drunken violence, research of this nature might help to contest the tendency in young adults' accounts (and elsewhere) to treat alcohol and testosterone as stable objects with consistent and predictable effects (Hart and Moore, 2014). Such studies could provide a compelling rebuttal to the tightly framed attributions of agency in men's drunken violence that we identify here.

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