

INCREASING GENDER VISIBILITY IN DRUG AND ALCOHOL RESEARCH



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4 MAY 2022

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GENDER STUDIES

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- 1. Theoretical developments in research never take place in a social, economic or political vacuum.**
 - 2. Gender changes in society gradually reflected in developments within the social sciences.**
 - 3. Increasing impact of feminist and gender studies gradually has an impact on research on drugs and alcohol.**
 - 4. However, merely adding gender or women to a title does not necessarily mean adopting a gender perspective.**

THE “MALE GAZE” IN STUDIES OF DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

1. Focus on men until the early 1980s
2. Research on women primarily within a problematic perspective

Women as Victims

3. Women as active agents missing

Given this approach – earliest research on women focused on women and treatment.

FEMINIST AND GENDER STUDIES

1. After the 1980s emergence of research contesting pathology approach.
2. Shift in focus from 'women as abusers' to 'woman as consumers.'
3. Research on women in public places – emphasis on agency
4. Women's consumption of substances examined as symbolic acts of resistance
5. Drug and alcohol use - markers for the construction of lifestyles.

GENDER AND EPI/SURVEY RESEARCH

- 1. Epidemiological research on Drugs and Alcohol long emphasized gender as a strong predictor of drug and alcohol practices**
- 2. Gender viewed a fixed attribute of individuals differentiating women from men at one point in time.**
- 3. This research tended to ignore extensive sociological research on gender.**

GENDER STUDIES IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES: “DOING GENDER”

- 1. Gender viewed as performance or practice - may alter in different social settings.**
- 2. Instead of gender as an individual attribute preceding drug and alcohol use – gender as processual.**
- 3. Gender not just influencing use of different substances, but different substances convey different meanings about the individual.**
- 4. Studies of Gender – exploring femininities and masculinities**

IMPACT OF GENDER STUDIES ON RESEARCH ON FEMININITIES

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1. Increasing influence of feminist research on women and drugs and especially research on the rave/club scene – a focus on pleasure.
 2. Gradually, changes in drug of choice from drugs to alcohol
 3. Survey research highlights the extent to which gender differences in HED (heavy episodic drinking) and intoxication beginning to narrow – but is the meaning the same for women and men?

IMPACT OF GENDER STUDIES ON RESEARCH ON MASCULINITIES

- 1. Historically, primary focus had been on men but, issues of gender and notions of masculinity rarely examined.**
- 2. Socio-cultural (Anthropological) research had long examined the role of drinking and intoxication as a central feature of maleness, but little impact on mainstream AOD research**
- 3. Recent research has looked at drug and alcohol use as part of hegemonic masculinity and the role of violence**

NEW DIRECTIONS: FROM MASCULINITY TO INTERSECTIONALITY

- 1. Research on gender increasingly focusing on studies of Intersectionality**
- 2. Focus no longer solely on a Binary Approach – women and men.**
- 3. Increasing examining the impact/interplay of other identities on gender, including sexuality, sexual identity, social class and ethnicity.**

CONCLUSION

- 1. Drug and Alcohol research often insular in examining other social science research and theoretical developments.**
- 2. Until 1980s and 1990s – research on Gender focused on men**
- 3. Latest Gender research moving away from a binary approach**
- 4. Important to incorporate new developments in gender studies in research on drug and alcohol consumption**

FURTHER READING

G. Hunt, T. Antin, J. Bjonness and E. Ettorre. (2016) The Increasing Visibility of Gender in the Alcohol and Drug Fields. In T. Kolind, B. Thom and G. Hunt (eds.) *Handbook of Drug and Alcohol Studies: Social Science Approaches*, Sage.

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G. Hunt, T. Kolind and T. Antin (2018) Conceptualizing Ethnicity in Alcohol and Drug Research: Epidemiology meets Social Theory. *Journal of Ethnicity in Substance Abuse*. 17(2):187-198

G. Hunt and T. Antin (2019) Gender and Intoxication: From Masculinity to Intersectionality. *Drugs: Education, Prevention and Policy* 26(1):70-78.



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