



LEISURE STUDIES IN A GLOBAL ERA

Alcohol, Age, Generation and the Life Course

Edited by
Thomas Thurnell-Read
Laura Fenton

palgrave
macmillan

Leisure Studies in a Global Era

Series Editors

Karl Spracklen
Leeds Beckett University
Leeds, UK

Karen Fox
University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB, Canada

In this book series, we defend leisure as a meaningful, theoretical, framing concept; and critical studies of leisure as a worthwhile intellectual and pedagogical activity. This is what makes this book series distinctive: we want to enhance the discipline of leisure studies and open it up to a richer range of ideas; and, conversely, we want sociology, cultural geographies and other social sciences and humanities to open up to engaging with critical and rigorous arguments from leisure studies. Getting beyond concerns about the grand project of leisure, we will use the series to demonstrate that leisure theory is central to understanding wider debates about identity, postmodernity and globalisation in contemporary societies across the world. The series combines the search for local, qualitatively rich accounts of everyday leisure with the international reach of debates in politics, leisure and social and cultural theory. In doing this, we will show that critical studies of leisure can and should continue to play a central role in understanding society. The scope will be global, striving to be truly international and truly diverse in the range of authors and topics.

Editorial Board:

John Connell, Professor of Geography, University of Sydney, USA

Yoshitaka Mori, Associate Professor, Tokyo University of the Arts, Japan

Smitha Radhakrishnan, Assistant Professor, Wellesley College, USA

Diane M. Samdahl, Professor of Recreation and Leisure Studies,
University of Georgia, USA

Chiung-Tzu Lucetta Tsai, Associate Professor, National Taipei
University, Taiwan

Walter van Beek, Professor of Anthropology and Religion, Tilburg
University, The Netherlands

Sharon D. Welch, Professor of Religion and Society, Meadville
Theological School, Chicago, USA

Leslie Witz, Professor of History, University of the Western Cape,
South Africa

Thomas Thurnell-Read • Laura Fenton
Editors

Alcohol, Age, Generation and the Life Course

palgrave
macmillan

Editors

Thomas Thurnell-Read
Loughborough University
Loughborough, UK

Laura Fenton
University of Manchester
Manchester, UK

Leisure Studies in a Global Era

ISBN 978-3-031-04016-0

ISBN 978-3-031-04017-7 (eBook)

<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-04017-7>

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s), under exclusive licence to Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2022

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are solely and exclusively licensed by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.

The publisher, the authors, and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, expressed or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Cover illustration: Marvin L, Unsplash.com

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG. The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

Contents

1	Introduction: Alcohol, Age, Generation and the Life Course	1
	<i>Thomas Thurnell-Read and Laura Fenton</i>	
Part I	Alcohol, Generations and Social Change	27
2	Formal Generations of Drinkers: Generational Change in Irish Drinking Culture to 1950	29
	<i>John O'Brien</i>	
3	Life Course and Generational Perspectives on Drinking in a Mediterranean Culture	53
	<i>Franca Beccaria</i>	
4	'I Would Never Dream of Drinking on a Lunch Hour, But ...': A Bourdieusian Analysis of the Intergenerational Reproduction of Alcohol Consumption Practices	75
	<i>Lyn Brierley-Jones and Jonathan Ling</i>	

Part II Alcohol, Youth and Adolescence	101
5 Alcohol Use and Narratives of ‘Maturing Out’ in the Transition to Adulthood Among Young Danes	103
<i>Maria Dich Herold and Vibeke Asmussen Frank</i>	
6 ‘If You Cannot Beat Them, You Join Them’: Friendship, Social Influence and Drinking to Belong Among Nigerian Youth	127
<i>Emeka W. Dumbili, Samuel O. Okpan, Kelechi Uwa-Robinson, and Peter M. Azende</i>	
7 Risk, Control and Hyper-Moderate Drinking Amongst Generation Z	151
<i>Henry Yeomans, Laura Fenton, and Adam Burgess</i>	
Part III Alcohol in Adulthood	177
8 Steaming Stags and Hammered Hens: The Role of Alcohol in Premarital Rituals	179
<i>Thomas Thurnell-Read and Sheila M. Young</i>	
9 Using Local Prison Registers to Explore the Relationship Between Female Drunkenness, Age and Marital Status in Mid-Victorian Salford	203
<i>Craig Stafford</i>	
10 De-gendering Alcohol Through Food Pairing: Covid-19 and Middle-Aged Women’s Conflicted Roles as Consumers and Cooks in Japan	227
<i>Swee-Lin Ho</i>	

11	'There's Nothing Classy About a Drunk 40-year-old': The Role of 'Respectable' Femininity in the Drinking Biographies and Sobriety Stories of Midlife Women	251
	<i>Emily Nicholls</i>	
Part IV	Alcohol in Later Life	273
12	Alcohol Use: Its Meaning and Impact in Older Age	275
	<i>Beth Bareham and Jennifer Seddon</i>	
13	Older Drinkers: Alcohol Consumption, Drinking Context and 'Successful Ageing'	297
	<i>John Foster and Betsy Thom</i>	
14	'I Don't Drink Much Now 'Cos I'm Old': Life Course and Changing Drinking Patterns Among Nigerian Older Men	323
	<i>Ediomo-Ubong Nelson</i>	
Index		345

Notes on Contributors

Peter M. Azende received his PhD from the University of Huddersfield, UK, in 2018. He is a lecturer in the Department of Sociology at Benue State University, Makurdi, Nigeria. Peter is a health sociologist interested in human sexual and reproductive health, mental health, and youth culture and has written several articles in reputable journals. He is a member of the Nigerian Anthropological and Sociological Practitioners Association (NASA).

Beth Bareham is a National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) fellow at Population Health Sciences Institute, Newcastle University, UK, researching health and psychosocial factors, mental health and wellbeing, and service development relating to older people's alcohol use. She has a background in health psychology and uses evidence synthesis, qualitative and intervention development methods in her work. Beth has worked closely with alcohol services like Drink Wise Age Well and With You in her research, conducting collaborative research studies, and has spent some time embedded within the service. Beth convenes an international network of alcohol and ageing researchers within the British Society of Gerontology and Gerontological Society of America interest groups, and is also an associate editor and Older Adults Theme Lead for *Advances in Dual Diagnosis*.

Franca Beccaria is president of Eclectica: Research and Training, Italy; deputy director of European Master on Drug and Alcohol Studies (EMDAS), University of Torino, Italy; and an associate professor in the

Faculty of Social Sciences at University of Helsinki, Finland. She is also an affiliate of the University of Helsinki Centre for Research on Addiction, Control and Governance (CEACG). As a sociologist, her main research interests are drinking cultures, drugs, gambling, addictions, health promotion and health policies, stakeholders and community engagement, and sociology of health. She has contributed to more than 170 publications including books, chapters, and scientific articles. Her recent books include, *Alcohol and Generation: Changes in Style and Changing Styles in Italy and Finland* (as editor) and (Carocci, 2010) and *Alcol e Giovani: Riflettere prima dell'uso* ('Alcohol and Youth: To Think Before Using') (Giunti Editore, 2013).

Lyn Brierley-Jones is a research fellow in the School of Healthcare at the University of Leeds, UK. As a sociologist specialising in qualitative research methods, particularly grounded theory, Lyn has conducted research into communication in childbirth; stigma, discourses, and memory-making in stillbirth; prevention strategies in cancer; leadership in public health; pharmaceutical prescribing; class-based alcohol consumption; and the history of alternative medicine. With a specific interest in the power of sociological theory to explain health phenomena Lyn has drawn extensively on the work of Pierre Bourdieu, Erving Goffman, Mary Douglas Peter Berger, and Thomas Luckmann. Lyn is part of the WardSonar project at the University of Leeds, which seeks to use a digital technology to improve safety in acute mental health settings.

Adam Burgess is an historical sociologist interested in the processes of social change, particularly changing behaviours. His research has been in diverse areas—from face mask wearing to guarding drinks from spiking—organised around themes of risk, individualisation, and, most recently, generations. He is Professor of Risk Research at the University of Kent, UK.

Emeka W. Dumbili is Lecturer in Sociology at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Nigeria. He is an Alexander von Humboldt Research Fellow at the Institute for Therapy and Health Research, Kiel, Germany. His research focuses on the sociology of substance use, gender, leisure, social theory, and qualitative methodologies.

Laura Fenton is a sociologist. She is a research associate at The University of Sheffield, UK, where she works on the Wellcome Trust-funded Youth Drinking in Decline project, and at The University of Manchester, where she is conducting research for the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)-funded Austerity and Altered Life-Courses project. Prior to this, Laura worked on the Girlhood and Later Life project, which explored the implications of post-war youth transitions for the lives of women born in the UK between 1939 and 1952. Laura's previous and current research build on her doctoral work on the changing place of alcohol in the lives of three generations of British women. Her areas of expertise include alcohol, youth, gender, generation, the life course, and biographical methods.

John Foster is Reader in Alcohol Policy and Mental Health Studies at the School of Health Sciences, University of Greenwich, UK. His original PhD, awarded in 2001, was based around an evaluation of alcohol treatment services. Since then, most of his work has focused on different categories of drinkers including older people with a focus of understanding the balance between the benefits and risks of drinking. This includes focusing on drinking in older people. He has been part of several European research teams and the chapter he has co-written with Professor Betsy Thom reports UK data from a European study. He continues to focus on drinking at home and is now interested in the impact of the Covid lockdown on drinking in university student and staff groups.

Vibeke Asmussen Frank is an anthropologist and a professor at the Centre for Alcohol and Drug Research, Aarhus University, Denmark. She has written widely within several areas of the alcohol and drug research field, including on harm reduction initiatives, opioid substitution treatment, prison-based drug treatment, cannabis cultivation, and drug policies. Most recently, her research interests have revolved around alcohol use and intoxication among young people, situational abstinence from alcohol use, and risk/pleasure related to nitrous oxide use among young people.

Maria Dich Herold is a social psychologist and an associate professor at the Centre for Alcohol and Drug Research, Aarhus University, Denmark. Her main area of research includes alcohol and drug use among various

groups of young people, which she explores by means of qualitative methodologies. She is particularly interested in how young people's social relationships and subjectivities shape, and are shaped by, their use of substances in different contexts, locations, and situations.

Swee-Lin Ho is Associate Professor of Anthropology in the Department of Sociology at the National University of Singapore, Singapore. She worked in China, Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore, and the UK—as auditor, financial journalist, and corporate executive—for two decades before completing her graduate studies in sociology and comparative culture at Sophia University, Japan, and in social anthropology at the University of Oxford. Her research interests and publications focus on the neoliberal transformations of work, self-identity, and urban space in Asia; the social formations of gender and friendship; emergent corporate practices; the globalisation of East Asian popular culture; ethnographic field methods; and the business of producing talent, creativity, and passion. Her current projects are about the 'Asianisation' of western classical music and the political economy of culture (art, food, music, and sport).

Jonathan Ling is Professor of Public Health in the Faculty of Health Sciences and Wellbeing at the University of Sunderland, UK. A fellow of the Royal Society of Public Health and a chartered psychologist for many years, Jonathan has interests across the breadth of public health and health sciences. He has an extensive research track record in public health and psychology, publishing widely and has been awarded national funding from the Medical Research Council (MRC), Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), and Public Health England, as well as the National Health Service (NHS) and charities. Jonathan is an associate director of Fuse, the UK Clinical Research Collaboration (UKCRC)-funded Centre for Translational Research in Public Health, is a member of the National Institute for Health and Care Research's (NIHR's) Research for Patient Benefit regional funding committee, and has been a member of the nationally recognised NETSCC College of Experts, Health Technology Assessment (HTA) Psychological and Community Therapies Panel. Jonathan holds a permanent honorary academic contract with Public Health England and was invited to be a member of the College of Experts for the NIHR COVID Recovery and Learning Research Call 2020.

Ediomo-Ubong Nelson a sociologist by training, is an associate researcher with the Centre for Research and Information on Substance Abuse (CRISA), Nigeria. He is also an alcohol and drug policy advocacy officer for the International Blue Cross. He has written many papers on alcohol and other drug use, gender-based violence, and criminal justice and public health responses to illegal drug use in peer-reviewed journals.

Emily Nicholls is Lecturer in Sociology at the University of York, UK. Her research interests include alcohol, sobriety, gender, and identity, but particularly the ways in which gendered identities are formed through the consumption (or non-consumption) of alcohol and how these processes are shaped by class and age. Her early research explores negotiations of femininity on a 'girls' night out' and has been published as part of Palgrave Macmillan's series *Genders and Sexualities in the Social Sciences*. More recently, she has researched women's experiences of early sobriety, drinking practices during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the marketing and consumption of 'no and low' alcohol drinks.

John O'Brien is Lecturer in Sociology in the Department of Sociology and Criminology at University College Cork, UK. His main research interest is the sociological analysis of alcohol use and its regulation, social theory, historical sociology, crime and deviance, and penology. His monograph *States of Intoxication: The Place of Alcohol in Civilization* was published in 2018. His recent publications focus on the Irish pub as a representation in collective identity, sociability in the COVID-19 pandemic, sexual aggression in the night-time economy, public health policy on alcohol, and informal social control in drinking culture. Other work has focused on topics such as political leadership, contemporary social theory, public order offences, commemoration, social care services, and urban regeneration. He is the president of the Sociological Association of Ireland.

Samuel O. Okpan teaches in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at College of Arts and Social Sciences, Evangel University, Okpoto, Nigeria. He has a background in sociology and anthropology, specialising in development studies. He has written articles in his research area and has equally conducted field research for national and interna-

tional agencies such as the Federal Ministry of Environment and the World Bank. He served as an assistant editor in the *Journal of Arts and Social Sciences* and holds the same position in the *Nigerian Journal of Social Problems and Social Policy Review*.

Jennifer Seddon is Lecturer in Psychology at Oxford Brookes University, UK. Her work focuses on applied public health research, with a particular focus on substance use and ageing. She has written numerous articles in the drug and alcohol field and has most recently been involved in evaluating the UK Drink Wise Age Well programme: a prevention-to-treatment programme which aims to reduce alcohol-related harm in people aged 50 and over.

Craig Stafford is an early career researcher and teacher. He received his PhD from University of Liverpool in 2019, with a thesis entitled “‘The Worst of Drunkards’: Female Drunkenness in Mid-Victorian Lancashire’. His research interests include the policing and sentencing of female criminals in Victorian Britain and the life experiences of women prosecuted for petty offences. He has had articles published in *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* (2017) and *Prison Service Journal* (2019). He has contributed a chapter to an edited collection, entitled *Policing Women: Histories in the Western World, 1800–1950*, due to be published by Palgrave Macmillan. He teaches history at University of Liverpool.

Betsy Thom is Professor of Health Policy and co-director of the Drug and Alcohol Research Centre at Middlesex University London, UK. She is an honorary professor in the Department of Psychology and Behavioural Sciences at Aarhus University, Denmark. Her research includes drug and alcohol policy and practice, with current focus on young people, drug-related deaths, and co-production approaches to research. She has managed European, national, and local research projects and led the development of a cross-national masters’ programme on drug and alcohol studies. Her recent books include *Alcohol, Power and Public Health: A Comparative Study of Alcohol Policy* (co-authored with Butler, Elmeland, Nicholls; 2017) and *Risk and Substance Use: Framing Dangerous People and Dangerous Places* (edited with Susanne MacGregor; 2020).

Thomas Thurnell-Read is Senior Lecturer in Sociology in the School of Social Sciences and Humanities at Loughborough University, UK. His research on drinking culture has been published in leading international journals and he is a regular contributor to national and international media debates relating to pub culture, alcohol, and drunkenness. He is the editor of *Drinking Dilemmas: Space, Culture and Identity* (2015) and is a founding member of the British Sociological Association (BSA)'s Alcohol Study Group.

Kelechi Uwa-Robinson is a PhD research student at the University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria. She is currently working on her thesis in migration, gender studies, sexuality, and reintegration. Her research focuses on health-seeking behaviours, drug use, sexuality education, gender studies, and quantitative/qualitative research methodologies.

Henry Yeomans is Associate Professor of Criminology at the University of Leeds, UK. He specialises in historical approaches to the study of drinking which examine how and why drinking behaviours, as well as the regulatory frameworks which govern them, have changed through time. He has previously investigated the development of moderate drinking guidelines and the popularity of the temporary abstinence campaign Dry January. He has written widely in social science journals and authored the 2014 monograph *Alcohol and Moral Regulation*.

Sheila M. Young is an ethnologist and honorary research fellow at the Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen, UK. Her doctoral research was on the form, meaning, and function of the hen party, and she has presented her work to audiences in the UK, Sweden, Germany, Denmark, and the USA. Her recent book *Prenuptial Rituals in Scotland: Blackening the Bride and Decorating the Hen* (2019) examines two prenuptial rituals practised by women in Scotland: the hen party and the blackening. She has made frequent appearances on TV and radio as an authority on both these rituals. Her current research is on the challenges faced by couples getting married during the COVID-19 pandemic and the long-term changes the pandemic may bring about to the marriage ritual.

List of Figures

Fig. 3.1	Recorded per-capita (+15) alcohol consumption trends in Italy and Finland. (Source: Global Information System on Alcohol and Health (GISAH), 2021— https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/themes/global-information-system-on-alcohol-and-health)	56
Fig. 3.2	Proportion of all premature deaths (defined as deaths in people 15–64 years of age) in the EU caused by alcohol consumption by sex and region. (Source: Rehm, 2012, 6)	57
Fig. 9.1	Number of drunkenness committals by summary area, 1869–1875. (Source: Strangeways Prison Female Registers, 1869–1875)	210
Fig. 9.2	Age groups of women committed for drunkenness, Salford, 1869–1875. (Source: Strangeways Prison Female Registers, 1869–1875)	210
Fig. 9.3	Committals for drunkenness, marital status by age group, Salford, 1869–1875. (Source: Strangeways Prison Female Registers, 1869–1875)	214
Fig. 13.1	Frequency of drinking contexts and relationships ($n = 863$)	308

List of Tables

Table 13.1	Sociodemographic characteristics of the sample ($n = 1087$)	306
Table 13.2	Principal components analysis of context and relationship variables	310
Table 14.1	Socio-demographic information of the participants ($n = 16$)	328



1

Introduction: Alcohol, Age, Generation and the Life Course

Thomas Thurnell-Read and Laura Fenton

This book is about alcohol and its role in people's lives. Lives which unfold as we age and move in and out of different roles and responsibilities and across which alcohol, drinking and drunkenness are likely to offer different rewards, pose diverse risks and harms and mean different things. Consistent with wider developments in social theory emphasising temporality and dynamic processes of change over time (e.g. May, 2011), the book explores how the centrality, or marginality, of alcohol to our lives changes significantly as we age. From youthful initiation and experimentation in adolescence, to the culturally expectations of the rituals and rites of passage that punctuate the journey into and through adulthood, alcohol is involved with both mundane daily routines and with special occasions. Across many cultures, alcohol is often drunk at important

T. Thurnell-Read (✉)
Loughborough University, Loughborough, UK
e-mail: t.thurnell-read@lboro.ac.uk

L. Fenton
University of Manchester, Manchester, UK
e-mail: laura.fenton-2@manchester.ac.uk

occasions and significant moments in life: to celebrate a birth, to congratulate a marriage and to console the bereaved. Indeed, in all cultures where alcohol is widely consumed it appears to play some functional role in marking out special events, festivities and ceremonies. Yet, it is often in the minutia of daily life that the social and cultural uses of drinking alcohol are most keenly felt. As the chapters of this book illustrate, within each specific cultural context alcohol means different things to different people and, in being situated in biographical and generational time, observable and often sticking differences characterise the use and purpose of alcohol amongst different age groups and generation cohorts.

Existing understandings of age or cohort specific drinking tend to stem almost exclusively from epidemiological approaches. Thus, statistical analyses demonstrate how rates of drinking and abstinence vary by age, birth cohort and gender (Meng et al., 2014) and changing levels of consumption are shown to be patterned across the life course and around key moments such as early adulthood and middle age (Britton et al., 2015; Leggat et al., 2022). Whilst such approaches are useful in illuminating important patterns in the intersections of age, birth cohort and alcohol consumption, not least in showing how incidence of alcohol-related mortality is concentrated in particular birth cohorts (e.g. Walsh et al., 2021), they are limited in their ability to tell us about the lived meanings of drinking practices. Moreover, alcohol is not simply drunk, and when people drink to get drunk they do not simply enact a physiological process which alters their bodies, senses and perceptions. Rather, alcohol and its consumption are woven into the social and cultural fabric of everyday life (Douglas, 1987; Thurnell-Read, 2015) and serve an important function in the creation and expression of identity (Wilson, 2005). As the sociologist Troy Duster is noted to have remarked, ‘alcohol is to social science what dye is to microscopy’, meaning that the study of it can reveal ‘the structures and relations of a society and the process of stasis and change’ (Barrows & Room, 1991, 1). In this spirit, recent scholarship in the social sciences and humanities has increasingly brought to the fore a broader range of drinking practices across the life course, with childhood (Jayne & Valentine, 2016), youth (Griffin et al., 2009; MacLean, 2016), early adulthood (Smith, 2014), midlife (Emslie et al., 2012) and old age (Haighton, 2016) subject to varying degrees of academic interest.

Both long-running and newly emerged debates about the place of alcohol, drinking and drunkenness in the lives of individuals, and in society more generally, either directly or implicitly involve concerns about age, generations and the life course. Indeed, these concerns are at the core of some of the defining trends that shape the evolving field of alcohol studies. This includes concerns about educating young drinkers (Bagnall, 1991) for whom alcohol is one of many harmful but enticing risks (Plant & Plant, 1992) and the rise (Measham, 1996) and more recent decline (Oldham et al., 2018) of a culture of hedonistic intoxication amongst young people. Drinking in adolescence and young adulthood remains a prominent interest amongst alcohol scholars (e.g. Conroy & Measham, 2019). We can also see a more recent emergence of studies of alcohol in midlife (Hunt and Lyons 2012; 2013; Brierley-Jones et al., 2014) and the emergence of home drinking as the dominant mode of alcohol consumption in adulthood (Foster & Ferguson, 2012; Holloway et al., 2008; MacLean et al., 2022).

This book is a timely contribution to these unfolding debates. The chapters examine the intersections between biography, history and social change. Foregrounding age, generation and the life course in the study of alcohol and drinking therefore offers an important opportunity to understand the centrality of alcohol to processes of ageing and to both life course transitions relating to work, leisure and the family and wider social, cultural and socioeconomic changes shaping generational shifts in the meaning and function of alcohol for individuals, groups and society in general. Given the recent expansion of interest in drinking beyond youth to other periods of the life course, and ongoing re-evaluations of youth drinking as well as investigations of increased drinking among generations now in later life, the book makes a timely intervention at an important moment in the development of research and thinking about alcohol. Importantly, life course and generational approaches involve getting away from treating particular age groups of drinkers (or non-drinkers)—especially ‘younger people’ and ‘older people’—as static categories that are not subject to change over time, both individually and collectively.

The 'Rites' and Wrongs of Alcohol and Ageing

In many countries there is a culturally prescribed and socially reinforced script or chronology of a person's developing relationship with alcohol. Children are aware of alcohol and its effects on adults, and their perceptions and attitudes to alcohol and drunkenness form over many years before initial initiation might occur and, later still, legal purchase and socially condoned consumption might take place (Fossey, 1994; Jayne & Valentine, 2016). After childhood inexperience, some initiation into alcohol and drunkenness is followed by increased experimentation and (mis)adventure (Johnson, 2013; McKay et al., 2011). The association of alcohol and intoxication with 'coming of age' is socially approved and culturally reinforced (Loughran, 2010) and as one matures into adulthood, alcohol becomes an accepted and expected component of leisure and friendships for many. As shown in the work of British criminologist Oliver Smith (2014), drinking alcohol in the pubs, bars and night clubs of the night-time economy is an integral part of the performance of youthful adulthood but one that carries into the middle years of adulthood with less ease, with marriage, parenthood and work responsibilities often prompting the need for a more responsible approach to be taken. In later life, alcohol might retain its allure, particularly as what might be seen as a well-earned pleasure in retirement and an opportunity to maintain or revive important social connections (Thurnell-Read, 2021). However, with health a greater concern, drinking occasions diminish and perhaps stop altogether, whilst any ongoing alcohol consumption must be negotiated and justified (Gough et al., 2020).

Lately, however, this long-assumed patterning of a drinking 'career' or 'biography'—from youthful experimentation and excess, a maturing out in adulthood followed by a decline leading to eventual cessation, or at least moderation, in older age—appears less certain. Importantly, while population-level data may on the whole appear to present a uniform and perhaps orderly transition, with some evidence of change over time, closer examination of lived experience shows the tensions and ambiguities involved in moving between stages of the drinking life course. The normative and moral framing of alcohol consumption and drunkenness

is dependent on the age, as well as other social characteristics, of those doing the drinking, meaning that age-specific drinking practices have come to define debates, discourses and representations of 'good' and 'bad' drinking. In particular, flashpoints in discussions about alcohol and age relate to assumed appropriateness not just of drinking and drunkenness but related concerns including how intoxication involves a loss of control, a loss of self and, by association, how that means our ideas and responses to it are linked to how we view the selfhood of individuals, which changes over time and as we age (Hutton, 2020).

Academic and public debates have, however, for some time focused rather narrowly on youth drinking, with the assumed heavy drinking students and working-class youth receiving particular attention. This concern or preoccupation with the drinking habits and misadventures of adolescents and young adults gained pace from the 1990s onwards. Thus, there was a repeated fascination with the emergence of 'alcopops' as being cynically, yet highly profitably, marketed to young drinkers (McKeganey, 1998; Metzner & Kraus, 2008) and the media fascination with the night-time economy settings of city centre bars and nightclubs. From this context, as Nicholls (2009, 236) observes:

[A] visual language began to emerge in mass-media depictions of 'binge drinking': photographs and CCTV footage seemed to reveal a nocturnal pandemonium of violent young men, sexually vulnerable (or promiscuous) young women, and harassed police in luminous jackets struggling to cope with the disorder that explored on the streets as young binge drinkers staggered from one garish venue to the next.

To some extent, scholarship on alcohol has shared this preoccupation with youth drinking and with consumption which takes place in urban settings on weekend nights with a focus on intoxication and excess. Yet, much academic research in this area has provided a necessary rejoinder to media sensationalism and moralising. The practice and meaning of youth drinking varies between countries and changes over time within them (see Järvinen & Room, 2007), meaning caution must be urged when making generalisations about youth drinking. Further, research has added nuance to understandings of the motivations, pleasures and tensions of

adolescents drinking by showing how many young people maintain friendships and both perform and experiment with constructions of identity (Demant & Järvinen, 2006) and important contributions are made by Jayne et al. (2011) and Jayne and Valentine (2016) in their studies that focus on alcohol within the home and with the family unit. Equally, there are notable changes in youth drinking cultures in the UK and several other high-income countries, where those currently in their mid-teens to mid-twenties are in fact both less likely to drink than any other age group and are also increasingly more likely to be entirely abstinent (Oldham et al., 2018; ONS, 2018). Shaped by a complex and deepening array of social, cultural, economic, policy and technological factors (Pape et al. 2018), this is a trend that is beginning to counter many assumptions about the long taken-for-granted character of youth drinking.

Aligned with the preoccupation with youth drinking in marketing, print and broadcast media, policy and academic scholarship is the relative lack of visibility of both midlife and older drinkers. Indeed, in academic research in general, and public health specifically, middle-aged drinkers are 'rarely regarded as inherently problematic in the same way that youth drinkers are' (Muhlack et al., 2018, 1). Similarly, while the assumed decline in drinking in older age is supported by some longitudinal data (e.g. Moos et al., 2009), but problematised elsewhere (Meng et al., 2014), there is increasing concern that alcohol consumption is becoming more widespread in older age groups (Tigerstedt & Bloomfield, 2020). With this comes a belated but important emergence of academic concern with the potentially harmful outcomes of continued alcohol consumption into older age (O'Connell et al., 2003). This is perhaps best illustrated by the Royal College of Psychiatrists (2011, 2018) noting specific concerns about a generation cohort now entering older age with a prevalence of substance use unseen in previous generations and, notably, who are poorly understood and thinly provided for in terms of treatment and support. Thus, these pressing public health concerns around alcohol harms relates to ageing also speak to wider issues about the cultural politics and political economy of age and ageing (Bristow, 2016) and, more generally, about the health of individuals and societies as they age.

Why Age, Generation and the Life Course?

The book is organised around three related themes: age, generation and the life course. Although each is closely interconnected to the others, it is useful here to consider each separately and in turn reflect on its relevance to advancing debates in alcohol studies and beyond. The first of these, *age*, is deceptively complex in both its lay and academic uses. While age commonly refers to chronological age (Pilcher, 1995) and ageing to the chronological and biological processes by which individuals mature and become older, passing designated milestones such as ‘turning 18’ and ‘hitting 40’, increasingly common are more fluid and multifaceted understandings that acknowledge the interplay of biological, social and cultural factors (Gilleard & Higgs, 2014). ‘Age’ and ‘ageing’ are therefore terms that reference a blend of physical, functional, social and societal elements (Kunkel & Morgan, 2015). Ages or age groups, such as childhood, adolescence and adulthood, are socially constructed in that they are categories defined through the social behaviour, interactions and discourses which describe and characterise them.

In Western countries, childhood is generally seen as a particularly significant time of life (Aries 1960), one that is critical for subsequent development, with children viewed as requiring protection from influences understood to be harmful, including alcohol. As such, few countries do not place some sort of legal drinking age on the purchase and consumption of alcohol. This assigning of a legal drinking age involves assumptions about rights, responsibilities and risks. Yet there remains considerable variation in the informal social and cultural practices informing the process of initiation into drinking. Mediterranean drinking cultures, for example, typically demonstrate a different perspective on alcohol in childhood, emphasising the gradual introduction in the form of small amounts during meal times (see Beccaria in this book). So too in adulthood we see normative social expectations and cultural practices shaping an individual’s experience of drinking alcohol. Thurnell-Read’s research has shown that particular orientations to alcohol exist within specific age groups, such as university students (Thurnell-Read et al., 2018), and inform both practices and perceptions of what is, or is not, acceptable

drinking amongst people of different ages (Thurnell-Read, 2017). For example, alcohol and drunkenness play a role in shaping perceptions of male bodies and behaviour, with perceptions of younger and older men being framed as 'out of control' or 'out of shape', respectively (Thurnell-Read, 2013). In middle or later life, alcohol takes on different functions, meanings and tensions and the balance between pleasure and harm shifts in various ways. Alcohol consumption, particularly pub-based beer drinking in small all-male groups, helps middle-aged men maintain friendships and both provide and receive social support (Emslie et al., 2013). In midlife, women's drinking is negotiated in relation to competing expectations of femininity, as is highlighted by a now growing body of research in the UK and Australia in recent years (e.g. Emslie et al 2015a and 2015b; Lyons et al. 2015; Foley et al., 2021; Kersey et al., 2022; Nicholls, 2019; this book). Further still, amongst some older people in the UK, pubs appear valued as important sites of social connection even when they are often found to also be spaces containing varied physical, social and economic barriers (Thurnell-Read, 2021).

The second theme, *generation*, is a concept with widespread everyday usage but sporadic application within the social sciences (Pilcher, 1994). Mannheim's (1952) social-generation theory typically approaches birth cohorts as groups who experience similar socio-historical conditions in youth, with consequences for their forms of cultural expression and individual subjectivities across their adult life. In other words, members of a social generation are believed to be shaped, at least in part, by the socio-historical conditions of their youth in relation to their perspectives, preferences and so forth, and to carry these dispositions forward in time, into adulthood and beyond. Prominent examples of generation cohorts include the Baby Boomers, who in being born immediately after World War II and coming of age during or soon after the progressive social upheavals of the 1960s are said to have benefitted from a particular combination of social and economic mobility, and Millennials born in between the early 1980s and late 1990s, who experienced an upbringing marked by rapid changes in relation to politics, technology, education and the environment. With reference to these generations, in particular, there is a revived concern with difference, inequalities and tensions both within (Woodman and Wyn 2015) and between generations (Martin &

Roberts, 2021), with the conflict and ‘deficits’ between generations lately framing fierce debates. Additionally, in research on ageing and later life, valuable contributions have examined how the Baby Boomer generation may be ‘redefining’ ageing (Edmunds and Turner 2002; Biggs et al. 2007; Gilleard and Higgs 2007; Phillipson, 2007). Nevertheless, the value of the social generations approach has been contested, particularly in the field of youth studies (e.g. Roberts & France, 2020). As critics point out, biographical *discontinuities* between youth experiences and later points of the life course may also be pertinent (Day, 2007; Tinkler, Fenton and Cruz, in press).

With regard to drinking, a generational analysis would concern itself with the patterns in where, how and why people buy and consume alcohol and how these may interact with both identity and belonging and with wider socioeconomic transformations. For example, Fenton’s (2018) research investigates the complex personal and collective drinking histories of three generations of British women born between the 1940s and 1990s. Examining their drinking biographies reveals both how their ways of using and thinking about alcohol had shifted over time as they aged and how noticeable variations existed between the three generations, with the oldest generation having had less experience of alcohol in youth but cohorts born in the 1970s and 1990s recalling pronounced interest and investment in drinking during their adolescence. The shifting political economies of alcohol policy, industry and culture meanings and practices of alcohol consumption are likely shaped by such events as the so-called feminisation of alcohol, entailing the increased involvement of women in both public and private drinking over several generations in the second half of the twentieth century (Gutzke, 2016), and the emergence of the night-time economy as post-industrial cities became reconfigured around leisure, consumption and hedonism from the late 1980s onwards (Hayward & Hobbs, 2007; Roberts, 2006). The Baby Boomers and Generation X came of age at specific times where a growing acceptance of intoxication as both a personal and collective pleasure combined with a seemingly never ending expansion of opportunities to buy and consume alcohol, from overseas holidays to the increased availability of low-cost alcohol in supermarkets. Thus, for those coming of age in high-income countries during the second half of the twentieth

century—decades characterised by rising consumption levels and reregulation of markets—drink more than preceding cohorts of people in later life did (Meng et al., 2014). Amongst this generation, then, it is hardly surprising that the personal pleasures and social connections forged in drinking spaces retain an appeal, even into older age (e.g. Smith, 2013; Thurnell-Read, 2021). Meanwhile, as noted earlier, present generations of teenagers and young adults are understood to be negotiating diverse relationships with alcohol through new practices of abstinence and moderation (see Yeomans, Fenton and Burgess, this book), giving rise to the somewhat condescending label ‘Generation Sensible’ (BBC News, 2018) being applied to a generation more risk averse and moderate than either their parents’ or grandparents’ generations.

The third theme, *life course*, encompasses a range of social identities that ebb and flow in complex ways, the analysis of which requires consideration of familial roles, work, leisure and consumption and gender and embodiment (Hockey & James, 2003). The life course is therefore seen to involve adopting social identities—the moving between which are often marked by rites of passage and other social rules and processes that discipline the progress between roles and identities—and having histories told, both by ourselves and by others. There has also been a greater appreciation of both the multiple and changing ways in which life course transitions are navigated and the agency with which, particularly, young people make ‘active efforts to shape their biographies and the structured set of opportunities and limitations that define pathways into adulthood’ (Shanahan, 2000, 668). Life course perspective studies have been made of food (Sydner et al., 2007), leisure (Heikkinen, 2021) and sport (Hirvensalo & Lintunen, 2011), but are only recently finding application in studies of alcohol and other intoxicants.

Bringing a life course perspective to bear on alcohol, drinking and drunkenness involves an awareness of the role played by alcohol in the biographies of individuals, such as the transition to adulthood (Seaman & Ikegwuonu, 2011), while attending to the ways that alcohol and drinking are often central to the biographical narratives used to tell the story of our lives to ourselves and to others (e.g. Nicholl’s chapter). It also involves acknowledging that the negotiation of one’s relationship with alcohol and intoxication is, for many, interwoven with the changing roles and

responsibilities where, as Jayne, Valentine and Holloway (2011, 53) observe, ‘the life course, and particularly significant events such as marriages/partnership and the arrival of children, often mark changes in people’s drinking practices’. Thus, life course transitions often precipitate changes in how and with whom the one spends one’s time and an associated shift in relational priorities, such as building and attending to relationships with friends, colleagues, partners and children, and shape the nature and extent of drinking practices and their meanings (Fenton, 2018).

Examining key moments in the life course, such as getting married, offers opportune moments to reflect on the role of alcohol in both personal identity and group belonging. For example, during the stag tour pre-martial ritual, extreme intoxication marks the status transition of becoming a married man (Thurnell-Read, 2012; also this book, Young and Thurnell-Read). Away from these more overt celebrations and rituals, the often tricky navigation through the life course, from one stage to another, involves subtle and ongoing revaluations of one’s relationship with drinking and with the times and spaces of alcohol consumption. As Kersey et al. (2022) suggest, understanding the place of alcohol in the lives of midlife women necessitates consideration of multifaceted experiences relating to work, leisure and family life and a diversity of intersecting social identities constituting the negotiation of parental, social and economic roles. This is well demonstrated in recent research in Australia, where Foley et al. (2021) examine the place of alcohol in the lives of midlife women in Southern Australia to highlight the affective role played by drinking in the navigation of life course transitions, with alcohol being associated with complex emotions and ambiguous feelings of both freedom and constraint. Similarly, Ward et al. (2022) identify a telling intersection of class, gender and age, with midlife women from different class backgrounds incorporating alcohol into their lives in different ways depending on their past, present and future relationships with work, family, leisure, health and wellbeing (Ward et al., 2022).

Roles such as ‘student’ or ‘parent’ come with associations and expectations in relation to alcohol. In this sense, ‘student’ has become viewed as a life-stage specific status and identity, one that is closely associated with excessive drinking, meaning that in many countries the association of being a university student with things like freedom, sociability,

experimentation and pleasure seeking mean that the student identity is, for many, bound up with frequent and excessive alcohol consumption (Piacentini et al., 2012). This is particularly true for young individuals living independently for the first time with whilst cohabiting with other students (Brown & Murphy, 2020); however, diverse relationships with alcohol and, in particular, intoxication are revealed by research with a more diverse mix of international students (Thurnell-Read et al., 2018). Such is this association, in the UK at least, that abstinent students must negotiate their identity relative to a social context in which excessive drinking was normalised and use strategies to cope with pressure to drink and findings ways to communicate to their peers that did not drink (Conroy & de Visser, 2014). In contrast, the role of 'parent' comes with a social expectation for moderation of drinking and greater pressures to negotiate a renewed relationship with alcohol (Killingsworth, 2006). Mother's drinking, in particular, has received considerable attention in public health research, with pregnant women often the intended recipients of public health messaging around alcohol (Dimova et al., 2021) and with mothers having to undertake discursive work present themselves as responsible drinkers in light of a strong awareness of the likelihood of moral judgement (Vicario et al., 2021). However, other research has highlighted the growing popularity of a 'mummy wine culture' in alcohol marketing and social media in much of the English-speaking world (Bosma et al., 2022), which may be read as both trivialising and normalising a certain aesthetic and ethos of alcohol consumption as co-existing with the role of mother. In contrast, but not surprisingly so, how fatherhood affects men's drinking has received limited attention. Yet, there is some suggestion that, for many men, becoming a father presents a moment of reflection and change in relation to alcohol consumption habits with some men reducing or ceasing drinking in support of a pregnant partner and, following birth, in response to shifting roles and duties (Dimova et al., 2021).

Age, generation and the life course are interrelated but different terms and each acts as a lens through which to view and understand the presence of alcohol in the social worlds of individuals, groups and communities. They share in common a sense of temporality in that they relate to the passage of time and the journey that individuals and groups make

through time. This book aims to highlight and analyse generational differences in alcohol consumption practices, meanings and values, explore biographical perspectives on alcohol, drinking and drunkenness, especially those examining the changing role of alcohol across the life course, and the presence of alcohol in life course events, transitions and rituals. One aim of the book is therefore an examination of the continuities and changes in the frequency, form, location and meaning of alcohol consumption between and within generations of drinkers.

Purpose and Scope of the Book

This book brings together work from an interdisciplinary team of scholars whose research provides a nuanced examination of the role of alcohol at different life course stages and explores differences between generations, either by direct comparison or by a close focus on specific age groups. It adds to a burgeoning, though still somewhat fragmented, interest in biographical and generational approaches to understanding alcohol and drinking cultures. For readers already familiar with social and cultural approaches to the study of alcohol, drinking and drunkenness, the focus of this book will offer an invitation to explore, and appreciate the significance of, temporality and change over time whilst showing how drinking and drunkenness are both life-stage specific and also by turns changing and enduring over time. The book encourages readers to see the meaning and practice of alcohol consumption as being caught up with the transitions and changes of ageing and as threaded through the biographies of individuals, groups and communities, meaning patterns and practices developed at one point in life can shape those in later life. For readers less familiar with drinking studies, but with an interest in age, generation or life course approaches, the book represents an entrance into investigating the sociological and cultural significance of alcohol as an integral actor in many people's lives as they unfold through coming of age, building and maintaining relationships, balancing work, leisure and family commitments, all whilst exploring and adapting a sense of self and navigating one's way through the various stages of the life course. Given this, although alcohol policy is not a direct focus of the book, we hope