

# Relationships between university life and young people's drinking behaviour during the transition to and through university

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**nus**  
national union of **students**



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# AIMS OF THE SESSION

- To give an insight into UK university student drinking behaviours and to discuss how addressing the gaps within the literature could lead to effective prevention strategies



# STUDENT BINGE DRINKING CULTURE





# STUDENT DRINKING AND THE MEDIA

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## A degree in drinking: Students booze for 19 hours per week... with the average session lasting SIX hours and costing £2457 a year

- Average student night out lasts 6 hours 20 minutes
- Majority go out at least three times a week
- £2457 is spent on nights out in London in one academic year
- 73% skip lectures due to hangover

By BIANCA LONDON FOR MAILONLINE

PUBLISHED: 15:50, 18 September 2013 | UPDATED: 15:51, 18 September 2013



It's Freshers' Week, that time of the year when the head off to university.

And while students' reputation for partying during their offspring will then knuckle down to studying

Researchers found that students go out partying at out lasting six hours 20 minutes. That's 19 hours a

## How university can turn your daughter into an ALCOHOLIC

- Bethany Cleasby, 26, from Oxford, developed a serious addiction at Southampton university
- She had spent all of her maintenance loan on alcohol before she finished her first term
- Bethany attended AA meetings but found there was no support for women her age
- Persia Lawson, 28, would turn up for classes at 8am already drunk
- She drank 30 units of alcohol a night, five nights a week

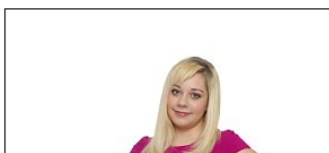
By MEL HUNTER FOR THE DAILY MAIL

PUBLISHED: 01:37, 18 September 2014 | UPDATED: 10:57, 18 September 2014



Every mother hopes for, yet in equal measure dreads, the day her eldest child leaves home to start university.

As Kym-Marie Cleasby hugged 20-year-old Bethany goodbye on the doorstep of her new student digs in Southampton, she desperately tried to mask her tears with a smile. These exciting new beginnings would mark the next



## 21 beers, 44 shots, 17 vodkas, 7 whiskies - in ONE night. The shocking proof students are drinking themselves to death

- By the time four students return home at 3am they have drunk 139 units
- The girls, 18-year-old Francesca and Codie, drinking 25 and 26 respectively
- Boys Sam and Jake downing 40 and 48 units each
- Government advises that men should drink no more than 21 units a week
- Women should drink no more than two to three units a day, or 14 a week

By KATHRYN KNIGHT FOR MAILONLINE

PUBLISHED: 22:38, 16 April 2014 | UPDATED: 03:01, 17 April 2014



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Jake, Francesca, Codie and Sam, all oil to the wheels of their many lives, invariably, start at their place of residence in Liverpool, where, bottles of cheap supermarket spirits they spend the evening 'pre-loading' large amount of cheap alcohol to get going too much when they're out — head to the city centre's many bars.

they head out to 'start' their party-faced 19-year-old Jake Hirst, who international journalism, has had 11 shots, three whiskies and one vodka.

paired, blue-eyed flatmate Codie has got through one bottle of beer, five vodkas. Their two friends have been thirsty: Sam's tally is eight beers, two whiskies, while Francesca's is 17 shots, three vodkas and two

they teeter round Liverpool's bars, more shots and two double vodkas

By the time they return home at 3am they have drunk a staggering 139 units, with the girls, 18-



# PREVELANCE


- According to a UK review 43% of female and 52% of male university students consume over 14 units of alcohol within a seven day period (Gill 2002).
- Results from a GHS suggest comparable figures within the general population were 33% and 37% respectively (Rickards et al. 2002).
- Good news:
  - Consumption rates amongst 16-24 year olds have continued to fall from their peak in 2000 according to General Household Surveys (Robinson and Bugler, 2010).

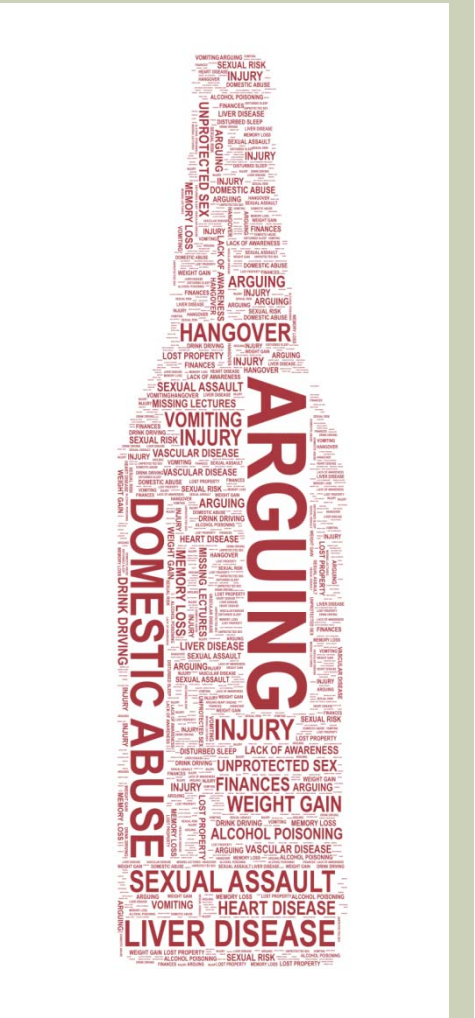
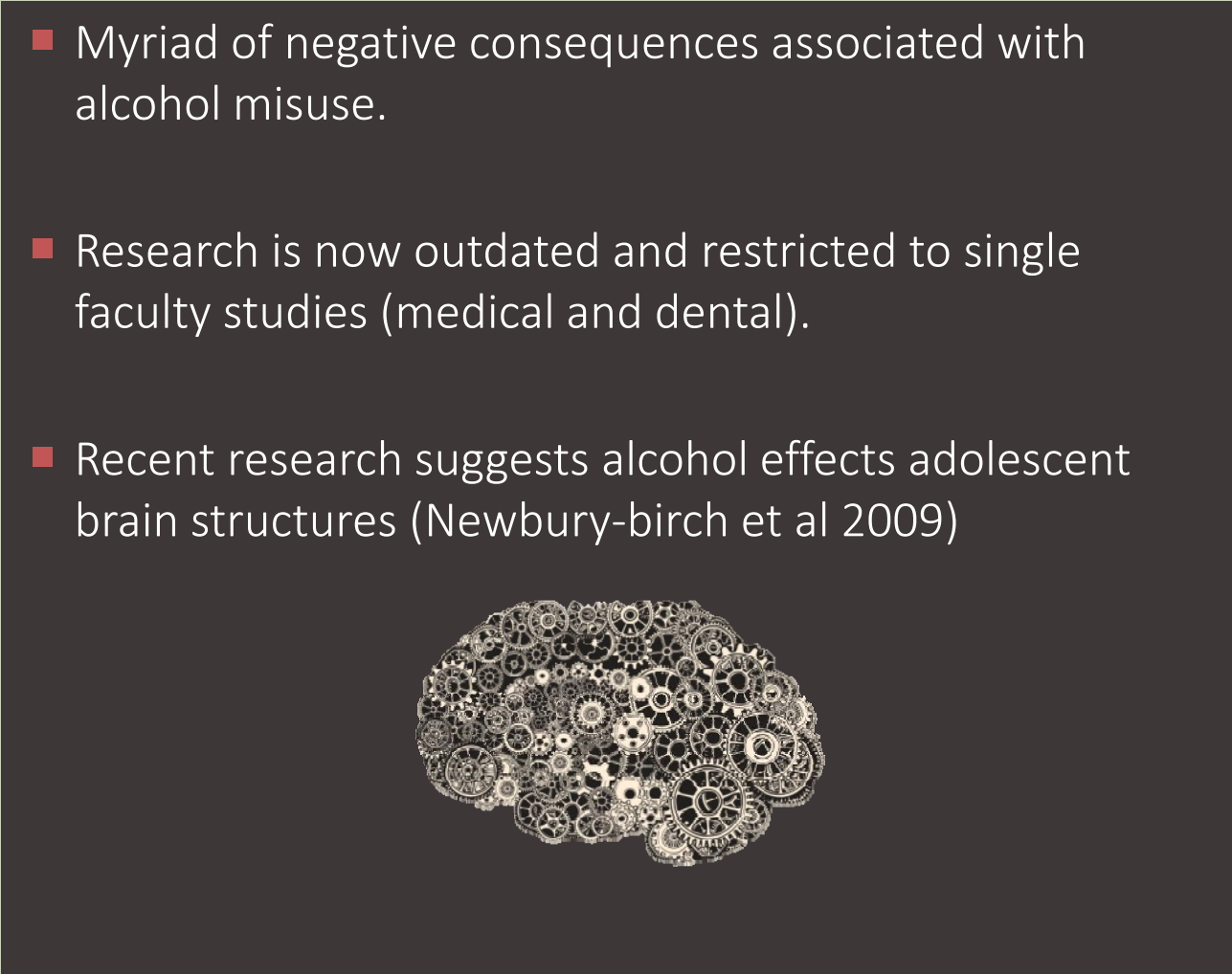
# TRUE REPRESENTATION?

- General Household Surveys do not reach university students
- University students are categorised as '16-24 year olds'
- Statistics come from unrepresentative student sample sizes
- Problems with collecting representative data from university students
- More alcohol down fewer throats (Balding and Regis 1996)



## CONSEQUENCES

- Myriad of negative consequences associated with alcohol misuse.
  - Research is now outdated and restricted to single faculty studies (medical and dental).
  - Recent research suggests alcohol effects adolescent brain structures (Newbury-birch et al 2009)
- 

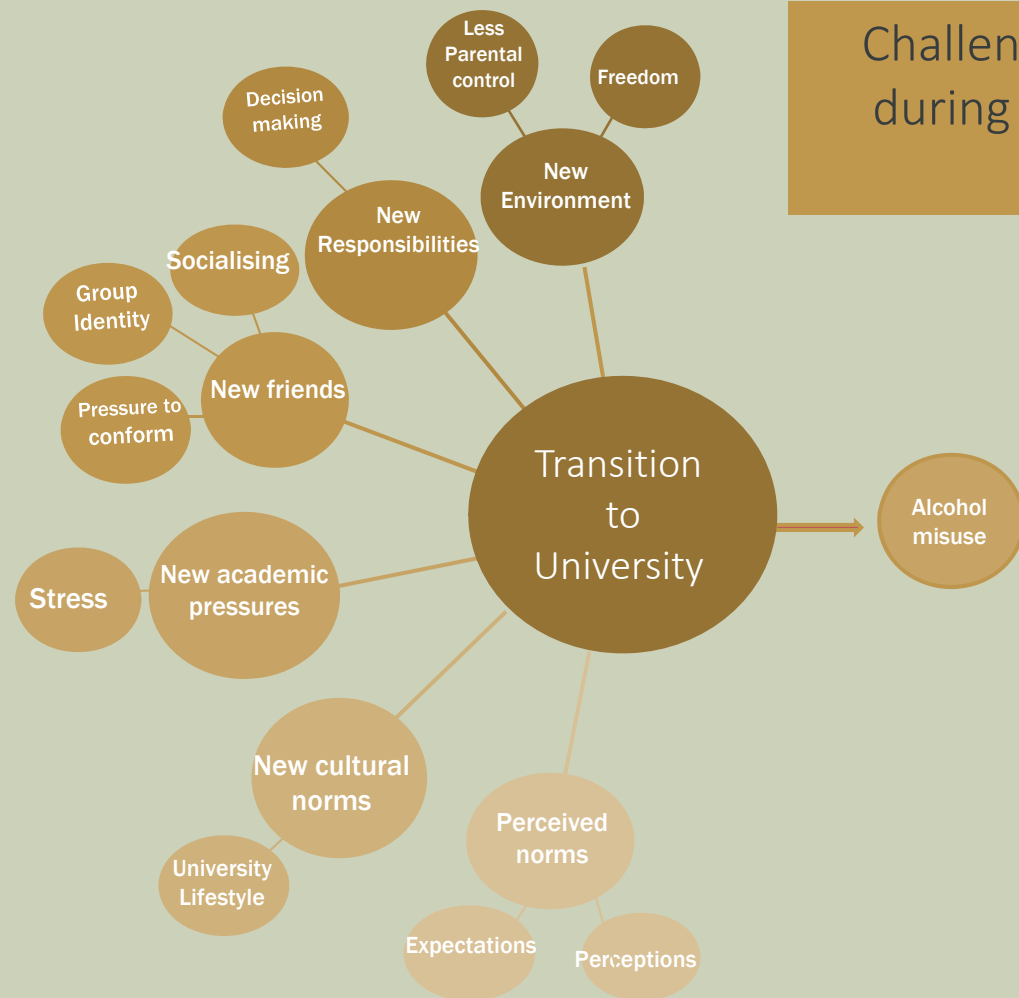


# GAPS WITHIN THE LITERATURE

- Research has primarily focused on US college students , the problem with this is:
  1. Differences in the legal drinking age
  2. Lower prevalence of consumption amongst US university students
  3. Differences in university systems
  
- Mixed methods
  
- Transitions
  1. Transitions to university
  2. Transitions through university



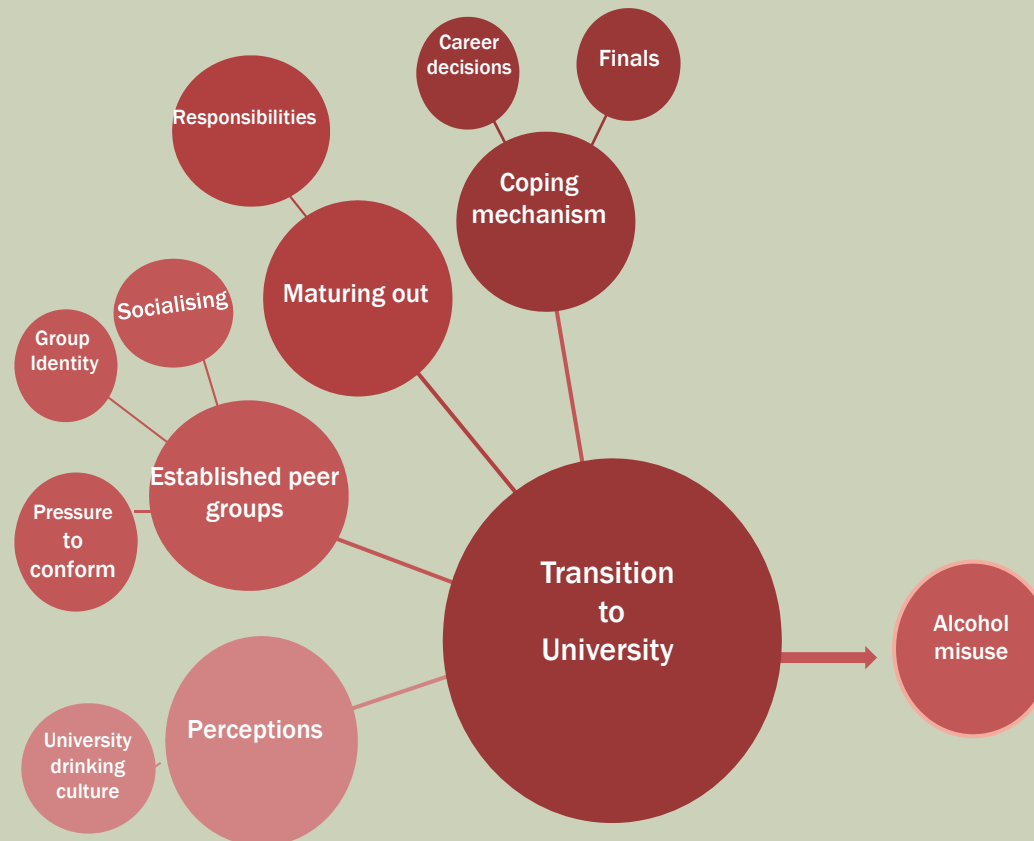
# TRANSITIONING TO UNIVERSITY



Challenges encountered during the transition to university

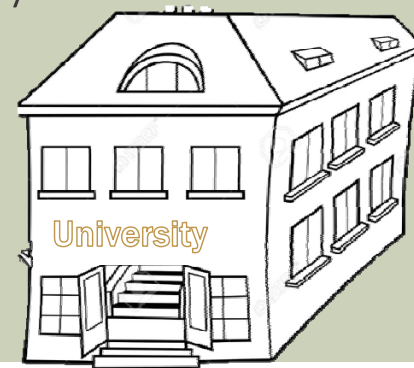
# TRANSITIONS THROUGH UNIVERSITY

Challenges encountered during the transition through university



# TRANSITIONS AND TRAJECTORIES

- First year students have been identified as a high-risk group of drinkers. YR 1: 18.9 units, YR 2: 16 units, YR 3: 13.8 units (Bewick et al 2008)
- Consumption tends to decrease throughout students university life course.
- Several US prospective studies have suggested drinking behaviours established during the first few months of university become habitual over students university careers.
- Which makes this transitional phase critical for policy intervention



# PREDICTORS OF ALCOHOL UPTAKE

- Demographics: age, gender, ethnicity
- Alcohol availability
- Parental influence
- Drinking history: High school consumption
- Alcohol expectancies: Arousal, cognitive functioning, social assertion
- Drinking motives: coping, enhancement & social motives
- Sport group membership
- Identity: fitting in
- Peer influence
- Coping mechanism: stress
- Personality factors: sensation seeking, shyness
- Living environment: university halls, campus location
- Direct peer pressure: Overt offers
- Indirect peer pressure:
  - Modelling
  - Social norms

# SOCIAL NORMS



- ❖ Individuals inaccurately perceive the attitudes and behaviours of others to be different from their own which leads to a change in their own behaviour.
- ❖ Research frequently shows university students overestimate drinking by their peers, which increases their likelihood for heavy drinking.
- ❖ The social norms approach has been designed to counter students' misperceptions of "normal" student drinking behaviours' by exposing actual norms. Such interventions have proved effective in lowering university student alcohol levels (Perkins and Berkowitz 1986).



# RESEARCH PROGRAMME DESIGN

PHASE 1: Transition  
through university

**Study 1a**  
LJMU students' drinking  
behaviours  
Secondary analysis of the  
National Union of Student's  
AIS survey

**Study 1b**  
Study 1a's results  
explored in-depth  
Focus Groups with  
current students

Relationship  
between  
University Life  
and Student  
Drinking  
Behaviours

PHASE 2: Transition to  
university

**Study 2**  
Survey with first year  
undergraduate  
students

**Study 3**  
Survey with prospective  
university students and  
their parents

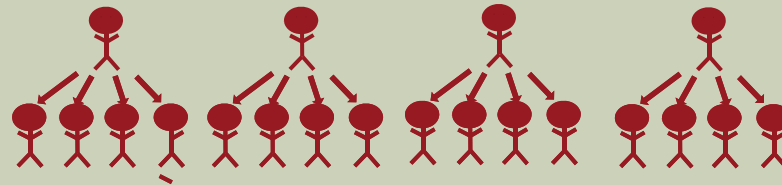
# PHASE 1 TRANSITIONS THROUGH

- Study 1a
  - Secondary data analysis of the National Union of students cross sectional questionnaire.
- Study 1b
  - Focus groups with students from a North West University.
  - Nine homogenous focus groups (n=90)



# PHASE 2 TRANSITIONS TO

- Study 2
- Pen-pencil questionnaire: Prevalence: prior to and during transition, social norms, expectations and perceptions.
- Snowball sampling method
- Seeds will disseminate the survey to 1<sup>st</sup> year undergraduate students 2 months after the transition to university. (n=380)



- Study 3
- Potential applicants' views on the university drinking culture.
- University applicant days

# PREVENTION

- UK evidence based research to inform local and national interventions.
- Current interventions adopt reactive rather than proactive strategies tackling university student drinking after drinking behaviours have been established.



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■ Questions?

