

ALCOHOL AND NEW UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: AN
INVESTIGATION INTO MULTI-LEVEL INFLUENCES ON
STUDENT DRINKING BEHAVIOUR AND
ORGANISATIONAL PRACTICE

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Summary

Starting university is often associated with increasing levels of alcohol use, resulting in a range of negative outcomes in student populations. Current and historical attempts to moderate consumption have had limited success, often lacking consideration of the full range of influences associated with the behaviour, including the role of the university context.

Reflecting socio-ecological approaches emphasising the intersection of personal and social influences, this study considers the role of alcohol in the social processes of first year students undergoing transition. Through organisational analysis, it further examines the development of alcohol processes within the university context providing the setting for transition and the enactment of alcohol behaviour. A case study of one university was conducted using mixed qualitative methods, specifically semi-structured interviews, document analysis and observations of campus alcohol practices.

It was established that multi-level influences act to pre-institutionalise students by reinforcing conceptions of identity that normalise excess alcohol use, experienced alongside pre-transition anxieties centred around peer group formation. Post-arrival, alcohol acts to provide commonality for new students, reducing anxiety and facilitating the development of social groups. University processes which present social opportunities as central to initial institutionalisation, act to support the normalisation of heavy alcohol use. This means that safe drinking messages currently attempted within this context contrast with student needs to successfully adapt to their new role, resulting in limited impact.

Findings indicate that a multi-level approach to identifying the complex interaction of individual, interpersonal and organisational factors affecting student alcohol use can provide new insights into intervention development, informing effective practice through the identification of barriers and facilitators to strategic planning and delivery.

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1 Introduction to the thesis

1.1 The research problem

Starting university is a major transition event in the lives of many young adults, presenting new experiences and stresses through wider exposure to people and behaviours, as well as opportunities for identity exploration and the acquisition of new peer networks. This period is often associated with changes in health behaviours, including increasing levels of alcohol use characterised particularly by binge drinking. The associated risk of negative health and behavioural outcomes, as well as concerns over future drinking trajectories in the student sub-group, have long been discussed within both research and public policy literature. Student alcohol use has been identified as above recommended guidelines for several decades (Gill 2002), despite ongoing attempts to moderate consumption and to minimise associated harms through national awareness campaigns and targeted interventions within higher education settings. These approaches have predominantly operated through an emphasis on education and awareness raising aimed at encouraging individuals to alter their behaviour and have met with limited success, often lacking sustainability after initial delivery. The limited successes to date reinforce the complex nature of the problem and suggest that a multi-level approach to student drinking, incorporating greater understanding of consumption as embedded in wider organisational and cultural contexts, would be beneficial.

Within studies of student drinking, recommendations on widening the lens (Dowdall and Wechsler 2002) suggest greater focus on contributions made by the contexts surrounding the behaviour, including the role of universities in providing environments which act to facilitate and reinforce heavy drinking norms. There is a current lack of understanding of the processes underpinning development of policy and practice on alcohol in universities, including the involvement of key stakeholders both within and outside the organisation. Universities are best characterised as complex, open systems embedded in cultural contexts which impact day-to-day function through a range of policy areas. The increasing size and complexity of universities is evidenced by the range of non-academic services provided and enhanced emphasis on the provision of a broad 'student experience', which is expected to include social opportunities, enhanced employability and personal development. It is arguable that this has resulted from recent policy directions emphasising marketisation and the changing status of

student-as-customer, necessitating increased focus by universities on the whole package offered to attract new recruits. Alongside organisational changes, this focus is increasingly reflected locally in night-time economy (NTE) activities within surrounding communities, based around the provision of social events targeted at student populations, illustrating that these shifts in educational policy have occurred alongside changes to alcohol legislation that have seen liberalisation of licensing and increased availability of cheap alcohol off-sales. This can be associated with a corresponding increase in the practice of pre-drinking among students, now recognised as central to the social experience of consumption (Forsyth 2010). The impact of these changes on organisational processes, including the development of strategies to moderate student drinking issues and their enactment by universities, is not fully theorised. University staff, who enact policy and practice as active agents, are rarely incorporated into studies of student drinking, leading to limited understanding of their perceptions of their own, and wider, practices.

This thesis suggests that an appropriate tool for encapsulating the spectrum of influences impacting both student drinking and the university context is the socio-ecological framework described by McLeroy et al. (1988). This provides a mapping tool through which influences on health behaviour operating across multiple levels can be recognised, from individual agent, through organisations and communities, up to policy and broad social structures which act to constrain and enable individual behaviour. A socio-ecological approach can address some of current limitations identified in individualised approaches to addressing student drinking behaviour, which focus on individual-level change through education or motivational approaches. These overlook the social motivations underpinning consumption, treating it as decontextualized and lacking in consideration of environmental contributors, as well as the potential intersection of influences operating across multiple levels. Adopting an ecological approach allows for greater understanding of how these multi-level influences act on both student and on organisational function to create observed behaviours and approaches to alcohol within HE settings. The positioning of alcohol within these settings may be significant in understanding the intransigent nature of student consumption, and the reinforcement of cultural norms of student behaviour. A dynamic approach to the development of these norms is also considered, drawing on life-course theory which locates starting university as a critical moment in the lives of young adults and acknowledges transition as a process rather than an event. Incorporating this

approach involves understanding influences on student conceptions of alcohol, both prior to arrival at university and acquired in the setting.

The thesis further argues that, although the socio-ecological framework enhances understanding of multi-level influences on both student drinking and on organisational processes, it is limited by presenting a static configuration of these influences at a given time point and is therefore enhanced through addition of a theoretical framework able to incorporate dynamic processes. In this research Structuration Theory (Giddens 1984) is utilised to provide this dynamic approach, and is drawn on to understand routinised practices observable in the intersection of agent and structure, resulting in the co-creation and reproduction of behaviour and setting.

This study aims to explore the role of alcohol in the social processes of first year university students transitioning into a higher education context where heavy drinking norms are embedded in day-to-day practices. It considers how students, as active agents, utilise drinking during friendship formation as an aid to adaptation to the university context, as well as for management of transition anxiety. This transition is considered by drawing on life-course approaches which recognise the temporal nature of the process of acquisition of student status and locate it within wider cultural contexts that characterise youth drinking as a normal part of the life-stage. The study further explores the development and implementation of alcohol policy and practice in a university setting, drawing on organisational theory approaches to understand institutional processes.

1.2 Chapter structure

The thesis includes the current introductory chapter, followed in Chapter 2 by a review of the literature on the persistent problem of student drinking as well as of identifiable risk factors influencing continuation of heavy alcohol use. Chapter 3 reviews the wider operating context for universities and considers the impact of multi-level influences, including organisational structure, on practice. Chapter 4 describes methodology, before data analysis and results are discussed in Chapters 5-7. The thesis culminates in discussion of findings and implications for practice in Chapter 8. Supporting information and data collection tools are found in the Appendices.

Chapter 2 presents the problem of student drinking, illustrated by evidence highlighting levels of consumption among student populations, as well as

associated negative outcomes in terms of health and behaviour. Consideration is also given to the attempted moderation of student drinking where, historically, many interventions have been oriented to psychological approaches focussed on individual-level behaviour. It is argued that these approaches characterise the problem as though decontextualized and static, under-emphasising the role of the institution as a setting, enacted by agents, which enables and facilitates the maintenance of heavy alcohol norms.

Risk factors impacting student alcohol use within this critical life-stage are discussed and it is argued that the youth cultural context observed in the late modern age, which associates youth with excess consumption, risk taking and lack of institutional guidance (Jack 1986), is significant in the development of student consumption patterns. This leads to the cultural reinforcement of heavy drinking norms, which are internalised by prospective students and expressed within institutional contexts where alcohol is readily available. The facilitation of student drinking through local and national economic processes, in terms of promotion and supply of alcohol, is then discussed.

Evidence of the impact of university attendance itself as a risk factor is also considered, including the configuration of student residences within universities as a facilitator of heavy home drinking and specific high risk behaviours. Family and peer group processes are examined, and the role of alcohol in student peer relationships is presented as a significant factor in the development and maintenance of heavy drinking norms. Psychological risk factors are then identified, including anxieties associated with transition to new student life and identity, and resulting impact on alcohol use.

This chapter advocates a socio-ecological approach as an effective means of examining multi-level influences affecting student drinking, and proposes the application of this framework to the experience of new students. In order to develop this understanding further, the limitations of the approach are highlighted and it is argued that the static nature of the model lacks explanatory power regarding the impact of temporal factors on social processes. This can be enhanced by adoption of a life-course approach to the development of the student, in regards to both identity and internalisation of alcohol associations. A life-course approach suggests that the process of transition to university constitutes a critical moment of change, where new students as active, reflexive agents, are confronted with increased opportunities for new behaviours and

relationships. This critical moment constitutes both an opportunity and a source of anxiety, with subsequent impacts on alcohol behaviour. It is further argued that the young adult life-stage is characterised within wider culture as a period of exploration, necessitating the requirement to actively construct sense of self and identity, manifesting as student identity in this context. The chapter concludes by arguing for further examination of the role of alcohol in the development of peer groups for new students undergoing transition and for greater understanding of student perceptions of the HE environment they are presented with.

Chapter 2 highlights the extensive literature on student consumption, illustrating that influences on drinking behaviour can be identified at multiple levels from individual experiences of transition to wider cultural presentations of student identity. Evidence suggests that understanding of the role of the university environment as location of barriers and facilitators to student drinking is under-developed, despite clear indications that campus cultures and structures contribute to variations in outcomes. Chapter 3 aims to explore this further, drawing on organisational theory approaches to illustrate influences on the development of alcohol contexts in and around higher education institutions. This involves examination of policy level factors, including the economic benefits of cheap alcohol to retailers who are invested in maintaining high levels of student consumption, supported by policy directions favouring limited regulation of availability and growth in off-sales. This is then significant at both community and organisational levels, with economic benefits to local bars and retailers supported by policy approaches to urban development, which are identified as significant through the creation of segmented NTE spaces for excess alcohol use. These spaces, constructed for young adult consumers, embody heavy drinking norms communicated to those in attendance and reinforced through routinisation.

The review then highlights organisational practices developed in response to concerns over student well-being, including provision of support and alcohol awareness advice. It emerges that the role of universities in addressing excesses in student behaviour is not clearly articulated in external guidance or internal policy, meaning inconsistent interpretations and applications of principles of duty of care towards students and, consequently, inconsistent practice. This is enhanced through the necessary segmentation of tasks in complex organisations such as universities, leading to departmental autonomy over daily routine practices, including approaches to alcohol-related behaviour.

The chapter then argues that the role of universities as complex organisations is under-developed in the literature on university approaches, leading to limited understanding of how internal processes in operation mediate alcohol policy and practice. It considers the contribution of organisational theory to understanding and examining structure in complex organisations and argues that effective characterisation of higher education institutions requires understanding of departmental functions and role development manifest in organisational sub-cultures. An open systems approach is advocated, which identifies universities as complex systems with nominal boundaries, located within local and cultural contexts with which they are involved in a constant process of information exchange identifiable through empirical study. It is proposed that lack of adoption of ecologically-informed approaches to understanding student alcohol use within complex organisations has led to gaps in understanding of processes through which universities shape drinking behaviour, including constructing their own practices in response to observed issues. Chapter 3 argues that considering the institutional context of student alcohol use and identifying the role of key stakeholders in the development of policy and practice, is essential to informing understanding of the maintenance of current processes within universities. As in Chapter 2, it is concluded that an effective means of examining the range of multi-level influences impacting the university, as open system, is to adopt a socio-ecological framework, enhanced by theoretical approaches addressing the dynamic interaction of ecological levels.

The reviews of the relevant literature in Chapters 2 and 3 identified gaps in understanding of the development of student drinking behaviour and organisational responses. This further highlighted a lack of temporality in understanding of influences on student drinking, leading to the following question:

- What multi-level influences contribute to student conceptualisations of alcohol and student life and when do these influences occur?

Further, although alcohol was identified as significant in peer relations, understanding of the possible functional role of alcohol in friendship processes was explored to answer the following:

- What is the role of alcohol in new student adaptation to university life and the development of peer relationships?

Drawing on organisational theory approaches, it was established that the university constitutes a complex open system, impacted by multiple factors and comprised of specialist sub-systems designed to meet organisational needs. Gaps in understanding still remain regarding the impact of multi-level influences on the university and its sub-systems, as well as how these intersect with students undergoing transition. The following questions were utilised in this thesis to explore these gaps:

- How do multi-level influences act on the university in the development of alcohol processes?
- How do organisational processes and student transition behaviours intersect in relation to student drinking behaviour?
- How do students interpret the impact of university alcohol processes?

The methodological paradigm utilised within the thesis is then articulated in Chapter 4, beginning with the critical realist ontological and epistemological meta-theory acting as the research foundation. The resulting research design is then articulated, with illustration of how the selected approach will address the questions highlighted above. The chapter then presents the rationale for the qualitative case study methodology adopted and explains the process of case identification and selection. For the purpose of empirical study, Structuration Theory was utilised, which designates the case as consisting of two observable systems for consideration: the institutional (staff) and the student systems (Jamal et al. 2013). The theoretical approach to these systems is explained, incorporating a socio-ecological examination of multi-level influences impacting their function. This is followed by description of the qualitative methods identified as most effective in uncovering the processes at work as well as the interpretations of key stakeholders involved. The selection and development of semi-structured interviews for data collection within each of these systems is explained and issues of stakeholder selection are described. Methods include supplementary data gathering activities, specifically document analysis and field visits, which were carried out to add to understanding of system interactions within the university context and for data triangulation. Ethical considerations specific to each research phase and sample are discussed, incorporating strategies developed to minimise risk to participants. Sampling and recruitment for each stakeholder group is also described along with the process of developing data collection tools, which are presented in Appendices. The chapter concludes by

explaining processes developed for handling raw data, as well as analysis procedures, including the theoretically-derived coding approaches utilised.

Chapter 5 begins presentation of data analysis and results, drawing on life-course theory to interpret the student experience of transition into the university as heavy drinking environment, and examining the role of alcohol in inter-personal processes and identity development. Data illustrates that transition into student identity, and internal conceptions of alcohol within this, commences earlier than has previously been identified, resulting in heavy alcohol norms being embedded in student understandings of behaviour through processes occurring prior to arrival. Within the analysis of findings this is theorised as the process of **pre-institutionalisation**, representing internalised conceptualisations expressed within an organisational context that facilitates their enactment through post-arrival institutional routines, thus continuing to embed alcohol use as intrinsic to student identity. Chapter 6 then aims to analyse the university context that students' transition into, through consideration of the development of processes within the institutional system as described through interviews with staff, as well as document analysis and field visits. This section articulates current understandings of alcohol policy and practice among staff within organisational sub-cultures and presents a socio-ecological interpretation of the impact of both internal and external influences on processes relating to alcohol. It emerges that differential interpretations held within these sub-cultures impacts the development of policy and practice on alcohol, with implications for moderation attempts within the setting. Drawing on Structuration Theory to understand the interplay of agent and structure, influences on practice are then interpreted as structuring properties acting to constrain or enable organisational and agential activities. This interpretation of the setting acts to define the environment presented to new students as one where heavy alcohol use is normalised and reinforced, constituting an intoxicogenic space (Seaman et al. 2013).

Our understanding of the student and institutional systems developed in Chapters 5 and 6 will be amalgamated in Chapter 7, with exploration of the interactions of these two systems during student transition into the university environment. By considering this temporally, multi-level processes which act to maintain the dominant role of alcohol within student life are identified, illustrating the interaction of environmental factors with student behaviour. It will be illustrated how these processes act to constrain opportunities available to students as

bounded agents, leading to reproduction of normative presentations of student drinking. This includes factors which encourage the homogenisation of student alcohol identity through constraining social and interpersonal processes and facilitating exclusion of deviant voices. The development of alcohol-intensive intoxicogenic spaces within the overall organisational structure is also discussed. Student perceptions of organisational practices relating to alcohol are considered, illustrating the lack of effectiveness in current approaches. Throughout the chapter, Structuration Theory is drawn on to aid in understanding of both individual and organisational processes that maintain continuation of excess drinking norms.

Chapter 8 reflects on findings of the study in relation to thesis research questions and with reference to the literature presented in Chapters 2 and 3. The contribution of key findings to understanding of the research problem is discussed, including examination of the contribution of a transition approach to student needs and behaviours at the commencement of university life. The contribution of the concept of pre-institutionalisation as an analytical tool for understanding the development of alcohol norms and behaviours for this sub-group is assessed.

The section discusses the value of organisational theory to examination of alcohol use within this context through provision of a framework to consider university policy and practice as responsive to multiple external and internal factors. The chapter then discusses the potential for change to organisational processes in light of the multi-level influences identified and considers possible impacts on student behaviour that may result from environmental adjustments. At the organisational level, communication practices, both from university to students and also between and within departments and staff, are considered. These findings are then further examined in order to suggest areas that can be developed to promote more effective harm reduction strategies, as favoured by stakeholders. The chapter also revisits the rationale for adopting an approach that considers the intersection of agent and structure as a means to understand the enactment of health behaviours in complex settings and discusses implications for future utilisation of this theoretical framework.

The thesis concludes with reflections on the research process, reviewing the methodological approach discussed in Chapter 4 and examining the quality of data obtained. Opportunities for further investigation and implications of findings for policy and practice are also identified.

2 Understanding the problem of UK student alcohol use: An ecological analysis of risk factors and facilitators of heavy drinking

2.1 Summary and introduction

This chapter will illustrate that high levels of alcohol consumption in university student populations constitute a long-standing public health problem, associated with multiple adverse health and behavioural outcomes. Risk factors associated with student drinking will be discussed, as well as existing attempts to moderate negative impacts and the limitations of these. The review will consider student drinking as located in the context of wider UK alcohol use and culture, which designates heavy drinking as a normalised part of young adulthood, accepted within the life-stage of the majority of undergraduate students in the UK. Discussion of current high levels of UK student alcohol use, and the associated negative impacts in terms of health and behaviour, will illustrate that public health responses would benefit from greater understanding of influences acting at multiple ecological levels to enable and sustain high levels of consumption. The chapter will illustrate gaps in our current understanding and conclude that analysis would be aided by utilisation of a socio-ecological approach to student drinking, incorporating a temporal dimension to understand the role of alcohol in transition to student life and identity. The resulting research aims relating to increasing understanding use of alcohol within student social processes will then be presented. The search strategy utilised for approaching the literature is outlined in appendices.

2.2 The context of UK alcohol use: defining the problem

Alcohol misuse in the UK is widely accepted as a significant public health problem, with estimated costs, in terms of crime, health, loss of productivity and other social problems, amounting to £18-25 billion annually (HM Government 2012). Discussions on tackling alcohol misuse have long been held at national policy level, with early Department of Health attempts to define 'sensible drinking' dating back to 1981, followed by the first weekly consumption guidelines issued in 1985 (House of Commons 2011). The mid 1990's saw a shift from weekly to daily recommendations with NHS guidelines stating that consumption should not exceed 3-4 units per day for men and 2-3 units per day for women, with any day where this level is exceeded followed by 48 hours alcohol-free (NHS.uk 2012). This has recently been amended further to suggest that neither men or women

should exceed 14 units per week, with consumption spread over multiple drinking occasions (NHS Change 2016). Despite these policy-level provisions, UK consumption showed a clear increase from 1985 to 2010, in contrast with most other European nations during the same period (Rabinovich et al. 2009). A major lifestyle survey on UK adults in 2009 stated that 39% of men and 31% of women had exceeded current recommendations within the last week, despite around half of respondents reporting accurate awareness of guidance (ONS 2010), suggesting lack of impact in current form. This survey further suggested that around a quarter of UK adults reported binge drinking in the previous week (defined as consuming twice recommended daily amounts in one sitting) with substantial variations by age, including higher levels of heavy single-occasion drinking in young adults aged 18-25. More recently, data suggests a decrease in levels of binge drinking, reported as 15% for UK adults in 2013, with 1 in 5 young adults reporting not drinking at all (HSCIC 2015), suggesting a potential positive social change but requiring longer term monitoring to assess sustainability.

Alcohol use in Wales is reflective of the wider UK picture, with significant financial, health and social costs in evidence. Data from 2010 indicated that 52% of men and 38% of women exceeded daily recommended guidelines on at least one day in the previous week (Misell 2010), decreasing to 41% of all adults in 2013/14 (Emmerson and Smith 2015). Findings state that 41% of 16-24 year olds drink above recommended daily guidelines, with 31% classified as binge drinkers (Public Health Wales 2014). Underage consumption is an area of particular concern and policy focus, with indications that levels in the UK are significantly higher than the European average for 15-16 year olds (ESPAD 2011), and Wales exceeding both England and Scotland in rates of 13 years olds who report drinking alcohol once a week (WHO 2012). Alcohol-related costs to the Health Service in Wales are estimated at £70-85 million every year, with 15% of all hospital admissions relating to alcohol intoxication (Welsh Assembly Government 2008).

This has resulted in ongoing concern at policy-level, due to strong evidence that regularly exceeding recommended guidelines is linked to increased likelihood of negative health outcomes, including increased risk of contracting a range of cancers, as well as liver cirrhosis, high blood pressure and heart attacks (NHS 2012). Evidence further suggests bidirectional association between alcohol and impaired mental health, with indications of higher rates of anxiety in heavy consumers, as well as heavy consumption in those with pre-existing anxiety

disorders (Kushner et al. 1990), with stronger association in relation to social and generalized anxiety disorders (Sabourin and Stewart 2007). A similar association occurs in considering alcohol use disorders and major depression, with identification of a causal relationship between the former and the latter (Boden and Fergusson 2011). With the impacts of mental illness costing an estimated £7 billion in Wales per annum (UK's Faculty of Public Health 2010), the health improvement rationale for reducing UK alcohol consumption is strengthened.

Debate continues on the effectiveness of guidelines regarding safe minimum levels of alcohol use (Nichols et al. 2012), leading in turn to continuing debates on binge drinking as a categorisation, as well as questions regarding efficacy of such guidelines. Evidence indicates that drinkers are more likely to self-define bingeing relative to their own tolerance levels rather than making reference to official guidance (Gill 2007). Although widely used in policy, the notion of binge drinking is defined in part by culture and is subject to change in light of political aims (Measham 2006) as well as medical evidence. However, despite the observed difficulties in categorising consumption patterns, research consistently indicates the social and financial costs of excess use, with alcohol subsequently remaining a policy focus across the nations of the UK.

2.2.1 UK student alcohol use

Within the context of high consumption among young people in general, there are particular concerns with regards to students in higher education. National government alcohol strategy acknowledges university as a key time for the development of harmful drinking patterns (HM Government 2012) and recommends access to alcohol-related education and support for all students. There is a traditional perception in the UK that university life correlates with excessive alcohol use and, as numbers of young people entering into higher education have continued to increase throughout the past decade (UUK 2011), there is growing concern over the impact of this use. These national concerns have been echoed in Wales (Misell 2010) due to indications of high levels of consumption among Welsh-domicile students (Faulkner et al. 2006; Hosier and Miles-Cox 2011) and policy responses to this will be discussed later.

There is evidence that alcohol consumption may be higher in UK students than their international counterparts, reflecting a possible impact of wider cultural norms of high consumption. Findings show that around 90% of UK students drink

alcohol and, of these, between 60.6% (Heather et al. 2011) and 88% (John and Alwyn 2010) regularly consume more than recommended daily amounts on any drinking occasion. This compares to 44% of students in the US (Wechsler et al. 1994) and 55% in Sweden (Stahlbrandt et al. 2008) but is consistent with data from New Zealand, with 87% of drinking students being classified as binge drinkers (Kypri et al. 2005). High levels of drinking in UK students relative to guidelines has been identified over 25 years of research (Gill 2002), suggesting an entrenched public health issue showing resistance to moderation attempts. In the mid-1990's evidence indicated that over 48% of female students and 61% of male students who drank were exceeding weekly guideline amounts (Webb et al. 1996) with 69% reporting binge drinking (Ingle and Furnham 1996). In more recent years regular binge drinking levels have variably been reported at 51% (Faulkner et al. 2006), 69% (Craigs et al. 2011) and up to 92.5% (Morton and Tighe 2011) of drinkers. Assessment of the accuracy of these figures is problematic due to significant variation in sampling, specifically in year of study, gender, time of year and method of measurement. However, despite these variations, there is consistent indication that high levels of consumption persist within this demographic.

Observed levels of alcohol consumption are associated with multiple adverse outcomes in student populations. In a comprehensive 'review of reviews', Newbury-Birch et al. (2009) identified multiple adverse impacts for drinkers, including missed classes, hangovers and illness, accidents and injuries, as well as increased risk of becoming a victim of crime when drunk. Reports of negative outcomes are common, with issues such as injury, hangovers, accidents and fights reported as impacting the drinker in over 47% of drinking occasions (Clapp et al. 2000). Over half of student drinkers report negative consequences of their own drinking and over 40% report a negative outcome as a result of someone else's consumption (Roche and Watt 1999). Heaviest student drinking has been associated with lowest attendance at lectures (Webb et al. 1997), higher risk of unprotected or unplanned sex (White and Hingson 2013), and with increased likelihood of being a smoker, including cannabis smoking (Webb et al. 1996), suggesting potential clustering of risk behaviours in those who drink most heavily. For students with existing mental health issues, these may be exacerbated within the university environment, where pressure to consume heavily is evident (Royal College of Psychiatrists 2011). Although the heaviest drinkers have also been found to have the highest rate of experiencing negative consequences on finances and health, evidence indicates a willingness to accept these consequences in

exchange for the perceived positive impact on social life (Bewick et al. 2008). This finding has particular implications for interventions aimed at highlighting potential negative outcomes of alcohol use and suggests a need to establish what students themselves may define as a negative consequence.

The range of negative outcomes associated with student alcohol use have ensured that it has been the focus of significant levels of academic research as well as public policy debate for many years. Alcohol use is commonly considered as an individual risk behaviour, grouped in policy development with smoking, obesity and illegal drug use (Buck and Frosini 2012), with emphasis on lifestyle as individual choice. Education campaigns aimed at individual behaviour change have long been utilised in public health approaches to alcohol, reflecting the Enlightenment belief that agency, as the capacity to make choices to act otherwise, can be increased through provision of information, thus leading to more 'sensible' lifestyle choices (Cockerham 2005). This conception has dominated public health interventions, with focus primarily on encouragement of behaviour change rather than on discovery of factors acting to continue certain behaviours over others.

A key question in planning health improvement strategies is the extent to which these choices, made by active agents, are the primary driver for engagement in risk behaviours, or whether this focus on agency minimises the potential impact of wider structural variables which may act to constrain or enable certain behavioural outcomes. Structural variables, impacting across multiple levels of influence, may act to guide or restrict health opportunities and choices available, for example through the effect of organisational practices governing alcohol sales in universities, or national policy driving outlet density and alcohol availability. The focus on individual actions not only overlooks potential causal pathways, but also allows for attribution of blame to the individual for subsequent health outcomes, both by professionals and the public (Richards et al. 2003). Policies and interventions which fail to account for structural influences and their interaction with, and impact on, the individual are less likely to have significant impacts on behaviour (McLeroy et al. 1988) and, furthermore, are not reflective of more recent theoretical developments within public health and related disciplines. The observed maintenance of harmful levels of consumption in student populations over time suggest limitations to current understanding which may be aided by incorporation of these developments.

2.3 Rationale for a socio-ecological approach

Attempts to move beyond individualised approaches in theorising health behaviours, such as alcohol use, include the development of conceptual frameworks which allow for more comprehensive mapping of influences on health outcomes, encompassing broad determinants of health as well as their interaction at multiple levels. Such models add analytical depth to mono-level categorisations commonly utilised in theories of health determinants, such as social, environmental, cultural, and biological-genetic influences (Keleher 2004), by enhancing conceptualisations of processes of interaction between these levels. The aim is to promote identification of proxal and distal determinants (Reidpath 2004) which may be targeted for health intervention, resulting in changes to health status and behaviour. The operationalisation of multi-level approaches to health improvement developed as a result of a growing evidence base illustrating limitations of mono-level understandings of health outcomes and associating health, not only with individual behaviour, but with local and national environmental contexts. This acknowledgment of multiple levels of influence on individual health has origins in the Ottawa Charter (WHO 1986), which defined social and environmental settings, and the multiple bodies involved in their construction, as having a significant role in promotion of positive health. This approach aims to enhance understanding of the complex relationships and interactions of people within and between these settings with a view to developing conceptual frameworks for health improvement (Stokols 1992).

One such model of multiple health determinants is the Socio-Ecological Framework (SEF) (McLeroy et al. 1988), which was developed with the aim of encompassing environmental influences, from genetics and biology to broad social structures, that impact on health outcomes for a defined population. It focuses specifically on social dimensions that exist alongside individual factors, counterbalancing individualistic behavioural approaches which fail to incorporate structural impacts (McLaren and Hawe 2005). The socio-ecological framework utilises the concept of levels within an environment, both as a tool for categorisation and as a means to illustrate interactions. These levels are not ontologically rigid but can act as a flexible framework reflecting research needs (Prendergast 2004). The aim of socio-ecological assessment is to identify factors which influence health behaviour at these analytical levels:

- **National/public policy**

- Community
- Institutional/Organisational
- Interpersonal processes
- Intrapersonal processes

This is frequently presented visually as:



Fig. 1: The socio-ecological framework of health promotion (McLeroy et al. 1988). Image from: <https://prezi.com/1kt7uughfs6j/area-of-responsibility-iii/>

Socio-ecological approaches move beyond a focus on individual-level behaviours and instead broaden understanding of risk by examining multiple levels of influence. This approach will now be utilised to consider influences on high-risk drinking among student populations, with utilisation of the SEF allowing for consideration of the following within this review:

National/public policy level influences on student drinking, including policies governing access to alcohol at local and national level, such as laws on age of sale of alcohol, licensing conditions and pricing policy. National level influences also include wider UK cultural relationships with alcohol, which form the context for young adult consumption and are identified as significant in understanding student consumption.

Community level influences impacting student drinking include the local structuring of drinking spaces, which provide opportunities for the enactment of social processes. The relationship between students and host community, including economic relations observed through consideration of promotional activity aimed at student populations, the structure and availability of alcohol within the local area and the interaction of students with local environmental provision, may also be significant in understanding the maintenance of local heavy drinking norms. Greater understanding of student engagement with, and perceptions of, these spaces would aid investigation of these processes.

Institutional/organisational impacts on students include the rules and facilities developed by universities in relation to student alcohol use, contributing to the context which students transition into, where development of conception of self-as-student occurs. Factors of significance include the physical structure of organisational spaces and their impact on student conceptions of appropriate alcohol behaviour, as well as localised norms of alcohol use transmitted to new students entering these spaces.

Interpersonal factors within the socio-ecological framework, refer to student social relationships with peers. Such relationships may be potentially health enhancing through social support and integration (Cohen 2004), or may be threatening through exposure to negative behaviours such as heavy consumption (Biederman et al. 2000; Rosenquist et al. 2010). Understanding the dynamics of interpersonal relationships, particularly in the formation and function of peer groups, can enhance identification of effects at the individual level, including potential barriers to implementation of interventions aimed at behaviour change.

Intrapersonal factors include anxieties and psychological impacts associated with starting university and any observed changes in behaviour accompanying this life event, as well as processes of role identity formation undergone to enhance adaptation to a new setting. The development of both positive and negative perceptions of alcohol and alcohol-related behaviours may be significant in understanding utilisation of alcohol during adaptation.

2.4 Risk factors for student alcohol use

Persistently high levels of alcohol use have been demonstrated in UK student populations, with multiple negative health and behavioural outcomes in evidence.

Despite continued moderation attempts, student drinking constitutes a wicked public health problem (Hunter 2009), characterised by multiple causal factors, high levels of social complexity and no simple solutions. This will now be further illustrated through identification of risk factors contributing to the development and maintenance of student drinking levels, commencing with consideration of student consumption as part of broader conceptions of youth culture and alcohol in the UK.

2.4.1 Late modernity as the cultural context of youth identity and risky drinking

Young people entering HE in the UK are doing so in an era of individualism and a rapidly changing cultural backdrop, evidenced in political, social and cultural shifts both within and beyond the sector. Giddens (1991) argues that the current era can be characterized as late modernity, with continuation of the rapid social and mechanistic changes observed in the post-war era but with a shift towards greater individualism and a changing role for the institutions and cultural traditions previously serving as guides to life. The late modern age is recognised by greater fluidity in social relations, with traditional markers of transition from youth to adulthood, such as stable relationships, leaving home, financial independence through work (France 2007), arguably becoming more protracted for young adults as a result of economic and social shifts, with later or no entry into marriage and increased numbers of young people staying in or returning to parental homes after education due to shifts in patterns of employment. In a context where global, as well as local, contexts are now accessible and influential in life-course development, pathways to adulthood have become more complex and more demanding of reflexive action on the part of individuals (France 2007). The reduction of traditional institutional influence and corresponding uncertainty of this leads to greater individualism through the belief that self must be actively constructed as the biography of a reflexive agent (Giddens 1991). Reflexivity refers to the process of self-referencing that leads the individual to perceive their experiences and biographies as unique rather than shared with their cohort (France 2010), with the associated perception that risk is something to be addressed and managed individually (Giddens 1991).

It is argued however, that the promised emancipation associated with the construction of reflexive self is guilty of underestimating the continuing impact of structure and the constraints embedded in it (Jones 2009). The epistemological

fallacy (Furlong and Cartmel 1997) suggests that late modern conceptions of the individual as empowered agent with freedom to choose is illusory, with agency continually constrained by socially constructed options. These constructions include the period characterised as youth, which is one of constant reinvention and evolution (Jones 2009) but which is consistently characterised in wider society as problematic and in need of constraint (France 2007). Risk taking, although widely accepted as part of youth development (Jack 1986) always occurs within a social and cultural context and is permissible only within a narrowly-subscribed societal framework of acceptable behaviour with permeable boundaries and shifting conceptions of deviancy (France 2010). Although it can be argued that the role of institutions may have changed and become less stable in the late modern age, youth and youth experiences are still highly influenced by institutional forms, which act to provide frames of meaning by which actors determine action appropriate to the setting (Meyer 1986). In UK culture today such frames of meaning incorporate the conception that alcohol use is an expected and age-appropriate behaviour for young adults (Sørensen et al. 1986), as part of a general culture of drinking within the UK that impacts on youth behaviour (Engineer et al. 2003). The association of alcohol and student identity is further accepted (Roche and Watts 1999), with appropriateness in this context then reinforced within cultural and social institutions. Socially structured youth culture norms therefore occur against a backdrop of shifting characterisation of youth and appropriate behaviour, with learning to manage alcohol-related risk considered part of the process of becoming an adult.

For a majority of UK undergraduate students, the transition to university will occur between the ages of 18 and 25. This life-stage has been characterised as that of emerging adulthood (Arnett 2000), referred to as a period of self-exploration and reflexivity, where adolescence has been left behind but full adult roles and responsibilities are not yet adopted and identity may be relatively fluid. This period of emergence brings opportunity for exploration, without societal expectations of full agency, but is accompanied by uncertainties and anxieties about self and future trajectories. The elongated transition associated with emergence accommodates an extended period of risk taking as part of accepted identity exploration for modern youth.

This ongoing project of identity construction is punctuated by the attainment of legal adult status (Arnett 2004) and, in the UK, corresponding legal drinker status.

With relation to alcohol use, the emerging adult period is significant as the time when consumption tends to rise for those who drink and when heavy use is considered a normal part of the life stage of young adults (Seaman and Ikegwuonu 2011). There is an established 'drinking trajectory' for most young drinkers, with alcohol consumption increasing through adolescence, into young adulthood, and then decreasing as adulthood progresses (Maggs and Schulenberg 2004; Brown et al. 2009). This 'maturing out' process may accompany the adoption of more adult roles, such as employment, partnership or marriage and parenthood (O'Malley 2005) but may be differentially delayed by later transition into these adult roles. This delay can include the trajectory associated with the continuation of formal education beyond the age of 18 (Verges et al. 2012), with the process of completing higher education marking a period of extended transition to societally sanctioned full adult roles (Jones 2009). Students, although legal adults, appear to occupy a liminal stage, neither accurately characterised as adolescent but also not yet undertaking many traditional markers of adulthood.

As well as representing a period of heavy overall consumption, young adulthood is further associated with high-risk drinking styles, with evidence illustrating that 16-24 year olds in the UK are generally more likely to engage in binge drinking than any other age group (Lader and Steel 2010), and to show increased risks of alcohol-related injury or accident necessitating Emergency Room treatment (Thom et al. 1999). Binge drinking in late adolescence is strongly correlated with increased likelihood of binge drinking aged over 30 for both men and women (McCarty et al. 2004), although lack of longitudinal research data means it is unclear whether this relates to establishing and maintaining individual patterns of use over time regardless of social groups, or to maintenance of same social groups with an established consumption level. The role of peer groups in student drinking levels will be considered later in the chapter.

Young people aged 16-24 are also more likely than other age groups to report drinking specifically to get drunk, representing an observable culture of intoxication within the late-modern UK context of youth drinking (Measham and Brain 2005). This understanding of alcohol primarily as a tool for achieving drunkenness in order to aid socialising (Seaman and Ikegwuonu 2010) has implications for education campaigns constructed with the aim of promoting sensible drinking, through failure to acknowledge the dominant conceptualisations of alcohol among the target audience. If the purpose of alcohol is drunkenness, it

is questionable whether drinking for any other reason would be considered valid and messages of restraint may therefore have limited impact. The association between drinking and the specific aim of drunkenness is reinforced by data illustrating that young people are less likely to engage in moderate daily consumption than any other age group, with only 1% of 16-24 year olds reporting drinking small amounts every day compared to 20% of men and 14% of women aged over 65 (ONS 2010). The highlighted differences among age groups strongly suggest that life-stage is a factor which must be considered when developing appropriate responses to excess alcohol consumption. This includes understanding of cultural conceptions of youth behaviour in both young adults and the wider population, including university staff and parents, which are likely to be significant in the communication of alcohol norms and the reproduction of existing drinking patterns. The emphasis on sociability, coupled with existing perceptions among young people of alcohol as a tool for drunkenness suggest that awareness of wider cultural and economic conditions surrounding student drinking are essential in order to fully conceptualise the problem and to develop policy solutions.

2.4.2 Institutionalisation and the role of the university environment in the development of student drinker identity

Cultural norms characterising youth as a period of excess consumption are significant in the ongoing expression of high levels of drunkenness among student populations. A further consideration is whether university attendance is in itself a predictor of high consumption, through facilitation of heavy drinking styles and provision of opportunities.

While alcohol use in this sub-group is demonstrably high, evidence of variations in drinking levels between students and non-students is unclear. Although there are consistent indications that students have drunk at higher than recommended guideline levels for many years (Gill 2002), methodological issues in studies with non-student populations make conclusions problematic. In a review of comparative research ranging over 20 years, Carey et al. (2010) found significant differences in definitions used for non-college status, age of respondents and drinking measures. Where the authors grouped studies into quantity and frequency measures of alcohol use, results indicated that students were more likely to engage in heavy single episode (binge) drinking but that overall consumption levels and frequency of drinking occasions showed little difference.

This variation by drinking style rather than quantity has been shown consistently, with findings of higher frequency of heavy episodic drinking in students than in non-students (Dawson et al. 2004; Slutske et al. 2004; Kypri et al. 2005).

The potential association between student identity and high-risk drinking styles suggests the need for further understanding of the embedded nature of drunkenness norms within this setting. Higher education acts as an extension to the period of transition from youth to adulthood, acting to create liminality where young adults are neither one thing (adolescent) or another (adult) and reflecting the process of transition (Skelton and Valentine 1998). Within this liminal space, students are given permission to act in ways potentially unacceptable outside their bounded world, with student status associated with perceived approval of binge drinking during this time (Banister and Piacentini 2008). The distinct nature of student identity is reinforced through the provision of a uniquely constructed living and working environment, often separated from non-student communities and where societal expectations of student behaviour can be played out with little censure (Banister and Piacentini 2008). Chatterton (1999) considered the identity of 'student' as a by-product of the institutional existence of a distinct system of higher education, based on temporal (academic year) and spatial (campus) structures, which form distinct geographical areas shaped by previous 'in loco parentis' status of universities. These contain situated identity norms, including conceptions of heavy drinking, which provide guides to action as well as reinforcing membership of a distinct social group - the student - and through provision of spaces designed for ease of association with other members of that same group. All of these places contain local constructions of conventional behaviour (Henderson et al. 2007) which provide cues to action (Scanlon et al. 2007), and exist within the context of macro-level narratives of youth identity. As argued, identity development is an ongoing task of the young adult, including the construction of a specific student self as part of adjustment to university life. This requires understanding and adaptation to the organisational culture localised in the setting (Maclean 2015), including the university presentation of social activity and the place of alcohol in this.

A significant consideration when assessing institutional impacts on alcohol use is the extent to which homogeneity is observed in 'student drinking' across different settings and time-periods, or whether variations both within and between campus cultures can be identified in universities. Evidence indicates that student life is

accompanied by a distinct drinking trajectory, with highest average consumption levels identified in first year of study (Bewick et al. 2008), suggesting that initial post-transition confrontation with the institutional setting may correlate with the most pronounced shifts in behaviour. Students have reported the perception that university culture makes binge drinking more acceptable (Morton and Tighe 2011), suggesting organisational affirmation of wider cultural norms associated with student identity. However, evidence further highlights that this experience of transition to campus life may be variable by institution, reflecting the considerable differences between universities in the UK in terms of size of student body and campus, rural and urban locations, age and history of institution and in areas of study, as well as with on-campus features; all of which combine to create a unique environment. Significant variations in consumption have been identified within geographic regions of the UK, with higher drinking on campuses in the North of England than the South (Heather et al. 2011), as well as between different campuses in Wales (John and Alwyn 2010). Within universities, disparities in heavy drinking rates have been identified between academic schools (Webb et al. 1997) and among students who participate in university team sports compared to non-participants (Heather et al. 2011). This may indicate that, even where wider cultural norms of heavy alcohol use among students are prevalent, these may manifest differently due to the interaction of locale with campus, as well as within-campus features. In order to gain further understanding of these alternative presentations, consideration should be given to the unique institutional profile of each university when assessing specific on-campus alcohol issues.

Despite these variations, one within-campus feature commonly identified as impacting consumption is place of residence. Students living in residence halls report consistently higher drinking levels than those living at the parental home or in off-campus accommodation (Thombs et al. 2009; Ward and Gryczynski 2009), with halls providing an opportunity for larger, mixed gender groups to socialise and drink whilst remaining within the familiar confines of campus (Presley et al. 2002). The structure of residence halls may act to readily transmit emergent norms within new student groups, including those of heavy drinking, with a majority of modern halls in UK universities predominantly structured as multiple rooms within a large flat with an average of between 4-10 occupants. This replaces the historical dormitory formation, with construction potentially acting to encourage the establishment of initial peer groups composed as a result of the

proximity/attraction effect (Newcomb 1960) whereby we form groups with those who are physically closest to us through the sense of commonality created by sharing of space. Those living in residence halls are also likely to be younger, with age associated with higher levels of consumption (Bewick et al. 2010), suggesting an interaction of factors which may be significant.

Shared residence environments that facilitate intensive contact with heavy drinkers may carry risk factors for lower consumers through exposure to more negative alcohol outcomes. In recent years, evidence indicates increased levels of pre-drinking within residences (Penny and Armstrong-Hallam 2010), with reported benefits including greater opportunity to socialise at home than in loud nightclubs (Forsyth 2010; Morton and Tighe 2011), as well as enhancement of group bonding (Wells et al. 2009) and financial benefits of cheap off-sales (LaBrie et al. 2012). Pre-drinking is associated with greater overall consumption during a drinking occasion (Foster and Ferguson 2012), as well as increased risk of negative consequences, including experiencing violence, in those who go on to other venues (Hughes et al. 2008). Pre-drinks in residence halls increases likelihood of participation in drinking games (Zamboanga et al 2014), where high risk consumption practices are often initiated by the heaviest drinkers in the setting and result in others feeling pressured to take part (Polizzotto et al. 2007). In an examination of internalisation of college drinking culture (ICDC), as evidenced by alcohol beliefs of first year students, a strong association was found between ICDC, peak intoxication and participation in drinking games (Moser et al. 2014). Further, first year students report higher consumption during drinking games than traditional non-home drinking events, as well as increased experience of adverse consequences (Clapp et al. 2014), including blackouts (Ray et al. 2014). As the research literature reports predominantly on drinking games within student populations, it is problematic to determine if this type of risk behaviour is as prevalent in non-student populations, however evidence clearly suggests high levels of use and associated harms within student groups, suggesting consideration in the formulation of moderation approaches.

Those who more frequently observe drinking games occurring are more likely to participate in them (Johnson et al. 1998) and, as evidence indicates that drinkers learn to associate particular venues with drinking styles (Seaman and Ikegwuonu 2010), this suggests potential interpretation of halls as corresponding with drunkenness and high risk consumption. Further understanding of how these

perceptions are established and maintained within the physical location over multiple student cohorts may have implications for reduction of consequences and for the development of organisational policy. The social motivations observed as underpinning these practices suggest further investigation into the role of spaces on campus and opportunities offered to students for socialising, as well as understanding of how alcohol operates in the interpersonal processes within these spaces.

2.4.3 The role of interpersonal processes: Assessing the influence of family and friends on student alcohol use

As well as facilitating the development of new student identity within the broader framework of youth cultural alcohol associations, university provides opportunity for the formation of new social contacts which may be highly significant in the development of drinking behaviour. These relationships signify the changing role of family and decreasing parental influence, reflective of the young adult life-stage of most UK under-graduates (Brown et al. 2009).

Research findings to date on the influence of familial levels of alcohol use, specifically that of parents, are mixed. Much research focuses on parental alcohol dependence as a factor influencing the development of dependency in youth, with notably less evidence relating to heavy but non-dependent drinking (Baer 2002). Student alcohol use is significantly more likely to be characterised as heavy but non-dependent, with evidence indicating hazardous consumption in over 51% of drinking students compared to dependency rates of 3.6% (Penny and Armstrong-Hallam 2010), suggesting that attribution of influence in parental consumption is problematic. It has been asserted that parental drinking behaviour is less significant than other potential influences encountered within higher education (Baer 2002), with comprehensive reviews of the evidence providing support for this. Elliott et al. (2012), in a review of 65 related studies identifying correlation between parental dependency and likelihood of a student showing signs of dependency whilst at university, found little evidence of the impact of parental behaviour on heavy, non-dependent, drinking in students. This finding echoes that of Perkins (2002), who identified negligible correlation between parental drinking norms and those of students once at university. It can therefore be argued that parental consumption is a limited risk factor for the dominant, heavy episodic drinking styles most commonly associated with student status.

While evidence on familial input is limited, the role of peers is established as important in both development and maintenance of alcohol using behaviour. Peer drinking levels are significant predictors of consumption within young adult groups, with the presence of heavy drinking peers associated with reported levels of heavy overall consumption (Clark et al. 1986; Balsa et al. 2011), and heavy single occasion drinking (Lau-Barraco and Lorraine-Collins 2011; Rosenquist et al. 2010). Peer drinking levels have been rated as the most significant reason for alcohol use among students (Faulkner et al. 2006), with drinking perceived as important in the process of social bonding at university (Seaman and Ikegwuonu 2010; Kairouz et al. 2002; Read et al. 2003). This is particularly significant for traditional students - single, age 18/19 at commencement, moving away from family home to student residences - who value social life at university more highly than those deemed non-traditional who are more likely to drink with pre-existing peers (Dill and Henley 1998).

The formation of groups is likely to be a priority for students experiencing the pressures associated with transition to university, representing a period of heightened anxiety and uncertainty and requiring identity work aided by the acquisition of knowledge on situated norms. This is often accomplished through peer group development, with transmission of institutional norms through peers leading to reduced feelings of anonymity and heightened sense of control (Raffo and Reeves 2000). Students living in residence halls consider friendship development as highly correlated with successful adjustment to university (Buote et al. 2007), reflecting the transition pressures associated with the move from both familiar community setting and family home. Moving to a new locale is also likely to involve exposure to new night-time economy settings considered as potentially unsafe, with indications that alcohol is perceived as an active aid to the creation of relationships within such settings (MacLean 2015), acting to enhance feelings of belonging and subsequently reducing anxieties.

Peer group development and function is then highly significant, with social integration at university linked to increased perceived emotional support and greater retention rates (Wilcox et al. 2005; McKenzie and Schweitzer 2001). It has been theorised that the process of group formation requires the resolution of initial differences and growth of cohesion, leading to the development of a 'we' identity, which in turn leads to psychological benefits of in-group membership and makes dissent less likely (Tuckman 1965). When groups are formed the resources

brought to the situation by each individual member merge to create something new, which is then able to exert influence back across those individuals through group norms (Lewin 1951). Perceived sharing of group norms can strengthen feeling of affinity to fellow members (Newcomb 1960) and can act to provide confirmation that our own choices and actions are appropriate for the situation (Festinger 1962). Opinion then becomes less divergent within groups when members perceive high levels of internal similarity (Wittenbaum and Stasser 1998), suggesting a mechanism for the establishment of 'normal' drinking within any peer group when a collection of individuals, with variation in existing drinking norms, come together. Once groups are established, members are invested in their maintenance due to associated benefits and, if heavy alcohol use is believed by members to be important within the group, this belief may be difficult to challenge. For those within the young adult life-stage and still in the process of identity development, they are less likely to feel confident in divergence from peers (Engineer et al. 2003), suggesting that if the perceived group norm involves alcohol consumption this is likely to be adhered to. Those who most strongly perceive alcohol to be part of, not only their immediate peer group, but of 'student' identity more broadly, show resistance to information on levels of drinking which challenge this perception (Livingstone et al. 2011), suggesting that once heavy drinking patterns have been established, they may prove difficult to dislodge.

Group dynamics and embedded alcohol norms have further implications for assessing the potential likelihood of individual members seeking to change alcohol behaviour. Research investigating preferred help-seeking behaviour in students who drank heavily identified low numbers of students stating that they would seek help from formal channels available, such as university counselling, with preference being to seek support from friends and family (Buscemi et al. 2010). Where available friends represent a peer group sharing heavy drinking norms and behaviours with the help-seeker, consumption may be seen as less problematic than attempts to deviate from or challenge group processes. As strongly associated peer groups are valuable for the self-esteem of members (Pettit and Lount Jr. 2011), these same strong associations will represent a barrier when one members seeks to make change. Hart and Van Vugt (2006) examined conflict and expectancies of members and identified that friends feel more strongly bonded when they perceive others to be making efforts to contribute to the overall function of the group. Potential changes to behaviour shared by members, such as

alteration of drinking norms, could be perceived as challenging the identity and function of the group and may increase the likelihood of rejection (Schachter 1951), with associated risk of loss of social and psychological gains. In research conducted with UK students, the benefits of group membership to personal wellbeing were rated as more important to members than a degree of personal cost (Van Vugt and Hart 2004), suggesting that even if personal behaviour change was desired it may be subverted for the sake of maintaining homogeneity.

Evidence shows willingness to accept negative consequences associated with heavy alcohol use where positive benefits are rated as more beneficial (Molnar et al. 2009; Carpenter et al. 2008), suggesting a subjective 'cost-benefit' analysis by heavy consumers. The willingness to accept negative outcomes of heavy alcohol use due to positive social benefits has serious implications for alcohol interventions which are based on highlighting the impact of such consequences as a mechanism for behaviour change. Failure to consider the power of positive outcomes of social drinking may impact likely adoption of health advice regarding safe drinking levels. As peer group membership is likely to be highly significant to students entering a new university environment, the psychological benefit of ignoring negative outcomes is potentially even higher, meaning personal attempts at moderation may be limited.

2.4.4 Inter and intra-personal processes impacting alcohol consumption: Transition behaviour, peer groups and psychological function in student drinkers

As we have seen, the process of arriving at university involves the development of new student identity and occurs within a life-stage characterised by uncertainty and exploration, requiring a reflexive response from agents. As well as these general pressures of identity exploration, many students transitioning to university are confronted with significant psychological challenges associated with leaving the parental home, as well as increased responsibility for finances, self-care and conduct. The process is accompanied by greater opportunity for socialising beyond family and has been identified as a risk factor for increased alcohol use, particularly for first year students lacking experience of independent living (White and Jackson 2004). It can be argued that this risk is associated with the intersection of the developmental needs of students for greater social integration (Cameron 1999), and the provision of opportunities for this presented

in university environments (Schulenberg and Maggs 2002). The emerging adult transition into student identity is aided by seeking guidance from normative presentations of behaviour encountered within social interactions, which are experienced within socially structured environments acting to constrain and enable certain choices (Thomson et al. 2002).

Preconceptions of the role of alcohol act as one such constraint, with heavy consumption acknowledged as central to formulations of student identity and recognised as such even by non-drinkers (Banister and Piacentini 2006). This suggests a reinforcing process whereby heavy drinking norms embedded in both wider culture and university settings are internalised by students and then reinforced through the observation of campus behaviour and within peer groups. The function of alcohol as a social lubricant (Seaman and Ikegwonu 2011), with capacity to enhance social bonding (Read et al. 2003), may be significant in initial facilitation of this group formation process, with associated psychological benefits. Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979) posits that our self-esteem and sense of self-worth are intrinsically linked to our membership of groups and our perception that these groups are valuable. Our psychological need for self-worth (Maslow 1943), and its foundation in group membership, supports the findings discussed above indicating that peer group formation will be a priority for new students recently dislocated from existing social ties, suggesting that alcohol use is likely to be maintained as long as it functions as expected.

As well as being utilised for the on-going maintenance of group dynamics, alcohol may be significant in the initial identification of peers for new students. People are not passive recipients of peer groups but engage in a process of selection based on desired characteristics (Newcomb and Earleywine 1996), including the perception of common interests and similarity (Lott and Lott 1965). For new students, there is a potential pathway which may occur from perceived shared interest in drinking to actual shared drinking, which acts to improve group bonding and therefore provides confirmation of the belief that alcohol is good for bonding. The development of strong peer group ties will then both be initiated by, and result in, shared drinking norms.

As well as assessing the role of alcohol on the development of peer behaviour, it is valuable to understand the influence of psychological states on alcohol use and associated effect on mental well-being. There is a significant body of research investigating psychological influences on alcohol use, specifically the impact of

mood states on consumption, with mixed results to date. Extroversion has been associated with higher levels of consumption and, consequently, higher levels of risk taking including drink driving (Vollrath and Torgersen 2002). The direction of relationship between risk taking and alcohol is however unclear, with indications that those who engage in risk behaviours generally are more likely to binge drink (Ham and Hope 2003). Furthermore, the association may be complicated by social and cultural expectations of risk as an accepted part of youth behaviour, with alcohol perceived as a justification for risk-taking and recklessness at this stage of the life-course (Engineer et al. 2003).

No significant correlation has been identified between heavier alcohol use and depression or stress in student populations (Webb et al. 1996; Pickard et al. 2000), with stress not predictive of binge drinking (Hutchinson et al. 1998) or overall consumption (Park et al. 2004). However drinking to cope with specific stressful situations is frequently cited (Park and Levenson 2002), with potential implications for alcohol use during the stress of transition. Although a degree of social anxiety is reportedly experienced by large numbers of students at various points in their academic lives (Purdon et al. 2001), this may not result in heavier consumption, with indications that students with social anxiety disorders may drink less overall (Villarosa et al. 2014). This supports findings by Schry and White (2013) in a meta-analysis of social anxiety studies in student populations. The authors established a negative correlation between social anxiety and quantity of alcohol consumed, however a positive correlation was found for social anxiety and experience of alcohol related problems. For those with the highest anxiety levels who generally drink less, the lack of drinking experience is potentially problematic, with greater likelihood of negative outcomes during drinking occasions and less employment of safety strategies (Villarosa 2014). This suggests potential learning of self-regulatory behaviours from drinking experiences, again complicating conceptions of alcohol use and risk through the implication that more drinking experiences can be protective.

Students who experience lower levels of social anxiety are more likely to participate in high risk drinking games (Johnson et al. 1998), suggesting lack of utilisation of alcohol for the reduction of anxiety. However potential gendered patterning is in evidence, with men experiencing social anxiety more likely to avoid anxiety-inducing situations and therefore to drink less, whereas women with social anxiety report drinking more to address these encounters (Norberg et al.

2010). This contrasts with general patterns of student consumption in which males are, on average, larger and more frequent consumers of alcohol than females (Ham and Hope 2003). Evidence indicates a strong double standard regarding perceptions of gender and drinking, with more judgemental attitudes expressed towards women's than men's drinking (de Vissier and McDonnell 2012), and the continued positioning of alcohol as intrinsic to masculinity, with capacity to 'handle' drinking still valued (Dempster 2011). This suggests that women who drink to address social anxiety may then encounter a circular problem, whereby more negative perceptions of their behaviour from others potentially contributes to increased anxiousness.

Although less research evidence is available, positive impacts of alcohol on well-being are in evidence in student populations, with moderate use correlated with positive mood enhancement and social integration (Peele and Brodsky 2000), as well as self-reported sense of well-being (Molnar et al. 2009) and satisfaction with social life (Murphy et al. 2005). Cognitions relating to alcohol may be significant in terms of expectancy of outcomes and perceived threat of use, with a potential pathway between positive experience relating to alcohol use, expectancies of alcohol outcomes and future use. Park et al. (2004) found that heavier drinking students experience more of both positive consequences, primarily socialising and fun, and negative outcomes, in terms of sickness and regretted sexual activity, but that positive consequences are more influential in future drinking intentions. Intention to drink (Elliott and Ainsworth 2012) and expected positive outcome both correlate with actual heavy drinking (Young et al. 2006) as well as with reported positive experience on a night out (Park and Grant 2005), illustrating the significance of personal alcohol beliefs on social behaviour.

As previously discussed, awareness and experience of consequences do not appear to act as a deterrent to alcohol use where positive outcomes are experienced, with evidence suggesting the same effect is applicable to awareness of consumption guidelines. The intention of guidance is to highlight potential dangers of exceeding stated consumption levels and to increase understanding of 'sensible' drinking, but unintended consequences of this approach have been identified. In a study of UK university students, those with more alcohol knowledge, in terms of being able to state current unit guidance, were identified as the heaviest drinkers (Ingle and Furnham 1996), with other student samples reporting using unit guidance to select the strongest drinks for the least money

(Jones and Gregory 2009). These findings suggest that further understanding of information communicated to students would be beneficial in developing intervention strategies and in understanding subjective interpretations of such information.

2.5 Limitations to current understanding and future research directions

This chapter has considered risk factors influencing alcohol use in individual students and has illustrated the impact of factors across multiple levels which act to structure behaviour and increase the likelihood of heavy alcohol use. We have identified that wider youth cultural conceptions of drinking, as well as individual psychological states and cognitions, are significant in observed changes to student behaviour and specifically to increases in alcohol consumption after arrival at university.

This review indicates that to fully understand the entrenched nature of student drinking and to develop more effective responses, it is necessary to consider the intersection of multiple factors impacting student drinking within the contexts in which it occurs. This includes examination of the social processes in operation during student adaptation to university and the manifestation of alcohol risk factors during this time. Although evidence strongly suggests the significance of peer group consumption in drinking levels, there is less understanding of the role of alcohol in peer group acquisition and function as a means of adjusting to the new university context. The social processes underpinning alcohol and group formation, in conjunction with environmental presentation of social opportunities, should be examined further when assessing the establishment of alcohol behaviour in new students. It is further argued the trajectory of the individual student and their transition to university should be considered as a dynamic process, where alcohol behaviours are established as part of adaptation to new settings.

We have also observed that positive experiences and expectations of alcohol use are significant to future drinking and alcohol outcomes, suggesting that pre-arrival influences may be significant in future student drinking behaviour. It is, as yet, unclear how students acquire conceptions of student identity and alcohol and whether this occurs prior to arrival. Understanding the development of these positive expectations suggests utilisation of a timeline approach to identify the process undergone by students. This exploration will aid identification of the interaction of multi-level influences impacting student alcohol use as well as the

role of agency in alcohol decisions. This includes the constructed role of alcohol in peer group acquisition and function for students, as well as understanding organisational and other wider contextual influences.

Questions remain regarding the relationship between student transition needs and the drinking contexts of student life, including the preconceptions students bring with them into university as well as how university approaches to alcohol are conceived by those arriving in the setting. Although it has been identified that wider cultural conceptions of youth and consumption are significant, consideration should be given to whether these wider cultural perceptions of alcohol and students may be reinforced within the local and organisational contexts of drinking at university, by both staff and students and what the impact of this on practice may be. These contexts act as the locations in which students function and socialise, offering opportunities for social bonding and development of student identity, suggesting that understanding their construction and maintenance may aid in planning responses to problematic consumption. Greater insight into how students interpret the presentation of alcohol within organisational and local community settings necessitates exploration of the factors impacting alcohol policy and practice within these domains.

2.5.1 Enhancing the socio-ecological approach: Using life-course theory to understand student transition

The present research argues that the socio-ecological approach to contextual analysis facilitates a more comprehensive understanding of the persistence of student drinking, through considering the multi-level influences acting on the environments surrounding alcohol use, as well as individual behaviours and conceptions. However, although a socio-ecological approach permits broader investigation of factors impacting student drinking, it is still subject to limitations. The model lacks a temporal dimension, with analysis providing a time-fixed assessment of multi-level influences. In relation to student drinking, we have identified the impact of wider culture in normalising heavy use, however it is as yet unclear how this manifests over time. It can reasonably be suggested that it is likely to be internalised prior to commencement of university and is then externalised in the setting but the process benefits from further investigation. It is now argued that this can be addressed through inclusion of a life-course approach, which considers transition to university as a process rather than an

event, undergone by agents who actively contribute to and reflect on their situation, with the subsequent impact of risk factors varying across time.

Adding temporality to a socio-ecological assessment involves the addition of dynamism offered by the life-course approach, providing enhanced opportunity to comprehensively assess health behaviour (Kuh and Ben-Shlomo 1997). A focus on temporality, as a measure not only of the life course of the individual but also of institutions and communities, can provide insight into social processes operating across multiple levels, including those which give rise to differential distribution of individuals into groups with varying degrees of risk for negative health behaviour (Glass and McAtee 2006). The life course perspective has been defined as:

...the study of long-term effects on chronic disease risk of physical and social exposures during gestation, childhood, adolescence, young adulthood and later adult life. It includes studies of the biological, behavioural and psychosocial pathways that operate across an individual's life course, as well as across generations, to influence the development of chronic diseases. (Ben-Shlomo and Kuh 2002 p. 286).

The approach aims to incorporate the impact of macro-determinants of health, such as unemployment and poverty, into theories of health inequalities and spans multiple sectors, including biology, public health, social policy and sociology, where focus is on the impact of changes in institutions and culture on well-being (Ben-Shlomo and Kuh 2002). Temporality is centrally situated within the life-course perspective through consideration of the impact of exposure to various events/contexts at periods of transition and their consequent impact on health outcomes. Two key conceptual contributions of the life-course approach which can be utilised in empirical enquiry are the critical period model, and the risk accumulation model (Kuh and Ben-Shlomo 1997).

The critical period model suggests that there are periods within the human lifespan where exposure to certain negative events may have a disproportionate outcome on health, such as childhood abuse occurring within key phases of psychological and social development which impact mental well-being later in life (Browne and Finkelhor 1986). The approach originated with examination of significant events during prenatal and childhood development and their links to later adult health but more recent presentations include examination of critical

periods in early adolescence and young adulthood which result in significant behaviour change (WHO 2000). One such period includes the young adult transition from the parental home to university, where new challenges including financial independence, new peer group exposures and reduction in monitoring are present.

In contrast with the specificity of the critical events model, the risk accumulation approach suggests that a cumulative adverse impact on health can be caused by exposure to multiple threats occurring within specific stages of life, with likelihood of exposure to multiple risks strongly associated with socio-economic status. Research indicates that accumulated threats, such as poor childhood nutrition, exposure to passive smoking and poor educational attainment, are linked to negative adult perceptions of well-being as well as actual symptoms of ill-health (Power and Matthews 1997). Consideration of links between macro-determinants, such as poverty, and links to clustering of secondary risk factors such as those listed above is therefore considered an important area for research focus (WHO 2000).

In relation to alcohol use and students, the critical periods model provides a more effective framework for considering the impact of transition to university on health behaviours and outcomes than a risk accumulation approach. The complexity of interactions described within risk accumulation approaches suggest potential difficulties in operationalisation, as well as being limited by availability of longitudinal cohort data for student populations. Consideration of transition to university as a critical event in the life-course of young adults therefore adds a necessary temporal dimension to the socio-ecological approach and acknowledges a broad spectrum of influences affecting the event. Reflecting the late modern experience of uncertainty and ongoing reflexivity described earlier, transitions are best characterised as ongoing processes in young adult lives, thus avoiding temporally-constrained conceptions based on normative timetables, which suggest that transition from youth to adult involves the attainment of key life goals by a specific age. This age reification (Sørensen et al. 1986), with adulthood assumed at age 18, dislocates the individual from their socio-ecological environment, allowing for the attribution of failure in attainment of age-appropriate status (Jones 2009). From an ecological perspective, transition through the critical event of starting university is perceived as a dynamic process, differentially experienced and with outcomes dependent on the personal resources and social structures

surrounding the individual and determining the range of choices available to them (Giddens 1991). Further exploration is required to identify the interaction of multi-level influences impacting student alcohol use during the process of transition.

This review has identified multiple factors influencing the development and maintenance of student alcohol consumption, illustrating the benefit of a socio-ecological approach. What remains unclear is the temporal element of this development and the potentially changing nature of influences over the process of transition. In response to this, a key research question relating to student alcohol consumption for the current thesis is:

- What multi-level influences contribute to student conceptualisations of alcohol and student life and when do these influences occur?

The review also identified the significance of peer group levels of consumption, however the specific role alcohol may play in the development of interpersonal relationships in a new setting is not fully understood. Further examination is necessary to explore the potential functional role of alcohol during the transition process and to understand temporality. The socio-ecological framework, coupled with the inherent conceptualisation of health as a continuous process within the life-course approach, suggests a potentially powerful analytical tool that can be employed to comprehensively map influences on alcohol use for students in higher education. This leads to the following research question:

- What is the role of alcohol in new student adaptation to university life and the development of peer relationships?

This question emphasises the examination of students as active agents who draw on alcohol during the process of transition to meet essential interpersonal and psychological needs. This includes the consideration of perceptions of alcohol as a readily available resource within the environment students arrive in and the multiple drinking settings available, which have been identified as significant in consumption behaviour. In order to better understand the role of these settings as contributing influences, their construction will be examined in the next chapter. This includes considering university approaches to alcohol on and off-campus, as well as the development of other night-time economy settings, as part of local and national economic agendas.

3 A socio-ecological approach to organisational processes: Understanding the operating context for university policy and practice on alcohol

3.1 Summary and introduction

In the previous chapter we saw that student alcohol use is impacted by factors across multiple levels, from wider cultural configurations of youth, to psychosocial processes including peer influence and the psychological impact of transition to university. We also identified the significance of university as the organisational context that students transition into, providing the location for the enactment and reinforcement of student alcohol norms. The variation in alcohol use profiles of universities in the UK suggests the importance of understanding contextual features at higher education institutions (HEI's) that may affect the development of drinking norms. This chapter will now consider the range of influences acting to create the alcohol environment in and around universities, which forms the operating context for the development of policy and practice. It will be argued that universities are best characterised as open systems constantly engaged in information exchange processes with other systems, resulting in bi-directional influence. This includes how the wider policy context acts to shape UK alcohol culture presented to students through national policy drivers for alcohol sales and pricing as well as the construction of night time economy (NTE) spaces for student drinking.

The impact of marketisation policies on organisational responses to student behaviour is also discussed through consideration of the historical development of university services, examining observed changes to these as a result of policy shifts towards a more consumer-driven sector. The chapter will consider current approaches to health promotion in UK universities, through the Healthy Universities programme and other initiatives. It is argued that our current understanding of organisational processes underpinning the development of university responses, including how key influences become embedded and enacted within university settings and the role of stakeholders in this, is limited. This means that our interpretation of the drinking environment presented to students is also limited. By drawing on principles of organisational theory to characterise the university as a complex open system, with multiple sub-systems, we can begin to better understand the construction of job roles and departmental influences on

organisational processes relating to alcohol. It is argued that, as with student drinking, a socio-ecological approach provides an effective framework for considering multi-level influences affecting both internal and external university environments. As we have seen, when considering a range of influences acting on a setting or behaviour, the socio-ecological framework provides an effective mapping tool to ensure avoidance of overemphasis on the agent over structure, and vice versa. The chapter concludes by arguing that the static nature of the socio-ecological framework necessitates consideration of the interaction of observed levels of influence to understand the intersection of the university and wider cultural contexts, as well as staff involvement with local area and with students. Structuration Theory will be presented as a mechanism to theorise how these influences across multiple levels intersect and interact. The search strategy utilised for approaching the literature is outlined in appendices.

3.2 Assessing influences on practice: The university as an open system

Universities, as complex, loosely coupled organisations (Scott 2001), reflect the wider cultural and environmental setting in which they function (Webb 2006), favouring characterisation as open systems in order to understand their relationship with external influences. Open systems approaches to organisational analysis are dominant in research and argue that any organisation is in a co-dependent relationship with its environment (Bastedo 2006) and will therefore reflect the wider cultural norms and values observable in the environmental setting (Scott 2001). The open systems approach considers how influences impact on social institutions such as universities, through the development of organisational processes which act to enable and constrain the actions of agents. The concept derives from the natural sciences in relation to systems whose boundaries are permeable to external inputs such as energy, and contrasts with non-permeable closed systems (von Bertalanffy 1968). This permeability means that institutional boundaries in open systems are less clearly identified and may be primarily nominal, functioning through the consensus of internal and external stakeholders (Rollinson 1998). This may include the shared understanding of being representatives of a university body, which is sufficient to provide a recognisable identity which can be utilised for analytical purposes.

The concept of organisations as open systems was elaborated by Katz and Kahn (1978), who described inputs as the energy imported into organisational systems from other sources. This may be in the form of investment and personnel, or in

response to external drivers such as market or legislative changes. These inputs constitute the energy which is transformed within the system into activities beneficial for organisational maintenance, before being exported back into the environment as a product of some form. Observable feedback loops are in operation between organisation and environment, which can be positive or negative, with the latter resulting in some form of course correction which impacts organisational function. The process of information exchange occurring in feedback loops is observable at macro-organisational and at micro-cultural level (Rollinson 1998), whereby the organisation as a whole, its sub-groups and individual agents each interact with local and national environments to accomplish tasks that are otherwise unachievable. Systems theory approaches in the social sciences suggest that open systems are designated as those in which inputs act to shape system processes and activities (through-puts) and are expressed in outputs.

The open systems approach has been applied to understanding of university processes as a means to consider organisational impacts on student and staff health and well-being. This is visually represented as:

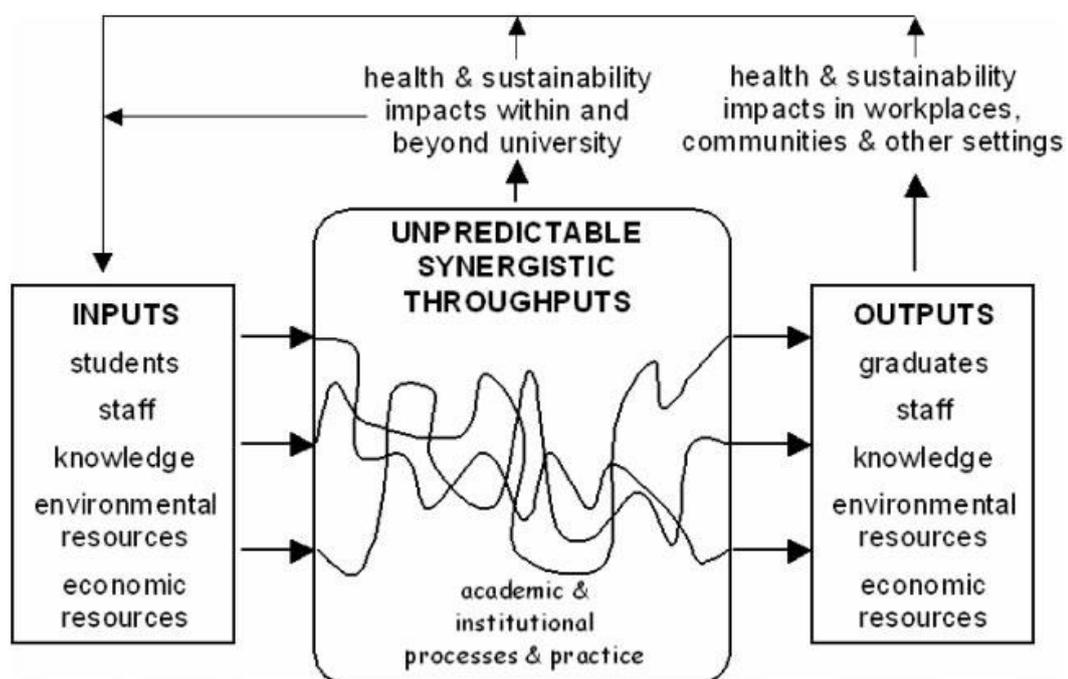


Fig. 2. Settings as systems: the example of a university. (Dooris 2005)

Inputs include human, material and cultural resources available to the organisation, such as alcohol legislation, which interact with and are expressed as day-to-day organisational processes by both individual and sub-groups in the

setting, e.g. in the regulation of university alcohol sales practices. Activities within the organisation produce outputs which again may be human, material or cultural and will in turn impact on the wider environmental context surrounding the setting. Understanding organisational processes on alcohol therefore requires identification of the range of influences acting as inputs, including stakeholder behaviour, policy and financial influences as well as wider cultural context. These will now be considered.

3.3 The national and local policy context for student consumption

University processes on student drinking are developed within the context of UK alcohol culture, which, as described earlier, characterises consumption as a natural expression of young adulthood, acting as a key input shaping agent conceptions within the university as an open system. The role of policy in shaping and maintaining this culture will now be discussed.

UK alcohol culture has been described as one of determined drunkenness (Measham 2006), where heavy drinking is normalised in young adult identities, including that of 'student'. Current patterns of student consumption can be interpreted as located in a post-industrial context, with changed gender roles and local community construction impacting both those who are observed drinking and the locations of this activity (Brain 2000). This is highlighted by increases in female consumption and a growth in locations specifically targeting young adults. Drinking is positioned as central to weekend excess for young people (Measham 2006), reflecting youth cultural conceptions of the acceptability of risk behaviour as a natural part of young adulthood, and cementing commonality in youth identity through provision of a shared activity in shared spaces (Miles 1998). Legislative shifts since the early 1990's have seen the availability and pricing of alcohol become subject to market forces (Measham 2006), with deregulation of many former controls on availability, such as limitations of pricing and allocation of sales licenses. The stated government policy aims underpinning these moves included the creation of a more 'continental' approach to consumption, contrasted with the binge culture commonly cited as prevalent in the UK (Institute of Alcohol Studies 2004). This deregulation of the UK alcohol industry reflects wider political culture, which emphasises lack of market regulation and frequently stresses the economic benefits of excess (Measham and Brain 2005), observed in both off-sales strategies and approaches to the creation of night-time economy spaces. In late modern culture, where individual consumerism operates

as the dominant economic strategy, policy approaches aimed at restraint of alcohol use are inconsistent with the wider acceptability of drinking to excess, and fail to acknowledge localised environments where moderation is not culturally appropriate (Measham 2006), including specific youth settings where alcohol is interpreted as a tool to achieve drunkenness (Seaman and Ikegwuonu 2010).

Measham and Brain (2005) argue that problematisation of drinking underpinning public policy approaches has gone through various - often media driven - iterations culminating in the current youth binge drinking and anti-social behaviour focus embedded across the UK in government policy, which emphasises control of the outcomes of drinking excess within public spaces through a law and order approach. The excessive media focus on binge drinking, evidenced through regular photo stories of drunk young adults featured in national newspapers, acts as a driver for policy direction and allocation of resources (Valentine et al. 2007). This ensures that criminal justice approaches, underpinned by individualised cultural emphasis on personal responsibility, dominate over health promotion approaches which may be aimed at more structural and environmental intervention. Lack of political utilisation of interventionist measures may also reflect awareness that public support is greatest for those policy approaches deemed less intrusive, such as education campaigns (Diepeveen et al. 2013), ensuring their likely continuation by government even where limited evidence of effectiveness exists.

It has been argued that, where competing economic and health interests are observed in the development of policy, historically economic concerns have won (Jayne et al 2008). Nicholls (2009) illustrates the emphasis on the economic positioning of alcohol through the example of the 2004 Alcohol Strategy for England, produced just after widespread deregulation of licensing and pricing of alcohol, which had prompted significant concerns over potential growth in alcohol related harms. Within a strategy ostensibly developed to tackle alcohol-related problems, the economic value of consumption to job creation in national and local economies is strongly stated, suggesting political unwillingness to address alcohol harms through any form of industry regulation and illustrating the inherent contrast between a market-led approach and an emphasis on controlled consumption.

3.3.1 The contribution of UK alcohol policy to the creation of student drinking spaces

The contradiction between health and economic concerns in alcohol policy can be observed in considering the growth of drinking spaces within the night-time economy, with regulation of such spaces inextricably linked to national policy agendas of economic regeneration (Jayne et al. 2006). The influence of economic drivers in youth consumption is illustrated in the reinvention of many UK city and town centres as spaces for leisure and consumption in the post-industrial landscape, with increased construction of venues characterised by hedonism and lack of behavioural restrictions (Hobbs et al. 2000). Factors of significance include a growth in numbers of retailers supplying alcohol, aided by favourable licensing conditions (Jayne et al 2006) and leading to the reinvention of many public spaces as areas for evening 'drinkertainment' (Bell 2005 p.26). The segmentation of town centres by the nature of day and night activities, allows the heavy drinking associated with youth consumption to become embedded in the localised culture of NTE drinking spaces, meaning those entering into these environments understand the rules of conduct and are active participants in maintenance of contextual norms (Hollands 2002).

The active creation of NTE spaces has predominantly been left to the market, with local authority ability and willingness to act in any constraining capacity restricted by increasing economic reliance on NTE spending (Hobbs et al. 2000). Where policy responses have been attempted by local authorities, they have predominantly aimed at the control of behaviour within such spaces rather than at reducing consumption. Actions include practices such as zoning, where heavy drinking locales are created as segregated areas for policing and behaviour management (Valentine et al. 2007), often resulting in separation of young drinkers from other local residents and reinforcing the segmentation of youth and other drinking styles (France 2007). Spaces are not passive sites for behaviour, but are constructed to actively maintain and transmit the cultures embedded into them (Anderson and Gale 1999), with implications for the deliberate construction of settings where heavy drinking is expected and behaviour management strategies are created specifically for the resulting consequences. This deliberate segmentation may function to create concentration of youth drinking styles reflecting the culture of intoxication characteristic of UK consumption (Measham

and Brain 2006), resulting in limited opportunity to challenge these situated norms through presentation of other drinking behaviour.

Segmentation is further observable in the divisions within the NTE between sub-groups of youth drinkers, with the creation of student nights in bars and clubs now ubiquitous in the UK alcohol economy, reflecting dominant student identity characterisations of heavy drinking behaviour. In terms of alcohol consumption, the HE sector is worth an estimated £1,428 million per annum in direct sales in the UK economy (NUS 2013). These high spending levels ensure that students are targeted extensively by alcohol retailers both at national level and in local host towns where they are the frequent subject of promotions by retailers, bars and clubs. The extent of this provision has impacted traditional drinking settings such as Student Union bars, with many students making limited use of these in favour of local, student-specific pubs and clubs (Chatterton 1999). Clubbing spaces dedicated to students represent places to socialise with others seen as sharing the same expressions of behaviour (Malbon 1998) which are reinforced through continued enactment, including heavy drinking norms embedded in identity portrayals of students, which are reproduced through routine practice (Del Casino Jr. 2009). Although the opportunity to congregate with others perceived as sharing identity status leads to enhanced feelings of safety, it also acts to reduce association with local community members (Chatterton 1999). This reinforced segregation with the non-student world suggests a cyclical relationship between student identity ↔ provision of drinking spaces ↔ student drinking styles, which is re-enacted in NTE's throughout the UK with considerable economic benefits to local communities. Any regulation of student alcohol use must therefore be attempted within a culture where students have significant economic benefits to business, and where economic policy aims constrain public health responses.

3.3.2 National-level policy approaches to tackling student drinking

In the UK, the higher education sector employs over 370,000 people and contributes over £31 billion annually to UK GDP (Kelly et al. 2009), with a value of £2 billion to the economy in Wales (AssemblyWales 2009), making it a powerful driver for economic prosperity. As identified when considering NTE settings, economic contributions of a sector can result in less capacity for local and national government to intervene in negative behavioural outcomes, and it is arguable that problems associated with student drinking are made harder to tackle through policy due to fears over challenging this economic relationship.

Although heavily problematised in public discourse, student alcohol use is not subject to significant policy focus at UK or Welsh level, being instead subsumed into general guidance on tackling alcohol related harms.

The most recent strategy on alcohol from the UK Government reflects the problematisation of public binge drinking highlighted earlier, with the rationale for acting on binge drinking associated with tackling alcohol related harms impacting public life, such as crime and violence, as well as the financial impact on health services (HM Government 2012). It identifies several key issues which may suggest a policy-led approach to this, including restricting number of outlets in a given area, focusing on premises serving drunk patrons, and tackling below-cost off-sales. However, as already seen, economic considerations and market-led politics act to constrain willingness to implement policy-led solutions which may limit the activities of alcohol retailers. The result of this market-driven approach is the increased involvement of the alcohol industry in tackling harms through the UK Government Responsibility Deal, which proposes a series of voluntary activities recommended to retailers and businesses. These voluntary responsibility deals include measures such as inclusion in labelling and advertising of messaging around 'responsible' or 'safe' drinking, as well as attempts to reduce the number of alcohol units in circulation through lowering alcohol strengths and limitations to advertising in proximity to children's environments (UK Government 2012). These have been enacted in industry-led best practice guidelines stating that the 'drink responsibly' message should appear on all packaging along with unit content of the beverage (Portman Group 2012). Although such messaging is now common practice, evidence indicates that references to responsible drinking have little impact on consumption and are viewed by drinkers as too ambiguous to effectively promote change (Torjesen 2011). Evidence further suggests that consumers frequently fail to distinguish between 'a unit' and 'a drink' (Gill and Donaghy 2004) leading to consumption over recommended guidelines. Drinkers also show a tendency to define sensible consumption relative to their own tolerance of alcohol and perceived level of drunkenness than with reference to official guidance (Gill et al. 2007), suggesting highly personalised conceptions of 'sensible' in operation. As with the 2004 Alcohol Strategy for England produced by the Labour Government, the description of the current Responsibility Deal begins by stressing the economic value of the alcohol industry, suggesting that marketised approaches are subject to little variation regardless of political affiliation. The industry-led strategy has been heavily criticised by public health

bodies for favouring voluntary action and for promoting approaches with limited basis in evidence, including product labelling (Knai et al. 2015). The influence of industry and the inability to tackle market-led approaches to the sale and promotion of alcohol ensures that the culture of excess consumption evident in student drinker portrayals, as well as the alcohol-intense environments observed in the NTE, are likely to continue to dominate the landscape presented to new students and acting as the operating context for universities.

Wales has seen a more targeted response to the high consumption levels identified in the student population, with Welsh Government-produced guidance entitled '*Substance Misuse Treatment Framework (SMTF) for Alcohol Prevention and Education in Higher and Further Education Establishments*' (Welsh Government 2011). This was the first such document specifically targeted at the higher education sector and reflects understanding of the transition to university as an area of increased risk for behaviour change and harmful consumption patterns. Elements of overlap exist with the UK Government strategy, with alcohol use described in terms of multi-level impacts such as costs of policing, the impacts of violent crime, and effects on public services as well as on individuals in terms of health outcomes. The specific impacts of student consumption on local communities are also referenced, in relation to noise levels and rubbish creation. Student-specific alcohol policy is recommended for adoption within universities as a framework to underpin organisational attempts to tackle alcohol misuse and an ecological approach to alcohol awareness is defined as best practice, with recommendations for partnerships at community level, sanctions at individual level and whole organisational strategies. Wider societal structures are acknowledged, in terms of pricing and marketing approaches targeted at student populations, which are identified as increasing likelihood of drinking heavily. Assessment of the effectiveness of this guidance is currently problematic as university compliance with recommendations is voluntary and there is no central monitoring of activity undertaken as a result of the paper. The voluntary status of suggested actions illustrates the independent status of universities and the lack of capacity for government policy led approaches when working with such settings. Further acknowledgement of the complex environment surrounding student consumption, from economic advantages in local communities to national approaches to pricing, suggests awareness of the difficulties facing universities in any attempts to impact alcohol-related harms among their populations.

3.3.3 The contribution of community-level influences: The local alcohol economy and student drinking

As well as being limited by the economic concerns discussed, alcohol policy has had a long-standing focus on the public consequences of drinking, meaning a lack of consideration of observed increases in home consumption (Valentine et al. 2007). Issues of availability such as 24 hour licensing and growth in off-sales, result in new home consumption patterns, with estimates of twice the amount of alcohol now purchased in off than on sales premises (IAS 2013). The pre-drinking common in student and non-student youth populations frequently acts as the precursor to going out into public drinking spaces, suggesting the need for policy recognition of home consumption as a factor in the management of public consequences. Law and order approaches to the control of behaviour in public spaces has been argued as having the unintended consequence of displacing heavy consumption from the public to private realms without actually tackling the drivers of heavy consumption (Wells et al. 2008). The limitations of such segmented thinking in policy development are illustrated by the intersection of private drinking with public consequences, with evidence indicating higher levels of alcohol-related incidents in drinking venues where pre-drinking has occurred (Labhart et al. 2013). This suggests that the exclusion of home consumption from policy responses restricts capacity to deliver local control-based strategies.

Although at-home consumption levels in student populations may have risen with the advent of cheaper off-sales (Penny and Armstrong-Hallam 2010), the actions of alcohol retailers illustrate their recognition that student alcohol use does not remain confined to the boundaries of campus. Students live, work and socialise within local communities where, as consumers of resources, they are the targets of significant quantities of direct alcohol marketing promoting drinking spaces (Kuo et al. 2003). Alcohol advertising aimed at young adult drinkers, including students, accounts for a significant part of marketing budgets for major retailers (Hastings et al. 2005), suggesting their positioning as a key audience. UK alcohol marketing is heavily focussed at lifestyle presentation (Brain 2000), demonstrating the sociability associated with drinking through the presentation of groups of young adults in social, and often humorous, situations (Griffin et al. 2009). This approach capitalises on the enhanced satisfaction reported through peer group drinking over individual consumption, as a means to creating a sense of belonging (Miles et al. 1998). This co-opting of youth relationships into consumer culture has

led to the creation and rapid adoption of alcohol identities among young adults which normalise heavy consumption as part of public socialising in dedicated youth spaces (McCreanor et al. 2005).

This creation of segmented space for the expression of alcohol identities, encompassing the image of excess dominant in public discourse on student behaviour, is typified in the UK by the presence of 'Carnage'; an organisation which runs student only social nights, in the form of pre-arranged bar visits, at many major university towns and cities. The organisers of these events have been heavily criticised by student organisations for promoting excess drinking norms and are banned from direct marketing at many Students Unions (NUS 2009). They have also been the subject of several high-profile media reports relating to incidents of drunken disorder by attendees, provoking widespread media criticism and negative public reactions to students residing within local communities. Such media coverage of public excess has acted to take student drinking off-campus and into the realm of public policy responses (Hubbard 2013), as well as confirming images of hedonistic practice in the public mind, which is generally not exposed to the frequent high levels of consumption characteristic of on-campus drinking events. Carnage is a high profile illustration of the intersection of local and national economic drivers with student culture, through the creation of a mobile space for consumption. However this space exists only because it is facilitated by the existing context of night-time economy provision already tailored to expected patterns of student drinking. Although, the largest current event-organiser of their type and despite criticism from student groups, Carnage are just one national example of a landscape of student themed events at local bars and clubs, including many organised in conjunction with universities as part of the Freshers programme, which provide a significance input to the local economy. This landscape ensures that organisational attempts to moderate student alcohol use take place in a context where, as stated earlier, moderation is not expected or accepted.

We have established that home consumption patterns are significant in ongoing alcohol behaviour in public venues, with local structural factors governing provision of alcohol off-sales influential on levels of consumption, further illustrating the significance of local licensing policy in the university operating context. Density of alcohol retailers within close proximity to campuses has been linked to higher levels of drinking (Weitzman et al. 2003) and to moderation of

the impact of on-campus alcohol interventions (Scribner et al. 2011), as well as correlating with higher levels of on-campus violence (Scribner et al. 2010). The impact of outlet density on consumption is higher for off-license than on-license premises (Kypri et al. 2008) suggesting that, where alcohol is readily available and cheaply priced in an area of high student density, demand will increase. Furthermore, frequency of low price alcohol offers in shops surrounding universities, coupled with intensive advertising on campus, is correlated with increased incidences of binge drinking among student populations (Kuo et al. 2003). Evidence indicates that banning multi-buy promotions can reduce the amount of alcohol purchased (Chick 2012), which may be beneficial in managing negative consequences of excess use in student areas. However, as pricing is largely controlled by national policy directives, local implementation in specific areas of towns and cities would require governmental support, therefore creating a further barrier to local authority moderation of impact.

The role of variations in community provision of alcohol on student consumption suggests that campus responses must be interpreted in relation to practices both on, and surrounding, each site, illustrating the openness of university systems. Some local policy responses have been attempted, including community-based interventions and initiatives aimed at managing sales practices, with evidence indicating that responsible server training in bars, coupled with visible enforcement of laws on selling significantly reduces numbers of drunk students being served as well as subsequent end of night incidents (Warpenius et al. 2010). Where enforcement of legislation has been delivered in conjunction with neighbourhood monitoring of drunken behaviour, binge drinking has been significantly reduced, leading to reported improved relations between students and locals (Saltz et al. 2009). These ecological, community-based approaches suggest the potential viability of multi-level strategies in reducing both the impact of student drinking on communities and the reciprocal impact of community practices on student consumption. However, due to difficulties in implementation and evaluation of programmes with such high levels of complexity, further investigation is required to fully assess applicability and to consider any potential barriers to implementation, including reluctance of local retailers to participate due to the economic advantages discussed.

3.4 Marketisation policies and the student-as-consumer

As we have seen, the wider operating context for universities is impacted by national policy decisions and cultural conceptions, leading to an external environment shaped to meet customer demands for alcohol-heavy social provision in segmented youth spaces. The economic drivers for this are linked to neo-liberal market agendas which act to promote financial benefit over constraint and regulation in areas such as local planning decisions. A further area where these agendas are evident is in the marketisation shift in the higher education (HE) sector, illustrating the impact of wider political changes on the university as open system.

Since the 1970's HE has been reshaped by the introduction of a market model, recasting the relationship between academic and student as one of customer and service provider (Furedi 2011). The market system in HE is not internally driven (Brown 2011) but is instead based on external governmental approaches to the sector, reflecting wider neo-liberal policy directions incorporating market principles and belief in the role of competition in improving services (Lynch 2006). Universities are now required to compete for students, meaning marketing of provision has become central to organisational function, increasing pressure to evidence the added value of the university 'student experience' and prioritising customer satisfaction. This includes the rights of students to demand a good experience (Furedi 2011), and the perceived right to purchase the benefits of graduate status (Williams 2011), with suggestions that recruitment material is now likely to resemble holiday brochures, with reference to great locations and student lifestyle competing for space with discussions of academic content (Haywood et al. 2011). This has raised concerns among critics of this social shift, with fears for the lack of protection of academic enquiry and challenge to student views in an atmosphere where customer satisfaction dominates (Barnett 2011).

Concerns for customer satisfaction may lead to the provision of services shaped to meeting students' self-defined wants, leading to requirements for greater flexibility in staff to adjust their product to student measures of value (Newman and Jahdi 2009). This focus on student satisfaction may limit capacity to provide a 'holding and creative environment' (Frost 2013, p.2), incorporating concerns over student as newly developing adult, including aiding in the development of a sense of personal and social responsibility through constraining behaviour (Barnett 2011). Student consumption of wider services, including alcohol and social

settings, should be viewed as part of the neoliberal, student-as-customer status embedded in marketisation, with the promotion of the student experience leaving less space for behaviour regulation in a customer-oriented service (Leontini et al. 2015). It is further argued that the market approach presents illusory choice more suited to those with economic means to take full advantage of national provision, contrasted with those non-traditional and less affluent students who favour proximity and availability of provision over marketing of the wider student experience (Lynch 2006). The result of this is the homogenisation of campus culture through increased recruitment of those with standard academic track records, as measured by nationally accepted UCAS scores, traditionally favouring those who are younger and from more affluent family backgrounds (Frost 2013). This homogenisation of campuses into settings dominated by younger students has implications for behavioural conventions around alcohol, with young adults more likely to manifest normative youth cultural conceptions of heavy drinking discussed in the previous chapter.

3.5 Understanding function and support provision in UK universities: An organisational approach

We have seen how external inputs can act on the university as open system to shape the operating context in which actions of student drinking can be located. In order to fully consider how these inputs impact university responses to student drinking, it is necessary to consider the development of internal processes and current provision for alcohol-related issues.

3.5.1 Existing higher education services and responses to student alcohol use

It is argued that the all-encompassing nature of student life, in which many live, work and socialise within the relative confines of the university and local community, provides an opportunity to challenge unhealthy behaviours in students with a view to aiding the development of healthy adults (Swinford 2002). It is further argued that university provides an opportunity to positively impact, not only student health, but also that of wider communities and social groups that students live and work in, both now and in the future (Keeling 2001). The UK Government alcohol strategy previously discussed highlights university as a significant time for the development of problematic binge drinking habits, and states that universities have a duty to encourage students to drink more

moderately, as well as providing support for those experiencing problematic use. Multiple influences on practice can be identified as impacting how universities approaches this promotion of student wellbeing and minimisation of negative alcohol outcomes, and these will now be considered.

National policy acts to influence service provision and the promotion of student wellbeing in universities, tangentially through economic regulation and alcohol policy and also more directly through education policy. This influence can be observed in the development of support services within UK universities, linked to the post-1960's expansion of student numbers with increasingly varied and complex needs and necessitating a shift towards professional, segregated provision of welfare services (Appleton et al. 1978). This approach is now ubiquitous in UK universities, with support and well-being services addressing a wide range of student needs including finance, mental health and substance dependency. Assessment of the impact of current levels of alcohol support provision within these services is problematic, with little evaluation or evidence to support particular approaches (Orme and Coghill 2014), and take up of formal support services by students low (Dhillon et al. 2008). Evidence suggests that less than 10% of students experiencing pastoral issues seek help through formal channels, categorised as student support or Student Union (Walsh et al. 2009). However, this is not necessarily indicative of lack of personal issues among student populations, with academic staff citing increased requirement to spend time addressing pastoral issues with students (Taylor and Baker 2012), and staff often reporting feeling under-equipped to address presenting issues (Laws and Fielder 2012). This is supported by evidence indicating that HE staff are no more likely to be health literate than the average person in the street (Jorm et al. 2006), with significant implications for the capacity to promote health behaviour in university settings.

As well as providing support for drinking problems through student welfare services, internet searches suggest that significant numbers of HEI's incorporate management of alcohol-related issues into organisational policy, in either specific student alcohol documents, or in disciplinary frameworks. This provision is voluntarily undertaken, with sector guidance on duty-of-care towards students relating only to safeguarding those with mental health issues, (AMOSSHE 2001), rather than any requirement for universities to incorporate alcohol-specific activities into practice. Evidence on the impact of alcohol-specific policies in

reducing student drinking is limited (Walter and Kowalczyk 2013) and divergent views on applicability and content of alcohol policy have been identified among stakeholders (Snow et al. 2003). These issues may suggest potential difficulties in developing guidance with campus-wide reach and effectiveness, as well as stakeholder buy-in, where departmental and individual views differ.

Alongside policy-led approaches, a majority of UK universities undertake alcohol awareness work, which has traditionally focussed on empowerment models of health promotion through provision of information to individual students (Dunne and Somerset 2004). Typical awareness-raising on alcohol includes display of safe drinking materials and resources (Orme and Coghill 2014), often in conjunction with external partners with the same aims of encouraging adherence to 'sensible' limits of consumption. Interventions for students have been developed with a focus on adoption of a range of safety behaviours as a means of reducing negative behavioural outcomes as well as the public consequences of excess, including the recent Drinkaware campaign 'Why Let Good Times go Bad?', supported by government as well as national student bodies such as NUS. Evaluation of this campaign indicates some acceptance among students of the validity of advice given (Millward Brown 2011) but lack of evidence of reduction in consumption, reinforcing suggestions that increases in educational messaging have little impact on drinking levels among students (Larimer and Cronce 2002).

Students are often the focus of research conducted within university settings to trial new behaviour-change approaches, due to their accessibility as a sample, as well as known high consumption levels. In recent years, much of this research has been underpinned by two dominant theoretical approaches: motivational enhancement and social norms. The social norms approach is based on evidence indicating that people commonly misperceive the drinking levels of others, believing them to be higher than they are and subsequently leading to increases in own drinking levels (Baer et al. 1991; Perkins and Berkowitz 1986). It has been theorised that interventions which educate people about actual drinking norms in contrast with perceived norms will lead to changes in behaviour (Perkins 2002), although the mechanism of change is not necessarily clarified in literature relating to the approach. Empirical applications of the social norms approach within student populations have led to short-term decreases in consumption (Bewick et al. 2010; Carey et al 2010) but show little impact of sustained change, suggesting

that individualised approaches may not account for the contextual and social processes underpinning consumption.

Interventions based on motivational enhancement approaches stem from psychological models of behaviour which deem readiness to change as highly significant (Rollnick and Miller 1995) and as potentially appropriate for those whose motivation to change is low, including students (Tevyaw and Monti 2004). Where such approaches have been implemented within university settings with the aim of increasing motivation, results include a reduction in negative alcohol related consequences (Amaro et al. 2009) as well as reduced rates of binge drinking (LaBrie et al. 2009) but, as with normative approaches, there is a lack of evidence of sustained change over long periods as well as limited impact on highest level consumers (Carey et al. 2007). Meta-analysis of 62 interventions using either norms-based or motivational approaches, indicates that return to pre-intervention consumption levels generally occurs within 6 months and further

illustrates a lack of impact on the heaviest drinkers (Carey et al. 2007). These limitations in effectiveness may reflect lack of acknowledgement of complex, multi-level influences constituting risk factors for heavy alcohol use, including cultural, environmental and psychosocial components. Within alcohol research, individual-level factors are commonly targeted for interventions aimed at promoting behaviour change, although it has been argued that interventions aimed at changing the individual within an environment but which leave the environment as before may have limited effectiveness (McLeroy et al. 1988). Despite lack of evidence of impact, such general education approaches are likely to persist due to the higher costs and greater difficulties associated with delivering more targeted interventions.

Due to limited evidence of effectiveness for either policy-led or educational approaches, it has been argued that universities should instead strive to create health-promoting settings, with health thinking embedded into organisational processes in order to maximise likelihood of positive choices (Doherty and Dooris 2006). Within a UK context, this is enacted within the Healthy Universities programme, which is the primary health promotion scheme in HE, established to encourage universities to move away from the ad hoc delivery of health education campaigns, towards more routine health promotion activities (Dooris and Doherty 2010). The programme utilises the open systems model presented earlier, with a view to identifying inputs that lead to organisational processes (throughputs) that

may aid in the development of health outcomes. The aims of the scheme are to promote healthy and sustainable university environments through embedding health thinking in decisions on service provision, procurement, commercial activities etc., creating a 'whole campus' approach to student health, underpinned by shared values and consistent practice (Doherty and Dooris 2006).

Assessing the potential of campuses to act as health promoting environments involves understanding organisational processes on alcohol, including how risk and protective factors embedded into campus practices may be significant in moderating alcohol related harms to students. In a study of the contexts surrounding student drinking, Clapp et al. (2000) identified associations between various other on-campus practices and risks of negative alcohol outcomes. Provision of food at drinking events, for example within Student Unions, was found to mediate risks of negative consequences, while availability of illegal drugs was identified as resulting in increased alcohol-related problems. Evidence indicates a clustering of risk factors, with regular drug use more commonly reported in those who smoke and binge drink more frequently (El Ansari et al. 2014), suggesting that university approaches to the creation of healthy settings and the management of alcohol related harms must consider wider contexts surrounding events and locations, as well as the intersection of multiple behaviours.

The capacity to control on-site risk factors is further limited by economic drivers governing the sale of alcohol on campus, primarily through Student Union bars. Guan et al. (2015) argue that the same shifts that led to professional student welfare support saw changes to traditional Student Union provision, with less emphasis on politicised activity and a move towards focusing on commercial needs, aided by the provision of alcohol at traditionally cheaper rates than local competitors. The authors argue that this provision has been challenged by neo-liberal agendas which have created an intensively competitive market for student drinkers, meaning SU's are now required to compete for custom. The extent of provision for students discussed earlier, including shifts to home-based off-sales consumption, means that the pressure to maintain financial viability is ever higher, resulting in homogenised product offerings, primarily based on alcohol-linked social activities. This is embodied in the UK by Freshers, which reflects youth cultural discourses associating alcohol with sociability and student identity with excess consumption. The economic context resulting in this alcohol-heavy

provision contrasts with health concerns previously identified in national policy and guidance, where university is acknowledged as a time when heavy drinking can become normalised, and further illustrates the multi-level influences acting to constrain organisational capacity to create settings where moderate alcohol use is promoted.

As argued previously, approaches to moderating student alcohol use, which have met with limited success, have focussed too heavily on the individual agent as constructor of their own behaviour, with separation from context and culture. In contrast, the whole-campus approach acknowledges that groups, including students, should instead be considered as embedded in social institutions which act to provide frameworks for behaviour (Poole et al. 1986). The characterisation of 'student' is an on-going cultural construction (Meyer and Jepperson 2000), influenced by social shifts occurring beyond the confines of the individual agent. These shifts impact not only actor identity but also the contexts in which actors are located, as evidenced in the previous examination of the effect of marketisation on HE relationships. The capacity to deliver alcohol prevention and support services in campus contexts must be understood in relation to university structure and function, as well as the influence of external and internal stakeholders on development and delivery. In order to understand alcohol-related processes in evidence within universities it is necessary to analyse the impact of internal construction, drawing on Organisational Theory approaches.

3.5.2 The role of internal organisational structure in the development of university alcohol processes

It has been argued that the study of student alcohol use would benefit from greater focus on processes at work within universities as complex organisations as well as the wider cultural context that they operate in (Dowdall and Wechsler 2002). We have defined the open systems approach necessary to understand environmental inputs impacting university function and seen key examples of influences on organisational processes. In order to understand the enactment of inputs within the university it is necessary to develop a framework for the interrogation of internal university practices and the factors shaping these.

Organisations have been defined as devices in which groups of people can attempt to meet commonly understood goals and requirements (Katz and Kahn 1978) that they would be unable to perform by themselves (Hatch and Cunliffe 2006). A

principal theorist in this field is Silverman (1970), who categorised organisations as always working towards a primary goal, or purpose, with all actions assessed in relation to the attainment of this goal. He distinguished between formal and informal organisations, with the former characterised by rules governing practices and conduct in terms of both internal and external relationships. This contrasts with informal social institutions, such as peer groups or families, characterised by less structured social relations more likely to be taken for granted. Silverman suggests that organisations are recognisable through the following features, which can be examined empirically: they will come into being at a specific time for a defined purpose which may be discoverable by the researcher if the original founders can be accessed; they will have recognisable needs; they will take actions to ensure their own continuation through review of practice in terms of structure and function.

Research into organisations has historically resulted from managerial concerns over performance and attempts to solve identified problems (Silverman 1970). This has been approached by either focussing on macro-level organisational structures or on micro-level agent behaviour, with little consideration of the interaction between these (Webb 2006), or with the wider environmental setting. Limitations inherent in these approaches saw them give way to the development of open systems theories previously described, which, as well as acknowledging the permeability of institutional boundaries, recognised that organisations are constructed of inter-dependent parts, necessitating understanding of the interactions and relationships between components of the system.

Success in complex organisations requires completion of key tasks which are subdivided into attainable goals, achieved through a structure composed of multiple smaller units, or sub-systems, within one recognisable identity (Rollinson 1998) and coupled with necessary autonomy of function. The growth of the HE sector in both student numbers and academic offering has led to increased organisational complexity (Bargh et al. 1996), with configuration and identity developed to promote attainment of multiple common goals, including student recruitment and retention, financial survival and research status. At the same time, market forces and the advent of competition previously described, have seen universities strive to promote a wider student experience encompassing social opportunities, skills and employability, necessitating a broader range of staff capabilities than ever before. In universities this complexity is evidenced by multiple sub-systems,

comprised of specialised departments required to meet this range of student needs, including Residences, Student Welfare, Careers support etc., which are still recognisable under one organisational identity but are each tasked with their own specialist duties. These departments constitute nested social systems (Shilling 1992), in which the needs of the wider organisational identity are addressed as a result of processes enacted by knowledgeable agents within specific job roles.

A number of analogies have been utilised in historical discussions of the form of organisations as well as empirical study. These are described by Rollinson (1998), commencing with the machine metaphor, which understands an organisation through assessment of what it was designed to do i.e. its primary goal, and the configuration of internal parts set up to meet that goal. In this view, agents are considered only as other component parts of the machine whose behaviour will be explainable in reference to the ultimate goal and therefore predictable, suggesting a lack of attribution of agency and highlighting a significant limitation to the approach.

The organism metaphor is more outward-looking and locates the organisation within the wider environment. It focuses on the part played by components towards aiding the survival of the organism within the habitat through their contribution to the function of the whole. Although this acknowledges environmental impacts it is still constrained by lack of attribution of agency to members and assumes a common purpose for them as components of the organism. This is contrasted starkly by the political systems metaphor, which defines organisations as comprised of sub-systems competing with each other for attainment of survival for their particular unit, minimising the level of working towards a common goal. Although acknowledging that agent conceptions and role relations within organisations are likely to vary, Rollinson (1998) argue that this overstates the degree of competition in operation and does not account for evidence of co-operation.

Lastly, the cultural systems metaphor argues that the beliefs and shared conceptualisations held by members will shape the practices in evidence in organisations. Within higher education, this is enacted as a shared learning culture within universities, which defines their broad organisational approach (Rowley 1998), and is held by those at all levels of the structure (Hofstede 1998). Within organisational theory, the cultural systems approach argues that the result

of organisational sub-division is the development of sub-cultures which, while working under a unified banner of identity, will vary in significant aspects (Rollinson 1998), including response to macro-level influences as well as agential variations, thus impacting the practices within departments. While shared cognitions of members relating to broad recognition of overarching organisational culture exist, this will be enacted differentially through sub-groups (Sackmann 1992), which, coupled with departmental autonomy, leads to distinctly different internal cultures. These will incorporate the personal biographies that staff import to their roles, as well as the likely differentiation in their interpretations of rules and practices (Webb 2006).

This approach acknowledges human behaviour as the means of enacting underlying organisational culture, while recognising that this will be expressed differently in complex organisational settings where multiple roles and departments co-exist (Rowley 1998), thus attributing agency to staff roles. Consideration of processes of institutionalisation in university sub-systems, each addressing different aspects of modular student identity, involves interpreting agent actions in relation to departmental and wider organisational requirements, as expressed in day-to-day interaction. Analysis of function allows for examination of both micro and macro level influences on processes developed to address department-specific issues relating to student drinking. A sub-cultural approach is arguably the most appropriate for university settings, where sub-systems are required to meet organisational aims. Universities necessarily function as locations of learning, social activity and living accommodation, with specialist departmental provision for each of these. Internal competition is not required, negating the political systems approach, but an overall organisational aim - student retention - can be identified.

3.5.3 Institutionalisation and the development of organisational cultures and sub-cultures

We have seen that universities can be characterised as complex open systems comprised of multiple sub-cultures developed as a result of segmented working and autonomy of practice. The processes operating within these university departments and governing responses to alcohol issues are maintained through the action of institutionalisation.

As argued by Powell and Colyvas (2008), institutions are enacted by people at all levels within day-to-day micro-processes of social interaction. These social interactions become institutionalised as recurring processes, differentially exhibited within the multiple units which permit the existence of distinct student behaviours under one banner of university identity e.g. learner, tenant, socialiser. Within organisational studies, the definition of institutionalisation as a dynamic process marked a shift from internally-focussed explanations of organisational behaviour which primarily attributed action to rational choice (Frumkin and Galaskiewicz 2004), and allowed for incorporation of agent behaviour as well as acknowledgement of influences from external forces including other organisations (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Institutionalisation includes the development of rules and norms governing activities within specialised departments, which are internalised by members and expressed as repeated practices, leading to the formation of stable bodies that maintain over time (Barley and Tolbert 1997). These repeat practices, along with departmental policies and processes, mean that institutional elements are transmitted to new members and become resistant to change through subsequent internalisation (Zucker 1987).

Sub-cultures institutionalised into organisational sub-systems are likely to influence staff conceptualisation of job roles and the location of alcohol within this. Staff concepts of their role identities and duties serve to connect them to the overall organisational structure (Webb 2006) as well as their own departments. Multiple identity layers are therefore definable - as members of the university, their departments and in their unique positions - illustrating a further level of organisational complexity influencing the performance of agent roles. Enactment of these identity layers signifies modular agency (Gellner 1996), allowing staff to adapt to the flexibility needed to enact roles within complex organisations, where job requirements may evolve in response to changing organisational needs and external pressures (Adkins & Lury 1999). Job roles, constituting rules of conduct, facilitate organisational routines enacted by individuals, offering boundaries for action while permitting expressions of personal agency in routine duties and during interaction with others (Kallinikos 2003).

An illustration of sub-cultures as responsive to external influences can be identified in the segmentation of university accommodation and academic services common in HEI's, with accommodation quality now actively marketed as

part of added value within the student experience (Blakey 1994). The changing nature of staff-student relationships as a result of marketisation and the commercialisation of key campus activities, means that intervention in student behaviour may be more difficult, with rights of student-as-customer constraining capacity to act. The market-led approach manifesting in the commercialisation of residences, promotes the rights of student-as-tenant, arguably signifying reduction in the monitoring role of residential staff within a landlord-tenant relationship. It can be argued that the lack of capacity to promote responsibility through pastoral care in any formal way may have implications for perceived responsibility for alcohol behaviour management within among staff in universities, even in sub-cultures such as Residences where alcohol consumption is prevalent.

Although it has long been recognised that residences can act as a learning environment for students (Parameswaran and Bowers 2012), attempts to intervene in the setting have been limited and, as seen in the previous chapter, high-risk consumption patterns are embedded in residential life. Evidence from the US sector, indicates that active creation of residences as a learning environment, through activities such as provision of study groups and greater involvement of academic staff, reduces alcohol-related behavioural issues even where no other sanctions exist (Brower 2008). Although suggesting a potentially promising strategy, further investigation in a UK context is needed. Despite all UK universities having policies regarding the management and prevention of illegal drug use on site, regulation of private behaviour within residential settings is problematic due to student rights as private tenants. Furthermore, unlike US institutions, where the legal age of consumption is 21 and residence halls are often 'dry', students in UK establishments are legally allowed to drink, making legislating for in-house consumption difficult and suggesting other approaches may be required. As previously argued, this behaviour regulation may be increasingly difficult in a Residential sub-culture based on a consumer-oriented relationship, where student-as-customer has rights associated with this status and departments are required to consider customer satisfaction. Although strongly recommended in UK government strategies, promotion of safe alcohol consumption is not the primary role of universities or a key responsibility of staff within the HE context, in either academic or residential roles. Coupled with the lack of health promotion knowledge cited earlier among university staff, it is potentially likely to be perceived as outside the purview of their duties or capabilities. To better

understand the potential enablers and barriers within university sub-cultures, greater understanding of the development of departmental responsibilities and staff roles in relation to alcohol would aid in consideration of institutional responses.

This thesis argues that understanding of intra-organisational factors, including stakeholder interpretations of wider cultural norms and behaviours and their expression in daily practice, as well as contributions from key stakeholders to the development of organisational approaches, would be aided by identification of routinised processes within university sub-systems. The development and maintenance of segmented organisational sub-systems, with autonomy of working and distinct job roles, questions the capacity of universities to develop 'whole system' approaches, discussed earlier in the context of the Healthy Universities programme, which by definition requires commonality of practice. Further, the characterisations of student alcohol use by departments and individuals within organisational sub-systems may be highly significant in the development of variable practices, suggesting evidence for the impact of agency of university processes. Understanding these variations would aid in consideration of sub-system practices and alcohol norms within university environments.

3.6 A suggested approach to analysing multi-level influences on university function

It was concluded in the previous chapter that the range of influences impacting student alcohol use span multiple levels, from national policy directives to intrapersonal factors. We have seen in this section that the operating context for universities is similarly impacted at multiple levels, with the intersection of internal and external processes highly significant in the development of spaces for the development and maintenance of alcohol norms. As argued previously, approaches to moderating student alcohol use have met with limited success and have not fully explored the impact of internal relations intersecting with external factors, with separation of organisational function from context and culture. Groups, including students, staff and university departments, should be considered as embedded in social institutions which act to provide frameworks for behaviour (Poole et al. 1986) and are themselves embedded in multiple overlapping settings. These people, institutions and settings are highly significant in the on-going cultural construction of the category of student as actor (Meyer and Jepperson 2000), suggesting that capacity for change involves social processes

occurring beyond the confines of the individual agent. These processes act on, not only actor identity, but on the contexts in which actors are located and must be understood in order to fully conceptualise the behaviour of interest.

It was identified in the previous chapter that greater understanding of student transition into the university setting and the multi-level influences encountered during this process would aid in better understanding of the stubbornness of problematic drinking within this group. This included consideration of the functional role of alcohol during transition to university for new students, as well as the intersection of student transition needs with university processes. As such, the research aims of the thesis were stated in these questions:

- What multi-level influences contribute to student conceptualisations of alcohol and student life and when do these influences occur?
- What is the role of alcohol in new student adaptation to university life and the development of peer relationships?

Through examining the literature on structure and function within complex organisational settings, including universities, we can also identify factors that may be significant in the construction of policy and processes on alcohol. It is reasonable to argue that, as students are impacted at multiple ecological levels, universities may be similarly affected by wider cultural changes and policy decisions, as well as inter and intrapersonal factors, suggesting the validity of a socio-ecological approach.

Due to the complex nature of HEI construction, investigation of potential variations in the impact of such factors on university sub-systems, as well as on role construction and conceptualisation in key staff in HEI's, will aid in overall analysis of the setting within which students enact heavy drinking norms. As such, key questions arising from examination of organisational function which will be investigated in this thesis, are:

- How do multi-level influences act on the university in the development of alcohol processes?
- How do organisational processes and student transition behaviours intersect in relation to student drinking behaviour?
- How do students interpret the impact of university alcohol processes?

The next section will outline a suggested framework for examination of these questions.

3.6.1 Intoxogenic drinking spaces and student culture

As we have seen so far, student alcohol use occurs within a cultural context that is politically and economically permissive of excess, with lack of regulatory capacity coupled with individualised expectations of the right-to-consume as part of youth drinking culture. Student drinking is facilitated by both NTE spaces constructed for this purpose and by university settings which represent environments where heavy drinking is normalised and relatively unchallenged. Within the setting of student transition, wider cultural conceptions of university life as a time of heavy drinking are reinforced. We have identified that wider organisational and sub-cultural processes may make holistic institutional responses less likely, meaning the development and maintenance of problematic use within broad university settings, and specific sub-cultures, is maintained. An effective way to characterise these settings is through the concept of intoxicogenic drinking spaces. This concept was introduced by Seaman et al. (2013) to discuss alcohol culture in Scotland and is based on assessment of environmental contributions likely to result in the maintenance of alcohol behaviour. The approach mirrors conceptualisation of the Obesogenic environment described by Swinburn et al. (1999), involving identification of micro and macro-level factors that make a particular behaviour, specifically obesity, more or less likely to occur, including economic factors, physical design of spaces, availability of resources, political and cultural rules in operation and resistance to change.

Seaman et al. (2013) argue that UK drinking culture is not homogenised but instead is comprised of sub-cultures related to geographic, temporal and biographical variations. These include urban/rural contrasts, age-related sub-groupings of drinker styles and variations within the countries of the UK. Within these sub-groupings values, practices and meanings associated with alcohol use vary, leading to different responses to attempts to mediate alcohol-related harms, such as price manipulation. The authors highlight the unique configuration of young adult drinking cultures, where the liminality of the life-stage involves the association of alcohol with self-discovery and exploration, as well as social bonds. Within this life-stage, perceived acceptability of heavy consumption of cheap alcohol as well as enhanced sense of belonging in drinking environments such as nightclubs, is sustained by contextual presentations and availability of

alcohol, thus presenting intoxicogenic drinking spaces, where drunkenness norms are reinforced. It can be argued that a university can be observed as an environment where an intoxicogenic drinking culture is evident. Within a university setting the maintenance of intoxicogenic spaces, including Student Union and Residences, may be reinforced by organisational and local environmental factors, which can be identified through empirical study.

3.6.2 Adopting a socio-ecological approach to the university as an open system

This thesis argues that the university, as the primary context of student identity and behaviour, is best approached as an open system, comprised of multiple sub-systems and role functions, each differentially impacted by influences at multiple ecological levels. We have seen that universities reflect the wider cultural and environmental setting in which they function and are constantly exchanging information with this setting, receiving inputs from a number of internal and external sources. Many of these external inputs may be identified as stakeholders who have concerns over the actions of the organisation, as either cooperative or competitive interests (Donaldson and Preston 1995). Identification of stakeholders involves assessment of both the immediate and wider environment to consider those both directly and indirectly impacted by organisational operation (Rollinson 1998). The complex range of services provided by universities leads to a broad pool of stakeholders who impact or are impacted by the provision of these services (Bastedo 2005). The role of both internal and external stakeholders in the development of university policy and practice in areas of student alcohol use should therefore be considered as part of an assessment of multi-level influences on practice.

In order to carry out empirical work in organisations it is essential to consider system boundaries as a means of guiding research activity. Openness in a system doesn't indicate lack of boundaries but instead signifies that it is permeable and permits information exchange (Dubin 1978), with decisions on boundaries necessitating ontological thinking regarding what is considered really within the organisational system and what is not (Bryant 2002). Consideration of university boundaries involves decisions regarding the extent of both sphere of influence and stakeholder involvement, for example through considering the role of parents of prospective students, future employers etc. who could all be designated as within the sphere of influence and therefore the boundary of university function.

However, for the purpose of much empirical work it would be impractical to consult with all of these potential contributors. Bryant (2002) instead suggests beginning the research process by drawing tentative boundaries based on the requirements of the research problem which will then be more clearly defined once functional relationships within the system are better understood. Defining these relationships is considered a principal task of organisational analysis (Silverman 1970) and decisions on inclusion for the current thesis will be discussed in the next chapter.

When investigating the function of a university as an open system with nominal boundaries (Rollinson 1998), adoption of a socio-ecological approach aids in capturing the range of influences impacting on the system, as understood by agents with key roles in process development. We can apply this to university settings, through consideration of the impact of macro-level changes such as marketisation, as well as micro-level inputs including staff role development and the enactment of day-to-day duties. A socio-ecological analysis allows for identification of intrapersonal determinants and consideration of how influences at other levels may mediate or moderate their effect. Utilising this framework, areas of potential interest for empirical analysis include:

National/policy level factors including the impact of marketisation and consumer culture within higher education, which have redefined the relationship between university and student. Understanding how these have impacted the provision of alcohol services and social experiences, as understood by key stakeholders, will highlight their influence. Government policy on alcohol should also be considered where resulting impacts on practice are identifiable.

Community factors are described within the socio-ecological framework as mediating structures, which define and reproduce the norms and values of a given space. Community is here defined by shared physical space or by common interests, meaning geographic boundaries may be elastic and, as with organisations and social groups, the norms and values evident in communities may be health enhancing or health threatening for members. Identification of community stakeholders involved in alcohol practices impacting the university, and the influence of their relationships with the organisation can illustrate the permeability of boundaries as well as community-university interactions which may impact capacity to moderate student drinking. This includes examination of

economic relationships between campuses and local businesses providing alcohol services.

In terms of understanding processes relating to alcohol, the rules and resources accessed by stakeholders to develop **organisational-level** responses are derived from what is available to them, and are observable as routinised actions (Poole et al. 1986) which can be accessed through empirical work. Institutional/organisational factors for consideration include the formal rules and resources embedded within an organisation in relation to alcohol, as well as the informal practices that exist, which impact on health behaviour of people within the organisation. This impact may be direct, e.g. alcohol sales practices, or less direct as either enhancement or barrier to health practices. Greater understanding of organisational culture in relation to alcohol, and the development and actions of subsequent sub-cultures, allows for examination of the alcohol context presented to new students, as well as aiding consideration of the development and maintenance of sub-cultures impacting provision of alcohol policy and practice.

At the **interpersonal** level, organisational features influence individual and group behaviour and the interaction of agents on a daily basis. The formation of job roles and groups in university which impact the development of alcohol-related processes should be identified. Individual staff members' conceptualisation of job roles, and the position of alcohol within these, may impact the performance of those roles and, in turn, the operation of the organisation. In relation to **intrapersonal** processes, staff beliefs around alcohol, as well as their personal biographies, may potentially impact on their actions within an organisational setting and should be identified.

Interpretation of the interaction between agent and context through the levels of the socio-ecological framework requires consideration of theoretical approaches which have aimed to conceptualise structure and agent as co-creators of both the environment and observed behaviours within it. This incorporates the perception of the agent as an active participant and co-constructer of their structural environment and the processes at work within it, rather than a passive recipient of external constraints. An example of such an approach is the theory of Structuration (Giddens 1984) which elaborates the notion of co-constructed systems. Giddens developed Structuration Theory in an attempt to describe the contribution of both structure and agency to social life and processes, with a

focus on the production and maintenance of social conduct through understanding the duality of structure. Duality of structure refers to the production and reproduction of social systems over space and time through social interaction; a process identified as praxis (Cohen 1993). A Structurationist approach involves the mapping of persistent practices, or routines, within the organisational setting through identification of patterned social relations maintained over space and time, enacted as the structuring properties which shape the patterns of social life (Giddens 1984). This theory has previously been utilised within organisational research to understand how change occurs within institutions even where processes are predominantly maintained through the enactment of routinised practices (Conrad 2005). Its inclusion of micro and macro levels in analysis of the duality of structure ensures inclusion of agents in understanding of organisational processes, contrasting with previous approaches characterising agents as more passive recipients of structural constraints (Hotho 2008). It can further aid in understanding of the changes at wider societal level which impact organisations and agents (Conrad 2005), illustrating potential utility in a socio-ecological analysis. Structuration can therefore be utilised as a theoretical approach for understanding the interaction between levels within the socio-ecological framework, and will be drawn on as an explanatory tool for the current research, elaborated in the next chapter.

4 Research methods

4.1 Chapter overview

This chapter will outline the ontological, epistemological and methodological approach formulated to address the research questions of this thesis, including description of the research design adopted. It will present the methods of data collection developed for organisational analysis to investigate both students and the university setting, outlining the mixed qualitative methods adopted. The process of management and analysis of data will also be discussed.

4.2 Theoretical framework and methodology

Blaikie (1993) describes ontology, epistemology and methodology as three essential areas of consideration for those embarking on social enquiry. Ontology refers to the nature of social reality, considering what can be said to exist, what it looks like and what it is composed of. Epistemology is concerned with how and what can be known about this identified reality, and considers whether knowledge of it, rather than belief about it, is possible. Epistemological positions follow from ontology, meaning decisions about what constitutes reality lead to assessments of how we can go about knowing it (O'Mahoney and Vincent 2014).

Ontology therefore is concerned with the 'ultimate reality that we are all part of' (Plowright 2011, p. 176). The primary ontological argument centres on the nature of this reality and our relationship with it, specifically on the question of whether there is an external, 'real world' which exists distinct from our beliefs about it or whether everything within the social world is instead a construction of social actors (Snape and Spencer 2003). The former is identified as a realist position and the latter constructivist (Bryman 2008), with a range of related ontological positions on a continuum between the two absolutes. Also of significance for research practice is the ontological argument that the social world is never static, but is instead constantly produced and reproduced through practices, with these practices and the interpretation of them by actors forming the objects of research (Archer 1998). These practices include the research process itself, beginning at the point of conception of the idea, with both the research design as planned in advance and the research as enacted on the ground constituting real, unique processes. Research therefore does not describe what is happening but is part of it (Maxwell 2012), with this embeddedness suggesting that empirical work should

be under-pinned by meta-theory, encompassing ontology and epistemology (Scott 2005) and acting to guide decisions on proceeding with the investigation (Fleetwood 2004). In light of this, the meta-theoretical underpinnings of the present research will now be described.

The ontological stance of the present research is that of Critical Realism, as described by Bhaskar (1975). Critical Realism purports that there is an external world which can be considered real, but that our understanding of it is mediated by our perceptions and is therefore an interpretation (Maxwell 2012). It is rooted in Kantian Transcendentalism, which argues that what we see in the world is filtered through who we are, meaning objective representation is unachievable (Archer 1998). Critical Realist assumptions informing research practice state that mental processes are considered real phenomena, meaning that understanding both an individual's observable situation and their perspective on that situation are valid research aims. The position further argues that when studying social systems it must be recognised that they are not closed, meaning that relationships between systems and surrounding contexts also constitute real objects of study (Maxwell 2012), consistent with the open systems approach to organisations outlined in the previous chapter. Repeated practices observable in social systems such as organisations constitute routines that can be established through empirical work (Fleetwood 2005), which are then embodied in the actions of agents and in the conceptions that they hold of them (Manicas 1998). Empirical applications of Critical Realism include understanding observable processes through identification of the generative mechanisms that may underpin them (Aastrup and Halldorsson 2008), adopting the most appropriate methodology for the research problem.

As stated, ontological assumptions act to guide epistemological stance, with epistemology not only impacting methodological decisions but also providing justification for claims to knowledge made by the research (Carter and Little 2007). Similar to the realist-constructivist debate, discussions in epistemology have centred around the positivism-interpretivism dichotomy, representing radically divergent positions on how we can claim to know the world. For adherents to a positivist epistemology, as with a realist ontology, the research focus is on observable behaviours measured using the tools of the natural sciences (Blaikie 1993). The natural and social worlds are not considered ontologically different, meaning that natural science methods are appropriate for the

interrogation of either domain. Positivist enquiry is predominantly a deductive process, with emphasis on explanation through the use of theory to generate testable hypotheses, the results of which are then used to develop laws (Bryman 2008), which are deemed to describe objective truths about the external world.

This claim to objectivity is challenged by proponents of an interpretive paradigm where understanding meaning and subjective experience, rather than explaining observed practices, is central (Bryman 2008). Adoption of an interpretivist position implies that the methods utilised within natural science research are considered inappropriate for the study of the social world for two key reasons. Firstly, because the world of social actors is primarily one of meaning and interpretation (Schwandt 2000) and secondly, that the immutable laws of nature strived for and underpinning such research have no equivalent in the world of human behaviour and interaction (Snape and Spencer 2003). Interpretivist research is not a pursuit done to an external world but is instead a collaborative, participatory act based on research relationships (Carter and Little 2007) and on methods aimed at understanding the settings in which actors develop the meanings they ascribe to the world and their actions within it (Schwandt 2000).

These polarised positions both risk exclusion of objects of study that are valuable to understanding the social world. Critical Realism is adopted in the present study as a credible epistemological middle ground, due to its capacity to encompass elements of both constructivist and realist positions (Sims-Schouten and Riley 2014). It purports that physical settings and interpretations of the social processes occurring within settings are both real, with descriptions of these obtained through empirical enquiry constituting interpretations made both by the agent and the researcher. This is not avoidable through methodological decisions, such as attempts to control research conditions, and instead should be considered as central to the process of enquiry, suggesting that actions are always best interpreted in context (Scott 2005).

Within research, decisions stem from the adoption of such meta-theoretical positions about the nature of reality and how we can investigate it (Morgan and Smircich 1980). These decisions then underpin methodology, referring to theories on how to conduct research into the identified reality which then guides choice of methods. The Critical Realist underpinnings of this thesis supported adoption of methodology aimed at uncovering thick description (O'Mahoney and Vincent 2014) with a focus on describing social processes in context and interpretations by

agents. This emphasis on agent conceptions and rich data therefore favoured development of qualitative methodology (Easton 2009), which is now outlined.

4.3 Research design and methodology

This thesis emphasised understanding of social processes and human relationships, thus favouring a qualitative methodology underpinned by Critical Realist ontology and epistemology. The goal of qualitative research is for the researcher to expand and generalise theories, not to establish frequency of occurrence of a phenomenon (Hyde 2000). Qualitative strategies can be applied to a range of approaches to social enquiry (Denzin and Lincoln 2000) where the underpinning conception of the social world is as constituted by open-ended processes (Morgan and Smircich 1980). Whichever methods are employed, they will be unified by an emphasis on naturalistic research settings and primacy of meaning, specifically the meanings held by those central to the enquiry (Bryman 2008). Qualitative research aims to understand social problems through consideration of the context in which the behaviour is embedded (Gilbert 1990) and is applicable where a problem or setting has a significant degree of complexity (Ritchie 2003). Dynamic social processes are emphasised over immutable events (Snape and Spencer 2003), with such approaches able to uncover the emergent nature of these processes as developed and expressed by knowledgeable agents (Layder et al. 1991). This paradigm was therefore relevant for the aims of the thesis, in understanding the interpreted role of student alcohol consumption (Dempster 2011) and its relationship to the complex, multi-level university setting.

Qualitative approaches support a range of methods, with selection determined by the problem at hand and what is hoped to be uncovered (Sayer 1992). As the research problem involved identification of processes with the aim of explaining system functions, a research design of case study underpinned by Critical Realism was effective (Easton 2009). A Critical Realist approach to case study research means acknowledging the importance of both micro and macro level functions, specifically in the consideration of both structure and agency within observable processes (Reed 1997). This is consistent with the findings of the socio-ecological analysis described earlier, which identified multi-level influences as significant in the development of both agent and organisational practices.

This complexity further necessitates the incorporation of multiple theories of behaviour within the conceptual framework of the research. Where a Critical

Realist approach underpins the use of case-study, the role of theory is contextually specific, meaning it is selected for its relevance to the reality being studied and its capacity to explain underlying mechanisms, processes and structures in the actual setting being examined (Dobson 1999). Observable processes represent the properties of the case, which are studied through accessing agent conceptions of their meanings (Pozzebon and Pinsonneault 2005). The theoretical framework underpinning the case study guides multiple factors, including site selection and data to be collected (Merriam 1988). Although case research is not restricted to any epistemological or methodological paradigm (Stake 2000) and is not exclusively a qualitative approach (Simons 2009), this was considered effective for the present research, where multiple potential generative mechanisms may be significant in university processes and where understanding was sought into how these processes arose (Fleetwood 2004). Case studies can recognise and incorporate this level of complexity (Bassegy 1999) and are singularly appropriate for uncovering processes and mechanisms due to their capacity to record multiple perspectives and personalities of significance from within the case (Merriam 1988). Further, they present the opportunity for methodological and data triangulation (Denzin 1978), with adopted research methods commonly including interviews, observations and documents but incorporating any data deemed as contributing to understanding of decision making processes (Yin 1989). Decisions on inclusion of data are guided by the theoretical framework and epistemological standpoint of the researcher (Crowe et al. 2011), with clear indication of relevance to the research problem (Yin 1989).

The case study approach adopted in this research incorporates multiple levels of analysis within a single case, reflecting the ecological approach which highlighted students, staff, organisation and local context as significant in the construction and maintenance of student drinking behaviour. This suggested a research focus on the interaction of agent and setting(s), meaning decontextualizing either is inappropriate (Christie et al. 2000) and necessitating incorporation of multiple levels of analysis. A multi-level single case study is relevant where the setting is intricate (Morgan and Smircich 1980) and where contextual meaning is being sought in a bounded system (Yin 1989), as identified here through characterisation of the university as a bounded but open setting. The research purports that case studies can inform theory development (Yin 1989), with multi-level case studies more likely to be effective for informing ecologically-based interpretations of events across and within multiple levels. Further, case study approaches focussing

on single levels of analysis e.g. agent behaviour only, risk encountering the same limitations previously discussed in relation to mono-level interventions, where key interactions and relationships of influence are not identified due to lack of incorporation of context. The single case method allows for full analytical attention to be paid to events at one site, contrasting with the risk of multi-site studies where focus may be on comparisons over content (Dyer and Wilkins 1991) and further emphasises use of multiple data sources for triangulation, consistent with Critical Realist approaches (Christie et al. 2000).

The present research draws on the case study strategy described by Stake (1995). Stake's approach is not methodologically deterministic, instead focusing on whatever best addresses the research problem, with features for consideration including key stakeholders, physical setting, history and wider influences, suggesting consistency with a socio-ecological perspective. Stake distinguished three types of case study for research purposes: intrinsic, instrumental and collective. The intrinsic case is selected due to its possession of unique features inherently significant to the problem and contrasts with the instrumental approach, where the specific case is less significant than its capacity to aid in exploration of a wider social issue. Lastly, the collective approach aims to select multiple contrasting cases for the purpose of comparison. These classifications are not restrictive and initial selection can be modified throughout the research as the problem is better understood (Crowe et al. 2011). The present research is categorised as an instrumental case study, with case selection not based on unique features but on opportunity to study the research problem. The case should not be considered as a 'typical' example of a university, with concepts of typicality deemed problematic in social settings where each possesses unique processes and interactions (Stake 2000). Universities vary considerably in features such as size, campus structure, student demographic and course provision, meaning that aiming to select a typical case from such multi-level, complex environments is unrealistic. However, this acknowledgement of uniqueness does not exclude the possibility of gaining insights that may contribute to discussion of processes at other examples of the broader category of universities.

Within Stake's categorisation, case studies aim to elucidate meanings held by those within the case, contrasted with realist case studies focussed on establishing causality (Bassegy 1999). They aim to provide rich description, which is utilised to develop a conceptual framework, then assessed against a previously

determined theoretical approach developed from interrogation of relevant literature (Merriam 1988). Case selection requires identification of a bounded system for study, while acknowledging that there are no closed systems in the realm of social interaction (Archer 1998). This bounded system can be identified as having a primary purpose and multiple secondary goals, as well as inter-related parts, or sub-systems within it (Stake 2000). Establishing boundaries, which by definition is an exclusive process, should not be perceived as prohibitive but is simply a practical tool to select a case to work with (Merriam 1988). The bounded case may be an organisation, a geographical space or a social group, and is only a case for the defined duration and extent of the study (Crowe et al. 2011).

Case identification in the present study utilised a previously existing organisational identity to define system boundaries, specifically a named university. Although having a recognisable identity as a bounded, total system, this is not indicative of closure, with varying degrees of system openness indicating the level of information exchange with the wider environment (Dubin 1978). This recognises, as identified in Chapter 3, that universities are engaged with key stakeholders outside the boundary of the setting, meaning a decision for case study researchers is to what extent wider social and cultural contexts will be considered as significant in shaping the history and function of the case and therefore necessarily featured in the study (Doolin 1998). It was previously identified that understanding of the intersection of these multiple contexts and their impact on the development of organisational alcohol process is limited, necessitating consideration of these within data collection. In terms of the inclusion of wider social and cultural contexts in this research, these were assessed by examining how information, including external policy and guidance on alcohol, was exchanged with the setting and incorporated into practice. Information deemed appropriate for inclusion and analysis was selected through a search of relevant local and national government policy, as well as from discussion within stakeholder interviews. The case study facilitated exploration of the boundedness of the system through mapping of functional relationships between key stakeholders (Dubin 1978), both within the setting and between the organisation and the wider community.

4.3.1 Research methods

The development of data collection methods drew on Jamal et al. (2013), who utilised Structuration Theory (Giddens 1984) to suggest that two observable systems are present within educational settings: the institutional system comprised of staff structures and processes, and the student system comprised of peer structures and processes. As issues distinct to each stakeholder group had already been identified, the thesis aimed to consider both systems through employment of theoretical frameworks specific to each, which are now described.

To address gaps in understanding of alcohol and student behaviour, semi-structured interviews were selected for their capacity to incorporate theoretical constructs while retaining the flexibility to explore new avenues (Newton 2010). The student interview schedule was developed to incorporate key theoretical concepts identified earlier, applying socio-ecological approaches to identifying determinants of health behaviour. This included understanding the role of alcohol in the social processes of new university students during transition, necessitating the discussion of pre and post arrival experiences. The inclusion of temporality in construction of the student interview schedule reflected life-course approaches and was used for exploration of pre and post-arrival experiences and reflections. This included discussion on pre-arrival information obtained, alcohol expectations, anxieties and fears, as well as experience of post-arrival processes and peer relationship development, reflecting the significance of peer relationships as identified within previous research.

In relation to the institutional system, previous analysis of organisational theory and research identified sub-systems as the standard construction within complex organisational settings, with further exploration necessary to understand the impact of this construction on processes relating to alcohol. Within the case study design, theoretical concepts drawn from organisational approaches informed question development, leading to discussion of sub-system approaches, role development and organisational identity. Semi-structured interviews with staff from identified sub-systems were selected to explore descriptive aspects of structure along with agent reflections on alcohol issues and organisational responses. This included consideration of role development in relation to alcohol and departmental responses, as well as personal reflections on alcohol issues and university activities.

Further methods were developed to span both identified systems, specifically document analysis and field visits. On-site field work is commonly utilised within case-study research, both for data provision and for the purpose of triangulation (Yin 1989), and can involve varying degrees of structure and researcher participation. It is a valuable tool for providing thick description (Geertz 1973), aiming to add richness to data through details such as construction of the physical setting (Mulhall 2003), as well as providing opportunity for immersion in the environment, reducing potential boundaries between researcher and researched (Angrosino and Mays de Pérez 2000). Here, observations were used to add to understanding of processes within the setting around the presentation of alcohol. As identified earlier, the economic imperative for those selling alcohol results in sales and marketing approaches impacting consumption levels, with direct observation of this carried out to add depth to agent descriptions and interpretations of behaviour.

Documents influencing the enactment of day-to-day processes are important data sources for research into organisations (Bryman 2008) and benefit from reduction of bias in documents existing prior to the research (Merriam 1988). Documentary data should be assessed on history, purpose and source information (Guba and Lincoln 1981) with further consideration given to who is being targeted, reference to evidence and any explicit use of stereotypes and preconceptions, as well as any dominant discourses on alcohol embedded within the text (Rapley 2007). It is necessary to be mindful that information on the process of development may not be fully available to the researcher (Yin 1989) and furthermore, document significance may be restricted by levels of agent awareness. Policy and guidance documents on alcohol were considered, both for direct analysis and as a discussion point in interviews, with awareness of key processes examined in both staff and students.

4.3.2 Researcher reflexivity

Within the design of the current study and congruent with the epistemology of the thesis, consideration was given to the researcher role as co-creator of both the process and means of data collection (Snape and Spencer 2003), monitored through ongoing reflexive activities such as a research diary.

Reflexivity involves consideration of researcher impact, including the contribution of subjective experience, prior knowledge and beliefs within their interpretation

of the researched moment (Fine et al. 2000). It is based on the understanding that social research is in itself an inherently social act, carried out by individual agents who import themselves into the process (King and Horrocks 2010). This is elaborated in the concept of the double hermeneutic, referring to the unique feature of social research whereby the researcher aims to understand something which is first interpreted by those who are being researched and then reframed according to their own theoretical position (Giddens 1993). It has been argued that the double hermeneutic is always present in this type of case study research, with the interaction between the context of the research as understood by those within it and the context of the researcher both significant in the generation of meaning (Brogden 2010).

My role and position within the research involved bringing both my academic and employment history to the process. My own student identity began two decades ago as a home student, meaning lack of experience of the residential context being studied. My interest in the area developed instead from employment and my involvement in research on student alcohol use with NUS. This involved engagement with all universities in Wales to understand their approach to alcohol and to work with Welsh Government on developing a guidance document for HEI's, which is now available to all institutions. Context mapping carried out in this role contributed to my understanding of where to start looking for both people and information to inform the study. My prior knowledge was widely accepted and seemed to afford me insider status (Adler and Adler 1987), with some staff referencing my previous work and others assuming pre-existing knowledge of areas of the sector more broadly, which was helpful in initial rapport-building and in informing interview questions. Each HEI is a unique setting and I aimed to be mindful of not being steered too heavily before interview, but to consider my own prior knowledge as informing the process in the same way as the literature searches undertaken. Where I was asked directly during interviews about either my knowledge of the sector or my prior involvement, I explained how my interest had developed from work done previously. This was essential to avoid being disingenuous and to acknowledge my own contribution to the co-created moment of the interview.

An area where this could have impacted data collection was through my own interpretations of what actions are needed to address some of the issues associated with excess student consumption and, having worked on guidance

before, it was difficult to refrain from looking for particular processes on site. The decision to adopt a semi-structured interview approach with interview guide constructed prior to data collection aided in minimising this through being based primarily on identified literature and theory, but with the flexibility to deviate according to the path taken during discussions. Throughout the text, moments of reflection will be included where practice was impacted by this process.

4.4 The research site: People and relationships

The case selected is a public UK university, with a main campus in a city centre location and a satellite campus which was not accessed for the present study. The university has over five thousand first year students, the majority of whom are housed within university-owned accommodation across multiple sites with varying degrees of proximity to the main campus. As participants within the setting were advised that it would not be named in the research in order to enhance anonymity as far as possible, demographic details will here be reported only minimally. Despite these endeavours, it must be acknowledged that for people familiar with the setting, identification may still be possible. Further demographic information will be discussed in Results chapters as required for context.

As previously discussed, the research design drew on Structuration Theory to categorise the educational setting as comprising two observable systems: the student system and the institutional system, with specific approaches developed for each, which are elaborated below.

4.4.1 Student system

The first observed system is that of peer structures and processes among students. Consistent with the Critical Realist paradigm, interview questions for students were underpinned by the theoretical framework of the study (Wengraf 2001), incorporating socio-ecological analysis of influences on alcohol use at multiple levels. As discussed earlier, the socio-ecological framework is enhanced by incorporation of life-course approaches, which focus on agent experience of socially constructed transitions (Hunt 2005). The life-course perspective considers the role of both micro and macro level factors as they intersect with the individual, with consideration of the institutional and cultural processes that act to impact how transitions are experienced (Ben-Shlomo and Kuh 2002). Within life-course perspectives, the critical period model argues that key changes or

events at certain life stages can have a disproportionately large effect on behaviour and associated health outcomes (Graham 2002). This is seen in the transition from parental home to university, occurring predominantly in late adolescence, with evidence indicating that starting university is strongly associated with significant changes in behaviour, including increases in alcohol consumption among many new students (Maggs and Schulenberg 2005). This process of transition is also associated with increased levels of anxiety and pressure, due to the presentation of new challenges and opportunities (Fisher and Hood 1987), including budgeting, meeting new people, lack of parental monitoring etc. These issues were incorporated into the interview schedule for students, which considered temporal processes during transition to the university environment, as well as influences on conceptions of the role of alcohol in the development of identity as 'student'. The interview schedule is included as Appendix 4.

4.4.2 Theoretical approach to data analysis: Student system

Analysis of student data draws on Structuration theory to consider knowledgeability of students as agents during the process of transition to university. This research considers students to be bounded, reflexive, agents, with capacity to act both constrained and enabled by multiple factors. Agency has been defined as the capacity for autonomous social action (Calhoun 2002) and as the capacity of an individual to act differently within a given situation (Giddens 1979). As stated previously, late modern interpretations of behaviour can understate the impact of structure and lead to agent-centred accounts emphasising choice and personal responsibility. This lack of attribution of influence to structure led Evans (2007) to develop the concept of bounded agency. Bounded agency understands:

the actors as having a past and imagined future possibilities, which guide and shape actions in the present, together with subjective perceptions of the structures they have to negotiate, the social landscapes which affect how they act. Bounded agency is socially situated agency, influenced but not determined by environments and emphasizing internalized frames of reference as well as external actions. (Evans 2007. p.17)

These confines illustrate the importance of considering actions in context, with understanding informed by awareness of local and national culture (France 2007),

as well as consideration of how events are interpreted and experienced singularly by the agent. Bounded agency is drawn on alongside Giddens (1984) concept of knowledgeability, which considers how agents utilise working knowledge, or rules, of the situation in order to figure out how to act appropriately to the setting. The working knowledge held by bounded agents can be examined through empirical enquiry aimed at understanding agent conceptions of actions and social settings. Here these conceptions are considered through the identification of pre and post arrival influences on student alcohol use and agent interpretations of both them and the setting.

4.4.3 Institutional system

The second system identified for analysis is the institutional system. As discussed earlier in the thesis, research into organisations has historically focussed on either micro-level agent behaviour or, more predominantly, at macro-level structural processes (Silverman 1970). Restrictions evident in both approaches saw this later give way to a focus on processes of institutionalisation, where internalisation of rules, norms and conventions leads to the formation of stable bodies that can be defined as organisations (Barley and Tolbert 1997). These bodies can then be identified for research purposes, incorporating the consideration of boundaries described earlier.

Thesis methods drew on organisational definitions presented by Silverman (1970), which echo Stake's description of the bounded case, with key features including a primary goal or purpose, and the presence of inter-related sub-systems. Silverman states that internal relationships are characterised by formality, contrasting with other social institutions such as families, further arguing that organisations will have recognisable needs, as well as regular discussions about structure and function which may lead to changes. Although there is a risk of reification in discussing 'needs' relative to organisations, the author argues that this is a valid, common-sense tool to utilise in research rather than an ontological statement. It does not imply a fixed, independent identity or that all members of the organisations agree with stated goals and actions. It is in fact a valid pursuit of the research to examine where agents diverge from organisational aims in their enactment of day to day practices, and this is assessed in the present study by looking at multiple stakeholder perspectives on university processes relating to alcohol.

In terms of describing the institutional system, Dragos-Aligica (2006) suggests that institutional mapping can never constitute a perfectly isomorphic representation of the setting and, as such, mapping should focus on uncovering that which is important to the research. Here, assessment of the institutional system again drew on Silverman (1970) to guide decisions on data to be collected and themes for interview schedules, with the aim of facilitating understanding of alcohol policy and practice within the university. In studying an organisation like a university in order to uncover internal processes, Silverman describes several tasks as key to the endeavour, including defining relations between members and considering dynamics both between individuals and within and between autonomous component parts, in this case recognised as university departments. The organisation is assessed as an open system impacted at multiple socio-ecological levels, linked to wider social and cultural contexts and enacted by agents whose actions are guided by structural constraints and opportunities (Hatch 2006). Understanding this requires observation of institutional relationships with the outside world, including expression of organisational goals through formal statements and individual conceptions, which are considered through document analysis and interviews.

4.4.4 Theoretical approach to data analysis: Institutional system

As previously discussed, adoption of a socio-ecological approach to university analysis involves identification of influences at multiple levels. The operation of institutional agency at each of these levels can be considered by drawing on the concept of organisational isomorphism (Heugens and Lander 2009), which suggests that organisations within the same field will share a degree of macro-level similarity related to their primary aims, representing isomorphism with what would be recognised as a sector archetype. The position is summarised as:

Organizations sharing an organizational field and occupying a similar structural position in it can reasonably be expected to be exposed to similar structural forces. As a consequence, they will differ in their potential for agency only in terms of differences in scores on organization-level variables... (Heugens and Lander 2009, p. 62)

In relation to universities, this means that all share similar influences at macro level - competition for students, government policy, economic relationship with local area etc. - and at this level agency is less influential as organisations strive

to meet structural requirements. At lower ecological levels the impact of agency is more evident, as organisational processes are shaped through micro-level activities, leading to unique configurations and distinct university identities. This research will describe both macro-level structuring properties with little impact of agency from those within the institution, as well as micro-level properties with greater agent input in producing observed routines.

Utilisation of socio-ecological analysis of influences acting on the university, as complex open system, at multiple levels necessitates consideration of the interaction of these levels. Here, Structuration theory was identified as a means to interpret the intersection of factors across these agential and structural levels to understand how the setting is co-created and maintained through routine practices. As previously described, Structuration was developed as an attempt to understand the interaction of agent activities and social structures as the basis for the development of routinised organisational processes (Conrad 2005). It has been described as a sensitizing device for research (Hotho 2008), meaning it is not methodologically restrictive and is instead a guide to action. It has predominantly been utilised in organisational case study research as a means to build theory (Jack and Kholeif 2007), based on the understanding of local processes rather than universal truths (Scapens and Roberts 1993).

Recognition of the duality of structure is reflected in the analysis of micro-level daily practices shaped by the lived experience and role perceptions of those within the setting (Webb 2006). Historically in organisational analysis, processes enacted by agents who reflect on and interpret their situations has often been overlooked (Collinson 2003), despite agents being primary responders to environmental inputs (Silverman 1970). The dynamic action of agents in acting on and reproducing the properties of larger settings or groups is constrained by presentation of available options, suggesting bounded agency in staff as well as students. By utilising existing rules reflecting these options, agents then reinforce their applicability for the situation, thus reproducing the patterned social relations within the system. Pozzebon and Pinsonneault (2005) argue that Structuration can be employed in organisational case study research to understand the enactment of social practices, observed as formal and informal routines, as illustrations of agent knowledgability of the setting. The temporal enactment of rules and routines leads to sustained institutional practices which are drawn on by agents and reproduced in action. These may then be continued informally, or

expressed as formal rules, for example in terms of job roles, which act to constrain and enable the tasks agents can, or are required, to undertake (Cohen 1989). Agent knowledgability of this is identified in the data where agents show understanding of rules guiding and constraining actions, including normative standards of behaviour and the enactment of job roles. In Structuration, structuring properties outlast any single agent cohort working in or traversing the system, suggesting a mechanism for continuation of university culture beyond any staff change or new student group but are also responsive to other influences, both internal and external to the university and existing across multiple socio-ecological levels. These influences, as identified by staff, will also be considered.

The importance of place is also acknowledged in interpretation where physical features are identified by participants, referencing human geographic principles whereby place is not a passive backdrop for social processes but is an active constituent and is, in turn, constituted by events (Jayne et al. 2008). The intersection of wider geographies -specifically physical features of local community- with organisational settings is significant in the development of localised cultures as understood by actors (Anderson and Gale 1999). This is evidenced through discussion of the development of organisational practices developed in response to geographic constraints.

4.5 The research process

The previous section outlined the research design as intended prior to commencement. Consistent with the Critical Realist approach to the research, the research process as actually enacted will now be discussed, with reference to distinct processes within the student and institutional systems already presented.

As we have seen, multiple methods and data sources are commonly utilised in qualitative case study research, including interviews, documents, archives and observations (Eisenhardt 1989). The primary methods employed in this research were qualitative semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, supported by field visits, observations and document analysis. The aim of utilising multiple data sources is not necessarily to check for consistency between sources (Patton 2002), but to utilise the unique contribution of each to uncovering multiple perspectives on meaning (Bryman 2008).

A participatory research ethos is embodied in the qualitative interview, where the meaning and words used by the respondent are considered as intrinsically valuable

(Newton 2010). The interview is a unique event which provides insights into not only the research topic, but also into what the respondent feels is important about it (Rubin and Rubin 2005). This includes an individual's perceptions of their life story and understanding of their experiences of the area of interest (Thomson et al. 2002). Both the construction and interpretation of interviews was influenced by the Critical Realist paradigm underpinning the research, which argues that content of the discussion should be constructed around underlying theory (Wengraf 2001), meaning semi-structured approaches featuring questions on specific topics, with further room for exploration where required. This flexibility acknowledges the conception of the specific interview as a co-created moment between researcher and participant and, consequently, a unique event but one which can add insights into the world under discussion (Banfield 2004). Adopting these principles, the interview schedule for this study was constructed after interrogation of the research literature, with questions grouped thematically to ensure inclusion of key topics (Newton 2010). The schedule was not used prescriptively during interviews, instead operating as a guide to ensure that all major topics were discussed (King and Horrocks 2010) whilst allowing for deviation into interesting avenues of exploration.

Before embarking on fieldwork, a case study timetable was developed. Through previous work experience in the higher education sector, I was aware that availability of staff is tied heavily to the undergraduate academic year, meaning limited availability for participation in other activities, particularly in the first term of the year. The decision was therefore made to conduct staff interviews during the summer break of 2013, followed by student interviews soon after commencement of the 2013/14 academic year. Observations and documents analysis were carried out at multiple time points through the academic year with each activity described below.

4.5.1 Student system: Sampling and recruitment

As the study was attempting to understand the impact of alcohol use on transition and friendship processes, purposive sampling was selected to focus on the sub-group having recently shared the experience of most significance to the research problem (Ritchie et al. 2003), specifically first year undergraduates. A homogeneous sampling technique was appropriate due to the research aims of gaining understanding of processes occurring within a defined context (Patton 2002) and the aim of examining peer acquisition processes in new students.

Research indicates that students who leave home to attend university rate the importance of developing new friendship groups more highly than those who are continuing to live in the parental home, with the latter group expecting to maintain higher levels of contact with existing peer networks than those who move away (Buote et al. 2007). It was therefore determined that those who had moved away from home into university residences would be targeted, excluding first year students who lived locally with family. Participants all came from the 2013/14 first year cohort, and had recently experienced both the process of transition to university and moving away from the parental home. Although sharing this recent experience, transitions are differentially encountered during the life-course due to pre-existing factors, such as socio-economic status and previous experience (Seaman and Ikegwonu 2011), supporting the qualitative, biographical approaches adopted in the present study, which offer participants the opportunity to discuss their own conceptions of such factors of significance.

Targeting of new first year students, or Freshers, meant that all recruitment activity took place after the end of September 2013, once the new cohort had arrived. After securing ethical approval, A4 flyers (Appendix 5) containing a brief description of the study, including incentives for participation and researcher email details, were posted on noticeboards at various buildings around the campus shortly after the commencement of the academic year. Attempts to target university accommodation directly were also initiated through contact with key gatekeepers prior to the arrival of new students, specifically the Deputy Director of Residences and a Residences Manager that had previously participated in the interview process. An enquiry was made regarding the possibility of three potential approaches: sending an email with attached flyer to all first year residents in university accommodation; distribution of flyers in student mailboxes located at residences reception; researcher distribution of flyers by hand on residences sites. The response to this enquiry advised that it would not be possible to send out emails directly to students due to the confidentiality of university email addresses. Concerns over confidentiality also meant it was not possible to target student mailboxes which displayed their names. I was further advised that the distribution of flyers is prohibited on campus property due to previous issues with littering, which was attributed directly to the marketing and promotional activity of pubs and clubs, who routinely distribute large numbers of flyers on and around campus at the start of the academic year, which meant that any further distribution of paper materials on site was prohibited. In light of these

constraints it was suggested by the Residences Manager contacted that I approach students going to and from residences sites on the public highway, particularly on Wednesday afternoons where no academic teaching takes place and large numbers of students attend activities or social events, making this the busiest time of the week for foot traffic. This advice was followed and flyers were distributed on three successive Wednesday afternoons, with reasonably high levels of contact made with first year students to gain interest in the study.

Recruitment strategy included the offer of a £10 Amazon voucher for any student completing an interview. Use of incentives to enhance participation rates is a frequent strategy employed in qualitative research (Simmons and Wilmot 2004) and it was decided to offer incentives in this study after initial interviews with staff, during which several participants commented on their own previous difficulties of securing student involvement in university projects, suggesting that incentives may therefore be required. This was further corroborated by several of my own colleagues who had previously conducted research with university students. It has been argued that use of incentives not only acts as encouragement to participate but also ensures that the process of involvement is more reciprocal (Lewis 2003), consistent with the participatory approach of this study. Concerns have been raised regarding the potential coercive influence of incentives (Alderson and Morrow 2004), however analysis of impact has determined that it is not problematic unless the following issues are in evidence: where risk posed by the research is especially high and/or includes degrading practice; where there is strong aversion to taking part which is only overcome by the incentive; where participants are dependent on the researcher (Grant and Sugarman 2004). Although none of these conditions existed in the present research and all participants were legally adults not considered vulnerable and therefore able to provide informed consent, measures were taken to ensure adherence to best practice recommendations, meaning all who agreed to participate were advised of the process of withdrawal from the research and were informed that they would still receive payment. I further ensured that use of incentives was included in the Research Ethics Application, including provision of clear information on how and when payment would be made (Wendler et al. 2002).

As an incentive for participation was being offered, initial recruitment activity outside halls involved starting the conversation with mention of the incentive, for example:

“Hi, I’m looking for first years who may be interested in earning £10.”

This was unsuccessful and led to a perceptibly defensive reaction from many students and my sense that this was being seen as a sales pitch. From previous interrogation of the literature I had identified that in Social Identity Theory, sense of in-group identification enhances likelihood of cooperation (Tajfel 1982), suggesting that shared group membership may be valuable through perceptions of insider status. After reflecting on events, this led to change of approach for the following week, leading me to first identifying myself as a student conducting postgraduate research on the lives of first years, with reference to incentives occurring only after initial expressions of interest. Reaction to this was much more positive, with several students taking flyers away for consideration.

Due to slow response rate to initial recruitment activity and time constraints within the academic calendar, I deemed it necessary to pursue alternative approaches and employed a mixed convenience/snowball sampling method, utilising my own part-time teaching work, through which I had access to significant numbers of students fitting the inclusion criteria. This approach is commonly utilised in organisational studies where the researcher may be in a position to access a population due to their own role (Bryman 2008). Students accessed through this method were given a brief explanation of the research and asked if they would be willing to take flyers back to their accommodation to leave visible to flatmates. It was essential that students felt no pressure or coercion due to the power differential inherent in the institutional relationship (Miller and Bell 2002). I was confident in my own good relationship with them as tutor and so felt comfortable explaining that they were not being asked to take part, but were being asked primarily to distribute, although several group members did request the opportunity to take part themselves and were accepted into the study. This snowball sampling technique is a purposive approach to identifying participants, where the researcher selects a small group based on previously identified characteristics of significance and then utilises their contact with a wider population who share these characteristics (Bryman 2008). Furthermore, the potential coercive effect of incentives described above was minimised through this approach, with several interviewees who were recruited through snowball

sampling having prior opportunity to discuss the project with a peer-group member who had already taken part, thus enhancing understanding of the process prior to consenting. In relation to the scheduling of interviews, when initial interest in the study was expressed a standard reply was constructed with consent information letter attached (Appendix 3). Students were invited to reply with any queries or to confirm continuation, at which time a meeting would be scheduled. All were offered the option of either meeting in their own accommodation or in a private space booked by the researcher. The latter option was selected by all and a quiet meeting room was used in a central location on the campus, ensuring greater privacy and anonymity.

The table below illustrates the results of sampling strategies:

Distribution method	Flyers distributed	Enquiries received	Interviews completed
Noticeboards	8	3	1
Flyers on street	38	6	2
Flyers through seminar groups	180 (approx.)	36	20

Fig.3 Table of sampling for student system

All participants (N=23) were current first year undergraduate students with age ranging from 18-21. 13 females and 10 males were interviewed, with 21 students resident in university-owned accommodation and 2 students occupying privately rented houses after failing in their application to halls due to late submissions. The table at the end of the Chapter presents introductory personal details of students, extracted from initial reading of transcripts as described in their own words.

4.5.2 Student system: Ethical considerations

Ethical concerns were identified and addressed through consultation with the British Sociological Association Statement of Ethical Practice (2002) and MRC Good Research Practice Guidelines (2012) for funded researchers. In accordance with Research Councils UK Guidance, ethical approval was sought from Cardiff University Research Ethics Board. Application for student interviews and observations for context mapping was submitted and approved by Cardiff University Research Ethics Board in October 2013.

Informed consent is essential for participation in research interviews, with concepts of agency and competence central to notions of voluntary participation (Heath et al. 2004). This is enhanced by provision of adequate information to participants and prior consideration of vulnerability by the researcher. An information sheet was therefore provided to all participants prior to our meeting including details of right to withdraw from the study, which is an essential aspect of informed consent (Wiles et al. 2005).

Two further considerations specific to this target group were identified and included as processes within the ethics application. Firstly, I had been repeatedly advised by staff of the difficulties in engaging students by email, risking information sheets sent electronically not having been read prior to interview. To ensure full confidence in participant understanding, details were reiterated and consent forms were read and signed at interview prior to recording, with time included to answer any further questions. Secondly, despite all participants being legally adults I was mindful that, due to the common age of transition to university for many undergraduates, this status was often only recently attained. Assumptions of capacity and understanding should not be made on the basis of adult status alone (Heath et al. 2004), with consideration of potential support needs essential. I have worked extensively on a one-to-one basis with vulnerable young people in previous employment and detailed this in ethics application for this phase, describing my own confidence in being able to identify signs of discomfort and distress should they occur. I was prepared to pause or stop the proceedings and ensure that participants felt able to cease the interview and seek support if required, but this did not prove necessary. Furthermore, due to the potential for conversations on alcohol use to provoke personal and emotional responses, I advised all participants within written material provided prior to interviews that information on available support services could be provided on request.

4.5.3 Using visual elicitation during student interviews

After reviewing the evidence on rapport building in qualitative interviewing, it was decided to incorporate use of visual prompts into the interview schedule for students.

Visual elicitation during interviews involves utilisation of images, diagrams or relational maps relevant to the concepts being explored and represents the

intersection of verbal and visual research methods (Hanna and Lau-Clayton 2012). Initial student interviews involved inviting participants to utilise their own photos taken at social occasions at the start of term as prompts, with the aim of gaining greater depth of information on peer groups and social events. Evidence indicates that the use of visual prompts during qualitative interviews can enhance the quality and depth of responses (Harper 2002) by evoking memories and feelings that would be missed by verbal questions alone, as well as aiding in gaining understanding of the context of the behaviour (Stanczak 2007). Collier and Collier (1992) argue that visuals make the interview more collaborative and reduce the researcher-participant power imbalance by making the photo the subject of attention rather than the person, consistent with the participatory ethos of this study. Students were given the option, communicated through interview guides, of selecting images from social media accounts for viewing on a Nexus tablet provided. Online social media has been described as essential for gaining understanding of contemporary social life (Wilson et al. 2012) and is widely utilised by students, with indications that 94% of undergraduates use Facebook regularly (Ellison et al. 2007). This is a potentially rich source of data on friendship groups and an aid to contextual mapping, through highlighting key locations featured frequently across the sample, such as favourite student nights in bars and clubs. Ethically, it was important to be mindful that images can represent an intimate moment within a social group (Crilly et al. 2006) and that the researcher is asking for access to this but, as selection of images and tool for their display was controlled by the participant, this was minimised.

Despite a strong rationale for inclusion, uptake of this option was limited, with students suggesting that events felt recent enough for visual prompts to not be necessary. There was no discernible difference in depth of information obtained during initial interviews between those who chose to use photos and those who didn't and, contrary to my expectations, the action of selecting photos for discussion acted to interrupt the flow of conversation and rapport. This prompted re-evaluation and I made the decision to remove the photo option from interview guides after seven interviews had been completed.

Visual materials were also used to gain insight into student awareness of university attempts to moderate alcohol harms, with webpages from the university site featuring alcohol advice and guidance shown to participants during interview on the tablet referenced above. Use of such visual materials can aid in

participant comprehension of processes and allow for consideration of overlapping features of interest (Whetten 1989), for example between their own recent transition experience and awareness of the university context within which behaviours had occurred. The material used had been identified by staff as a significant feature of university alcohol awareness work and the aim of inclusion was to assess levels of familiarity with content, as well as examining student opinions of the acceptability of messaging.

4.5.4 Institutional system: Sampling and Recruitment Strategy

The aim of university analysis was to gain understanding of the development and enactment of organisational processes related to alcohol. For staff interviews, participant selection was guided by the Institutional Analysis and Development Framework (Ostrom 2005), which was developed to assess processes and outcomes within complex organisational settings (McGinnis 2011) and aims to identify factors significant in shaping social interactions between agents within an institution through consideration of stakeholder involvement in practices. The framework defines staff activity within hierarchical organisations as operating at multiple levels, described as operational (where individuals make day to day decisions), collective-choice (decisions about rules that govern day to day decisions), constitutional (higher level actors). Involvement of stakeholders at these levels allows for interrogation of both strategic functions within an institution and on-the-ground practices (McGinnis 2011).

Sampling strategy for this research therefore involved examination of the university hierarchy and inclusion of those in management roles with more involvement in policy development, as well as team members with more student-facing roles. This purposive sampling approach is employed where respondents are likely to have specific knowledge and can uniquely contribute to addressing study research questions (Bryman 2008). Respondents are selected as those from whom the researcher can learn the most, rather than because they are representative of a population (Merriam 1988). This led to targeting participants from non-academic departments with involvement in student well-being and alcohol practices in either a support, education or sales capacity. Although non-randomised sampling techniques lack generalisability beyond the study population (Bassegy 1999), they are commonly employed in case-study research (Yin 1989) and were appropriate for this study due to prior identification of areas of importance to the problem

(Denscombe 2010), both from the theoretical framework as well as my own previous work experience.

To identify gatekeepers and potential respondents I made contact with the university Human Resources (HR) department explaining the research project and requesting access to organisational flowcharts, which was granted. In assessing the significance of job roles, I also drew on my own previous experience in the higher education sector, which involved working with staff involved in developing and delivering alcohol-related services. This, coupled with interrogation of the university website, led to the selection of departments to contact. University departments are characterised under 'Professional Services' and departmental relationships are illustrated below, with P(n) indicating location of interviewees. As well as university departments, the Student Union was identified as significant in campus alcohol processes. This is a member-led organisation with separate structures of management to the university and autonomous working practices and is displayed as such below:

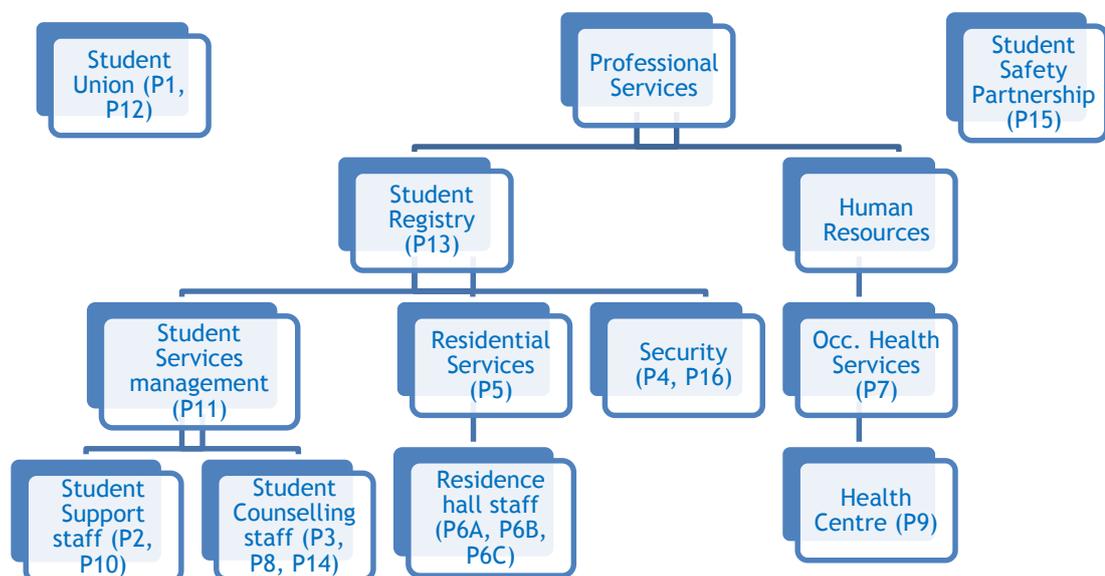


Fig. 4 University organogram with location of interviewees

Provisional identification of interviewees across departments was made at this stage but it was anticipated that names may be added on the suggestion of gatekeepers and interviewees once the nature of the research was more widely

understood. Initial contact was made through a standard letter to gatekeepers (Appendix 6), specifically heads of department, explaining the purpose of the research and requesting consent to contact staff members directly. The separate function of the SU necessitated direct contact with the Chief Executive for consent to approach team members and student officers. Gatekeepers were informed that data would be anonymised but that areas of work may be reported, and that participants would have the right to withdraw at any point in the study prior to publication.

Once gatekeeper consent was obtained, candidates were contacted by email with request for return expression of interest. Those who agreed to participate were sent an email response with thanks and provided with a standardised information letter stating that interviews could be scheduled at a time and location suitable for them, with all participants ultimately choosing to be interviewed in their own offices. Having completed multiple interviews at HEI's for previous work projects, I was comfortable going to such settings and felt that interview locations enhanced rapport building by maximising participant feelings of relaxation. All were informed at the initial contact stage that interviews would be recorded for transcription and also that their data would be stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998).

4.5.5 Institutional system: Ethical considerations

As with the student system, ethical issues were identified and addressed through consultation with the British Sociological Association Statement of Ethical Practice (2002) and MRC Good Research Practice Guidelines (2012) for funded researchers. In accordance with Research Councils UK Guidance, ethical approval was sought from Cardiff University Research Ethics Board. Applications for ethical approval were submitted over two phases, reflecting the staggered data collection approach designed to accommodate the academic year. Approval for staff interviews, document analysis and initial context mapping activities was gained in April 2013.

Consent, recording and data management processes were dealt with as in the student application meaning that, at interview, participants were given a consent form repeating this information to be read and signed prior to commencement of recording, ensuring full understanding of the process and providing an opportunity to address any questions (Heath et al. 2004).

A further ethical consideration related to the extent of gatekeeper roles during recruitment activity. Within hierarchical settings, such as organisations (Miller and Bell 2002), power differentials can impact on the process of consent (Heath et al. 2004), particularly where gatekeepers may be in a position to pressure, or deny, someone an opportunity to take part in the process. It was therefore decided to ask gatekeepers only for consent to speak to team members rather than enlisting them to make approaches directly to their staff. This was aimed at minimising risk of targeted selection of those deemed uncritical or most co-operative, and to ensure no feeling of pressure to take part (Neale and Hanna 2012). Furthermore, gatekeepers who consented to access were not informed of which staff within their departments would be approached. This also ensured that informed consent could be obtained directly from interviewees, in accordance with BSA guidelines (2002).

As well as protection from coercion, anonymity was paramount, necessitating consideration of the risk of potential identification for staff who occupied unique job roles. This could act to limit both ability to express their views and future cohesion within, often small and tight-knit, teams. All candidates were advised that general areas of work would be discussed due to their significance in understanding the structure of the institution but were assured that their names, the name of the institution, and any colleagues referred to would be excluded from the research report. They were further advised that quotes which I felt may be revealing, for example those featuring distinctive turns of phrase or speech idioms, would be not be used verbatim without prior consent.

All participants bar one agreed to interviews being recorded for later transcribing, which is considered essential within qualitative interviewing to capture adequate detail for later analysis (King and Horrocks 2010). The participant who didn't wish to be recorded understood that extensive note taking would therefore be required and accepted the extra time involved. Although insights were gained from this interview, the note taking process acted to limit my own sense of rapport building and reduce the richness of data obtained, highlighting the value of data recording. Another interviewee, who held potentially sensitive and critical views of one particular institutional department, requested that they be contacted in advance should any direct quotes about this department be reported in the data to ensure that they were happy with my selection. This was agreed and recorded but did not prove necessary during analysis. One further participant with similar

concerns advised prior to commencement of recording that they may request that taping be paused in order to impart information deemed inappropriate for reporting directly but of interest to my work. This happened twice during the interview and it was agreed that I would not make direct use of this content but that it would inform my overall understanding of the processes within the setting. I was mindful of reflecting on this content in field notes directly after this interview to minimise the potential for these, somewhat negative, perceptions to colour my future contact with departments discussed.

As the formality of the interview process can cause tension in some participants (Bryman 2008) the recorder was always left on after the end of questions through the more relaxed wrapping-up process, to capture any afterthoughts or reflections that may emerge (King and Horrocks 2010). Audio recordings were stored on a password-protected hard drive, with later anonymised paper transcripts stored in a locked desk. These procedures had been detailed within the ethics application and were approved by Cardiff University Research Ethics Board.

4.6 Documentary evidence of alcohol policy and practice

Search for documents was determined by the nature of the problem under investigation in order to provide context to events and processes (Merriam 1988). Interrogation of open access areas of the university website for alcohol-related documents was conducted prior to initial interviews and returned little information, prompting inclusion of additional questions in the interview schedules on any existing documents. This disclosed the existence of an employee alcohol and drug misuse policy but no student-specific policies on alcohol for the university or Student Union. Due to limited results, and consistent with the epistemological basis of the research, I decided to focus on documents or webpages cited by interviewees as influential to practice, illustrating the intersection of agent with structural processes. Where these were referenced in interview, discussions were conducted with authors where possible to gain insight into the means of construction (Bryman 2008). It was identified that alcohol was primarily included in departmental disciplinary guidance in relation to student behaviour, as well as in awareness raising webpages on alcohol aimed at new first years. These are referenced throughout Results chapters in relation to practice, with content aimed at influencing student behaviour discussed in terms of perceptions of the intended audience.

4.7 Observational activity in student and institutional systems

In this study observational field work was carried out for the purpose of gaining greater understanding of institutional processes around alcohol, as well as considering conceptions of practices held by those in the field of study (Bryman 2008). Sites and activities for field work were selected as a result of information obtained during interviews with staff, including identification of areas and events of interest and potentially useful data sources.

All field activities were unstructured, recognising the unique context of the activity and the potential for a co-created moment between the researcher and any people encountered during the visit (Mulhall 2003). Unstructured observational methods are commonly utilised in case study research due to their capacity to reveal processes within a naturalistic setting (Lui and Maitlis 2010) and were appropriate for field activities carried out in public and semi-public areas. Although lacking a predetermined observation schedule, planning is still essential (Angrosino 2007), and in advance of campus visits a theoretically-driven observation plan was developed, aimed at identification of the enactment of organisational processes and student conceptions of these processes.

In terms of level of researcher involvement, field work employed a mix of non-participant observations of public settings and limited participant approaches, acting in the role of volunteer/researcher (Angrosino 1992), dependent on the situation. All observational activity was completed between September 2013 and April 2014 and, where visits were carried out alone, I adhered to my University Lone Worker Policy at all times.

4.7.1 Freshers week campus visit - September 2013

Freshers Week, when new first year students arrive and move into accommodation, occurs prior to commencement of academic activities and is predominantly known as a period of heavy alcohol use. During Freshers the campus experiences heavy foot traffic in and around university buildings, including public areas where promoters of local bars and clubs are heavily in attendance. I conducted a visit to observe alcohol-related promotional activities during Freshers week and to collect materials being offered to new students, as well as to observe the promotional material on display. Before arrival I had expected the fact that I was significantly older than most of the students present

to inhibit this activity but this was not the case, with promoters freely offering materials as soon as I made eye contact. All activity was conducted in a public space and no personal information was obtained, meaning no requirement for informed consent from those involved. As a matter of good practice, I requested consent from the Student Union General Manager to conduct mapping activities in the area around the SU, including street-based observation and also notation of poster displays related to alcohol within and around the Union building.

4.7.2 Safety Patrol Observation - November 2013

From site mapping I was aware of a key activity aimed at reducing alcohol related harms, involving a safety-bus service provided jointly by the SU and Police, with suggestion from a gatekeeper that an observation of this service would be useful. The service involves a mini-bus driven by volunteers and staffed by representatives of both the SU and local police. The bus is provided at peak times of Union activity, traditionally Wednesday evening, operating as a safety patrol and emergency transport. The bus traverses the local area, specifically the main route between campus and residences, picking up students who appear too intoxicated to get home safely. The driver can also be called by the SU in the event of a student trying to leave the building or being ejected, who is considered by staff to be unsafe to travel home alone. I made contact with the lead officer in charge of the service requesting consent to observe the process of service delivery, including levels of utilisation and student responses to it. This was agreed and a date was arranged with the designated driver, who had been advised of my request by the gatekeeper and had consented to my visit on a Wednesday evening between 8:30 and midnight. To support the verbal agreement from our telephone conversation, signed written consent was obtained from the lead staff member present during the activity. Three other volunteers were also staffing the service and I identified myself to them and explained the purpose of my attendance, as well as answering any questions they had on the aims of the research. I did not obtain individual, written consent from each volunteer, as no personal details or direct comments were recorded.

In obtaining consent from the lead officer, it was agreed that my role would be as volunteer observer (Angrosino 1992), meaning that I would be acting as one of the team of volunteers if needed, but would defer to instructions from the lead staff member on duty at all times and not involve myself unless directly requested. This acknowledged that the event might have involved a situation where a more

hands-on role was necessitated, for example in dealing with multiple students requiring support. My own employment history meant that I was confident in my ability to assist should it be required but only as directed by staff on site and remaining subordinate to them at all times. Although comfortable in this role, my involvement as volunteer did not prove necessary due to relatively low numbers of students encountered. No personal information was requested or required from any of the students who utilised the service and their anonymity had been assured to the gatekeeper, necessitating no direct need to obtain further consent. This decision was reinforced by my awareness that those students who were receiving assistance did so because they were severely intoxicated, meaning that direct questioning was not appropriate whilst they were in what I deemed to be a vulnerable state. No recording equipment was used during the visit and field notes were completed immediately afterwards.

4.7.3 Open day 2014

Undergraduate open day events are aimed at prospective students for the following academic year and I attended campus during such an event in April 2014 to observe activity and to gather any promotional materials being passed to those visiting the university and the SU. I attended an open talk in the SU from an existing Elected Officer on life at the university, as well as collecting leaflets from a stand provided by the university. These events can be categorised as semi-public, as all sites and talks were accessible without requiring pre-booking or identification. As the activity did not involve any recording of personal data or conversations with those on site, and in light of prior permission to carry out activities on campus, consent was not sought again. If questioned regarding my presence, I was prepared to identify myself as a researcher investigating the experience of new students, but this did not occur.

4.8 Data analysis and management

The chapter so far has outlined the research process both as planned and enacted, describing the qualitative case study approach adopted. This section will now present the approach to data analysis developed for the thesis.

In relation to data analysis it has been argued that:

The critical task of qualitative research is not to accumulate all the data you can, but to “can” (i.e., get rid of) most of the data you accumulate (Wolcott 2001, p44.)

There is no consensus within methodological literature over the correct analytical approach for qualitative data but commonly identified features include review, reduction and interpretation (Crinson and Leontowitsch 2006). To inform decisions on this process a data analysis plan was developed to assess how data would be managed and how this would then address the thesis research questions. Planning drew on Guest et al. (2012), who advise consideration of the objectives of the analysis, here identified as an explanation aimed at building theory and addressing research questions. The analysis plan identified the production of discrete chapters as an aim, examining the institutional and student systems previously discussed, along with a cross-data set analysis considering the intersection of students with organisational processes. This aims to address specific gaps previously identified in the literature review to answer resultant research questions. It was anticipated that, consistent with the use of multiple data sources in exploratory case studies, information obtained from documents and observations would be assessed after theme development and incorporated into the student system and institutional system chapters to aid the level of description. Thematic analysis of all data produced was identified as consistent with the stated aim of addressing research questions, leading to the development of a provisional coding plan for each data set (see Appendices), with intentions at this stage to utilise appropriate software to proceed with the analysis.

Acting on the analysis plan, I reviewed and transcribed the first five recordings from each stakeholder group close to the point of interview. During the initial data handling stage, where the focus is on organisation and reduction, it is recommended that interpretation is not attempted (Ritchie and Lewis 2003), with employment of first stage open coding to identify areas of interest rather than active commitment to the theoretical framework underpinning the study. These transcripts were read multiple times to identify emerging themes, as well as any ambiguous questions or issues with interviewee interpretations in order to amend future interviews. Although complete consistency of questions was not a requirement of the semi-structured interview, it was necessary to check for inclusion of key themes at this stage, as well as to reflect on my own interviewer behaviour and consider any issues of leading or prompting that were impacting

the process. Although nothing was identified as significantly inhibiting data quality, this reflection did highlight a tendency to underuse silence through moving on too quickly, possibly due to my own researcher inexperience, which I addressed for future conversations.

This initial transcribing was also used to develop a convention on notation of pauses and hesitation noises. Decisions on transcribing recorded data are always theoretical and reflect the anticipated needs of the research (Davidson 2009). The level of detail on conversational style, body language etc. required for approaches such as discourse analysis was not deemed necessary for this organisational case study, where theoretically-driven themes were being investigated (King and Horrocks 2010), leading to the decision to eliminate pauses and hesitation noises as part of initial data reduction. All other recordings were then sent to an external transcriber with instructions on level of detail required, based on the convention established for the first scripts.

Qualitative analysis involved a decision regarding whether to manually code transcripts or to employ specialist software, both of which are acceptable within a qualitative ethos as a means to organise data and to produce codes which inform the readers' understanding of the social context under study (Basit 2003). I undertook training in use of both NVivo and Atlas ti packages to keep my analysis options open and initially began coding through Atlas ti, however found that I did not feel as embedded in the data as I wanted, potentially because of the decision to send interviews out for transcription rather than completing this task myself. Saldaña (2013) argues that, particularly for early career researchers, the hands-on approach of spreading papers out and reading scripts in close proximity can aid in feelings of immersion, prompting my adoption of this approach. The manual handling of data felt beneficial and aided identification of features which formed an interesting part of the analysis, e.g. grouping certain people with commonalities such as departments, and comparing their responses to similar questions side by side. This allowed certain themes to emerge which could be mapped against organisational structures and other contextual data. Once codes began to emerge and key words were identified, search functions of Microsoft Word were employed to supplement reading of electronic versions of scripts.

Data management was continued through multiple initial readings to develop familiarity with the material. Both sets of interview data, as well as relevant documents, were first analysed using a staged approach based on selected first

cycle coding techniques described by Saldaña (2013), incorporating both inductive and deductive aspects. This suggests that, after initial open coding, data should be examined to search for descriptive codes detailing contextual information about settings and physical features, process codes to identify actions and behavioural sequences, and values codes which identify participant opinions and values relating to a specific issue. In Vivo coding using verbatim statements was also utilised where a quote was deemed to have particular illustrative power. This approach allows incorporation of the researcher experience of the context within the analysis (Taylor and Bogdan 1998), which is then enhanced by a theory-driven approach. Coding plans were developed for each data set and are included in Appendices.

As the research focussed on the content and meaning of what was said (prioritised over frequency of occurrence), such a form of theory-driven thematic analysis was appropriate (King and Horrocks 2010). Where themes are to be developed, they can be either theory-driven -derived from prior data or research- or developed inductively from study data (Boyatzis 1998). The Critical Realist ontology of the thesis supported a theory-driven approach incorporating generative mechanisms identified through analysis of relevant literature, meaning next stage analysis of interview, documents and observational notes was guided by the theoretical framework of the thesis. This phased analysis strategy, with data management and reduction preceding thematic analysis, ensured that theory did not restrict interpretation through exclusion of data not immediately of obvious significance (Ritchie and Lewis 2003), while also orienting analysis to theoretical concepts that may not have been identified using solely inductive approaches (MacFarlane and O'Reilly-de Brún 2012).

Within the analysis, documentary and observational data was incorporated into themed presentation of findings, and was utilised for data triangulation, as well as to illustrate formal rules in operation. Although student and staff interview sets were initially analysed as distinct contributions, they were then subject to further comparative analysis to address the remaining research questions. This allowed for exploration of the intersection of student and staff experiences and perceptions, as well as student interactions with organisational processes on alcohol. Coding for each, based on relevant theoretical framework, allowed for consideration of issues specific to these groups as well as comparison. A significant overlap emerged with regards to issues including awareness of

organisational harm reduction practices, policy development and student experiences of transition. These are presented in Results, with thematic relationships between the two interview data sets in terms of common and divergent understanding of alcohol-related processes and issues discussed.

The interpretation of collected data also drew on the socio-ecological framework (McLeroy et al.1988) identified in earlier chapters as providing an effective means of understanding and presenting complex influences on both agents and university context. The intersection of these multi-level influences was interpreted through Structuration Theory (Giddens 1984), aiding understanding of the interaction of multi-level factors which act to constrain or enable the actions of agents within the setting in relation to alcohol related processes. Structuration was also utilised to inform understanding of the contributions of both sets of agents to the co-creation and maintenance of the context. Within the Results students are defined in the data as S(n) (M or F) and staff as P(n), with biographical information provided where it relates to the discussion.

Fig. 5 Introduction to student participants

	Personal details	Home	Before arriving	Accommodation	Since arriving
S1	White English Female, 18 years old, studying History	Home is about an hour and a half away so didn't feel too far away.	Had visited a few times before and liked the area. Came to the Open Day with mum. Drank before Uni but mainly just pubs and rarely clubs.	Lives in halls and chose after reading about which halls were most lively on Student Room. Used the Halls Facebook group to speak to people before arriving.	Has joined the course society but no others. Is living with current housemates next year.
S2	White English Male, 19 years old, studying Criminology	Home is a tiny village about four hours travel away.	Came to Open Day with a friend who applied to the same Uni. Had visited the area with friends before and knew there would be a lively nightlife compared to home, which just has a local pub.	Lives in halls. Made choice of hall after reading online about costs and location. Didn't use Facebook as wasn't bothered about finding people in advance.	Has joined the course society and a sports team and goes out a lot with each. Is living with friends from halls next year.
S3	White English Male, 18 years old, studying English	Home is a town about three hours away.	Came to Open Day with parents and had never been to the area before. Often drank at friends houses before coming but	Lives in halls. Checked Student Room for details after Open Day and chose the 'most social' option. Found a few hall-	Hasn't joined any societies yet or been to course socials but wants to do it next year.

			parents are both non-drinkers so never drank at home.	mates on Facebook but not really in touch with them now.	
S4	White Welsh, Female, 19 years old, studying Chemistry	Home is about an hour away, which was important to staying with boyfriend	Came to Open Day, then decided to take a gap year to travel, which felt like good preparation for living in halls. Drank before uni but was 'never too bothered' about it.	Lives in halls. Choice was based on advice of a friend who started the year before. Didn't use Facebook to find people as she felt prepared enough after gap year.	Found Freshers quite tough as a moderate drinker but found a good group of friends and is living with them next year.
S5	White English, Female, 18 years old, studying Optometry	Home is a city around three hours away	Came to Open day with parents and loved the area. Went to pubs quite a bit before uni but was worried about pressure to drink differently at uni.	Choice of halls was based on info from Student Reps. Used Facebook to make arrangements for Freshers with housemates.	Joined two societies but neither are big drinking groups so didn't find it pressured.
S6	Female EU student (didn't want country of origin recorded). 19 years old, studying Maths	Although home is far away, she has family close by and knew the area very well, which was helpful.	Came to Open Day on advice from her parents to see course and halls facilities. Drinks 'very rarely'.	Lives in halls but found it really hard in Freshers due to drinking levels of flatmates. Had to request a transfer.	Has found friends who drink less through Societies where drinking is not a big part of activities.
S7	Asian Female, International student, 19 years old, studying Psychology	Home is a long flight away!	Visited the area once before starting and really liked it. Drank a bit before uni but was worried about lack of experience.	Lives in halls but had to change flats because flatmates were 'bullying' her about not drinking much.	Joined a music society and found people there who don't mind her lack of drinking.
S8	White Welsh Female, 20 years old, studying Criminology	Comes from a small town about an hour and a half away.	Came to Open day and then did internet research on course and nightlife. Drank before Uni but only a couple of local pubs to choose from.	Lives in the 'social hall' and her flat is often used for pre-drinks. Made some arrangements through Facebook before arriving.	Has made lots of friends in halls and is living with a group next year. No societies.
S9	White Welsh, Male, 20 years old, studying Biomedical Science	Home is about two hours away, which felt close enough.	Older sister had been here a few years ago so gave lots of information. Had a gap year working before coming. Felt like he had plenty of	Picked a 'social' hall based on his sisters experience. Didn't use Facebook to find people before coming.	Is living with course friends next year and is closest to them but still goes out drinking

			drinking experience.		every week with flatmates.
S10	White English Male, 19 years old, studying Geosciences	From a village in a rural area a couple of hours away.	Older brother studied here so he has visited a lot and stayed in halls before. Drank in local pubs before Uni and was looking forward to a bigger range of places to go.	Chose the same hall his brother had lived in. Didn't do any internet searching as he knew as much as he needed.	Has joined course society and is closest to course mates. Is living with them next year.
S11	White English Female, 18 years old, studying Music	From a town about four hours away.	Didn't come to Open Day but her sister knew the area and said it was great. Didn't drink much before Uni.	Missed out on halls because of late application so in rented house. Feels like this meant missing out on a lot of the social activity of halls. Mostly goes to local pubs with housemates.	Living with same people next year as hasn't really met many other people.
S12	White Male, EU student, 20 years old, studying Engineering	From Southern Europe so means a flight home.	Had never visited the area before but mum had lived here for a while and described it. Didn't come to Open Day. Had a gap year working.	Chose the hall he heard was most fun from internet research. Went out drinking a lot before uni and was looking forward to doing it here.	Joined a sports society with a lot of drinking. Living with friends from halls next year.
S13	White English Female, 19 years old, studying Sociology	Born locally but now lives about four hours away in a village in England.	Has visited lots of times before to see family and came to the Open day with parents. Drank before uni but not many options at home so just local pubs.	Chose the biggest hall to meet the most people. Found some contacts through Facebook before arriving.	Closest friends are in halls so will live with them next year. Hasn't joined any societies.
S14	White English, Female, 21 years old, studying Criminology	Home is a city about three hours' drive away.	Parents both came to uni here so she had visited a lot before. Came to the Open Day two years ago but then deferred application.	Wanted the busiest hall so took Student Reps advice. Liked clubbing before uni and was looking forward to going out here. Found flatmates on Facebook before coming.	Joined 3 societies and goes out with them a lot. Living with flatmates next year.
S15	Asian Welsh, Female, 19 years old, studying Education	Born locally but home now is about three hours away in England.	Has been many times before and had a cousin who'd been to the uni and given her the full tour. Non-drinker.	Chose one of the smaller halls to avoid so much drinking. Found two current best friends through Facebook before arriving. Some people have had issues with her	Joined 2 societies but one didn't work out because of everyone else's drinking. Has found friends

				not drinking.	now who don't care about her non-drinking.
S16	White English, Male, 20 years old, studying Pharmacy	From a city about four hours' drive away.	Took a gap year after not getting on first choice course and worked. Came to the Open Day alone and liked the area. Drank regularly before uni.	Didn't get first choice halls so is in a quieter one than expected. Didn't look for anyone on Facebook.	Has made better friends on course than halls so is living with them next year. Is in course society but no others.
S17	White English, Male, 19 years old, studying Chemistry	Lives in a small town about an hour away.	Went to lots of Open Days and liked this the best, especially the 'village' feel of halls. Drank in local pubs back home but not much clubbing experience.	Used internet to look at cost of halls but not social activity or flatmates. Got first choice hall.	Has made friends from course and from the society he joined but is living with flatmates next year.
S18	White English, Female, 19 years old, studying Criminology	Lives in a 'medium-sized' town about two hours away.	Has family from the area and has visited a lot before. Didn't come to Open day. Drank moderately before uni with friends.	In the biggest hall and happy about the chance to meet lots of people. Didn't look on Facebook before coming to avoid prior judgements.	Living with flatmates next year. Joined one society but left because of a 'dirty pint' initiation that was expected.
S19	White Welsh, Female, 18 years old, studying Psychology	Home is an hour away and goes back on weekends for a part time job.	Came to Open Day with parents and loved it. Hadn't been here before. Boyfriend is at the same uni. Hadn't drunk much before coming but the area had a good reputation for nightlife at home.	Did internet research before choosing halls and picked the biggest. Looked for people on Facebook after receiving offer.	Hasn't joined any societies yet and main friendship group are from halls. Will live with them next year.
S20	White Welsh, Female, 19 years old, studying Education	Home is a small town about two hours away.	Came to Open Day with mum and had visited the area quite a lot before. Boyfriend is at another uni close by. Drank a bit in pubs before coming but no clubbing experience.	Deliberately chose the 'quiet' hall after reading on Student Room. Didn't look for people on Facebook before coming.	Didn't join any societies as wanted to settle in first. Is living with same group from halls next year.

S21	Black English, Male, 19 years old, studying Pharmacy	Home is a city about three hours away.	Came to Open Day with parents and then followed up online. Didn't know much about the area but had heard that locals 'liked a drink'.	Chose the most social hall based on what Student Reps said but got placed in a quieter hall instead. Liked drinking and was looking forward to going out a lot here.	Has only joined course society so far but has made friends on course. Living with them next year.
S22	White English, Male, 18 years old, studying Computer Science	From a mid-sized town about three hours away.	Came to Open Day with a friend who was also applying. Aunt had attended uni here so had given lots of tips. A 'special occasion' drinker before uni.	Applied to halls after research on Student Room but was too late so is in private housing. Found housemates on Facebook before applying.	Closest to housemates so living with them next year. Joined a sports society and goes out with them quite often.
S23	White English, Male, 19 years old, studying Biomedical Science	From a city about four hours away.	Came to Open Day alone. Uni was recommended by a friend who'd been here last year. Liked pubs and clubs before uni 'for the atmosphere'.	Chose the 'social' hall on advice from Student Reps. Didn't look on Facebook to find housemates as he didn't want to pre-judge anyone.	Is living with friends from halls next year. Is in a society but it's an individual activity so they don't socialise together much.

5 A socio-ecological analysis of the role of alcohol in becoming a student: Identification of pre and post-arrival influences on transition

5.1 Chapter Overview: Pre and post-arrival processes impacting student transition

This thesis adopted a qualitative case-study methodology, using semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, document analysis and field visits. Theory-driven thematic analysis was undertaken on all data and results of this analysis will be presented in the next three chapters. This chapter explores the extended transition process undergone by students starting university and their use of alcohol within this. The data collection process aimed to address these questions:

- What multi-level influences contribute to student conceptualisations of alcohol and student life and when do these influences occur?
- What is the role of alcohol in new student adaptation to university life and the development of peer relationships?

As discussed earlier, adoption of a life-course approach allows for more detailed interrogation of factors impacting student transition to university and the development of student alcohol behaviour. Within this chapter, influences on transition will be illustrated through utilisation of the socio-ecological framework to show how the student timeline is impacted by multi-level influences on health behaviours and environments. This ecological analysis considers evidence of influences which act to shape student activity and expressions of agency in relation to alcohol use during transition to university. It will draw on Structuration Theory (Giddens 1984) to understand how influences interact across multiple levels, contributing to the development of agent knowledgeability in relation to the role of alcohol in the process of adaptation to university life for new students. To illustrate the temporal processes underpinning transition, data will present pre and post-institutional influences on acquisition of identity as a student, as well as examining experiences of the university setting. Incorporation of a temporal dimension in considering this process facilitates identification of the changing impact of ecological influences over time, from wider cultural narratives of student behaviour to more situated organisational and interpersonal factors. The data will indicate that the process of developing knowledge of normative student behaviour begins prior to contact with the university through pre-institutionalisation, meaning agents arrive already in possession of the

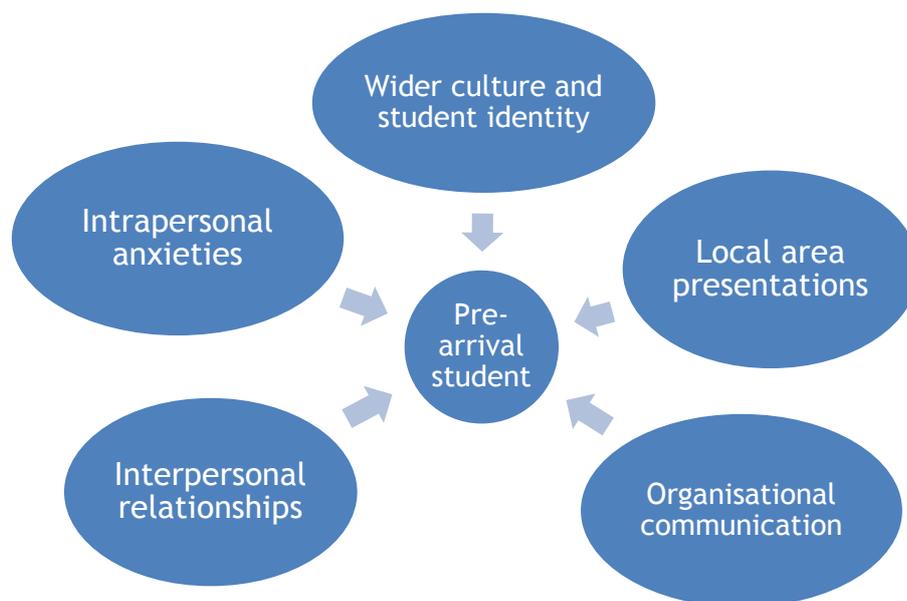
knowledgeability of rules of conduct which are then enacted in practice. The chapter will consider how observed behaviour of new students and the use of alcohol during transition are drawn from these rules and then act to reproduce them in practice in the university setting, illustrating praxis. This refers to the process through which institutions are maintained and reproduced through the daily interactions of agent and setting.

Acquisition of working knowledge of being a student and the role of alcohol in this will be described to illustrate how pre-institutionalisation incorporates influences of multiple ecological levels. I will discuss how students, as knowledgeable agents informed by pre-institutional processes, adapt to the new university environment and their changed identity status, drawing on locally acquired information and operating within the constraints of the organisational setting, with construction of this setting then elaborated in the next chapter. Results will illustrate how multi-level structuring properties act to constrain the capacity for agents to diverge from local constructions of behaviour thus ensuring that dominant alcohol norms associated with student identity are continued. These constraints demonstrate the bounded nature of agency as described in Chapter 4, whereby students arrive at university as bounded agents, having acquired information prior to university life, including identity constructs and expectations of alcohol use at university, thus bringing with them knowledge and experience that has guided actions to this point. The acquisition of rules guiding student identity and conduct reflect commonalities in the experience of those transitioning to university life, demonstrated by the existence of re-occurring social practices. These rules acquired prior to university are then applied within the confines of the organisational setting as allowed by existing patterned social relations and organisational routines.

5.2 External constraints and facilitators influencing pre-arrival conceptions of alcohol: Student identity, alcohol promotion and interpersonal processes

The section presents analysis of pre-arrival influences on student behaviour and conceptions, presented below:

Fig. 6 Pre-arrival influences on student conceptions of alcohol use



5.2.1 Wider cultural influences on conceptions of being a student: Pre-arrival constructions of student identity

As described in the previous examination of the literature dominant political agendas, including drives towards marketisation in HE, shape university practice through redefining learner as consumer (Molesworth et al. 2009). These impact on student expectations of the experience and conceptions of quality of ‘service’ provided by the institution, as assessed by contact hours and perceived knowledge of tutors (Kandiko and Mawer 2013). Although direct payment for HE is associated with higher expectations, this is associated predominantly with assistance in raising levels of employability (Jones 2010) and it is less clear what students expect in terms of guidance on health behaviours and support. Changed expectations as a result of marketisation were not evident in discussions with students, with only one interviewee - a self-defined ‘workaholic’ and non-drinker - making reference to fees in relation to drinking:

I don’t want to wake up with a hangover and miss lectures that I’m paying £9000 for, weighing it all up, I don’t feel the need to do all that. (S15, F)

Evidence indicates that traditional younger students place greater emphasis on the social aspects of university life, compared to the more academic focus found in mature student populations (Ozga and Sukhnandan 1997), with the expectation that university will provide opportunities for sociability. The provision of social

environments - specifically relating to Freshers - and the relationship of this to wider cultural expectations will be examined later.

As discussed earlier, the current period forming the backdrop to the HE experience has been classified as the late modern age (Giddens 1991), characterised by reduction in traditional institutional influence, in the form of temporal and spatial constraints to action, leading to rapid social and individual change as well as increased flexibility and uncertainty. The lack of guidance to conduct from traditional social institutions results in greater perceived choice of possible actions, consequently resulting in greater potential risk for 'wrong' decisions. Giddens argues that, within this context of institutional fluidity, the self is an ongoing project tasked with developing and sustaining an individual biography whilst maintaining a sense of belonging. Within higher education settings this means the establishment of identity as a student and, as the majority of new students in the UK are around 18, also as adult within a cultural narrative that defines alcohol as a key part of the expression of freedom within youth culture (Griffin et al. 2009). Periods of transition, from non-student to student and from youth to adult, require reflection on identity characterised by exploration of the demands of the new situation. Some students recognised the **personal changes** that underpinned this new identity development:

I think if I was still living at home it wouldn't be the same... it's just a really really strange environment I think and the fact that it's like a student thing... (S3, M)

I'm like a completely different person I'd say to who I was like six months ago...some of the things I've enjoyed most about being at uni is just like being 'yeah why not do this', you know...you're only like young once and I've enjoyed it like being able to just you know do things I wouldn't normally do. (S16, M)

This 'psychic reorganisation' (Giddens 1991 p.33) occurs in a late modern context with less institutional guides to aid transition and, consequently, more personal risks (Giddens 1991). Although institutional guidance may be limited, perceptions of structural constraints in operation, including those formalised as organisational rules governing student conduct, are still drawn on by agents in the construction of knowledgeability. This includes the expectation that localised guides to conduct will be available.

Formal rules on alcohol are inconsistently implemented across the HE sector (Orme and Coghill 2013), facilitating space for the development of informal behavioural expectations. Interviewees were asked about knowledge of any alcohol rules in operation at the university, with the majority reporting no knowledge and accurately reflecting current lack of institutional guidance identified within the research. When asked if they would expect there to be any rules, the avoidance of impact on other students or the university was expected to be part of any behavioural standards in place, illustrating student **knowledgeability of broader practices** associated with alcohol consumption in shared spaces. This was developed prior to university through general awareness of wider social behavioural norms, with no variations observed with age or gender:

I assume as long as you're not causing too much trouble you can do what you want in terms of drinking and stuff. (S9, M)

We're all over 18 so I wouldn't see why there would be (S1, F)

As stated, interviewees' views accurately reflected the lack of official policy, but most were able to surmise what guidelines may be in operation around managing the impact of excess alcohol use. This demonstrates importing of knowledgeability from wider cultural settings, including awareness of legal parameters, which are applicable within a HE context. S21, who expected before arriving to go out drinking a lot while at university, assumed post-arrival that general legislation would be applied:

I can't imagine there being (rules) because we're all kind of adults now so I expect the rules, you know, just stay within the law, I assume. (S21, M)

I'm presuming that if someone looks too drunk that they (university) can't serve them but I think that's just a general rule for all staff isn't it? (S19, F)

High levels of acceptability demonstrated by students for these parameters are likely to lead to maintenance and routinisation of practices consistent with these expectations, through the process of praxis defined earlier.

The less obvious influence of structures on behaviour leads bounded agents to perceive them as less significant, with emphasis on individual agency in directing behaviour. This illustrates the epistemological fallacy (Furlong and Cartmel 1997),

which is a feature of the individualist ethos of the late modern age and occurs as a result of the weakening of ties with traditional social structures. Where individualism has primacy and structure is perceived as less binding, agents are more likely to attribute responsibility for outcomes to their and others' choices and to emphasise personal decision-making even within highly structured environments (Evans 2007). Some students indicated the association between adult status and agency, specifically attribution of **personal responsibility and acceptance of consequences**:

The thing is, like, I think really we should be doing it ourselves because we're all adults so we should...if we get ourselves into a situation it's our fault really isn't it? (S18, F)

Personally I think you need to learn yourselves...maybe (rules) should be put in place but then again you think, well would that ruin it for everyone else that does take it sensibly that is alright with their drink because some people have gone over the top (S23, M)

This was evident in a majority of responses, reflecting the theory of Emerging Adulthood (Arnett 2004), with the agency associated with young adulthood observed as the capacity to take responsibility for own actions, including the freedom to get things wrong as part of a work in progress.

Individualised accounts of heavy alcohol use and other health behaviours reflect dominant cultural narratives of 'lifestyle' choices, enacted in education based interventions commonly aimed at students where, despite behaviour occurring in the structured context of a university, inclusion of analysis of the impact of environment is frequently under-developed. This was evident in both drinkers and identified low or non-drinkers, with S15 - a non-drinker - equating **independence with high levels of freedom**:

You're at university, you're independent, you can do what you want. You're an adult and obviously with the drinking age being 18 here I mean everyone has done it before. (S15, F)

Equating agency with moral responsibility (Giddens 1991), and specifically with adult status means the individual is frequently dislocated from social context and given full responsibility for making 'sensible' decisions regarding consumption, with engagement in risky behaviour attributed to either poor choices or lack of

education. France (2010) argues that in late modern society risk, and the consequences of risk taking, are personalised with little emphasis on social influence in discourses on behaviour. Although universities often attempt to mediate risks associated with young adult drinking behaviour through organisational practice as discussed in Chapter 3, in the present study these attempts were constrained by conceptualisation of adult status, including perceptions of the wider norms evident in UK drinking culture:

I don't really know what you'd say because I think people will, it's a natural human thing I know that adults like to get a drink in them. (S3, M)

Data suggests that most students expected local rules to be drawn from **wider cultural standards** rather than being specific to the university context, as evidenced by the assumption of 'common sense' content:

I just assume that you're not supposed to drink in lectures and stuff but, but I don't know really. (S8, F)

Not being drunk in lectures I guess would be one, I don't know if that's an official rule. I would assume it would be. (S17, M)

Where local construction of behavioural constraints was considered, a strong majority of students, with no variation by age, gender or drinker status, favoured harm reduction approaches rather than prescriptive rules. Student responses reflect **experiential learning** principles (Kolb and Kolb 2005) which describe a transaction between the person and their environment in order to understand and assimilate new experiences, as part of the process of adaptation to the world:

Even if someone gave me advice I probably would still do it so I think you kind of need to learn from your own mistakes as well. (S8, F)

Time to learn from experience is therefore significant and, in common with the other interviewees who had taken gap years, S16 cited this extra time prior to university as important in personal development through provision of space for experiential learning, with this perspective applied to alcohol use:

Like the best way of finding things out is actually doing things myself. I've been there and I've been in those speeches and just been like 'oh I can't wait to go...' (S16, M)

The capacity for the university environment to act as a learning space for students to gain the necessary experiences desired, and the location of heavy drinking behaviour within this, will be more fully examined in Chapter 7.

5.2.2 Ecological analysis of national and local area presentations of alcohol: Pre-arrival influences acting to structure formulations of student identity

As illustrated when discussing organisational structure, universities are open systems embedded in wider cultural settings, which coercively influence the construction of organisational processes. Student transitions similarly occur within wider contexts and are also subject to processes of coercive influence, which shape conceptualisation of student identity and behaviour. Anderson and Gale (1999) state that our actions and mental frameworks are shaped by the wider cultural geographies we inhabit, which we then interpret and understand by drawing on these frameworks in a recursive process. **Wider cultural identity constructions** of students constitute a structuring property, which reinforces the role of alcohol practices in perceptions of identity:

Erm, it's just a part of being a student like you go to lectures and then you go out. (S19, F)

(on reasons for drinking) *Well it's a stereotype really isn't it? (S11, F)*

Media portrayals of student drinking excess are commonplace in the UK, such as in the recent TV series following Freshers through the transition process (<https://www.itv.com/itvplayer/freshers/>). Oswell (1998) argues that mass communication tools such as television and social media act to disembed relations for young people and relocate them across space and time, leading to sense of connectedness and kinship with wider networks. Where social relationships are less embedded in locality (Giddens 1990), this allows for the development of group identity as 'students' across previously restrictive geographical boundaries. Media content, including long-standing television images of student drinking behaviour, are accessible to a wider cultural audience and become subsumed into accepted identity portrayals which reproduce norms of heavy consumption and association with sociability (Griffin et al. 2009). The internalisation of this association was evident in interviews:

I guess it's sort of like a traditional way of getting to know people. When I say traditional I mean traditional like the student sense and not the goes back through the ages. (S16, M)

Data illustrated how cultural presentations of student identity acted to structure pre-arrival alcohol expectations. Wide acceptance was in evidence across the sample of the cultural rule of alcohol as **intrinsic to studenthood**:

I don't know where the whole drinking craze came from at university but obviously the two are entwined and because of that people must just sort of shake off all the thoughts about what alcohol does to you, because you feel like you go to university you're going to have to drink, the two are like inseparable... (S15, F)

That's probably a part of being a student, being young. (S13, F)

A minority of students directly referenced specific media input featuring localised presentations of wider cultural norms, which the act to **shape expectations** of future behaviour:

...there was like a reality programme in the Valleys...and they go to like (local club), we actually go there quite a lot. (S3, M)

Because obviously you've got like clubs which are well known and stuff from like MTV, because obviously when you're a Fresher you want to go there. (S20, F)

Despite living far away from the area S21 illustrated internalisation of media presentations prior to arrival, which shaped his perceptions and were cited as a factor in application:

I think Welsh people in general just have a liking for a bit of drink to be fair. (S21, M)

For some, prior expectations led to utilisation of social media forums to gather localised information on nightlife, demonstrating an **agentic response** (Scanlon et al. 2007) e.g. active pursuit by the individual:

Just reading online and stuff, I think, I actually researched where's the best university nightlife and it came up with here, Leeds and places like that so I think that swayed my decision as well. (S1, F)

This suggests that the influence of marketisation may be significant beyond the presentation of the quality of educational experiences, with extra emphasis on the added value publicised by universities. Cultural presentations of student life, and the role of alcohol within it, constitute marketing of the wider student social experience, with expectations then incorporated into pre-transition conceptions of university. Marketisation acts to shape the expectation that university will provide a good social experience, personified in the cultural conception of Freshers as a period of excess:

It's synonymous with Freshers week. I went round to see all my friends at different unis so like, I'd spent weekends in the different ones and it's quite a common theme, like it's what everyone does to tolerate each other. (S16, M)

Evidence indicated that wider cultural norms of heavy alcohol use oriented students towards drinking by shaping alcohol expectations, expressed through interaction with enabling situational contexts (Northcote 2011). Students arrive with knowledgeability of the 'correct' Freshers experience, evidenced by internalisation across the whole sample of the cultural rules around Freshers:

You know that basically Freshers is just going to be, just total binge drinking chaos really. (S4, F)

University processes acting to reinforce these conceptions will be presented later.

Alcohol was commonly perceived as prevalent in both campus and local community environments, allowing for expression of internalised associations of its place in student identity:

It's just such an accessible thing as well you know like illegal drugs and stuff obviously they do take an effort and stuff for people to like go and acquire them whereas like you can just go over to Tesco and just get it. (S3, M)

Shared alcohol norms, embedded into the timetable and lifestyle of higher education, have previously been identified as a welcome part of starting to feel like a student (Banister and Piacentini 2006), suggesting that conformity to dominant cultural narratives is beneficial to adaptation to the university experience. This study further suggests that the dominance of alcohol in the conceptions of new students constrains opportunity to deviate from these

narratives, acting not only as a boundary to agency, but as a limit to the requirement for any agentic response. The consequences of deviation as rule breaking will be explored further in Chapter 7.

5.2.3 Pre-arrival communication of organisational processes: The observation of bounded agency in student responses to contextual information

In order to understand motivations in selection of the specific institution, interviewees discussed pre-arrival contact with the university and their subsequent perceptions. Although wider cultural presentations of alcohol in student life are highly homogeneous and largely generic in university settings, local community and organisational facilities are variable. These were significant in directing some students to make initial contact with the university based on prior information obtained.

Consistent with the exploratory nature of the emerging adult period occupied by those interviewed, desire to explore a new location and be independent was significant for many, but was coupled with emphasis on feeling safe after leaving the familiarity of home, making physical features of the setting an important consideration. Unsurprisingly for students visiting an urban campus rather than a more isolated out-of-town setting proximity to local city centre and facilities, including bars and clubs, was important to many. The size of the city was commonly considered to be manageable, being “*big but not too big*” (S17, M), meaning that facilities were accessible but size was not overwhelming, with “*everything within walking distance*” (S22, M). Several students, both male and female, cited proximity to parental home as important for maintaining existing interpersonal relationships, with common personal assessments of ‘reasonable’ travel distance, based on time, convenience and costs. This suggests that economic and social, as well as academic assessments were made prior to selection, as indicated by S19, for whom maintenance of her existing part time job meant less need to draw on student loans.

Open Day attendance in the year preceding arrival was often highly significant in guiding the decision to apply. Geographical features, including the appearance of campus buildings, was surprisingly powerful with many stating that the look of the university on Open Day visits had been important in swaying their decision from the multiple options available to them at the time. A positive first experience of

staff during visits also proved significant, with staff described as friendly and welcoming.

Part of the Open Day process includes campus tours conducted in groups and led by Student Reps. These are volunteers from the student body who are available to answer questions based on their own experiences and local knowledge, meaning they are a potentially influential source of information due to credibility lent by their peer status (Green 2001) and the belief referenced by interviewees that they wouldn't give the 'official' answers. Several students described information given by Student Reps, which highlighted significantly **different drinking cultures** across halls of residence:

Go to A if you're boring, so I chose A. B if you like to go out and C if you go out every single day of the week. (S20, F)

B and C they said is very social, two social areas, they say A is a bit more separate from that because it's sort of down the other end, it's harder to get access to the building which I suppose is a good thing but if you're sort of socialising you want to go in and out of people's buildings and stuff...I think I wanted to be right in amongst it all. (S23, M)

This was cited as prompting those students to consider their drinking expectations and choose accordingly. As above, S21 had also stated that social offering was important and chose the hall with the strongest reputation for this:

The rep said C was kind of like the social, for first years like the social centre...So yeah I thought like it's like the party place. (S21, M)

In response to this information, many students reported seeking corroboration on Student Room, which is an internet forum boasting 1.5 million members, hosting member-led discussions on any aspect of student life with questions answered by older students. I searched Student Room for discussions on the university residences to assess whether geographically disembedded perpetuation of local behavioural norms was in evidence. My search supported discussions during interviews, with Hall C described by former residents as the loudest, with frequent noise disruption at night and lots of opportunities to drink, and Hall A as quiet. There were also multiple mentions of the proximity of very large Tesco store offering all night access to alcohol, with previous residents suggesting

organisation of a 'big pre-drinks' session in order to meet housemates and break the ice on arrival in halls.

S1, who had not taken part in a campus tour with the Student Reps, had received only formal information from the university regarding cost of halls, proximity to campus etc. For her, information on Student Room was therefore even more significant:

I put A first and then C and then I went on that forum (Student Room) and everyone had pretty much said C is way more fun so I swapped them around. Yeah so I did base it on what people said I think rather than what the University said, I based it on what students have said I guess. (S1, F)

The enactment of pre-arrival information as drinking behaviour in halls will be discussed later in the chapter, with the interaction of student behaviour and organisational processes elaborated in Chapter 7.

5.2.4 Pre-institutional processes impacting the development of alcohol expectations: The influence of interpersonal relationships

Interpersonal influences were significant in the development of alcohol expectations, with friends and family cited by a large majority as sources of information obtained pre-arrival about both the university and generic student life. These relationships commonly informed expectations of university and alcohol use, with the **experience of peers and siblings** significant:

You've got like cousins and friends and stuff who have gone to uni and, sort of like, they've been saying you drink quite a lot at uni and stuff to relax and socialise. (S22, M)

My brother's 3 years older than me and he's always talking about that (drinking at university). (S13, F)

Such information acted to build on and reinforce expectations developed from wider cultural narratives, with a majority reflecting wider cultural associations of university life and drinking. S18, who had maintained relationships with existing peers through social media stated:

Quite a few of my friends went to XXX and that's started like a week, two weeks before me and then on Facebook they were posting videos and so

then it got you really excited and you thought 'oh I hope it's going to be the same'. (S18, F)

S12 discussed a friend who had started at the same university a year earlier and described drinking behaviour, reflecting stereotypical conceptions of students, as **facilitated by aspects of organisational structure:**

I think it's part of our culture almost now, I think it's just...I don't know, yeah I think it's part of being a student there is the drinking side a lot. Because people like my friend who's only got six contact hours if he does all his extra reading he's got lots of extra time on his hands and going out is fun, going out is fun isn't it? Drinking with your mates is a laugh so why would you not go and have a bit of fun? (S12, M)

Locations can develop a sense of shared meaning (Shields 1992) as a result of local and national agendas (Valentine et al. 2007) including media, economic factors and licensing practices, with the impact of these in shaping university function previously discussed. The same influences acted to shape expectations of positive drinking experiences associated with this location, **reinforced by interpersonal information:**

I was expecting it, like, because obviously some of my friends went before me like they'd say a lot of stuff about like nightlife and stuff. (S9, M)

My sister goes out loads and here is one of her best places... (S19, F)

The value of drawing on interpersonal sources to understand rules in operation was illustrated by S17, who was the only interviewee reporting no such friends and family experiences of higher education, instead describing gaining ideas of student life from wider cultural presentations such as TV or Facebook. To overcome this perceived hurdle he intended to **adopt situational norms** as guides to conduct:

Am I supposed to be going out every night and things like that because none of my family have been to uni before so I didn't really know what to do. So it was like I'll just do what everyone else does. (S17, M)

The informational processes described above acted to **pre-institutionalise** potential students by presenting the generic image of alcohol and identity

embedded in wider culture, which was then reproduced through interpersonal relationships and contextualised information. Although macro-level influences are significant in the identity development that signifies pre-institutionalisation, the effect appears to be amplified when reinforced within trusted interpersonal relationships. The positioning of alcohol acts to develop expectations of the future patterning of social relations which are then supported by situational cues and organisational information provided. The structuring of this organisational presentation will be discussed in the next chapter.

5.2.5 Intrapersonal anxieties as a driver for alcohol use in the construction of post-arrival peer relationships

The move from home to university has long been identified as a period of psychological change and vulnerability to stress (Fisher and Hood 1987), with opportunities for new experiences and personal development coupled with challenging separation from existing support networks (Rice 1992). For many first year students this transition period is associated with increased stress levels (Dyson and Renk 2006) and emotional support needs, causing difficulties in adjustment to university life and therefore increasing retention risk (McMillan 2013). A significant factor in successful adjustment is the development of new friendships, with inadequate peer support associated with self-reported loneliness in first term at university (Pierce et al. 1991), and the development of positive social relationships correlated with more successful settling-in (Friedlander et al. 2007). For first years moving into halls of residence, friendship acquisition is rated as more significant than for students continuing to live in the family home who expect to maintain more contact with existing peer networks (Buote et al. 2007). In order to explore pre-arrival concerns I asked students what they were most worried about in the summer before starting university. Overwhelmingly throughout the sample, the primary concern related to relationships with new living companions, reinforcing research findings on the perceived importance of peer relationship development:

Not making friends, like not getting on with my housemates or, like, I was more worried they wouldn't like me. (S1, F)

I was worried about meeting friends, I'm not completely sure why. I've always had a good amount of friends anyway so it's not like I'm a bit of a loner and I wouldn't make any friends but it just worried me. (S11, F)

This concern showed no variation for gender, age or course of study, suggesting commonality in the experience of student transition. Research indicates the importance of peer bonding in successful university adaptation (Lapsley et al. 1990), with respondents demonstrating intrinsic understanding of this:

I think obviously you're worried about like getting on with people like making friends and stuff you know that's the last thing you want is to come here and not. (S3, M)

This concern was associated with successful adaptation to university life and, potentially, to continuation of studies:

You don't want to be the one who's like not even happy in your flat or you don't bond with anyone properly in your flat because you're stuck with them...if you were just unhappy, I don't think you'd last very long. (S4, F)

I think I just knew if I didn't get along with people I just would hate everything else about uni. (S1, F)

Although prioritised by halls residents, these relationships can also present challenges, with on-campus students reporting more stress associated with living situation than others (Hicks and Heastie 2008), as well as increased anxiety about changes to existing friendships (Karp and Holmstrom 1998). While frequent changes to living situation are characteristic of young adult experiences (Clarke & Wheaton 2005), selection of housemates from existing peer groups generally involves the capacity for agency, which is lacking for students due to university routine practices over-seeing the allocation of places:

I was worried about having a flat with people you don't get on with. It's a bit of a weird thing isn't it? Just like moving in with people that you don't know. (S8, F)

These concerns were reduced by post-arrival discovery that others are “*in the same boat*” (S15, F) which acted as re-assurance and reinforced commonality, illustrating the benefit of **shared identity as Freshers** in initial social integration (Henderson et al. 2007):

I think it's probably making friends because you haven't had to do that for a long time... but then I think coming here and realising that everyone was in the same boat made it a lot easier and a lot of people came from all over the place so there were no like friendship groups that had already been made when we arrived at university. (S15, F)

Interpersonal influences were significant in the development of social expectations, specifically where parents or older relatives had maintained their own peer networks from university and presented the experience as an opportunity to make 'friends for life'. This was coupled with the suggestion that making friends would occur naturally, with sociability positioned as an inherent aspect of the university experience. S9 described this as a source of **pre-arrival anxiety**:

If you'll meet people who you'll get along with or if you'll like struggle to make friends and stuff...because everyone says it's easy to make friends but you don't actually know what it's going to be like until you get there. (S9, M)

The frequent failure to meet these expectations had necessitated an organisational response, with Student Support reporting provision of assistance to many students in the first term whose experience did not match up. P10, a student support advisor, stated:

Making friends is a big, big part of it because, you know, we see students all the time who say, you know, 'mum and dad said university was the best time of their lives and it's not mine'. (P10)

Variations in responses were evident between those with more prior drinking experience and developed drinker identities. Pre-institutional presentations of alcohol which locate it centrally within student life create anxiety for those lacking prior personal experience of the **situated rules** associated with drinking behaviour. S20 expressed concern over public drinking in clubs, with experience restricted by geographical constraints:

I wouldn't say I go on nights out like I do now simply because a good night out is about 45 minutes away from where I live so [laughs]. I didn't really ever go out, when I turned 18 I just didn't really, I went to like the pub and stuff but not really on a night out like here. (S20, F)

Post-arrival, this fear had been allayed for S20 by the realisation that this lack of experience was common, illustrating that development of student identity as a temporal process, gradually conforming to cultural presentations. For some of those with more experience, concerns around social life related to whether flatmates would match their own **perceived levels of sociability**:

I was worried about having reclusive people in my flat. I'm very loud and outgoing and I was really worried that people would, like quiet people, would find me a bit too loud. (S14, F)

S21, who went out drinking frequently stated:

I think I was worried about my flatmates... and making friends on course there's so many people you're bound to have at least one or two friends but if you're in your flat and you know there's only nine of us in the flat, that's not that big a number...I didn't know if we'd get on...I didn't know, you know, if they socialised much outside. (S21, M)

Macro-level presentations of typical student behaviour were also evident in comments from S5, with **expectations of heavy drinking norms** in evidence rather than any expectation of commonality based on study requirements. This led to anxieties over her own timetable:

I think it was more if I had a good, like, good set of people in my flat...whether it was going to be...everyone wants to go out every night and then I'm the only one that has to stay in and work. (S5, F)

Pre-arrival concerns illustrate the reflexive nature of the young adult experience, with the life stage characterised by interpersonal shifts from familial influences to increased importance of peer relationships, as well as the opportunity to re-write personal biography (Henderson et al 2007). This opportunity for change prompted concerns among some over successful integration, incorporating recognition of self as driven by agent **reflexivity within the constraints** of existing structuring properties:

Do I get there and be a different person...am I supposed to be going out every night? I didn't want to be forced to change like how I am outside of uni. (S17, M)

How I'll get on with people and whether I'll have friends...whether I'll have to change in order to sort of fit in, if that makes sense... Because you always worry 'oh am I the sort of odd one out, do I need to be different in order to be accepted'. (S23, M)

The reflexive development of self was aided by life experiences prior to university. King (2011) argues that, within the life-course of the young adult, gap years represent a break in the process of transitioning into student which provides an opportunity for the development of life-skills beneficial to emerging adult identity. Students who take gap years report acquisition of more cultural resources and greater maturity than those who haven't (Heath 2007) and this was reflected in the current data, with **divergence** between gap year and non-gap year students in feelings of preparedness:

...as I say having a gap year I sort of like was quite up for that but I mean I know people who like literally just left home and, like they'd all their meals cooked for them and like never done anything so I imagine it's quite scary like if you'd, not be quite childish, but you know like not done a lot of things. (S16, M)

This experience was considered good preparation for life in halls:

I took a gap year and I kind of had to be more social and I did grow up a hell of a lot in my gap year so I wasn't worried about Uni at all compared to my friends who went straight there. (S12, M)

This positioning of self as at a different life-stage to other students suggests that experiential learning led to enhanced sense of self-as-adult:

Living with strangers I think that definitely helped, you kind of know what to expect a bit more I suppose and just having, it's like yeah living with new people you need to learn how to deal with the things that annoy you. Yeah so maybe it helped a bit. (S4, F)

The gap year represents time after the initial culturally sanctioned, post-18 exposure to alcohol, potentially suggesting reduced attribution of importance to drinking as part of student life. However little variation was in evidence, with most gap year students interviewed displaying no difference in alcohol expectations or in the likelihood of positioning alcohol as central to student

identity. This suggests that **pre-institutional processes**, including internalisation of macro-level presentations of student life still remained powerful.

The only deviation was in S4's views of the heavy drinking emphasis of Freshers as "a bit sad" and "not worth the money", which acted to position S4 outside of the cultural rules governing Freshers, resulting in social exclusion:

I personally found it quite like, quite tough really. Just the drinking every day and it was just that's what everyone wants to do and yeah that is the expectation to go out and then if you're not really that fussed about going out you're kind of, you feel like you're missing out.

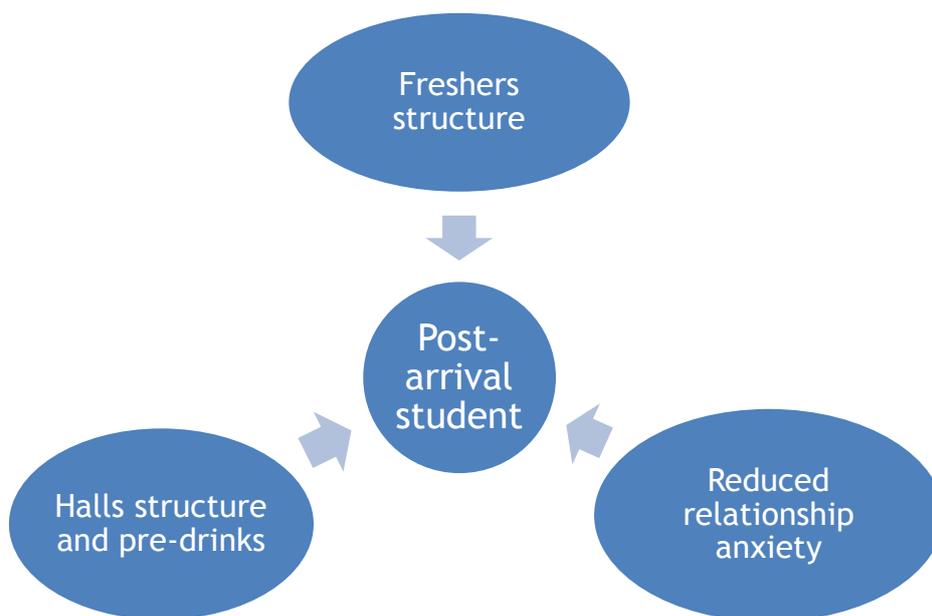
This process by which alcohol as the dominant social offering of university can act as exclusion from social interaction will be discussed further in Chapter 7.

5.3 The observation of bounded agency in the enactment of post-arrival transition behaviours: Institutionalisation and social processes

By adopting a timeline approach to the analysis of student transitions, it was possible to identify the process of pre-institutionalisation, through the illustration of structuring properties acting to ensure bounded agency. This occurs through the internalisation of cultural and familial norms which act to shape alcohol expectations and conceptualisation of student identity prior to transition to university life. To complete the timeline approach, we will now consider post-arrival behaviours and experiences of new arrivals, representing attainment of situated 'knowledge of' developed from direct experience of context rather than decontextualized 'knowledge about' (Schutz 1973). The temporal nature of transition represents a process in which the former develops into the latter within contextual constraints presented to new students. These constraints influence bounded agent engagement in transition behaviours (Evans 2007), referring to strategies employed in order to attain goals identified as significant for successful adaptation. Transition behaviours described here illustrate agentic responses employed to aid adaptation to university and new demands on identity, which are prompted by both pre-institutionalised 'knowledge about' and contextualised 'knowledge of'.

The diagram below illustrates post-arrival influences identified as impacting student alcohol behaviour.

Fig. 7 Post-arrival factors impacting student conceptions and behaviour



5.3.1 Alcohol and initial institutionalisation: Student responses to organisational presentation of Freshers

A common agentic response to pre-arrival anxiety was use of Facebook to identify other new students, specifically housemates. As an estimated 94% of undergraduates use Facebook regularly (Ellison et al. 2007), social media may aid reduction of transition anxieties through the development of social capital, however concerns over reliability and trustworthiness were expressed:

Because it's talking over a computer, you don't really know them do you?
(S20, F)

...I know for a fact I pre-judge people purely on just chatting to them on Facebook... (S14, F)

Despite this, data suggests weak social ties developed over Facebook (Ellison et al. 2007) were in evidence, with several students reporting **reduction of initial anxiety** after identification of new housemates:

Definitely Facebook was a big part...we all talked over Facebook, tried to get to know each other a little bit more so that was nice, that was really good. (S11, F)

It definitely made me feel more settled than if I'd turned up having no idea who I was living with. (S1, F)

No variations were observed between male and female likely use and perceptions of the utility of this, illustrating the ubiquitous nature of social media in young adult life. Further uses of social media included the practical - “*has anyone bought a toaster?*” (S5, F) - as well as the social and frequently involved arrangements for Freshers events in response to programme information sent by the Student Union. Welcome packs sent out prior to the new term detail the events programme and succession of club nights on offer, with students commonly reporting making advance plans to attend together. Although alcohol is not mentioned explicitly in promotional material, young people commonly associate night-time economy venues with the sociability of drinking (Valentine et al. 2007), suggesting that alcohol doesn't need to be marketed overtly for drinking expectations to occur. This was observed in the current research:

I knew there would be a lot of drinking involved I think. There was all these (?) advertised for like the Student Union events in Freshers so we assumed obviously that's what we were going to be doing so there would be drinking involved. (S1, F)

Obviously I knew the Freshers Week was like a massive thing but yeah I guess that the expectation was you know there was so many events and stuff. I wouldn't have thought the expectation would have been to like have gone out and just gone to them without having a drink. (S3, M)

Social engagement through Facebook provides commonality drawn from wider cultural narratives on rules of alcohol use during the period, where no other commonality yet exists. This in turn reinforces those narratives and maintains the centrality of alcohol to Freshers and to sociability:

Because it's just like this massive...instead of policies there's this whole message like over the Freshers thing like you know you drink and drink and you drink. (S3, M)

This was echoed by S22:

In Freshers Week it's sort of quite centred around obviously like the big student nights out and sort of bars and clubs and stuff. (S22, M)

Planning consumption with housemates before arrival was equally likely in male and female students, indicating **homogeneity of expectations** of heavy alcohol consumption and reflecting **internalisation** of wider cultural associations previously identified.

5.3.2 Post-arrival transition behaviours and the role of alcohol in reducing relationship anxieties

Post-arrival transition behaviours signify the enactment of knowledge about alcohol, acquired through pre-institutionalisation by wider cultural and interpersonal influences. This is then transformed into knowledge of normative standards in context, expressed by agents within the constraints of the organisational setting. The start of Freshers signifies intensive alcohol promotion by local retailers, which acts to reinforce **pre-institutionalised expectations** of alcohol use and defines the local environment as one which permits, and encourages, enactment of heavy drinking norms. S4 linked the visibility of this marketing directly to first impressions for new arrivals:

It's terrible during Freshers Week, all the nightclubs, there will just be people stood outside...it might be like girls in short shorts and things like that. They'd give you carrier bags full of little goodies and it's total rubbish. Yeah maybe you don't need to let promotion like that happen as much, it's a bit full on and then that's what makes you feel like you're missing out and that's the pressure to go out I guess...it feels like that that's what you should be doing, if that's what you get to uni and that's your first impression do you know what I mean? (S4, F)

The ongoing **intensity of alcohol promotion** in the first term was frequently cited, with low price and free drinks incentives offered for club attendance:

In terms of promoting club nights and things like that you know on their little leaflets they've got the shot prices, they've got 2-4-1 deals on cocktails and stuff like that. And yeah I would say they really did big that up some clubs would give free shots on entry. Obviously free drinks, people will go for those nights. (S15, F)

Promotion acts to reflect and reproduce a national level culture of intoxication (Griffin et al. 2009) where heavy consumption is the perceived rule for the young adult life-stage. This is then reproduced at local level, with the enactment of this

rule - and subsequent economic rewards to promoters - acting to reinforce practices and ensuring continuation. Organisational attempts to limit this activity and constraints of local factors will be described in Chapter 6.

A key student aim on arrival is meeting transitional needs associated with successful adaptation, including formation of peer relationships and development of identity as student. Scanlon et al. (2007) argue that formation of friendship groups is an important feature of the establishment of student identity, requiring an agentic response from individuals in order to be completed successfully. Alcohol consumption may assist development of friendship groups and has been described anthropologically as an inherently social act (Jayne et al. 2011), with shared consumption assigned high value within the context of peer groups as a tool for cementing bonds (Miles 1998). This is pertinent during transition to university life where **anxieties over friendships** were prevalent among a strong majority of the sample. Where the local environment presents alcohol use as the dominant social offering, its potential function in overcoming these anxieties was recognised by students:

I think in the first week, settling in, having to live with people that you don't know it's a lot easier to get to know them by having a bit (of alcohol). (S14, F)

It sounds stupid but you kind of feel a bit more confident when you've had a drink or something. So at the start of pre-drinks on the first night I was just standing in the corner like 'what am I doing here? I don't know anyone'. (S8, F)

Student conceptions were also reflected in comments from staff, with P12 discussing the importance of alcohol during settling in:

It's in western culture I think that, particularly young people, like to lose their inhibitions at times when losing your inhibitions is helpful, for example when you've just been put in a flat with a bunch of people you don't know. (P12)

To understand how this period had been negotiated we discussed behaviour after arrival, including tactics employed specifically with the aim of settling in and the role of alcohol within these processes. S5, who described bonding with flatmates as her aim at Freshers, stated:

It was the first night we had in our halls they'd put a board game on the table and it was, if you land on this you have to do certain things and one of the guys like had to eat a raw onion and just random things like that and then it got a bit rubbish so we played Ring of Fire (drinking game). (S5, F)

S21 describes bringing a bottle of absinthe purchased on holiday specifically to ease initial meetings with new flatmates:

And yeah I brought it to my flat and that's kind of an icebreaker, I was like 'oh guys do you want to try a bit.' (S21, M)

For a majority of drinkers, with little variation by gap year, gender or residence, the prior expectation of drinking together was then reproduced through consumption in flats on initial meetings as a means of generating shared activity and conversation, aiding in overcoming anxieties. Initial meetings with new flatmates predominantly involved drinking together, which was observed as positively impacting those meetings through **enhancement of commonality** as a precursor to the development of shared identity:

Alcohol probably does make it easier, takes away the awkwardness of it I think. You can have something in common when you're drinking with people. (S2, M)

Some students drew a distinction between drinking together and chatting in halls as 'doing something', as opposed to chatting without alcohol as 'doing nothing', reflecting anthropological accounts of alcohol as a marker used to characterise a situation as a social event (Fox & Marsh 1998):

I think that the drinking helps with like meeting your neighbours as well...because you're more likely to be in and out...whereas to go and knock on their door in the afternoon for a cup of tea...it doesn't seem the same as for drinking. (S4, F)

It also gives you an excuse just to sit around and talk, which like, just sitting in the kitchen not having a drink, chatting just seems a bit strange with nothing to put your hands on. (S1, F)

Students are highly likely to consider alcohol as a social tool aiding friendship formation (Collins et al. 2014) and this was reflected in the data but with

observable differences between students who identified as low or non-consumers prior to arrival, and students who expected to drink. Students with weaker drinker identities were likely to report alcohol as unimportant in their peer group formation but were more likely to report **initial difficulties in establishing friendships** as well as perceived pressure:

Some people will say like 'oh well yeah you'd have more fun if you drank'... there is pressure, people, some people aren't understanding at all. (S15, F)

A strong majority of interviewees who drank rated this as aiding friendship development:

Because like loads of your peers do it and if you want to make friends you do it as well, yeah. (S7, F)

The first week we pretty much went out every single night...I think that did help like you find out things about each other. (S1, F)

Research with second year undergraduates suggests that students value the role of alcohol in facilitating expression of selves which may be more subdued when sober (Banister and Piacentini 2006):

a lot of people are quite nervous about meeting new people and they just find a little bit of drink and seeing other people drinking and you just get a bit more confident... (S9, M)

S4 reflected this perception, stating:

I think, yeah, it just relaxes you a bit and then you start having a bit more fun and I guess, see who the silly ones are and things like that when you get a bit more drunk... (S4, F)

The development of shared bonds, including stories and experiences, indicates the beginning of a shift from being individuals in a shared space to the attainment of social group status (Deaux 2001). Alcohol was rated as highly significant to this development of **social group identity** by a majority of students, again reflecting internalisation of cultural narratives associating sociability with alcohol use which are widely presented during young adulthood:

I think it (alcohol) probably makes bonding quicker because then you have stories to tell rather than, like...you make your stories with them rather than just telling them about friends from home. (S13, F)

Probably the relationship wouldn't have been as strong. There is something about going out with people when they're getting drunk and having a good time that does, sort of, bring you close together... (S23, M)

The effect of alcohol in reducing inhibitions aids initial bonding, with willingness to be socially uninhibited then embedded in the anonymity and safety provided by social groups (Baron et al. 1992), suggesting greater importance for drinking in early stages of relationship formation. New students negotiate multiple novel experiences and locations within a brief period, with reduced familial input and little initial contact with the university beyond the SU and halls, meaning **perceived safety** associated with development of group identity is significant:

But then after you've had a few nights and stuff you get to know people and it's like when something happens, like if something bad happens on a night out and someone helps you, you know like who you can trust and stuff as well. (S8, F)

Although students generally stated that bonding with new peer groups would have happened eventually, it was felt by a majority that it happened faster where drinking was present, with **speed potentially advantageous** for reduction of anxieties:

I think in the morning when we woke up and we'd all been out together we were like sober again but the awkwardness was like gone, so we got on pretty much straight away from that I think. (S1, F)

in the first night you go out you kind of get to know people properly obviously you're, kind of, a bit more relaxed when you do have alcohol...It's just weird to think what it would have been like without alcohol. (S2, M)

Post-arrival behaviour is constrained by organisational practices necessitating a staggered arrivals process, meaning that initial bonding and generation of in-group identities between flatmates may occur earlier for some. This enhances requirement for later arrivals to ingratiate themselves within these groups, with

alcohol proving valuable to this process. S8, who arrived later due to her parents work schedules, said:

It was me and this other girl that had come on the Saturday so we were like kind of talking in the corner for a bit. But then people started like getting me involved and they started doing drinking games and stuff so you get more involved. (S8, F)

S20, who also arrived later to fit in with family scheduling:

So the other four had already met and already been out together so it was a bit more awkward...my two like best friends in the flat those two were very close because they were going out like together then in the Freshers and stuff and I was kind of not so I think it did impact a bit. So I guess going out and stuff does kind of create friendships. (S20, F)

S19 also reflected on her experience of breaking in to a group that had already started to form through **utilisation of social drinking**:

Because they've already made like a pack...it was just kind of they'd already made friends so they were talking about previous nights and things like that so it wasn't that it was on purpose but it just happened...I went out to all the nights with them, so after a few days it was fine. (S19, F)

Transition to university is a highly pressured situation with new interpersonal and psychological challenges identified by students. The primary concern of respondents related to rapid social integration, leading students to draw on pre-institutionalised knowledge of the role of alcohol in the HE context to guide conduct. It can be argued that drawing on pre-institutional information simplifies the process of developing commonality with others in a situation where other interpersonal connections have not yet been established. Data presented later will illustrate that alcohol use is readily facilitated by the organisational context and presents an easy option, both in attaining social integration and in conforming to situated norms. Although friendship formation requires expression of agency, this is observably bound by the constraints of the setting which ensure that compliance with situated norms is the easier option. Processes acting to maintain and reproduce localised norms of intoxication will be considered further in Chapter 7.

5.3.3 Residential configuration and student agency: Utilisation of alcohol to enhance social networks in halls

The multiple flat structure common in halls means that extension of social networks requires exhibition of active agency to overcome geographic barriers, which is bound by knowledgeability of situational rules and shared practices within the setting. The university advocates an ‘open door’ policy to new students as a means to facilitate social contact, indicating awareness of the physical constraints of halls living. In an illustration of **bounded agency**, actions were guided by drawing on shared macro-level presentations of the role of alcohol in social activity, providing a guide to action which then finds space for expression in the geography of the setting (Anderson and Gale 1999). Initiation of new contact therefore occurred for a majority of respondents across multiple halls through arranging alcohol consumption, specifically pre-drinks:

So people just knock on each other's doors and say we're doing pre-drinks... (S20, F)

I think the drinking helps with like meeting your neighbours as well because you're more likely, in a pre-drink sort of situation you're more likely to be in and out and milling about and stuff whereas to go and knock on their door in like the afternoon for a cup of tea isn't quite as, I don't know it doesn't seem the same as just for drinking. (S4, F)

After the initial ‘knocking doors’ approach of Freshers, S20’s house now runs a Facebook page to arrange pre-drinks, with nominated flats developing reputations as key gathering places:

So if ever anyone wanted to pre-drink you'd just say (on Facebook) and then go down to a certain flat. (S20, F)

So the whole house came down to our flat because we're on the ground floor and then we all had pre-drinks at our flat and then went out as a big house. (S17, M)

Facilitation of contact with other drinkers through pre-drinks includes exposure to **high-risk consumption styles**:

Usually we just drink everything beforehand and it's getting more intense now like some of my flat mates, the boys, they have ten pints before they leave and then the night begins. (S19, F)

So you're having your drinks before you go out and things you can't see your measures, that's what I've noticed loads. Because like say you have a bottle of vodka you would probably put in near enough a triple, obviously you can't put triples in when you're on a night out so you get drunk so much easier. (S2, M)

I find as well like the measures I put in, especially once I've been drinking a bit, you know what I mean like in bars and stuff obviously they've got like the actual shots that they properly do it for. Mine are say like triples every time. (S3, M)

For many, this routinely included drinking games:

So we would all pre-drink together, like my flat and the other flats, and just drinking games. (S1, F)

High-risk drinking, including drinking games, is perceived within groups as socially beneficial (Workman 2001), potentially due to the associated reduction of inhibitions but also as an expression of trust in new contacts. **Praxis** was evident, with students demonstrating internalisation of dominant cultural narratives of the sociability of drinking together encountered through pre-institutional processes. This expectation of heavy alcohol use among peer groups was identified, not only by drinkers, but also by those defining as light or non-drinkers, demonstrating the strength of cultural associations.

The commonality of pre-drinks among this group illustrates cultural shifts over recent years which have seen the growth of home rather than public drinking, with consumption forming a significant part of domestic social life (Valentine et al. 2007). The last two decades have seen a growth of pre-drinking of cheaper alcohol among student populations, with as many as 85% of drinkers reporting home consumption before going to another venue (Pederson & LaBrie 2008). Boundaries of home within halls may be more flexible than for other forms of accommodation, with multiple layers signified by flat, wider house and residence hall settings acting as possible limits to the home environment. For many students, halls represents the first experience of a home of their own creation,

with opportunity to construct new domestic routines without familial monitoring (Skelton and Valentine 1998):

And also obviously pre-drinks and stuff, in the flat you can do it but at home your parents are in you can't really do as much. (S8, F)

As well as widening social networks, pre-drinking was valued not only for saving money, but for providing a more relaxed atmosphere than night-time economy venues which are utilised after initial consumption:

That's my favourite part of the night to be honest... you know everyone and it's just chilled. It's just chilled yeah. (S21, M)

We do pre-drinks and then head straight into the place where we're supposed to go... yeah again it's a bit cheaper as well to drink at home, to do pre-drinks... it's nice as well because you can sort of socialise and play games. (S6, F)

In this research pre-drinking formed an integral part of **negotiating the social and geographic terrain** associated with moving into halls, which was further enhanced through ready availability of alcohol in the local area. The observed success of pre-drinks as a means to extend social networks ensures that local constructions of rules governing new student behaviour are reproduced as patterned social relations in the immediate student cohort and beyond. This was demonstrated in the information transmitted in wider settings, such as Student Room, by former halls residents which then acted to structure the experience of others by becoming part of pre-institutional processes.

As well as aiding transition through social integration, development of peer networks was significant for more **pragmatic purposes**, through the need to identify potential year 2 housemates. Local economic relations act to impact this process, with the promotion of second year housing occurring early in the academic year and adding to the perceived need for rapid relationship development. This pressure led letting agents marketing strategies to be criticised by staff:

The agencies, they panic students, thinking that they have to look for their house next year in November. So we start advising students not to look until January...you've had your January exams, you've had that

pressurised time and you know a bit better who your friends are by that point. (P10)

This early external pressure causes frequent problems, requiring a university response, with Student Support describing regular contact with students who have entered into housing contracts too early based on initial bonding who are then unable to break this contract later in the academic year when other, preferred networks have formed. This **pressure** to identify future housemates was acknowledged by many students during interviews:

It was a lot of stress... I was desperate to get to know people on the course I was in, I wanted to live with the people on my course, wanted to live with people that I was doing the same things as but obviously it's very difficult because of that short space of time. (S23, M)

You sort of have to do it in like November, late October time to get because that's when the house list comes out...So yeah there is quite a bit of pressure on just socialising with everyone, making sure you can sort of get on with them and sort of have things in common that you can talk about. (S22, M)

Several respondents acknowledged feeling panicked by this process, which fails to recognise the likely changes occurring in friendship groups over time:

You've got to make friends because you've got, like now is the time to decide housing which is so soon and if you haven't met people then I think that will be a tough situation. (S5, F)

When reflecting on his experience of this process, S9 suggested it would be helpful to advise others to delay housing applications until relationships were more firmly cemented:

Because some of the people who maybe you are going around with in Freshers Week, you may not be their friends for the entire uni thing, you'll like meet a lot of new people on the course. (S9, M)

S15 who, as a non-drinker, deviated from dominant student identity conceptions, felt that ongoing friendships and living arrangements were challenged by her non-drinker status, which necessitated finding people who respected her decision and didn't apply pressure. This excluded continued living with the same housemates in

the second year, and instead S15 had constructed a different social group who fit her criteria. This deviation from normative standards and the enhanced effort required to find a like-minded group, illustrates the **convenience of accepting and reproducing the majority behavioural standard**.

5.4 Summary of findings and areas for further examination

Evidence clearly illustrates that students consider social integration as fundamental to successful adaptation after the transition to student status, with significant pre-arrival anxiety identified. The process of adaptation is aided by development of a friendship network, acting to provide in-group status and shared student identity. We have seen that prior conceptualisation of this identity develops as a result of multi-level influences, with commencement of pre-institutionalisation occurring before arrival through the impact of wider cultural presentations of student identity and alcohol located within narratives of young adult behaviour, as well as through interpersonal contributions that reinforce the centrality of drinking to the university experience. Pre-institutional influences ensure that alcohol expectations develop relatively homogeneously across student populations, with little variation or patterning observed and light-drinkers equally likely to evidence internalisation of wider normative presentations of the centrality of drinking to student identity. This lack of deviation illustrates the strength of pre-institutional presentations, with expectations then intersecting with organisational-level structuring properties, such as information obtained from Student Reps, SU communications and the arrangement of academic scheduling, to create a context where exposure to situated alcohol norms constitutes initial institutionalisation post-arrival.

The lack of patterning observed in results, specifically in relation to gender variations and use of alcohol in initial social relationship development, further suggests that transition anxieties are experienced relatively uniformly across the first year cohort. Satisfaction of initial intra and interpersonal needs after arrival was attained for most students by utilising alcohol which, through homogeneity of pre-institutional experiences, provides commonality where no other shared experiences yet exist, acting to promote bonding through reducing inhibitions. Student conceptions of alcohol and sociability are impacted by influences at multiple ecological levels, both before and after attainment of student status, including cultural and organisational presentations which act to constrain the requirement for, and expression of, agency. By looking at these issues ecologically

and temporally, it can be identified that pre-arrival interpersonal influences identified by new students are significant in guiding alcohol behaviour post-arrival, with agency bound by contextual drinking norms which facilitate enactment of normative cultural presentations of student drinker identities. The aspects of student identity which are pre-institutionalised by external factors are not bound to any one organisational setting and it can be argued that these are likely to be observable to varying degrees across a UK context, regardless of demographic differences and variations in campus structures.

The data presented so far focusses on the journey undertaken by students as bounded agents and leaves questions remaining regarding the composition of the organisational context presented to new arrivals. In order to better understand the constraints and enablers impacting students it is necessary to examine the development of university policy and practice regarding alcohol. This will be presented in the next chapter.

6 A socio-ecological analysis of multi-level influences impacting the development of organisational culture and practice on alcohol

6.1 Chapter overview: Influences on organisational practice

The student experience of starting university was considered in the previous chapter, through examination of multi-level influences acting to shape the knowledge and opportunities available to new students in relation to alcohol behaviour and identity construction. Analysis illustrated that the transition undertaken by new students involves a process of pre-institutionalisation prior to arrival, leading to the development of alcohol conceptions associating student life with heavy alcohol use. Post-arrival, this is then enacted through agent behaviour within the constraints and facilitators of the university environment. This chapter presents analysis of this environment by examining influences impacting the development of university processes in relation to alcohol.

It considers processes within the institutional system previously described, through analysis of staff interviews, organisational documents and observations, with focus on these research questions:

- How do multi-level influences act on the university in the development of alcohol processes?
- How do organisational processes and student transition behaviours intersect in relation to student drinking behaviour?

As in the previous analysis, it utilises the socio-ecological framework to illustrate how influences on structure and agency account for organisational practices within a Higher Education institution (HEI). This approach facilitates consideration of environmental inputs on university practice operating across multiple levels, including broad national and political directions whose effect spans multiple sectors, groups and people, as well as those micro levels of influence observable in the day-to-day practices of staff. The analysis of structural and agential forces impacting university function across multiple ecological levels will be enhanced by drawing on Structuration Theory (Giddens 1984) to consider mechanisms of interactions within and across levels resulting in the co-construction of observed outcomes.

This organisational analysis will also utilise the work of Heugens and Lander (2009), which recognises the university as an isomorphic organisation impacted by

similar influences to others within the same organisational field. It is designated as an open system with nominal boundaries (Rollinson 1998), meaning that it has a recognisable identity with broad consensus on what is part of the organisation and what is not. The university, as an open system, exchanges information with surrounding local and national contexts, impacting at both macro level of overall organisational aims, and at micro level in the day to day practices of departments and agents (Katz & Kahn 1978). This information exchange will be discussed here by considering external influences on practice. At the university level, staff conceptions of own and others job roles and the contribution of this to the development of organisational sub-systems will be examined. This will illustrate areas of patterning within responses based on exposure to alcohol-related incidents.

The co-creation and reproduction of normative behaviour in relation to alcohol will then be identified in Chapter 7, where data will indicate that organisational practices act to enhance the division of academic and social identity in students through homogeneity of social experiences. Attempts to moderate alcohol impacts within university sub-systems will also be discussed, including student interpretations of these actions. The environment created and maintained through the interaction of organisation and student will be described, demonstrating that the university acts as an 'intoxogenic drinking space' (Seaman et al. 2013) which enhances likelihood of heavy drinking behaviours and is created and maintained through Structurationist processes.

6.2 Respondent involvement in campus services relating to alcohol

Interviewees were drawn from departments listed in the Methods chapter and displayed again below. Staff interviewees are identified throughout as P(N), with department stated in the organogram below. Students are designated throughout results as S(N). Routine services are briefly described here to provide context for the analysis of influences acting to inform their development.

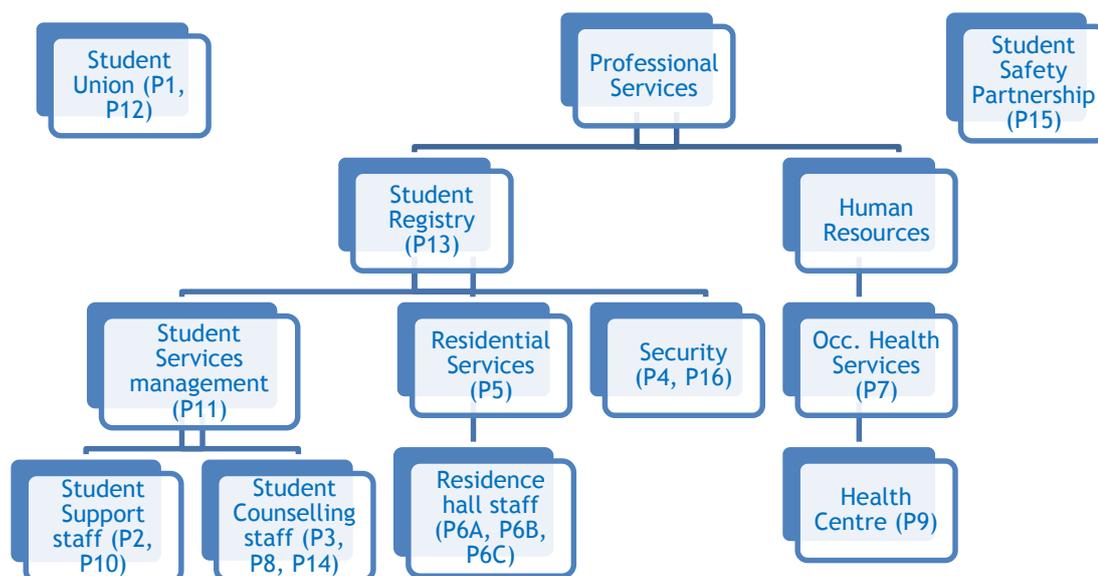


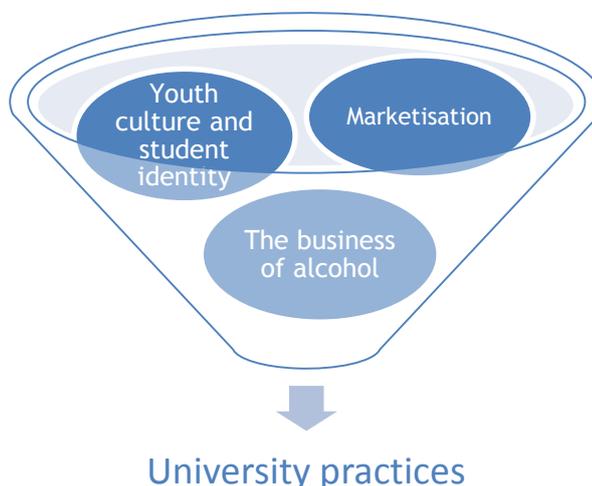
Fig. 4 University organogram with location of interviewees.

In terms of existing services for students, support is available through university-run Student Support and Counselling, as well as within the Student Union, providing a range of walk-in and appointment based confidential advice. These services do not explicitly refer to provision of support and information on alcohol, with more generic language used around help available, although several staff described their own previous experience working with alcohol and drug issues as equipping them with the skills to respond to any student problems presenting. For general pastoral care and responses to alcohol-related issues within Residences, each hall has a management team accessible between 8-6, as well as student wardens available on evenings and weekends for general assistance. Examination of university policy documents identified no specific student alcohol policy but a behaviour management approach incorporating alcohol into disciplinary frameworks. For breaches of tenancy such as alcohol-related damage or noise complaints, residence managers follow an in-house disciplinary process and apply sanctions including financial reparations. The Registry department is responsible for sanctions initiated under the university disciplinary code, which would be used for more serious alcohol-related offences, including assault. Issues will often be highlighted to those applying behavioural sanctions by Security, who provide 24 hour campus coverage, and are the main contact point for student alcohol issues

between midnight and 8am, with most alcohol-related problems reported as occurring between 2-4am. Both Security and Residential Services are members of the local Student Safety Partnership, featuring university representation from all local HE sites as well as a dedicated police liaison, Local Health Board and Local Authority partners. The group holds quarterly meetings to discuss student alcohol issues and to plan strategy for minimisation of alcohol-related harms and community impacts.

6.3 External constraints and facilitators influencing the development of organisational routines: Marketisation, student identity and the business of alcohol

Fig. 8 External influences on university alcohol policy and practice



The diagram above illustrates key areas of influence at national/policy and community level of the socio-ecological framework, which were identified as significant within the data. As argued earlier, consideration of influences at these levels recognises that universities are open systems embedded in wider social and cultural contexts that impact their function. This action of social institutions as able to influence and apply pressure on each other (Frumkin and Galaskiewicz 2004), is a process defined as coercive isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). These coercive forces applied result in constraints on the practice of agents within university through influences such as government legislative frameworks around alcohol, higher education policy, and cultural expectations around student drinking. A key consideration for analysis is to what extent all universities are acted on by the same macro-level forces, or structuring properties, and how this

is then expressed in the routines observable within the organisation. A structurationist approach argues that the capacity for agents within the organisation to respond to structuring properties at these higher ecological levels is evidenced in the performance of routines illustrative of agency (Giddens 1984). Routine practices and agent awareness of constraints to performance of these will be discussed throughout the chapter.

6.3.1 Marketisation and the changing status of students within higher education: Organisational responses to the rebranding of student as consumer

As we have previously seen, the student experience of higher education in the UK occurs within what Giddens (1991) describes as the late modern age, characterised as a period of post-traditional institutional life, with global as well as local contexts playing a role in development. Observed macro-level changes include political shifts in higher education that have redefined student identity, with the status of student-as-learner transformed to student-as-customer through policies of marketisation (Furedi 2011), prompting concerns discussed earlier over changes to the caring role of universities. Although not strongly evident in student data in this study, research indicates that student conceptions of their consumer status leads to assessment of the higher education experience on a value-for-money basis, related to perceived quality of academic offering, staff knowledge and employability (Kandiko & Mawer 2013). This was however reflected in staff conversations, with inter-departmental forums described, where recognition of the need to provide a **broader student experience** was cited:

I think that the university recognises increasingly the importance of the student experience, so it isn't just about getting students in and giving them a good teaching for a degree. But I think it's more than that, it's actually about making that experience here good...from the admission of students in right the way through to the accommodation that's offered, the sports facilities we've got, the support mechanisms that exist. (P7)

Accommodating a wider range of student needs requires provision of modular services beyond teaching, reflecting the sub-system structure previously outlined, and raising the issue of defining these services within a consumer relationship:

Those expectations are there, I want to know what it is I'm getting for my money you know what range of services am I getting, what am I entitled to, what am I expecting and are my expectations realistic - which they're not always... (P3)

This theme of student-as-customer was identified as an emerging concept during early conversations and then included in all further interviews as a direct question where it didn't arise unprompted. Staff interviews reflected varying interpretations of rights associated with customer status, with contrasting views of the level of autonomy associated with this and no recognisable patterning by role or department. P3, who counselled alcohol and drug users in local authority care before working with students, reflected a more holding approach to student support, suggesting that a consumer relationship permitted intervention in maintaining a healthy environment for all:

Yes they're a customer but in the same way if you are a customer anywhere you assume that there is insurance, you assume that there are health and safety, you assume that people have considered the environment that will keep you safe. And equally, if you go to a service and you are under the influence then you can, you know you can expect that you will be turned away because you're not fit. (P3)

This contrasted with P8, who also works in counselling and argued that student fees 'bought' the right to determine own behaviour:

If I'm paying nine grand I don't know that I would want someone to be telling me how I should live my life. I think health promotion is a kind of take it or leave it isn't it. You can, you know, you can engage in a workshop, if you chose to, or you could decide to go to the pub. It's about choices. If I'm being provocative about it, if I'm paying my money and I'm not really annoying other people and I'm going out and getting hammered every night, and I'm still doing ok in my studies, you know, I may not be getting firsts, but I'm doing ok, then whose business is it? (P8)

P8 further argued that student identity should be considered similar to that of non-students at the same life-stage, with the expectation of **individual responsibility** associated with the young adult life-stage:

I'm not sure that people should necessarily be disciplined by the university if they happen to end up in A & E after a night out on the lash. It doesn't happen to an employee of Lloyds' bank for example, if they do that...because we're not in loco parentis.

It was argued that customer status made it inappropriate for the university to “micro-manage students' lives” (P13), with attempts to regulate alcohol consumption through policy **exceeding reasonable expectations** of duty of care. This was reflected by P6B:

They're sort of customers you know they're not naughty people, they pay us to live here. Your landlord doesn't come round to yours and say 'only one bottle of wine a week' you know it is very difficult. There's a line and you can quite easily cross it. (P6B)

The consumer status of students was associated with the freedom to act in ways that may be characterised as having negative health impacts, which in turn constrained organisational responses to these impacts. This was further reinforced by staff conceptions of student-as-adult, which will now be explored further.

6.3.2 Staff responses to youth culture conceptualisations of young adulthood and the positioning of alcohol in student identity

In the previous chapter the transition to university was located within a period characterised by increased institutional flux and uncertainty in the construction of action. The result of this uncertainty is a necessary process of institutional and personal reflexivity impacting both universities, as institutions, and students. This opportunity for identity exploration forms part of the process of attainment of young adulthood, characterised by freedom to take risks and to make mistakes. The association between freedom and adulthood was recognised by a strong majority of respondents as a cultural norm, suggesting high degree of coercive isomorphism in describing the **universality** of the student experience:

They're not coming just to experience the culture, they're coming to cut the ties from their parents and to become adults in their own right and make their decisions, whether it's a good or bad decision, whether its falling over drunk and friends helping them and put them to bed...not necessarily that we want to encourage but that can be part of the university and it's them making decisions as an adult and learning what it is right from wrong. (P2)

It can be reasonably surmised that this process of coercive isomorphism occurs regardless of institutional variations in approaches to alcohol policy and practice between universities, due to the longstanding cultural association between adulthood and alcohol, with public consumption marking observable transition to the adult world (Seaman and Ikegwonu 2011). This defined legal boundary contrasts with theoretical conceptions of late adolescence as an extended period between 16-25, punctuated by newly acquired legal rights but with limited adult responsibilities, thus ascribing liminality to the period (Skelton and Valentine 1998). This was reflected in references to the freedom for students to explore behaviour, potentially, for the first time:

We are dealing with adults and we have to work with the fact that students should be given a certain amount of freedom to do as they wish and that's why I keep harping on about the educational side of it as opposed to the directive side. (P13)

in terms of the support that's there, we do what we can...it's a very difficult balance because students, for the vast majority, they're 18 plus. They're adults and whilst we can educate and promote health and well-being, people will want to live independently, and for many it's the first chance they've had to do that. (P7)

Young adults within this life-stage reject labels of 'adolescent' and expect, as part of adult identity, to take responsibility for actions and to make mistakes as part of personal exploration (Arnett 2004). As indicated in the last chapter, societal expectations of students coupled with the HE context acts to elongate this liminality (Banister and Piacentini 2008), through separation from wider community settings and through the provision of distinct identity constructions. This sense of separation was confirmed by several student descriptions of the university, where academic buildings are separate from accommodation, with

halls of residence situated in a grouping with “*a village feel*” (S3, M). This ‘part of but separate’ aspect of the setting was cited as a positive - “*like a bit more of a community*” (S23, M), suggesting facilitation of homogeneous group identity through geographic factors.

The young adult life stage of most students is characterised as a period of risk taking (Jack 1986) in the search for autonomy, with the expectation that this will be replaced by **adult rationality**, and therefore **personal responsibility**, upon attainment of full adulthood (France 2010). It was recognised that this is a developmental process:

Students don't have the same capability to assess the risks as older adults. (P16)

It was acknowledged by others that this limited capacity for assessment of risk may impact alcohol use due to reduction in monitoring:

It's one thing to go out with your mates at home but...you're the decision-maker in university and you're looking after yourself there's nobody to sort of say...and also with new people around they don't know their limitations so nobody can say 'oh you've had enough'. (P6A)

There certainly used to be an expectation that going off to university was the best time of your life, not only just about the education, but it's about the socialising, all those things, all of which is true but, you know, suddenly to be free to do all of that and nobody to see what time you're coming in at night, is a different experience. (P8)

These arguments reflect the theory of Emerging Adulthood (Arnett 2004) previously identified in student understandings of their own liminal status, with adulthood recognised as an ongoing process. Despite recognition of this process, results demonstrate that cultural attribution of adult status manifest in the views of staff and students constrains practice by challenging the acceptability of intervention. The legal adulthood of students was significant in considering institutional responses to behaviour, including lack of alcohol policy, with staff perceptions reflecting the enhanced independence and personal responsibility associated with adulthood, including the **right to drink heavily** and to make mistakes, as well as the **application of own judgement**:

They have a level of intelligence and I would hope common sense and we've got to give them credit for that and whether we can get them to change their minds on things is another thing entirely. And I would assume all students who come here will know that alcohol is an issue and over-drinking is a big issue. (P2)

P13, who is responsible for the policy direction of student services, argues:

This is not a school, this is a university, you're dealing with adults. As long as we are, I think, giving students the right advice, the right support, then, then that probably is sufficient. (P13)

Although the association between adulthood and freedom in students was acknowledged it was also suggested that the university must not act to encourage personal excess, suggesting recognition of local environmental cues:

I think there is an issue about where the duty of care for our students begins and ends. What we mustn't do ever, is act as some sort of encouragement to drink more than you're capable of drinking...we've all got to keep educating students about sensible limits. (P13)

The current structure of university support provision is relatively generic across UK campuses, suggesting coercive isomorphic processes, including the wider educational policy shifts discussed earlier, leading to the homogenisation of student-specific contexts. The **non-directive approach** embedded in provision reflects expectations of students as free to choose, including freedom to drink heavily, which is accepted as being part of student identity for young adults:

And there is still the ethos that it is a drinking culture, you go here to drink, you come to study. You study hard and you party hard. (P2)

Alcohol is, you know, I think before they come away to university it's something they may not have dabbled with and then suddenly they're thrown into it and it's a way of life (P6A)

As we have already seen, macro-level cultural expectations of alcohol use were internalised by students, with associations between heavy drinking and young adulthood. This association was also expressed by staff and intersected with common conceptualisation of what it means to be a student. Wider cultural

presentations of alcohol use were widely accepted as being **part of student identity** for young adults:

I think that there is definitely a culture of students coming into university who will be desperate to experience the fresher's experience and desperate to live the life, you know, of a student. And that often encompasses that kind of party atmosphere. (P7)

Certainly alcohol is perceived as part of the university experience, it's perceived as the enjoyment of coming to university... 'we're not here for a long time, we're here for a good time', that's the student outlook. (P9)

As discussed in the earlier review of the literature, wider societal conceptions of student identity contain situated identity norms of heavy alcohol use, which act to provide cues to action (Scanlon et al. 2007). Staff reproduction of these drinking narratives within university spaces, where non-drinkers occupy out-group status (Conroy and de Visser 2013), leads to little challenge to dominant norms and the **routinisation of non-interventionist practices**:

To be honest we accept it here as part of the Higher Education experience and whether that's right or wrong I don't know, it's my opinion. I think students socialise and as part of the socialising they have a pint. (P2)

A strong majority of respondents across all departments displayed acceptance of cultural narratives of heavy drinking as part of student identity, with fatalism suggesting **perceived lack of agency** and capacity to address issues caused by high levels of consumption. This illustrates that the bounded agency observed in student populations applies also to micro-level behaviour within organisations through staff behaviour. P10, who attended a different university, drew on her own experience to inform her view:

I think, with alcohol, it is a kind of rite of passage for students, we expect it. I was a student myself, you know. We know students go out drinking, it's a big part of their experience for, you know, a lot of students, not all students. (P10)

This was echoed by P3, who also drew on personal experience of student life at another campus:

I think particularly within British society there is that expectation that when you go to university you're going to be drinking excessively, you're going to be using drugs, you're going to be partying. (P3)

Staff views of rite of passage and learning through drinking reflects experiential learning principles previously expressed by students. This sees the university act as a learning space for them to experience and assimilate alcohol use as part of the process of developing personal boundaries and becoming an adult consumer of alcohol. It further involves learning to 'handle' drinking, with frequent reference from both staff and students to learning own limits. It is necessary to then consider whether the university environment is conducive to this stated aim of allowing students to learn to become safe drinkers or whether this in fact contrasts with situated norms. In a further illustration of **bounded agency**, P6A described the impact of alcohol on staff capacity to address student behaviour, where habitual and environmental cues act to **support continuation** of behavioural practices:

You really are then trying to appeal to adults to curb their behaviour and to be mindful...they're great when they're sat in front of you and then Friday night, Saturday night comes and it's just same old you know. (P6A)

The pervasiveness of cultural presentations of alcohol and students is evident when staff draw on historical and wider geographical examples to support their positions, suggesting a structuring effect on organisational practice through constraining the capacity and willingness of agents to challenge cultural identity norms. P5 has over a decade at the university observing students and also works with other local HE sites to develop pastoral care strategies, meaning regular exposure to information on other student cohorts. She stated:

It's just trying to find the best way of getting messages across really, because we're not going to change it completely, it's part of growing up, it's part of being a young person, let alone a student. (P5)

Reflecting the intersection of wider cultural and interpersonal influences identified by students, previous familial input was acknowledged as an important external factor, providing a limited foundation that would prepare them for the exploration associated with young adulthood, but mediated by wider cultural and life-stage expectations:

It's very hard to educate, you know that should come from home...but then they're teenagers, they're starting to dabble in drinking...it's trying to make people take responsibility and accountability for themselves, I think that's the hard thing. (P6A)

The extent to which students have attained adult status was more likely to be questioned by staff whose work meant contact with the negative outcomes of drunkenness, in contrast with those staff in daytime roles who were unlikely to see these outcomes. Through work in Residences and Health respectively, both P5 and P9 are exposed to negative outcomes of heavy drinking impacting on daily work practices. P5 described issues encountered in Residences:

When it's been a possible disciplinary issue in terms of damage...99 times out of a hundred, alcohol is involved somewhere with the damage (to property).(P5)

This was further evident from P9, who discussed how his work in the student health centre meant frequent contact with injuries and accidents related to excess alcohol use:

Lots of them will be glass in the foot of young women, because they've gone out with their heels on, can't walk with their heels on afterwards, so take the heels off and get glass in the foot...We have had physical assaults, we have had sexual assaults. We have had some incidences of spiked drinks but that is much less. (P9)

This contact appeared to influence his perception of the continued adolescence of the age:

Students when they come, it may not be PC but basically they are still kids. They're 18 year olds, they're away from home for the first time in a major sense. They're with a bunch of others who are also in the same situation as them and they're all let off a leash. Some of them may have points to prove, some of them are doing what they think society demands of them at that age. (P9)

Both have been involved in developing department-specific adaptations in response to these issues, including seeking out external training and partnerships as well as developing awareness-raising educational materials which are described later.

Residential staff, who are often first responders to drunkenness issues, echoed this conception of continuing adolescence as impacting capacity to carry out their role:

I think that people then just use that against you if you try and sort of manage them in any way they will just throw that and say 'yeah well my kitchen cupboard doors been broken for a week' and you kind of just feel like you're just in this debate with a teenager. (P6A)

A further staff member from Residences described the problematic nature of the **intersection of liminal adult identity with student-as-customer** in residences. P6B described an example in which the rules of consumer status and marketised identity were drawn on by a student who had been warned for drunken behaviour, impacting their response to organisational applications of sanctions for damage:

'Yes I got drunk and trashed my flat but you haven't done anything about that tap, that's why I'm going to do anything about this'. It's like 'what'?! (P6B)

As stated, this contrasted with observations from staff in Support and Counselling services who predominantly see students in daytime settings and were less likely to rate alcohol as significantly impacting their daily working:

But it's not quite so common that students are presenting here with alcohol issues, on the staff side I'd say it's more common but I suppose. (P14)

it's not a regular issue but it does come in. It doesn't often come in as the presenting issue, more often it comes in as it's a way that person, that student is coping with their difficulties...So it tends to come in as a secondary issue. (P3)

P2 described seeing students who are experiencing financial issues, often linked to overspending on social activity but cited that this was the only connection to alcohol observed in practice, stating that *"we don't see it in any other way"*

The complexity of the student-organisation relationship were neatly summarised by P8, in relation to university attempts to regulate behaviour:

In my head you either end up with the adolescent behaviour or you end up with the parental behaviour, with the adolescent and the, kind of, parental bit of the university. And when have adolescents and parents ever really managed to work together on something.

The departmental patterning observed between those who have the most contact with drunkenness and those who do not suggests sub-culture development in response to student behaviour. The outcomes of this are further discussed throughout results presentation below.

6.3.3 The business of alcohol: Manifestation of the economic imperative in community and organisational-level responses to student drinking

Coercive isomorphism can be observed in higher level influences acting to structure the operating context for universities, through the impact of marketisation of the sector as well as policy directions in relation to alcohol. It is reasonable to consider that the impact of wider cultural conceptions of youth and alcohol would impact all HEI's, acting to constrain capacity for agency in developing responses and reinforcing the openness of university systems to wider cultural processes. The impact of these processes was also observable in the enactment of economic policy drivers at local community level. Cheap alcohol, and particularly off-sales, was a factor in alcohol-related problems impacting campus function, with large retailers well-positioned to capitalise on high levels of student alcohol expenditure. Frequent reference was made to intensive promotion of alcohol to students, with high levels of awareness across departments. Residences made particular reference to the actions of off-sales outlets in the vicinity, with multi-buy offers and discounts common. Key retailers benefit from **geographic advantage** in relation to halls, with promotions responsive to academic scheduling:

We're surrounded by Tesco's, both entrances to halls have got Tesco drinks promotions outside... (P5)

...you'll see their window display change when the students come back and it will be alcohol and really big promotions. (P6)

Staff comments here reflect data presented earlier on information communicated to students from Reps and external websites such as Student Room, illustrating

constraints to staff practice. As well as retail outlets, four local services provide 24-hour alcohol delivery, including to halls, meaning home drinking is readily facilitated.

In common with most UK universities the Student Union is the predominant on-campus alcohol retailer, operating as an independent sub-system with organisational routines constructed in response to retailer identity. Existing pricing approaches are impacted by macro-level factors including cultural expectations of cheaper alcohol among student populations. Although unable to compete with off-sales prices, SU bars respond to this by being cheaper than bars and clubs in town, which is primarily enabled through central purchasing available to NUS members. This national structure facilitates organisational practices which act to reinforce wider cultural presentations of students:

It's just something that comes with the territory so students have been bombarded with that and it becomes part of the, it's kind of expected.
(P1)

The economic imperative to maintain levels of alcohol sales within the Student Union constrains capacity for it to act to promote reduced consumption. This was acknowledged during interviews by other members of staff within the institution, who recognised the **ambiguity between sales and duty of care** inherent in the SU position:

I guess we've got to remind ourselves that the union is a business and their biggest business is the bars...they're going to try and make as much money out of students as they can. (P10)

We do appreciate the Students Union is a business, they've got to make money but they can still make money and still have, like I say if there was water, that sort of thing. Yes, people are going to buy a drink, people are always going to drink. (P4)

SU takings were cited as around £2 million p.a. with alcohol takings significant for continuation of all functions. Around 56% of annual take comes in the first term (P1), with approximately £0.5 million taken during Freshers, illustrating the significance of successful engagement of students in Freshers activities which, as previously identified, constitutes the key point of **initial institutional contact** for new arrivals. University staff were asked to describe their input into the

construction of the programme and their view of its aims. The dominant conception of Freshers as presenting opportunities for social adaptation was broadly echoed across university departments and was summarised by P8 as:

Meeting friends and form a network of support, both learning and personal support, so that they could start to feel part of being in the university. (P8)

And by P3:

My hunch would be you know those two are the priority for Freshers - where do I find stuff and how I make friends and get to know people. (P3)

Freshers content is developed predominantly by the SU based on review of the success of the previous year's offering. Activities are segmented into distinct day and night programmes, with daytimes linked to practical concerns such as GP registration, obtaining student card, joining societies etc. with external partners, such as banks and major supermarkets also paying for promotional space, and evening activities consisting of a series of themed club nights. The SU communicates Freshers offering using multiple methods, including website, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. These state that events will take place in the bar and club in the union but otherwise no alcohol promotion is in evidence with no references to drinks prices, getting drunk etc. Although analysis has identified that formal communication to students does not promote alcohol, it does emphasise the social opportunities within the local area, suggesting some recognition of the importance of this aspect of student identity, particularly in evidence in the presentation of Freshers. As illustrated in the previous chapter by students' pre-institutional understanding of alcohol use in Freshers, it can be theorised that normative associations of student drinking make intensive alcohol promotion unnecessary in a context where it is already expected.

Although university input to the development of the Freshers programme is limited, this was not always acknowledged. P13, from university management, stated that Freshers was:

Very much around what residences are organising. It's also about what student support is organising.

Further stated conceptions of the university role in Freshers were offered:

It's an opportunity to educate and inform students. It's an opportunity - even though it's very difficult because you have hundreds and hundreds of them going through - but you are showing a face and you are making your presence known, so you're offering a contact. (P9)

RB: So who would you say takes the lead on Freshers, in terms of the whole content?

I think it's student support, I think they're encouraging...it does seem the departments are doing more and more...And then they go to the union for registering with societies and the sports and all that sort of stuff. (P5)

However Support Services and Residences described their input as minimal, being largely reserved for day time informational activities with no input at all in more social offerings. As previously stated, programming creates temporal segregation between drinking and non-drinking or moderate drinking students, with all non-alcoholic events run during the daytime, segmenting the use of the SU as a space based around the nature of social activity occurring, thus creating rules of attendance which are then communicated to new students. The sub-grouping of student into drinkers and non-drinkers through the structure of social provision reflects operation of the wider night-time economy which operates on a similarly segmented basis, creating a distinct evening culture for drinkers with further separation of perceived youth sub-groups (Hollands 2002). **Location of the SU within the night-time economy** means non-drinkers may be deterred from full participation in the social activities on offer, potentially acting to create further segregation and delaying opportunity for social group formation. This **segmentation** reinforces cultural stereotypes of typical students, creating potential issues for those who deviate:

It's a kind of stereotyped cliché that's students come, they get pissed all week. And some people come and they don't actually want to do that. And it is very much geared in the union to go drinking, so I can imagine it is difficult. (P10)

At the end of the day there's like two and half thousand 18 year olds really so there's going to be a lot of them that are going to want to go out and drink and there's nothing you can do about that. (P6C)

This is facilitated by organisational arrangements of the period, with the suggestion that students are wandering around residences for much of Freshers with a “*lost soul look*” (P5), due to lack of structure and the empty time characteristic of the first two weeks, leading to more time for drinking. As previously identified, this lack of other options was reflected by students, and the impact of this empty time on those who deviate from dominant alcohol identities will be illustrated in the next chapter.

Reflecting the cultural association between alcohol and sociability (Griffin et al. 2009), drinking together was acknowledged as aiding attainment of social integration during Freshers through provision of commonality and the basis for **shared identity construction**:

You're all thrown in together...majority of time no one knows each other at all in the halls so for six people who don't know each other and you have to find a common ground...you go to the pub. (P2)

This was identified as a key part of the role of the SU in student transition:

I think that there is enormous benefit in us running the freshers offering that we do, way over and above just the income generation that it gives. What we offer, is a chance to make friends, and that is what students crave. (P12)

This echoes findings strongly expressed in student interviews, with this shared conceptualisation of the role of alcohol suggesting widespread acceptance across the whole organisation.

The economic value of alcohol consumption by the local student population also acts to create routines in the actions of local bars and clubs aimed at engagement of new students. Location and timing of promotional activity illustrates the openness of institutional boundaries, being heaviest during Freshers and centred around direct marketing in public areas beyond institutional control. I observed this activity on the second Friday of Freshers through a field visit to the public thoroughfare nearest the SU, with high levels of students passing. Multiple promoters along the length of the street were handing out materials, all of which were themed towards promoting alcohol use, with a standard approach of handing out flyers for venues with drinks offers attached. Other techniques included freebies with flyers, such as drinks bottles, key rings and energy drinks but always

accompanying materials related to alcohol promotions. The bigger clubs were operating teams of promoters who were identifiable by matching t-shirts and, in one case, a branded vehicle. Prior planning and financial investment from promoters was evident and it can be presumed that this is therefore financially viable.

Residences staff previously identified as more likely to be exposed to negative consequences of drunkenness in the course of their work, expressed frustration at the activities of local licensed venues which are **shielded from the consequences** of heavy alcohol use:

They don't see that, those repercussions so they're going to offer what they can to get the most people in but they don't see people taken to hospital afterwards, the people who have to be helped home. (P6B)

Although direct promotion is confined to off-campus areas through a 'no flyer' policy in university and SU buildings, bars and clubs have circumvented this restriction by recruiting students living in residences to act as sales reps, offering advance tickets and drinks promotions to other residents, as well as widespread distribution of flyers. Students can call reps and have tickets delivered, meaning minimal effort required. In response to this localised issue, Residences have had to autonomously develop specific departmental attempts to limit this activity, both to reduce promotion of drunkenness and in response to littering. P5 described the limited impact of her own efforts, which included discussions with local authority on potential applications of by-laws on littering - so far to no effect - as well as direct contact with promoters:

We write to them (clubs) and, say 'please don't come on site, we don't want you, we'll report you to the licensing authority'. Then we put posters up confirming that, then...they still come on site. What they do is employ students, so even if you catch them, you say 'leave site' - 'well I live here'. So that's the battle they're employing students on site, I can't stop them coming on site. I can't really take any action as a, you know, landlord/tenant because they've been caught giving out leaflets. It's not like they're running a business from their room. (P5)

The rules of the landlord/tenant relationship act to constrain action available to staff, with P5 describing the routine as a "constant battle" of responding to promotional tactics. To provide evidence of impact, P5 had collected examples of

each leaflet being given out just this term which filled an A4 box file, illustrating the intensity of this activity. Awareness of constraints to possible university responses in addressing the issue were also indicated by students:

They're not supposed to sell, the little fliers they're all over and they've put notices up on each house saying no fliers here and they've put fliers around the notices, it's really funny. (S19, F)

It can be identified that, as coercive isomorphism can be seen to constrain and facilitate at the organisational level, bounded agency is in evidence at the micro-level of day-to-day staff activities, reflecting a similar process of restricting options for practice.

Recognition of the period of emerging adulthood as one of experimentation and risk taking, with the associated freedom to make mistakes and learn from the consequences of own actions, is often not incorporated in policy directives. These instead reflect cultural narratives of youth as a period requiring social control, with the problematisation of youth drinking expressed in policy as a focus on the management of public consumption (Valentine et al. 2007). Within semi-public locations, including university and student residences, data illustrates that they are more accepting of consumption as youthful risk taking and, although some steps are taken to respond to behavioural problems, they are therefore less likely to apply regulations to student behaviour.

National policy was infrequently cited in staff interviews and was not evident in internal guidance documents, suggesting little intersection of policy-level influences with organisational practice and lack of translation into the promotion of sensible drinking. During interviews, P9 stated the view that alcohol issues were not currently taken as seriously as other concerns where less perceived choice is in evidence, specifically student mental health, reflecting wider debates on individualised 'lifestyle choice' in health behaviours (Cockerham 2005). This translates into differential services:

So it is a case of, you know, flavour for the month and I think mental health gets a bigger profile within the institution and therefore there is a bit more co-ordinated, joined up approach with regard to that. (P9)

As seen earlier, this lack of institutional response is not reflective of the extent of alcohol issues experienced by some departments. Residences, Health Centre and

Security, with highest levels of exposure to alcohol-related problems, all favoured a **more proactive** institutional approach, expressing desire for higher-level governmental and institutional policy direction to go with existing departmental practices and reinforcing the recurring theme that staff most frequently exposed to alcohol issues were more likely to favour directive approaches:

I think that if the Government and other agencies had a better profile, a push, on alcohol then that also would facilitate the university taking a combined approach. (P9)

I think that would have to come from a lot higher up than I'm ever going to be. (P4)

I think we could do one clear, central policy, which is perhaps the central message, and then I do think we all need to have our own interpretation of that, and how we're going to implement it. An action plan if you like. (P5)

These distinct sub-cultural attitudes are more influential in day-to-day practice than single organisational ethos or higher level policy goals, and are a result of the personal experiences of such key staff and the levels of autonomy they are permitted by the organisational structure. This departmental segregation and implications for working will be explored further in Chapter 7.

At local level coercive isomorphism was evident, with the effects of national alcohol policy observable in adjustments to organisational routines prompted by the introduction of 24-hour licensing, which led to a growth in alcohol availability through extending hours of sale in many local licensed premises. It was noted by P4 that enactment of this national directive at local level and the prevalence of all-night drinking in local clubs had led to an observed increase in incidents and had subsequently changed 'peak' incident management time for Security personnel:

It does tend to be that there's a lot of drinking going on before they go out and they're not going out until between 10 and 11. We do have people that are that drunk, they've had so much on their way out that when they walk out in the fresh air, the fresh air hits them, I have had occasion where I'm taking somebody home at 11 o'clock at night. (P4)

This change of timing was also recognised in Residences however practice, specifically availability of wardens, had not been adjusted, making Security the primary responders to alcohol incidents on and around campus out-of-hours.

Reflecting earlier discussions with students, it was cited by a strong majority of staff that pricing strategies have resulted in **increased consumption** from off-sales premises, reflecting wider shifts which now see twice as much alcohol bought in off than on-sales outlets (IAS 2013). Pre-drinking represents less regulated consumption than measured on-sales purchases and is associated with more experience of adverse alcohol-related consequences than drinking occasions without prior consumption (Read et al. 2010). The increase in off-sales drinking was recognised locally as causing the most issues for the university, reflecting student descriptions of the ubiquitous nature of pre-drinks:

I think the biggest challenge we've got is, it's not drinking in the union bar that's the issue, it's the shots beforehand, you know, in your room. That's the problem, you pop to Tesco's and buy it cheap and all you need is topping up and I think that's the biggest challenge... (P13)

P16 reported discussion of this issue in the Student Safety Partnership previously described, and reflected on a sense of helplessness within the group in the face of macro-economic and legislative forces, which **constrain capacity** of all HE sites to tackle consumption levels:

I think there's a sense of frustration at what can be done. How do you tackle licensing and cheap off-sales? (P16)

It's so much cheaper to go and buy your ten cans of Carling from Tesco and have those in the house before you go out. So I don't think there's anything that we can do as an on-premise (Student Union) to change that culture...the off trade and that preloading thing reflects badly on licensed premises regardless of how well they're being run, it's entirely beyond our control when that happens. (P1)

The local impacts of unregulated off-sales consumption were posited as rationale for national policy change, with the SU supporting minimum unit pricing (MUP) for alcohol. P1, who has worked in alcohol retailing and been exposed to alcohol-related behaviours for many years, argued that cheap off-sales removed an essential safeguard to public behaviour by encouraging people to drink privately

instead of in social contexts with peer monitoring, in turn making regulation of SU environments more problematic. P1 stated:

I think the difference is that when people are drinking in that pub environment someone is there to say, no, you're not having any more...I think if we could make the price difference between on-trade and off-trade make that gap just a bit smaller. (P1)

Reflecting the difficulties in legislating for private spaces discussed in an earlier chapter, P1 argued that the policy focus on practices in licensed premises at government level **lacked insight** into good retailing within Student Unions and ignored the issue of domestic drinking. He illustrated this with reference to a local initiative where those receiving medical treatment related to alcohol are asked to state the last venue they attended:

We were talking around the idea of someone who has had those ten cans of Carling and walked in through the front door and then passed out in the toilet, he didn't have a drink here! Ten people last month that ended up in treatment and they'd all been in the Student Union. Yeah they did but how many of them drank to excess in our bar? (P1)

Although monitoring sales to intoxicated patrons is significant, P1's point regarding the bulk of consumption is valid. The emphasis on home drinking evident in both staff and student data is not reflected in local or national level initiatives or policy approaches, reflecting the dominant focus on public drinking as problematic. Home drinking is less likely to be subject to attempted interventions perceived as infringing private space, including student residences, ensuring continuation of social processes established within this setting.

The analysis presented so far illustrates the benefits of utilising a socio-ecological approach to examine influences on university responses to student drinking. The constraining impact of higher-level factors on organisational routines is evident in staff responses to perceived changes associated with marketisation and economic policy. Shared acceptance among staff and students of wider cultural conceptions that strongly associate alcohol use with student identity also act to reproduce these conceptions and reduce likelihood of any challenge to exhibited behaviours. It has also been identified that national policy directions on the availability and price of alcohol are highly significant in structuring both the experience of, and responses to, problems associated with excess consumption. From examination of

these structuring properties it can therefore be concluded that the institutional system is heavily constrained by the interaction of external influences with organisational processes. Differential approaches to these issues across university sub-systems illustrates patterning associated with exposure to levels of alcohol related issues in the course of day-to-day duties, suggesting differential sub-culture development based on roles and responsibilities within the organisation. This link between external and internal factors illustrates the openness of the university system as well as the interconnectedness between ecological levels.

6.4 Agency and the development of organisational processes: The influence of departmental and individual role identities on staff responses to student drinking

Examination of external factors impacting organisational processes has illustrated the key role of wider policy shifts towards marketisation, as well as policy approaches to alcohol availability. This adds to current levels of understanding of how the university, as an open system, responds to alcohol issues. This understanding will now be further enhanced by considering internal organisational factors that impact the development of processes.

As discussed in Chapter 3, a university consists of multiple overlapping units responsible for providing opportunities for students to live, study and socialise, each with autonomy in attaining these aims. These units form part of the university as an open system, within which the process of information exchange is observable at both macro-organisational and at micro-cultural level (Rollinson 1998), with each interacting with their own local and national environments based on the needs and aims of that particular sub-system. In Structurationist terms, these nested sub-systems contain structuring properties, identifiable through repetitive practice and conventions accepted by members (Thompson 1989) and identifiable empirically. University sub-cultures develop from these routinised practices and were here evidenced through differing conceptualisation of alcohol issues across departments and resulting practices. The development of these role variations will now be considered further.

6.4.1 The enactment of departmental and professional identities as practices: Staff conceptions of the role of the university in student behaviour

Observed micro-level influences on practice included staff perceptions of alcohol problems and their roles in responding to them which are then manifest in, and shaping of, departmental identities and approaches. As discussed earlier, identities in complex organisations are modular and flexible to adapt to changing institutional needs. This flexibility permits expressions of personal agency in the enactment of daily routines within the constraints already identified. The insertion of **personal biography** during interviews indicated the impact of agency and the overlap of multiple role identities (Webb 2006), with own history as a student commonly cited as a rationale for acceptance of heavy drinking norms:

Opinions have been offered, partly as a joke, to laugh things off. It's something you'd hear several times a year at different things...staff, will reflect back to their time at university 'oh gosh, I used to get wasted, that's what you do at that age'. So there is that amelioration of what they're doing by their own experience, and I would say, by their own mistakes. So I think they probably don't see it as bad. (P9)

Within the data this was predominantly cited by staff in departments not experiencing regular contact with drunk students, summarised by P2 who reflected the positive benefits of drinking with new people:

I was quite a shy student person and I needed something to break my barriers down to actually go and start chatting to people... to be stone cold sober and just turn around and speak to somebody who are already speaking to other people, that's a massive thing for someone to do. (P2)

This observed inter-generational acceptance may reduce the likelihood of support for organisational action and decrease capacity for a cohesive organisational response to develop. The contribution of personal history to conceptualisations of alcohol issues illustrates praxis, whereby structuring properties impacting the development and maintenance of student identity conceptions are **reproduced inter-generationally** through day-to-day expression:

And that seems to be quite fixed within our culture. I mean it was the same when I went to university 20 odd years ago. (P3)

There certainly used to be an expectation that going off to university was the best time of your life, not only just about the education, but it's about the socialising. (P8)

Despite this observed reproduction of social processes, staff references to learning from experience described earlier indicate a perception that each student cohort must learn the process themselves, suggesting lack of awareness or acknowledgement of ecological influences on the maintenance of practice.

Assessment of alcohol impacts by staff contributes to departmental construction of responses to alcohol-related issues. As stated, there was a lack of overarching institutional guidance in the form of alcohol policy, resulting in **department-specific** development of practices stemming from agentic responses from role occupants, elaborated further in the next chapter. This extended support role was recognised as shaping processes in Residences:

We have a role in terms of supporting our students from (this) university, in whatever they require...my understanding is that it's all part of our pastoral care responsibilities in terms of advising students on the consequences and, perhaps, being there sometimes afterwards, in terms of offering guidance when things happen, whether that's disciplinary or referring them to counselling or whatever. (P5)

Current efforts within the university to reduce alcohol-related consequences involve non-academic staff, often in partnership with external organisations, thus locating alcohol as an issue within groups with pastoral organisational roles and outside the academic functions of the university. At the study site this was attributed to historical practice stemming from the need to maintain academic freedom, which limits capacity for consistent support provision across schools:

It's very variable from school to school, so you have some schools that do it very well and then you have some schools that do it rather less well. It's to do with the history of the university, and that schools have been allowed to do what they like. And that's very good for academic freedom and very bad for consistent service. (P11)

Within non-academic services, patterning associated with **frequency of exposure** to alcohol-related consequences was again in evidence in responses to alcohol issues, with those in Residential and Security services more likely to adopt

narratives of harms associated with heavy drinking binges, reflecting the realities of day to day impacts of alcohol on their roles. Residences and Security, as the primary out-of-hours university services, developed their own processes of information sharing using nightly incident reports, although it was acknowledged that alcohol is not consistently noted as a factor in these. Common out-of-hours problems centre around the impacts of drunkenness, including aggression, damage to property and health concerns, with Residences operating their own disciplinary process developed by the current management team. They are generally autonomous in addressing incidents but liaise closely with Security on sanctions and will often visit students together after an issue to discuss the problem and apply relevant disciplinary response. It was cited that Security staff - many of whom come from police backgrounds - brought valuable experience of alcohol issues and situation management to the job with them, illustrating departmental ethos based on the need to manage and minimise behavioural outcomes. The extended pastoral role of Security in relation to alcohol was recognised by all departments, with the understanding that they “*mop up*” (P8) issues and use their discretion in responding. Although some incident reporting occurs, it was suggested in interviews that I may experience difficulty obtaining details of alcohol related incidents due to institutional concerns around image:

I think our security would probably have more of those numbers because that's the main source because a lot of these things that happen, happen out of hours. They happen during the weekends and night-times so Security is usually the first port of call...but it's the University seems to frown upon things that might promote negative...(tails off). (P6A)

This was associated primarily with fear of media exposure, with management of reputation significant for student recruitment and retention. This aspect of the job role was recognised:

That's also managing reputational risk for the university which probably would be the first line of my job description, as I see it...so that's all fine. (P11)

This response illustrates the coercive effect of mass media communication on organisational processes as a means of controlling the public profile of the university. It is likely that this is not unique to the study site, with all HEI's subject to the same recruiting requirements and economic pressures.

This harm management ethos contrasts with the more therapeutic philosophy expressed by staff from Student Support and Counselling, described as:

Try to help somebody think about the consequences, the pro's and the cons. I would always do the pro's and the cons, that sort of thing. (P14)

Our relationship is not necessarily to point to them to the polices and what they should and shouldn't be doing but...it's more about helping them manage a lifestyle, or perhaps finding better coping mechanisms for things that are going on for them. (P8)

During interviews, staff from Student Support and Counselling were also more likely to interpret 'alcohol issues' as referring to dependent drinking, with this interpretation guiding their departmental responses, primarily involving referrals to outside specialist agencies. When I mentioned this observation, P11 from Student Support, stated:

That's interesting that I went straight to the extreme ones isn't it?

As we have seen, Student Support and Counselling, who operate daytime services, are less exposed to the impacts of drunkenness and report low levels of students presenting to their services citing alcohol as a primary concern, meaning harm management is less likely to shape their conceptions. Neither team has a formalised process in relation to alcohol issues, reflecting their lack of involvement in disciplinary matters as well as a primary understanding of alcohol issues as dependency related and therefore, within the remit of outside services:

The alcohol dependency we don't get to see that much of, because I think it's kind of a norm that the people will go out and get drunk and do stupid things, and stupid things only happen sometimes, so it hasn't been like 'oh, we definitely need a policy'... not that we're a reactive service, but we, you know, we go with what we see and what we experience. (P10)

Counselling reported minimal contact with other departments due to high workloads, meaning little knowledge of how other services address alcohol issues and illustrating the **segmented development** of departmental responses:

We don't have so much contact with colleagues from other departments, maybe because we're so busy to be honest. (P14)

Although attempts are made to maintain communication channels, there is no designated forum where discussions on alcohol-related issues could take place, meaning informal chats at opportune moments tend to suffice.

Departmental identity was of further significance to the development of processes within the Student Union. Although identified in literature available to students as a member-led, campaigning organisation, the SU was primarily defined by its own staff during interviews as a nightclub:

At the end of the day our core offering is a nightclub so then it then becomes difficult to programme in other bits and bobs...We've done some things like a film night and it's just rarely well attended...if you are up for a nightclub, go to the Union if you want to do something that's not a nightclub, let's go somewhere else. (P1)

This positioning meant associated behavioural expectations related to managing the impacts of drunkenness. Within the SU issues are logged by the duty manager on shift, detailing incidents dealt with and sanctions imposed. Drunken behaviour which impacts others can result in being banned from the SU for a fixed period but does not extend to any other area of the university. Incident data is not shared with the university except in cases such as severe injury or criminal activity. Incident logs are used to analyse patterns and flashpoints within the academic year, for example when “*certain sports teams are attending*” (P1) in order to adjust staffing levels. At present, data management does not allow for assessment of whether incidents in the SU are leading to incidents elsewhere on campus, for example when those ejected from the SU return to Residences, making understanding the extent of issues at the university problematic. I was advised that there is an established information-sharing process between Security and Student Support but not between other departments, including SU and Residences, although it was widely agreed that this would be beneficial to organisational practice:

I guess it can only help if departments know what other departments do to make sure there is consistency, and if they're doing something better than another department then that could be shared as good practice (P10).

Differing alcohol narratives and working practices further manifest as lack of coherent messaging around student alcohol use, with little evidence of a unified cross-campus approach:

Whether there's much communication between the university and the Union and the community around supporting a safer drinking message, I'm not aware of one. (P3)

I think if the university were comfortable with the fact that the approach that we took didn't interfere with the student expectation and the student experience, give it a negative view, I think that may facilitate a more joined up approach. (P9)

In an example of institutional construction impacting processes, internal communication was considered problematic due to institutional size acting as a constraint, with a majority of staff recognising organisational limitations to practice in issues such as multiple admin systems and historical working:

Small universities, people know each other a bit better and you know your students as well. Maybe in big universities it's harder to do those kind of things. (P10)

These factors meant that the development of cohesive alcohol awareness messaging ran into multiple problems:

Who is going to pool all that information? Who's going to do it? Who's going to pay for it? All this work for something that seems like a really simple idea for such a huge organisation. (P3)

The segmentation of internal cultures was reflected in relationships between academic and non-academic services, which were particularly emphasised by staff in Residence and Security departments. Within these discussions it was evident that the university senior management was associated with this segmented academic side of the organisation:

I can't say there's any form of a relationship between us and the academic side. (P6A)

Academia was described as a different culture whose involvement in issues of student behaviour was “a bit woolly” (P16, Security). It was widely perceived that, for most academic staff, pastoral care was outside of their remit,

illustrating variation in rules governing job roles and meaning that institutional responses to student behavioural issues could appear disjointed and lacking impact:

When it's just their Residences, we're out on a limb really because we can't make people homeless so we're very restricted in what we can do...I just think if there was something that tied in with the academic side of it. Because at the end of the day we all fall under the same umbrella. (P6A)

The **dual identity** of student as tenant and learner was recognised as further complicating potential application of sanctions within Residences:

There is a bigger picture again to see so are we then in a situation where we're telling students we've caught you with alcohol and you've broken the rules therefore we're kicking you out of halls and what impact does that then have on their university life and their education so it's, I don't know. (P1)

It was also recognised that the primary operation of Residences as landlord, with associated financial requirements, may reduce the capacity to provide pastoral services which constitute a secondary outcome:

But, they're coming at it from the point of view of doing what they're told to do, which is to run a business unit, and they do that very well...My interpretation of their area is that it's run as a business unit. (P11)

Although staff across multiple different departments suggested that joint working would be beneficial to the development of cohesive responses, it was not thought to be realistic, with **segregated identity** repeatedly cited as a **barrier to action**:

There is a divide, a definite divide between their living and their academics and it's one institution at the end of the day, we should be working together but we're not...But whether they would want to is debatable. (P6B)

This lack of awareness was acknowledged as a two-way issue, with staff indicating that they may be unaware of the day-to-day impacts of alcohol on academic performance, and 'the academic side' unaware of out-of-hours problems:

I don't think the University realise sometimes, academia itself realises what goes on after 5 o'clock...ok, example, 11 o'clock, Tuesday morning (street) is teeming with people attending lectures. Well that's pretty much what it looks like between 1 and 3 on a Saturday night. (P4)

This was further illustrated by Residences staff, recounting a potentially serious incident that had recently occurred:

He (student) was found by the staff in the bin...They were pulling the bins out for Biffa and they flipped the lid back, which when we pull the bins out we don't do that now, and there was a student asleep in the bins...And if Biffa had come, he'd be dead. (P6C)

The University, I don't think enough of that gets back for them to realise that this is such an issue that you know that lives could be at risk and that it effects other people as well you know? (P6A)

The analysis of departmental identities presented illustrates the segmentation in effect and the impact of this on the development of cohesive responses to alcohol issues. This fragmentation, and organisational obstacles to information sharing, mean that the maintenance of existing practice represents a less challenging option than undergoing processes of change. Specific institutional activities aimed at moderation of alcohol impacts, and student interpretations of these activities, will be examined in the next chapter.

6.5 Summary of findings and areas of further examination

The initial aims of the chapter were to address the following research questions:

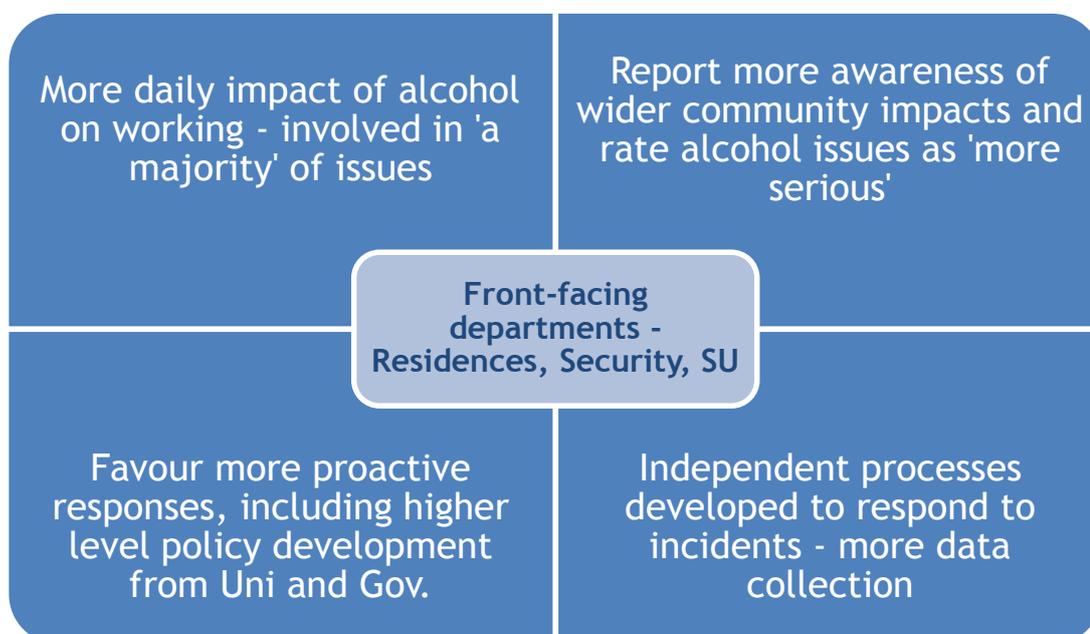
- How do multi-level influences act on the university in the development of alcohol processes?
- How do organisational processes and student transition behaviours intersect in relation to student drinking behaviour?

The data obtained demonstrates that multi-level influences external to the university are highly significant in the development of organisational routines on alcohol. Macro-economic factors, including financial benefits to retailers and community-level influences observed in sales and promotional practices, interact with intra and inter-personal processes underpinning staff conceptualisations of

alcohol issues, job roles and appropriate university responses. This intersection of factors acts to structure the alcohol context within and surrounding the university campus, which then becomes institutionalised in recursive routines observed in day-to-day practices - as formal and informal rules - through the actions of agents within their job roles.

We have also seen that, although complex organisations are recognisable through shared identity, operationally they are divided into departmental sub-systems with varying degrees of autonomy over day to day practice as well as their own goals and objectives. Reflecting the cultural systems approach presented earlier, sub-cultures were clearly illustrated across departments and were reproduced through recursive routines and communication practices. Patterning of results indicates that exposure to alcohol-related consequences is highly significant in shaping conceptualisation of the problems associated with student drinking and perceived acceptability of intervention. This is evidenced by differences between 'first responder' services, in Residences, Security and Student Union, contrasted with more reactive services such as those offering support and counselling, with data suggesting that individual conceptions held by staff in these sections also become embedded within departmental practices and identity.

Fig. 9 Departmental patterning of staff responses



Limited sampling mean patterning cannot be detected for Health Centre and Student Safety Partnership although individual interviewees from these sectors shared conceptions displayed above.

Hotho (2008) argues that individual conceptualisations observable in agents are the result of cognitions both developed and expressed in social contexts. This suggests that staff interpretations of alcohol as an issue were mediated through norms evident in social groups of which they are members, including university departments, as well as external forums related to specific job roles. All teams considered are members of external bodies tasked with practice development for their specific sub-system, such as AMOSSHE for Student Services, ASRA for Residences etc., which constitute spaces for the recursive maintenance and development of shared professional identity (Hotho 2008). The significance of departmental patterning comes from its likely effect on the development of higher level organisational directions. Where discussions are held on responses to student alcohol issues within the university or in wider local and national forums, conceptions of those involved are likely to be shaped by direct exposure to issues, shaping subsequent suggestions for practice. When those involved in responses are not in front-facing teams, less proactive approaches are likely to be favoured, meaning limited reflection of the full scope of organisational impacts.

Further influences on agent conceptualisations of appropriate roles and responsibilities included the personal histories frequently described by respondents as well as their perceived capacity to effect change within the constraints of the organisational structure. The potential for staff agency, in terms of being able to act otherwise in response to student drinking, is perceived as bound by cultural, local and organisational enablers of heavy alcohol use among students. Agent responses are impacted by lack of rules, both in organisation-level guidance and in unique job roles and departmental segmentation, with university identity as an educational setting for adults contrasting with potentially more interventionist approaches required to address alcohol related harms. Local and national strategies on alcohol may impact the development of organisational processes but these are currently limited in scope and expectation and are further constrained by potentially conflicting economic and health priorities in evidence.

Data analysis presented so far indicates that the interaction of cultural norms, economic factors and intrapersonal concerns constructs and maintains an environment where heavy drinking is normalised. We have seen that for students,

conceptions of the location of alcohol in social identity are pre-established and brought to this environment, finding expression within the confines and opportunities presented by community and organisational structuring properties. These organisational properties reflect the universities' conception of the role of students within the setting i.e. their organisational identity, with acceptance that students will arrive with expectations and a clear sense that alcohol will form part of the social experience available to them. Organisational processes, in conjunction with the economic imperatives already considered, ensure that alcohol is the dominant social offering within the environment, with localised standards of appropriate use reinforced by wider cultural norms. The convocation of multi-level influences enacting within the organisational context creates a setting that can be defined as an intoxicogenic drinking space (Seaman et al. 2013), where heavy drinking is normalised and facilitated.

Although this chapter has illustrated the role of multi-level influences in impacting organisational responses to alcohol issues, further examination is necessary to understand how this intoxicogenic environment is co-created and maintained by those within the setting and the structuring properties in operation. This involves consideration of how staff role conceptions and alcohol beliefs maintain organisational routines, as well as student interpretations of these routines. In order to explore this concept further, it is necessary to consider which specific aspects of campus function contribute to the maintenance of intoxicogenic spaces, as well as results of the intersection of these with student contributions. This will uncover processes acting to co-create and reproduce observed alcohol behaviours. As student drinking constitutes an ongoing issue transferring across cohorts and geographic boundaries, it is also necessary to consider the processes which act to reproduce this behaviour over time. These issues will be explored in the next chapter, as well as attempts, both within departments and campus-wide, to moderate alcohol-related harms among students.

7 The intersection of student and organisation: The co-creation and reproduction of heavy drinking norms in university sub-cultures and intoxicogenic spaces

7.1 Chapter Overview

Chapter 5 described the role of alcohol in transition into the university environment and the development of student identity, through consideration of pre and post-arrival influences. From this analysis it was identified that alcohol is actively utilised by knowledgeable agents who draw on acquired rules of normative use as a means to aid social integration and overcome pre-arrival interpersonal anxieties through acquisition of peer groups. Analysis illustrated how pre-institutional processes which position alcohol as a normative aspect of student identity, intersect with new social needs and organisational routines. In Chapter 6 we identified a range of multi-level influences significant in the development of these routines, categorised as structuring properties relating to alcohol and acting to constrain and enable agents in the development of organisational processes. These influences included cultural presentations of student life, economic forces and inter-personal role conceptions, with observed interactions creating an environment where heavy alcohol use is routinised. The intersection of influences creates an environment where heavy drinking is a normalised part of the identity of students, enacted in an intoxicogenic drinking space, referring to an environment geared towards heavy consumption specifically by younger adult drinkers. This is reinforced by temporal processes occurring in the move from pre-institutionalisation to adaptation to the institutional setting.

Chapter 7 considers how multi-level influences, enacted through student behaviour and organisational processes, maintain heavy drinking norms through segmentation of social activity from other aspects of university life. This understanding of processes acting to co-create and reproduce the existing environment addresses these research questions:

- How do organisational processes and student transition behaviours intersect in relation to student drinking behaviour?
- How do students interpret the impact of university alcohol processes?

As seen already, initial contact with the university presents the setting as primarily social, through the temporal process of early meetings with both staff

and students and through construction of Freshers. Evidence presented will further illustrate how alcohol norms and limitations of the social offering promotes homogeneity of student social identity, reinforced through exclusion from social activity for those deviating from alcohol 'rules' in operation. Data will illustrate how student identity finds room for expression in distinct organisational sub-cultures, developed around Residence Halls and the Student Union, differing from the university as academic setting and constituting micro-environments where multiple factors intersect to create and maintain heavy drinking norms. Within such micro-environments people draw on rules of conduct which reinforce behavioural expression, reflecting Structuration in action. This chapter considers the interaction of organisational and agential processes described in the previous two chapters and their contribution to the routinisation of practice. Attempts to moderate alcohol use within the setting will be examined, before suggestions for practice and organisational routines as barriers to change are discussed.

7.2 The role of institutionalisation in student identity and in-group development: Organisational processes facilitating the segmentation of social and academic life

Drawing on Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner 1986), it can be argued that becoming a student involves attainment of in-group status, with associated feelings of solidarity and trust in fellow in-group members. Student in-group status involves attaining membership of a socially constructed category, with the meaning of this reinforced through social interaction with others who share this conceptualisation of self (Jenkins 2008). Identity as student initially acts to weakly bind a broad non-geographic in-group, reflecting shared cultural understandings. This identity was associated by several respondents, both male and female, with a unique time of life presenting opportunities for personal development but before commencement of full adulthood and associated responsibilities:

It's quite a good point to like move out of home and to live by yourself and meet similar people and it's quite, well it's a good opportunity to sort of like I don't know...like live in the real world but not (S16, M)

People kind of see it as a way...it's kind of like a gap year, gap between A Levels and work [laughs]. So it's kind of like that for people. (S20, F)

Perception of what it means to be a student incorporates wider UK cultural norms around alcohol use (Anderson and Gale 1999), contributing to expectations that university will provide a broad social and academic experience:

I do think uni, yeah it is once in a lifetime...I think it is yeah quite a unique lifestyle...a lot of socialising but then also the hard work as well. (S12, M)

It's like a student thing... Yeah some of them just drink, don't go to lectures or anything. (S3, M)

The unique profile of student life strengthens perception of shared identity status (Hetherington 1998), which is then enhanced by membership of a specific institution within designated geographical spaces. A sense of identification with other students within more bounded categorisations (Del Casino Jr. 2009) e.g. members of the same university, enhances feeling of safety and the expectation that those like you can be trusted:

It sounds really bad but I'm more trusting if I speak to someone that's from this uni...I'd still feel at ease if I was speaking to a (other local uni) person but I wouldn't feel as at ease. And then if I was speaking to someone who wasn't a student I'd feel a bit like 'oh who are you'? (S1, F)

People seem to have better times when they're sticking with the Union stuff because you meet a lot more students...I think it feels a lot safer coming to the Student Union and things like on nights I've walked home it's been from here whereas I wouldn't feel safe really walking through town people. (S9, M)

Temporal and spatial aspects of the university are significant in creating modular student identities, referring to the multiple roles occupied by each student; as learner, resident/tenant, customer and social being. Macro-cultural conceptualisations of alcohol locate it in the movement between work-time and play-time and the consequent switch of role identity (Gusfield 1987) from employee to social self. For students this temporal division is less clearly delineated due to academic scheduling which often leaves large periods of free time where alcohol use can occur. This is in evidence in the continuing designation of Wednesday afternoon as a period for other activities, primarily based around clubs and societies and associated with high levels of alcohol

consumption. Snow et al. (2003) identified that the construction of the HE day, including low contact hours for many students, was associated with heavy alcohol use and this was reflected in this study:

RB: Do you think alcohol is a big part of student life?

There's nothing, well, there is stuff to do in the evenings but on weekends and stuff like that there's not much else to do. (S20, F)

Because people like my friend who's only got six contact hours if he does all his extra reading he's got lots of extra time on his hands and going out is fun, going out is fun isn't it? Drinking with your mates is a laugh so why would you not go and have a bit of fun? (S12, M)

The development and reproduction of identity occurs through student exposure to university sub-cultures, occurring in a timeline determined by organisational requirements. This 'typical' timeline was similarly described by the majority of respondents and illustrates that earliest contacts are with the most intoxicogenic spaces - Residences and Student Union - where social identity is constructed:

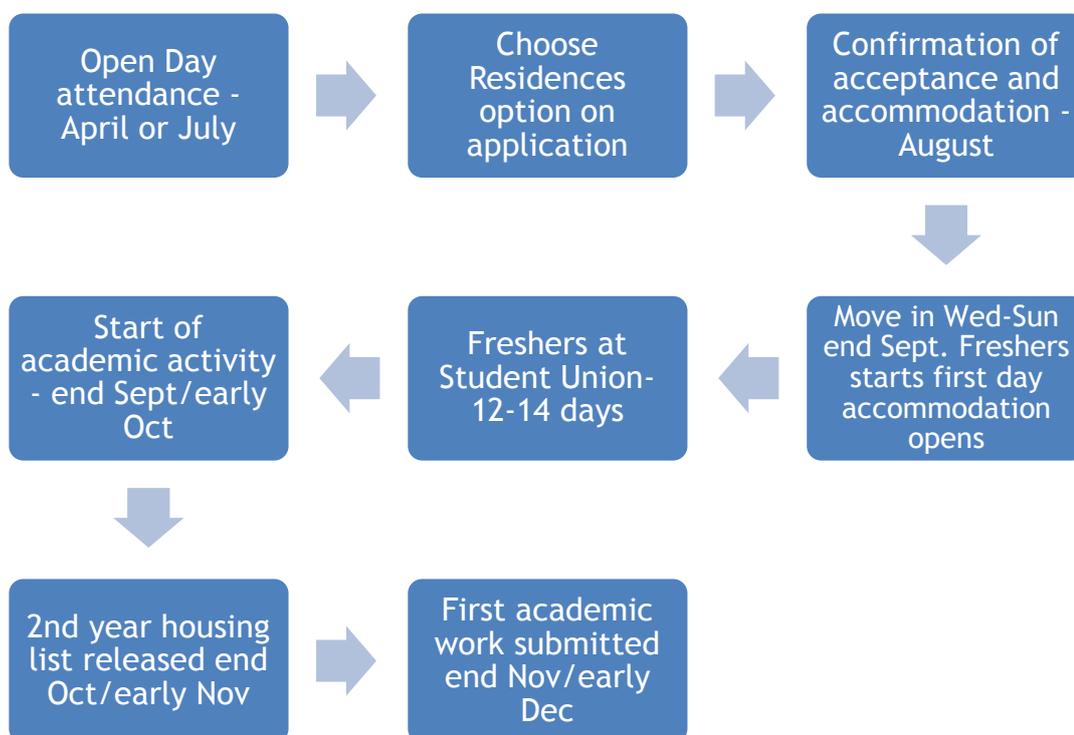


Fig. 10 Representation of first year transition timeline

Processes within these spaces will be explored in more detail below.

7.2.1 Reinforcement of modular student identity through initial institutionalisation

Adaptation to university requires pre-institutional experiences to be integrated into experiences in context (Perry and Allard, 2003). As previously identified, new students arrive at the university with knowledgeability acquired through pre-institutionalisation, before beginning the dynamic process of institutionalisation through the acquisition of norms, values and practices embodied in the organisational setting (Barley and Tolbert 1997). The process of institutionalisation that occurs for new arrivals does not develop through exposure to a singular ethos but is reflective of micro-cultural university configuration, occurring differentially across university sub-cultures and meaning that students are separately institutionalised to academic life, residences life and social life. This leads to the development of separate academic and social student identities, structured by organisational processes which act to reinforce this separation.

The dominance of the alcohol narrative within social identity is more easily maintained due to lack of challenge in the initial period of institutionalisation. After arrival, university life started for respondents within residence halls and SU rather than with the setting as an academic institution, reinforcing modularity and confirming expectations of social life. It was identified through discussion with students that contact with the academic identity of the university is minimal during this period, including with any staff identified as being in supervisory roles, meaning little opportunity to present the university as anything other than a social space for the first two weeks. Induction for new students occurs online prior to arrival without any requirement for staff interaction, followed post-arrival by collection of keys at residences before moving in and acquisition of student cards at the SU. Levels of contact with staff during this initial period were perceived by a majority as limited:

You don't actually see much contact with much University staff. Lots of it's done online I suppose. (S2, M)

I just picked up my key and went, that was literally it. So I hardly met anyone at that time. (S12, M)

After arrival in the residential setting, the next experience for most is engagement with the social offering of Freshers. As shown in Chapter 5, pre-

institutional expectations inform the view that Freshers will constitute a period of excess alcohol consumption, aided by drawing on narratives of alcohol use reinforced by localised behavioural rules and expectations:

I guess that's what you do like as a Fresher, I suppose. Like we went out the other night and there was only two of us and this girl was like 'why is there only two of you?' And we were like 'oh no one else wanted to come out'. She goes 'what year are you in?' And we said first years. She was like 'oh that's so bad that no one else wants to come out when you're in Freshers, you should be going out every night if you're in Freshers'. (S20, F)

This situational reinforcement included communication of local knowledge of night-time economy provision aimed at student consumers, reinforcing localised alcohol routines and maintaining existing practices:

During Freshers we would say to people 'where's good to know?' Just to second years or whatever in town as we were walking in we'd say 'where's going to be best place tonight' and they'd say there and we'd just go there. (S12, M)

The distinct nature of Freshers as a period where norms of drinking act to facilitate establishment of social groups among students experiencing high levels of inter-personal anxiety, as identified earlier, means the beneficial effects of alcohol are likely to restrict efforts at moderation. S1's comment associates this with the interpersonal anxieties discussed earlier:

I think basically like you start off and you drink and that to be more confident and you just know you're going to be able to talk more easily if you're getting drunk and going out together. I think from then it just becomes part of a routine. I think if people didn't do it initially in Freshers then they might not do it so much. (S1, F)

The ability to find like-minded groups is highly significant to settling in to university life and can be impacted by normative expectations, as well as localised behaviour within sub-groups. Emergent Norm Theory (Turner and Killian 1957) suggest that initial heterogeneity within groups is reduced over time as situational norms develop, suggesting that acceptability of heavy alcohol use can become embedded in group identity after initial manifestation during early

bonding. Many students suggested that the intensity of this period would naturally subside, reflecting reduction in initial concerns:

Like if someone says I don't want to go on a night out and if they're really like, 'no', it's just ok...whereas at Freshers Week I reckon people felt a bit more they had to go out, to like make friends in the first place. (S19, F)

Like, in Freshers and for the first few weeks our flat would go out like a few times a week, we'd go out like 3 or 4 times a week. Now it's hardly ever. (S16, M)

The conflict between normative standards of the Freshers period and advice on limiting alcohol consumption leads to desensitization to concepts of risk presented (Lazarsfeld & Merton 1948):

I don't think you need to have concerns about how much alcohol you're drinking, especially not in Freshers Week maybe like if you're drinking in the day or you're drinking every single evening without fail then yes you might need to but I mean I go out probably twice, three times a week and I don't think I have a problem. (S10, M)

Sounds bad to say no but I don't think people would listen to it otherwise if you did start advising people how much to drink in Freshers I think they would just ignore it. (S2, M)

This desensitization was directly associated with risk behaviour for S9:

I mean they don't always do it like I know I've walked home alone a few times but like I know I shouldn't and stuff but I think you just sort of feel like when you get to 18, 19, 20 you've had so many talks on it you just feel like it's enough now, we know things. (S9, M)

Structuration is identifiable in the intersection of multiple factors observed here as: interpersonal student anxieties, organisational promotion of Freshers, wider alcohol promotion to students, location of alcohol in identity conceptions. This intersection acts to co-create and reproduce norms of heavy alcohol use during this period. The complexity of this intersection suggests multiple factors which need to be taken into account in the potential development of responses aimed at reducing negative outcomes. Student views on university processes aimed at moderation of alcohol impacts will be explored in depth later in the chapter.

7.2.2 Temporality in organisational processes and the resulting segmentation of academic and social identities

Successful adaptation to university involves development of positive social and academic relationships in order to establish identity as both ‘learner’ and ‘social student’ (Johnson and Watson 2004), thus enhancing levels of student retention (Briggs et al. 2012). Temporal processes ensure that opportunities to develop identity as social student come first, primarily through contact with those in accommodation where heavy drinking is expected, meaning that intoxicogenic norms constitute first exposure to university life. The segregation of academic and social identities was evidenced through consideration of the positioning of alcohol in relationship building with those met in academic settings, which contrasted with processes in residential locations.

Initial student friendship groups were primarily based around social activity with those from residences, preceding exposure to wider social networks through which other relationships developed. This was seen by most as a natural evolution:

Because for probably the first month, we only saw people from outside the flat for a night out....so it just kind of happens over time really when you get to know more people. (S8, F)

In Freshers they're (flatmates) like the people who you've got to know and get along with but then as time goes on you branch out and meet more people. (S16, M)

We discussed whether alcohol had any significance in academic identity formation and relationship development with course mates. When contact with academic fellows occurred the process of relationship building was noticeably different, suggesting variation in rules governing these interactions. Organisational routines determined that contact with academic peers is variable by school, with some scheduling induction events during Freshers and others arranging no contact prior to initial lectures. Bonding with course mates was impacted by this scheduling and the dominance of social activities at the start of term:

My first lecture, we had introductory ones like in Freshers Week after nights out, no one wanted to talk to each other because they were all hung over, everyone was just sort of sat there trying not to fall asleep so there wasn't much communication going on between people. (S17, M)

Actually everyone was hung over so no one wants to talk. (S19, F)

Although sharing a course of study could provide commonality as a basis for initial shared identity development, this was constrained by organisational processes which incorporate an extended period of socialising and heavy alcohol use, meaning the initial routines of student life were experienced as unrelated to academic aspects of university:

I think I was settled and I was happy but I was like I would have preferred not to go to, I was dreading seminars basically. (S8, F)

So yeah, you were there for over a week and it felt like ages, much longer than a week before you actually kind of, got into it - I think it's probably a bit too long...you hear it all, everyone is really ill and horrible by this point. (S4, F)

As a result of this, it was suggested in both staff and student interviews that the process may benefit from adjustment:

Perhaps the Freshers week could be, I don't know, they could give you more things to do, perhaps like get you together, more social side, with your course mates. (S4, F)

Ideally it needs a complete rethink on how that is done, but I think Freshers has a connotation that you have to have Freshers week, it's what you do as a student, it's part of the bubble of excitement and so on, so that's difficult to answer. I think we've made the best of what we could but if someone was to take a clean canvas I think there are many changes that would need to be made. (P9)

Where students described later friendship formation with their academic cohort, I asked about the role of alcohol within this. Rules governing these contacts were described by most students who drank as differing from those in residences, with dominant narratives of alcohol less central to relationship-building with academic cohort:

I'd say it's not, like if I think about it like that yeah it's not as important for me to be drinking when I'm with my course people... (S4, F)

RB: Does alcohol play a part in getting your know your course mates?

No. Not really. We just got to know each other in the day so no not really...But it's not like, we didn't need to do that to get to know each.
(S14, F)

On-going academic arrangements acted to reduce initial utilisation of alcohol:

No, since they were my course mates we just met each through like in the middle of lectures and any breaks we had we just always hung around.
(S6, F)

These distinct patterns of social relations act to reinforce academic-social divisions observable in student life and suggest that pre-institutional alcohol conceptions are less significant in ongoing relationship development than for initial social bonding. S4 stated that relationships with course mates had been founded on shared concerns and stresses associated with the course, suggesting that academic identity may be based on differing norms and expectations to that of social identity, where alcohol provides commonality that may otherwise be absent:

Definitely not compared to your people you're actually living with...I don't think it's essential at all to get to know your course friends really. I think with your flat, because it's just a random bunch and I think it's that expectation you build up. So it might not be always what you expect. You have to make a bit more effort I think, it comes more naturally with course friends. (S4, F)

Organisational structures were frequently described across the sample as constraining development of relationships not based on shared alcohol use, with course size and variations in contact hours making informal social contact more difficult:

That was harder, even harder than my flat... I don't really have a lot of friends from the lectures but I have them from the seminars because I don't really see the people in the lectures a lot so it's just the little groups in the seminars that I'm friends with. (S19, F)

I've got a friend in a different uni that does history and he's got something like six contact hours a week and he says he's hardly got any course friends whereas I say that's funny because I've got loads, so yeah, I think it's just through contact hours. (S12, M)

For S1, lack of academic group bonds were compensated for by residence-based relationships which provided essential social networks:

I wasn't bothered about getting into a massive group or whatever because I knew that I had flatmates at home. (S1, F)

The intensity of initial contact in residences illustrated in Chapter 5 and the role of alcohol within these relationships is measurably different from identified processes of relationships building with academic cohort. Organisational processes determine that relationships more likely to incorporate intoxicogenic norms develop first, further reinforcing the distinction between social and academic student life and acting to reproduce norms of alcohol use associated with sociability in student identity.

7.2.3 The effect of deviation from homogeneous social identity: Alcohol as exclusion from organisational opportunities

Earlier we discussed identified impacts of marketisation on student and staff conceptions of identity status as consumer. It has been argued that the marketisation of higher education presents an illusory portrait of consumer choice available to young people (Frost 2013), which is in fact constrained by structuring properties. In relation to social engagement for new students, choice is impacted by adherence to identity rules in operation within the setting. Knowledgeability of these rules in students is informed by pre-institutionalised norms, meaning standards of appropriate conduct are understood prior to arrival and then confirmed locally, binding potential agency and reducing requirement for reflexivity. Where agent behaviour conforms with local conventions, no explanation for action is generally required (Giddens 1984), but for students who do not adopt dominant alcohol norms adaptation to the setting can be more problematic. Deviation can act as a prohibition on the ability to join in with various university activities, potentially limiting levels of peer exposure and constraining social opportunities. This was strongly evident in reflections among low or non-drinkers on the impact of behaviour outside of drinking norms:

RB - Did Freshers in that whole period work out the way you expected?

Probably not to be honest, yeah I personally found it quite tough really. Just the drinking every day and it was just that's what everyone wants to do and that is the expectation to go out and then if you're not really that fussed about going out you're kind of, you feel like you're missing out. (S4, F)

It was horrible. For us who didn't really go out - we like obviously we did go out because it's Freshers but we didn't go out massively - we didn't sleep in until like 2 o'clock in the afternoon and then get up and get ready to go out again. We didn't really do that so when we woke up there was nothing for us to do at all. (S20, F)

This illustrates the dominance of alcohol within initial social offerings, which is further reinforced by temporal construction and the 'empty time' identified earlier.

Previous research indicates that non-drinkers within the university context are characterised by drinkers as placing themselves outside of conventional social practice and, while being admired for will-power, are not seen as desirable company on a night out (Conroy and de Visser 2013). This placement as outside of the mainstream of student culture (Piacentini and Banister 2006) was reinforced here by a majority of students who drank:

They don't have to be drinking but I think during Freshers that's what everyone does...I've heard a couple of friends complain about 'oh there's one in the flat that never comes out with us', they call them boring. (S13, F)

There's one guy who plays in our football team. He's the best footballer in the whole team, he doesn't drink. Socially he's not part of the group. Not that I choose that but the heavy drinkers kind of do. He still fits in, he just doesn't get the social side out of it because he doesn't drink. (S2, M)

This exclusion of non-drinkers reinforces, not only student identity constructions, but also the segregated use of spaces as locations of social activity, with 'going out' confined to those engaging in alcohol use. This was reflected widely across

the sample in discussion of the experience of non-drinkers, suggesting shared conceptualisation regardless of gender, age and drinker status:

RB: So if you didn't drink do you reckon it would be harder to make friends?

I think it depends actually who's in your flat as well because if they're heavy drinkers and want you to drink and then you're like 'no no no' and I think you'd probably be backed into a corner and just won't go out and won't socialise. (S5, F)

These perceptions were confirmed by participants who deviated from normative levels of consumption. For two students from outside the UK who both defined as light drinkers, Freshers involved difficulties in establishing relationships with flatmates:

RB: Did that make it harder to get to know your flatmates then?

A little bit at the beginning but then now like when they are sober it's alright. (S7, F)

They were fine when they were sober the problem was when they were drunk and they would be getting drunk every single night and it was sort of hard. (S6, F)

Both reported delays in establishing social groups and having to look outside accommodation to meet peer networks, reinforcing the difficulties associated with deviation from localised standards of behaviour.

As well as forming social groups through accommodation and course settings, university provides the opportunity to join clubs and societies and, theoretically, to meet those with shared interests. However alcohol consumption within these groups was acknowledged as potentially exclusive, with suggestions that joining would be more difficult for non or light drinkers. This was predominantly, but not exclusively, stated by male students and related to the activities of team sports societies:

But the sports culture of drinking is crazy, I think. Well it's just weird if you don't drink. (S2, M)

I think that they'd, they (non-drinkers) just wouldn't go... it is quite pressurised and I think there is a way you can get around some (drinking) games or whatever but I think most of the time you wouldn't ever be able to I don't think. (S5, F)

Drawing on Structuration theory we can observe that rules governing routine operations of these social groups are predominantly related to alcohol use, with deviation from normative behavioural standards resisted by members:

Things like after training they'd sort of go to the pub to, like, socialise more. So if you didn't sort of drink and stuff you'd...they'd all get to know everyone better and you'd, sort of, be left outside the group. (S22, M)

If you're in one of the traditional 'we're the lads' things then it can be a bit, like, pressured. (S16, M)

These traditional reputations of certain sports societies as heavy consumers was widely shared with staff and perceived as important in routinisation of heavy drinking norms:

...there comes a point where sport comes into this as well, you know, you've found your feet, you've joined the football or rugby team, and some groups are seen as a place to drink as well, rightly or wrongly. (P5)

Social Identity Theory (Tajfel and Turner 1986) suggests that the psychological benefits of in-group identity ensure that members desire continuation even where negative consequences of group membership may be experienced. Defensive reactions to questioning of group norms may be exhibited to reduce the cognitive dissonance associated with this contradictory outcome (Festinger 1962). The application of pressure on deviants reflects a desire to maintain an established in-group identity through negative responses to behaviour outside group norms, where deviation manifests as direct verbal criticism or employment of alternative behaviours which are interpreted as implied criticism (Hornsey et al. 2007). Where heavy drinking norms are established within peer groups, including clubs and societies, and are shared by members, this acts to reinforce feelings of similarity which in turn makes members more likely to report homogeneous views (Wittenbaum and Stasser 1998), including attitudes towards the positioning of alcohol within the group. The exclusion of deviants from social opportunities was clearly understood by first-year students and acted to reinforce the intoxicogenicity

of social identity. Restrictions on accessing the full range of university activities will be further explored next in considering university sub-cultures.

7.3 Processes within organisational sub-cultures: The construction and maintenance of intoxicogenic drinking spaces

As we saw in in Chapter 6, complex organisations are necessarily divided into sub-systems, with autonomy of working practices manifesting in sub-cultural variations, including conceptualisations of alcohol issues and role identities. Where there is a lack of single organisational ethos on a topic like alcohol this creates the opportunity for intoxicogenic spaces to be maintained within the overarching university identity as long as the primary institutional goal remains unthreatened. This will now be examined more closely with reference to Residence Halls and the Student Union.

7.3.1 The intersection of student conceptions of alcohol use in halls with residential processes

As stated, the negative impacts of drinking in public spaces have been prioritised in government policy on alcohol and are frequently subject to extensive media coverage (Measham 2006). Despite findings indicating that over 70% of people drink most often at home (Jayne et al. 2011) there has been little policy focus on high levels of domestic drinking, with intervention constrained by the characterisation of home as private space excluded from monitoring (Valentine et al. 2007). Although halls represents home to student occupants, it can be argued that it occupies a liminal position between public and private, with universities retaining right of access to shared areas as well as local community impact on daily life, for example through alcohol marketing approaches described earlier. This liminality is consistent with the status of students as a distinct grouping, separated both culturally and geographically from wider adult norms. The conceptualisation of halls as home for new students was enhanced here through occurrence in a location defined as belonging to those bound by shared identity labels based on organisational identity, contributing for several to perception of safety:

It's excluded from the whole city it's like a safe area where you don't get too much trouble because there's like-minded people who don't tend to want to get themselves in a fight because you know if you're going to get yourself in fights you're going to probably get kicked out of there or you're going to get yourself into trouble with the police and you can't do the jobs you want to do. (S2, M)

This perceived safety was significant for students new to the area, with several referencing it as rationale for initial prioritisation of residence relationships, before later exploration of the local community once more established networks had formed. This was facilitated by organisational processes which presented initial opportunities for bonding through residences:

I would always make sure I stayed with them...you're living with them so it's just easier to go home with them than if I ended up with. Like now, if I ended up with someone what wasn't in my flat and I was out I'd feel fine but in that first week of Freshers I always made sure I stayed with them because, yeah it's just a safety thing I guess. (S1, F)

For a space to be understood as belonging to an in-group it must have a recognisable designation in relation to the alternative (Del Casino Jr 2009). In halls this means designation as different to academic buildings, leading to development of residential micro-identity. This identity involves configuration of residences as drinking communities, reinforcing relationships between halls living and sociability through alcohol. Jayne et al. (2011) suggest that, anthropologically, the association between social drinking and home is long-standing and significant. Inviting others into designated private 'home' space is a sign of loosening the boundaries of this private space, signifying the development of social bonds and trust, which is then reinforced through reciprocal invitation. For the two interviewees, S11 and S22, who resided in private accommodation instead of halls, both felt constrained in their opportunity to do this, with significant impact on their university experience so far through limiting the development of wider social networks. S11 described the isolation of living in the community as a "them and us", distinct from halls where all students are "in the same boat". This led to feeling excluded from social contact as well as information about social events:

RB: So what was the image that you had of life in Halls?

Everyone goes out all the time and everything like that, you meet tonnes of people, yeah basically but in the house we just kind of stick as a group, we don't go out that much and all the events that the people in Halls get told about, we don't get told about anything. (S11, F)

S11 associated conceptions of student drinking specifically with residences, through expectation that she would have consumed more alcohol if she had lived in halls. Research indicates that those living on-campus consume more alcohol than off-campus students (Presley et al. 2002), suggesting that this perception is accurate. It further suggests that halls sub-culture is a significant location for development of a social identity associated with drinking, illustrating the intersection of organisational configuration with student interpersonal processes. This was echoed by S22, who associated halls with opportunities for wider social group development, aiding the process of adjustment:

Getting to live in Halls you'd have opportunities for like potentially meeting people on other courses and obviously you'd have a higher chance of meeting someone with the same interests and getting talking to them which would sort of help sort of just relaxing you into like university life. (S22, M)

Places come to develop shared meanings understood by those occupying them through either processes of socialisation into groups who already understand localised norms or through the acquisition of labels attached to specific settings (Shields 1992). Evidence suggests that both processes were evident in the development and reinforcement of halls' reputations in relation to alcohol, through the interaction of pre-institutionalised alcohol expectations with organisational processes:

Halls creates the binge drinking like we're drinking here and then we're going out...I think once you've calmed down a bit from first year then it's more like going to go to the local pub and stay at home and that sort of thing but I think Halls creates the like, the more mania side of it probably. (S4, F)

This reinforces previous findings, suggesting association between particular venues and styles of drinking (Seaman and Ikegwuonu 2010). The 'mania'

associated with halls was facilitated by physical construction which aids access to other drinkers:

I think it's just a lot easier this year to have the big drinks sort of thing, because you've got like a corridor for all our flats and then like a big communal kitchen so it's just easier to all get together in the kitchen. (S9, M)

Because of the house and there's always someone who's going out...you have a lot more opportunity to say 'oh actually I do fancy coming', whereas if like when we're all living in separate houses like a couple of minutes away from each other I don't think there will be as much temptation. (S10, M)

The permeation of halls reputation and widespread acceptance of situated norms across staff and student populations illustrates the process of routinisation, and suggests that addressing intoxicogenicity within halls micro-cultures may involve tackling reproduction of local reputations. Evidence further indicates that these local reputations extend to designation of specific residence halls within the same institution as more intoxicogenic than others, recognised on site through information from Student Reps referenced earlier and through staff association of some halls with more alcohol-related issues:

You have these blocks that pose problems and sometimes they can be the smaller blocks but you know more often than not you know our large blocks can cause us problems because you've got a larger amount of first years living together and again you know I think the pressure is on to fit in, to have the great experience, nobody wants to miss out on a night out. (P6A)

In terms of regulating behaviour within residences, modular student identities restrict the potential for moderation through policy, specifically in the student-tenant identity previously described. Several UK universities are currently trialling a policy of alcohol-free residential halls, with sanctions for infractions of the no alcohol rule. I asked Residences staff if this had been considered and found reservations about the value of the approach, citing the unintended consequence of creating “party halls” (P6B), where alcohol behaviour is reproduced. However, it is arguable that existing processes and information, including that from Student Reps, reinforces this already. Student responses to this information illustrate that

communication of informal localised rules created a streaming effect in choices of residence halls, whereby prior alcohol expectations interact with environmental cues leading to the development of distinct alcohol micro-cultures on site. In an illustration of praxis, hall-level constructions of drinking were further reproduced in the social relations of the setting, which acted to reinforce and homogenise the experiences of students in these settings, as well as creating context for those who will access in the future.

Routines developed around alcohol and student identity may not be confined to the initial setting where they develop (Shilling 1992) suggesting that, once established, potential reproduction may occur outside halls throughout the period of identification as 'student'. Most students will move away from the halls environment into community living in their second year of study, and I asked if they thought drinking would change as a result of this. A majority expected consumption to reduce, with reference to previously identified social benefits of alcohol during early adjustment and subsequent reduction in the need to drink after the initial peer bonding process:

I suppose some people feel a bit more pressured into doing it to start with but when you don't know people, once you've settled in and stuff they might be less bothered about it. (S8, F)

At the beginning I think it's because you want to make friends, I don't know why people continue it because obviously you will make friends eventually in the first year, hopefully. (S15, F)

S9 expected patterns of drinking to change outside halls, with a move away from residence-based group consumption patterns:

I think it will be different kind of drinks. I think it will be less, sort of, pre-drinks in the kitchen and more like going out to a pub or something (S9, M)

It can be theorised then that adaptation involves active utilisation of alcohol to promote adjustment to university through the attainment of social groups, before this utilisation changes with the evolution of closer friendships. For S19 this evolution related to the belief that housemates next year would become more closely bonded, leading her to redefine their relationship:

I think we'll be more like a family so it will be a bit weirder to drink so much. (S19, F)

Structural constraints, specifically increased second year workload and the importance of grade contribution to final qualification, were cited by a significant number as reasons for reduced consumption. Although it was beyond the reach of this study to examine, this may suggest that drinking routines are responsive to organisational processes and changes over time, suggesting potential capacity for change through challenges to routinised practices.

7.3.2 The business of alcohol and the construction of processes within the Student Union sub-culture

As described in Chapter 5, most new students attend Freshers events in the SU, locating it for many as the first place for social activity outside halls and for the initial expression of newly-developing identity as social student. Wider economic forces driving the business case of the SU ensure that provision of alcohol remains central and, in turn, acts to reinforce pre-institutional student expectations. Henderson et al. (2007) found that young people reported drinking in places deemed safe for consumption and assessed as unlikely to result in jeopardising other goals in life. This may be particularly pertinent for students, with consumption often located away from academic and local community settings in safe residential spaces or student specific nightlife offerings where expectations of behaviour incorporate excess alcohol use. Being confronted with the task of identifying safe drinking spaces was identified as a source of risk for new students who may lack prior experience of drinking in public settings and are away from the perceived safety of home:

If that's your first time moving out and your first bit of freedom and, if you come from a small town with no clubs or anything and then you get to come here, and it's just totally different. (S13, F)

To be honest I was quite worried...I haven't had any experience about going to clubs and bars before. I was afraid that I was forced into doing it. (S7, F)

It was recognised by many students that the Union provides a safe space to begin drinking trajectory at university due to shared identity with other first-year students, before wider exploration of locale:

I think Freshers Week people seem to have better times when they're sticking with the Union stuff because you meet a lot more students. I know some people they do wristbands for the clubs in town as well but I think with that you're meeting a lot more second, third year and even people who are just not students... I think it feels a lot safer coming to the Student Union and things like on nights I've walked home it's been from here whereas I wouldn't feel safe really walking through town. (S9, M)

This was recognised in staff definition of the identity of the SU:

We pride ourselves and promote ourselves as being a safe place to come and have a drink with your friends, and some of the clubs in town don't share that. (P12)

The SU provides a place for reinforcement of student solidarity, with knowledgeable agents drawing on shared conceptualisations of alcohol norms appropriate to the space, which are then reproduced and routinised. Young people rate shared environments with others perceived as looking for the same experience as central to the sociability of drinking spaces (Valentine et al. 2007). This manifests in early experiences of the SU, which represents a social setting with shared conceptualisations of the rules of conduct which are understood by attendees (Malbon 1998). Structuration was evident in the recursive construction of the Freshers offering in the SU, with national economic drivers reflected and routinised in practices, with the resulting offering conducive to initial interpersonal needs of students, thus reinforcing student drinking norms and patterns of attendance.

Significant numbers of students, particularly non-traditional students, have little contact with the SU during their time at university, perceiving little offering beyond drinking and sports culture (Kandiko and Mawer 2013). When discussing diversity of offering within the SU and availability of non-alcoholic social spaces for students, several staff described the 'International Lounge' within the building, which identifies as non-alcoholic, however it was acknowledged that, even with this provision, not drinking could be difficult:

And there are spaces, you can avoid alcohol if you want to. I think that it is more difficult, it's the peer pressure you're in isn't it, you know, to come out and have a drink. (P13)

This suggests organisational dissociation between physical space available and behaviours occurring within that space, with recognition of social, but not environmental, pressures being exerted meaning that practices reinforcing the intoxicogenicity of the space are unchallenged.

Positioning of alcohol within the SU is further reflected in primary designation as a nightclub, as discussed earlier, locating it culturally within the local night-time economy and reinforcing the financial relationship between alcohol and practice. It was further recognised that status as a major local retailer acted to shape alcohol policy and practice, with internal policy described as based on being responsive to typical alcohol outcomes:

All the issues you'd expect. People being sick, people sleeping, people passed out, people fighting, people exposing themselves, very minor sexual harassment, theft. We see it all. Of course we do. (P12)

The maintenance of local partner relationships was also cited as highly significant in development of routines, illustrating the embedded position of the SU within the community:

Every week during term time we put thousands of slightly drunk students out onto the streets and, somehow we've still got our license, and the reason we've still got our license is because of the good relationship that we've got and the trust that exists with the council, the police and ourselves. So that trust, and not wanting to break that trust, governs our alcohol policy also. (P12)

In discussing current processes developed to address alcohol issues I was advised that the SU runs annual, short campaigns aimed at communicating harm reduction messaging. P1 acknowledged the difficulties of doing this, where financial health is dependent on alcohol sales:

RB: ...that sounds like a challenge really, you're committing to reducing your own business aren't you?

Yeah it is difficult and I mean it only reduces business where it's effective and students actually take it on board. (P1)

This limited expectation of effectiveness suggests acknowledgement that any impact is likely to be constrained by alcohol associations with the SU sub-system.

Some staff outside the SU recognised the constraints of this financial imperative to maintain sales:

The events they run give a contradictory message to those from elsewhere because the SU needs to make money...Nights like Drink the Bar Dry. The duty of care differs between the university and the union - their primary role is different...After big nights in the SU there are more incidents in halls. (P16)

These perceptions illustrate the segmentation of sub-systems presented earlier, with SU sub-culture maintained by distinct working practices and operating requirements. From an SU perspective it was suggested that the university may fail to appreciate these practices, with misunderstanding in evidence over the extent of alcohol promotion onsite during 'Drink the Bar Dry' end of term events, and misperception of pricing strategies. P1 stated:

I think particularly from a University point of view...is that it's just entirely irresponsible that we sell beer at 50p a pint and we just run it to get as many students drunk as we possibly can. But then when we kind of get to sit down and talk about it, it's not that picture. (P1)

Evidence suggests that these university responses are not data driven, with P1 producing figures showing less alcohol-related incidents in the SU at these events than on more routine occasions. Departmental segmentation, resulting in communication issues within the university and lack of routine data utilisation, mean that staff responses to union practice are not driven by context-specific information. As previously identified, reputational risk is significant and the university is mindful of activities perceived as promoting drinking and it is likely that this drives responses to an event with the inflammatory title of Drink the Bar Dry.

7.4 Organisational moderation of alcohol impacts: Departmental and sub-cultural variations in addressing alcohol harms

We have seen that university responses to student alcohol use may lack an evidentiary framework. This section will further consider organisational responses to student drinking and will assess the impact of these responses on the continuation or otherwise of current patterns of consumption.

Dutton and Dukerich (1991) argue that dominant organisational identity is significant in influencing the way members perceive their role in tackling issues that fall outside the primary remit. If a university is perceived first as an educational institution with no formal role in student health outcomes, then organisational routines will be developed to meet this primary role, constraining staff responses to addressing other behaviours. This was reflected in evidence presented earlier, illustrating internal conceptions of roles and departmental identity as acting to limit responses. Further, if a behaviour is considered consistent with existing identity it is likely that this will only be challenged if and when the behaviour poses a threat to the success of the organisation. Staff and student conceptions of university as a place where students drink and have fun mean high levels of acceptance of current behaviour. This does not threaten educational function and is largely consistent with wider cultural presentations of student life, meaning limited commitment to addressing intoxicogenic norms is in evidence. As seen earlier, this was expressed by some staff as questioning the universities right to intervene in drinking behaviour. Structuring properties identified so far create a framework within which attempts at management and/or reduction of negative alcohol impacts are constructed. These attempts then form part of the alcohol environment that exists in the university, which is experienced by students entering the setting.

Previous research with undergraduates identified students as unreceptive to the idea of the university as regulator of their behaviour (Snow et al. 2003), with reluctance to engage with formal support services. Lynch (2006) argues that the marketisation of higher education and the increasing emphasis on universities as providers of economic capital has narrowed the HE focus, leading to reduction of developmental input in the lives of students. Emphasis on value for money and the role of staff as providers of information to enhance employability may impact perceptions of the appropriateness of staff as providers of more tangential information including alcohol advice. Reluctance to receive advice also reflects attitudes characteristic of the young adult life-stage of the sample, with expected development of personal responsibility for actions and the freedom to self-determine (Arnett 2004). Although the potentially problematic student-university relationship was acknowledged by staff, it was still considered necessary by a majority for the university to take action in reducing harms impacting students through both the Student Union:

It's the duty of care, it's the, it's partly the expectation that our students, and by extension their parents have of the university, and all those other stakeholders have on us, the local community as well, the police. They know that we're a good organisation to work with, they know that we're a particularly conscientious licensed premises. (P12)

And through the university:

It would be very easy to leave it with the Union because they're the predominant events organisers but that would be renegeing on responsibilities because, you know, the University does have a responsibility, a duty of care towards the students. (P3)

As described in Chapter 6, pastoral care services are provided across a range of teams within the university structure. To assess student perceptions of support, I asked who they would suggest going to for advice and information on alcohol if asked by another student. Answers were divided between internal - Student Support or Student Union - and external - GP, police, websites such as Talk to Frank. Research has identified limited awareness of centralised Student Support services in students (Chew-Graham et al. 2003), reflected here in lack of understanding of support services available, despite being signposted to relevant webpages detailing these during Residences induction:

I've heard of it (Student support) but I don't know what it does (S17, M)

They maybe might have mentioned it but no I wouldn't know any, I wouldn't know where these are. (S2, M)

This highlights limited effectiveness of current communication practices to students and suggests that traditionally constructed Student Services may have limited capacity to be effective in addressing alcohol-related issues among student populations.

Regarding formalised rules governing university practice, no student-specific alcohol policy is in place, with several staff expressing surprise at this. Within HE behavioural impacts of alcohol are often subsumed into disciplinary policy relating largely to effect on others (Orme and Coghill 2014) and, as seen earlier, this was evident here with sanctions for noise and damage applied within halls. I asked staff whether they would favour a student-specific university policy on alcohol, with high levels of ambiguity expressed regarding effectiveness, appropriateness

and enforcement. Sanctions for bringing the university into disrepute were generally deemed an acceptable policy focus (P2, P11), reflecting the significance of reputational risk, however the constraints of lack of enforcement capacity were recognised:

My question is what benefit does a specific alcohol policy have, in an area where I'm not sure we have the policing capability - policing in inverted commas - to enforce whatever it might say. So we revert then to general education campaigns around this area. (P13)

Opinions reflected wider cultural conceptions of student drinking described earlier, as intrinsic and immutable, within student life:

I don't know with an alcohol policy whether that would work and whether it could be implemented to be honest, I mean how can a lecturer say 'you, you and you I know you've been drinking alcohol get out', how can you do that because it's all been embedded for so long that's part of the university life. (P2)

P2 further cited constraints related to localised alcohol culture and existing organisational practices, recognised as contrasting with potential applications of an alcohol policy:

Whether you put something on we don't expect you to drink alcohol in between lectures possibly, but how can you regulate that when we've got the Student Union next door and pubs all around us. (P2)

The limited organisational responses identified were explained through alcohol not being seen as “a fashionable topic” (P9), echoing international findings that alcohol use is not taken seriously by HE organisations, with management of reputational risk paramount (Snow et al. 2003). Alcohol-related activities are a secondary aspect of the overall function of the institution and are often not part of any designated job, meaning much practice development is ad-hoc and informally driven.

As we saw earlier, influences at multiple ecological levels impact development of organisational processes, constraining capacity for staff to address student alcohol use within their roles and within the boundaries of the recognisable university. A frequent agentic response to this was to identify external partners, with inter-agency working common practice, and of particular significance for staff working

at the forefront of student alcohol issues. As described in chapter 6, there was a recursive process in the development of working partnerships, with the selection of associates reflecting departmental segmentation by shared ethos and approach to alcohol. It was identified that Residential and Security teams frequently deal directly with the consequences of heavy alcohol use and develop practices in response to this. Both these teams reported strong working relationships with the local police, reflecting a shared behaviour management approach, with P4 reporting almost daily contact at the start of term due to the spike in incidents such as aggression or Emergency Room attendance. Security and Residential relationships with community partners are formalised through the local Student Safety Partnership previously described, with the remit of this group summarised by P5:

There's two remits really: to look at the impact of students on the community and looking at the welfare of students as well because they represent such a large proportion, certainly in certain parts of (town) as well. (P5)

I was advised that there can be reluctance among attendees, which include other local HEI's, police and local authority, to discuss specific problems and to share information due to caution over public perceptions, again reflecting awareness of media influence and the potential impact on recruitment of customers within a marketised system.

Security and Residential practices developed in response to student alcohol behaviour includes extra patrols of key areas during peak incident times, as well as campaign work developed within the partnership described above. In order to protect the university as open system, these departments also respond to grievances expressed by local residents in quarterly meetings, which primarily relate to late night noise and rubbish:

They're (students) walking back from town and sometimes we're finding people asleep outside of the grass or that sort of thing...because we're not a, sort of, closed campus. It is the main thoroughfare for people coming up through the city centre. (P4)

Just people coming back and urinating and throwing up in their gardens and throwing rubbish. (P6)

It was observed that residents tend to blame all issues related to young people on students, which was cited as unfair by staff. Although there may be some overstatement, it is also likely that in many cases residents are correct due to the geographic concentrations of students in certain areas and the walking routes favoured by those returning from town to halls, suggesting institutional reluctance to engage with the scale of issues where firm data is limited.

The routines developed in teams facing alcohol-related behaviours most frequently are determined by the public nature of many of these actions, leading to recruitment of partners representative of this public realm and the underlying sub-cultural ethos, rather than from those most proximal within the institution. The shared behaviour management ethos in evidence is likely to be reproduced in forums such as the partnership described above, reinforcing their separation from other areas of the university and maintaining segmentation of current practice.

7.4.1 Attempted moderation of alcohol harms within Residences sub-culture

Earlier it was demonstrated that academic and non-academic sectors of the university are commonly perceived as separate. This segmentation included halls as distinct from the university, cited by a small number of students as rationale for lack of behaviour regulation:

If there was a rule saying that you can only drink two pints and I saw something I would be, like, 'who are they tell me what I can do?' Like, I'm living here you know, so long as I'm not hurting or annoying anyone then what's it to do with them. (S16, M)

When asked if she would expect an alcohol policy in halls, S20 referenced campus geography, stating:

I don't really feel like it's the Uni's job...Because it's a non-campus uni because the residences are like far away from everything, I feel like that's kind of separate from the Uni if you see what I mean? So what you do there is separate to your Uni because it's not like it's on campus (S20, F)

This may suggest that, as well as other constraints to enforcement, attempts at behaviour moderation in halls must take into account geographic factors and student perceptions of structure.

As argued earlier, for many students halls represents the first site of independent living, with reduced monitoring of behaviour and the capacity to develop own domestic routines for the first time as part of emerging adult status. This independent status, and the landlord identity of Residential units, is reflected in limited contact with staff in residential settings, with students citing cleaners or roving security patrols as their most frequent contact. Student wardens are on duty to provide pastoral support but awareness and access to these is limited:

He's got a big t-shirt with 'student warden' on the back so it's pretty obvious who he is...but I wouldn't know how to contact him directly or anything like that. (S17, M)

I don't really know, I've never actually seen one. (S1, F)

Lack of student awareness of available support services suggests limited capacity to respond to issues, with concerns expressed during staff interviews in relation to connectedness of university pastoral services. P11, in relation to hall wardening, stated:

That's a problem, I would identify that as a problem, so you could have a student who's drinking a litre of vodka every night in their bedroom, and the warden might know about it but not be aware of what's available in student support because there's no formal link between them and student support.

This reflects the constraints in organisational communication processes previously identified, which impact the development of cohesive working practices between pastoral services. Segmentation means that practices are often developed in-house in sub-systems, as evident in Residences, who responded to their own exposure to issues by developing alcohol safety advice webpages which students are signposted to during induction. In interviews I presented students with these pages on a tablet to assess awareness and opinions on content. The first of these contains information on alcohol and drugs, specifically on psychological and social consequences of excess use (designated Page 1) The second page is a series of tips for a safe night out (designated Page 2). As only two remembered having seen them before, I asked all students to read and give their views on content. Page 1 was commonly assessed as not useful:

This is like the same sort of thing that's drummed into you at school like drugs are bad, don't drink too much, things like that... But things like I don't know the psychological consequences, people aren't going to care about them and social consequences. (S17, M)

Antipathy to labelling 'types' of drinkers, as seen on Page 1 with designations of habitual, dependent etc., suggests a potential boomerang effect (Cho & Salmon 2007), where the opposite outcome to that intended by the message is achieved and the audience actively avoids consideration of content:

I don't think, I don't think I'd like to label it, it makes it official like I can't really get out of that little category if I label it. (S19, F)

Research has indicated that students are more receptive to harm reduction approaches over strategies aimed at behavioural controls (Snow et al. 2003) and there was strong consensus that the hints and tips on Page 2 were more useful due to the more practical, less censorious, nature of the content:

You may as well give them advice on what to do if something goes wrong or how to prevent something going wrong rather than telling them not to do it because that doesn't help anyone. (S17, M)

This was recognised by most as helpful within the context of the university experience and the location of alcohol within it:

I went out before I came to uni but coming here it was just kind of I've gone out more times here than in my life before. So it's good to have just kind of little rules to kind of keep to. (S19, F)

This emphasis on harm reduction reflects previous findings showing that a majority of students, including the heaviest drinkers, do not see any need to reduce consumption levels (Roche and Watt 1999). This was echoed here and reinforces the acceptance of alcohol use seen in staff and student interviews:

It happens and everybody does it so I don't think there's any point in saying 'oh you should only be consuming this much or you're a binge drinker'. (S10, M)

Although a majority suggested favouring harm reduction advice, for one interviewee prioritisation of alcohol and sociability suggested disconnect between narratives, negating the value of tips on reducing risky drinking styles:

I think that's the best way of doing it personally...I understand that point though of you may feel pressured into drinking but I think it's quite a good social thing to do, rounds. And also it saves everyone time because there's one person going to the bar. (S12, M)

The life-stage and previous experiences of students as young adults further limits the impact of messaging, with several interviewees describing prior exposure to advice throughout compulsory education, indicating both desensitization and rejection of information considered inconsistent with emerging adult status:

But I mean like they are useful tips but I think everyone, well most people who have sort of like...lived in the world like through like school and friends already sort of know what to do. (S16, M)

You get taught like in school, in PHSE, not to drink too much but...don't know, I don't think it would really alter many people's behaviour unless they had a real problem where they like depended on it. (S13, F)

There was very little variation in responses to alcohol advice across the student sample by gender, age, drinker status or residence, suggesting similar expectations of agency among young adults. Further, moderation practices are perceived as contrasting with situated alcohol norms of use and availability as well as with the heavy drinking culturally associated with first year student identity. Current organisational practices mean that attempts to provide alcohol information have little penetration, with constraints on staff intervention facilitating drinking routines, acting to co-create and reproduce residential settings as intoxicogenic spaces. These norms are then recursively transmitted to other students and future cohorts, through institutional and pre-institutional processes, constituting the rules in operation within the setting and the sub-culture of the environment.

7.4.2 Moderating practices within Student Union sub-culture

SU practices emphasise maintaining status as a responsible retailer, illustrating primary identity as a business unit located within the local night-time economy but with enhanced duty of care:

We're not like your average bar or nightclub environment so we're not solely in it to make as much money as we can...there's a commercial income stream but we've got a duty of care to our members...it is just taken a bit more seriously than it would be in a nightclub in town for example. (P1)

This manifests in a range of actions aimed at moderating alcohol harms, including operating a general advice centre, which doesn't specifically address alcohol issues but signposts to both university counselling services and GP's. Alcohol campaign work promoting safe drinking messages was predominantly run by the elected Welfare Officer if they choose to do so within their term of office, with the freedom to choose direction of the work themselves. For staff outside the SU, this reliance on the views of a single officer meant lack of sustainability in SU provision, as well as lack of engagement with other university partners on developing content:

it has to be a joint thing, because if it's just SU it won't be sustainable because SU campaigns aren't sustainable. (P11)

...thing is with the elected officers every year it's a different person and everybody has their own agenda, they have that and they only have a year. (P4)

At the time of observation, awareness raising activity in the SU constituted poster displays as part of a national drive by Drinkaware, as well as materials for the 'Dry January' campaign initiated by Alcohol Concern. No evaluation of the effectiveness of these occurs, and the impact is likely to have been limited by timing, with very low numbers of students around campus early in January due to exam period, meaning severely limited exposure to the messaging on display.

In response to accusations of being "*building-centric*" (P12) and failing to engage with problems occurring in areas outside, the SU launched the Student Safety Bus in conjunction with local police. This minibus patrols between SU, halls and local areas with high levels of student renters and offers transport home to students who are publicly observed as very drunk. Student awareness of this service was variable, with knowledge sometimes obtained through informal channels:

Some of my friends have ended up on it, that's the only reason I know about that, one of my friends had to be taken home on it and so yeah I've heard of that. (S1, F)

I conducted an observation on the bus, which was staffed by 3 university student volunteers and one police officer, who is required to be present for the service to operate and stated that, for students collected, relationship-building was emphasised over legal sanction. During the evening we encountered several drunk students on public streets and in one case, a railway line, who were approached and offered transport home. Most were initially paranoid about impending arrest, suggesting the expectation that they would be dealt with criminally, as with non-student adults. The team do not distinguish between their own students and those of other universities nearby, with the bigger issue deemed to be management of student behaviour in order to minimise community impacts. Although there are resource implications, this approach is pragmatic considering that residents affected do not draw distinctions between local HE sites, illustrating staff awareness of the impact of reputational risk. It is notable that in developing this service, the SU response to identified issues involved seeking partnerships external to the university, with no evidence of joint working internally. This reinforces segmentation of the SU from the university, as well as illustrating the harm reduction approach adopted as a response to acceptance of the intoxicogenicity of the setting.

SU practices combine harm reduction with awareness raising, again reflecting the ethos of risk management rather than consumption reduction, and consistent with conceptualisation of youthful risk taking as permissible within certain protected spaces. Although pragmatic, this acts to reinforce social and organisational routines based on intoxication as a drinking style. These harm reduction approaches acknowledge the emerging adult status of students, with some expectation of personal responsibility, but with provision of a safety net unavailable to non-student adults. This provision further delineates student identity as a distinct life-event, incorporating excess alcohol use and facilitating continuation of intoxicogenic structuring properties.

7.5 Staff and student reflections on current practice in moderating alcohol impacts and suggestions for improvement

Although university practices illustrate attempts to reduce the impact of alcohol related harms, reproduced cultural rules associating alcohol with sociability were expected to constrain effectiveness:

What angle does that come from? Alcohol seems to be the pretty much the only way that students see 'this is how I make friends, this is how I make those connections and get involved in university life'. (P3)

High density of messaging is also problematic for communication with new students during Freshers, with dangers of “*information overload*” (P3) reflected by several students:

In Freshers Weeks you're given all this information you can't digest any of it, it's so difficult to understand. You take kind of things from your course rather than outside stuff because then you think right I'll do it that later and first I'll do the course stuff. (S20, F)

You're sort of swamped at the beginning with lots of new information and lots of talks on this and that. (S23, M)

The economic necessity of external partner input was identified as impacting the tone of the event, with retailers who pay for space “*wanting the razzmatazz, the crowds*” (P9). For Security, this can mean that personal safety messages are lost, with potentially significant consequences:

At Freshers people are interested in having fun and they're bombarded with information. I actually find they actually listen to us better around about February and that sadly is because by then they've either been a victim or know somebody that's been a victim of crime. (P4)

Impact of messaging is further constrained by the pre-institutional expectations and cultural associations of alcohol and Freshers described in Chapter 5, which are readily facilitated on arrival:

I don't think it harms getting them (safety messages) but I just think people don't really pay too much attention to it, they're too focused on like you just know Freshers Week is going to be a week where you get drunk a lot. (S9, M)

As well as timing considerations, students discussed the acceptability of alcohol advice and appropriate messengers. Academic staff involvement in alcohol messaging was incongruous with perceptions of their role:

I don't think any student wants to hear their lecturer or teacher talking about drinking, you know, they're going to be sitting there like 'oh you're just like my parents'. (S15, F)

Interviewees overwhelmingly stated that, if advice is to be given, it is preferable from those with shared student identity:

I think it's better from someone in your own boat, from their perspective rather than, like you hear it from your parents all the time. (S13, F)

They're at the same kind of level. If you speak to the staff it feels like...they'd be judging because they're older. (S19, F)

Second year students I've spoken to they've been a bit more like oh yeah this club is good, or this place has got really cheap drinks... So maybe if one of them was to turn around and say be careful, you might have a bit more of an effect because you're not expecting it of them, you're sort of expecting them to try and advertise to you. (S23, M)

Staff generally recognised this preference, with most citing the SU as the preferred option for delivery. For some this related to shared identity:

Sometimes students might see our attempts as being draconian, or spoiling the fun, or almost as a sort of parent type figure. Whereas I think there's a different relationship between the SU and the students. That's more supportive. (P7)

I'd like to say that the Students Union and the elected officers would probably be the best people. They are students, they're younger people and they can lead by example and that sort of thing... (P4)

For others this was associated with their duties as a retailer:

If it's not from the source of where the student is and if they're drinking and they haven't got that in front of them then where else will they see it? Where else can they access so I would say that it is probably the best place to do it because that's where the students are going to drink. (P2)

However the financial constraints of SU reliance on alcohol sales, culminating in the intoxicogenic profile of the setting, mean that delivery of contrasting messaging may be problematic. P10 reflected on potential difficulties in having advice distributed from a service predominantly acting as, and known as, an alcohol retailer, illustrating the conflict previously discussed between health and economic outcomes:

If they're comfortable going to the union when they got a problem, at least they've got somewhere to go then...But I guess...yeah, if they've got a real alcohol problem you wouldn't want them to be going past the bars and the pub on the way. (P10)

Despite organisational awareness of many issues impacting alcohol messaging, these are not translated into current harm reduction practice, suggesting that existing knowledge and understanding of those on site is not utilised in current development of moderating practice. The lack of insight underpinning much current organisational routine ensures that processes are likely to be maintained regardless of effectiveness.

7.6 Summary of findings

This study has illustrated that the process of transition into university for new students is a period of interpersonal anxiety for many, with peer development recognised as fundamental to the process of adaptation. Evidence indicates that alcohol aids initial development of peer groups and is actively employed, particularly by those in Residences, as a means to overcome both psychological and physical barriers after arrival. We have also seen how transition is preceded by pre-institutional processes which act to shape student alcohol conceptions and behaviours, with contributions from wider cultural presentations, interpersonal relationships and organisational communication. These factors intersect and ensure that students arrive with knowledgeability of the centrality of alcohol within university life, with this understood by both drinking and non-drinking students. The lack of variation in responses, for gender, course of study or residence, regarding conceptions of alcohol and student life reinforces the

dominance of normative associations of alcohol and university imparted pre-institutionally.

The diagram below illustrates the intersection of the typical student timeline described earlier, with established university processes. We have seen how this intersection acts to co-create and reinforce existing practices and heavy drinking norms in student behaviour and university settings:

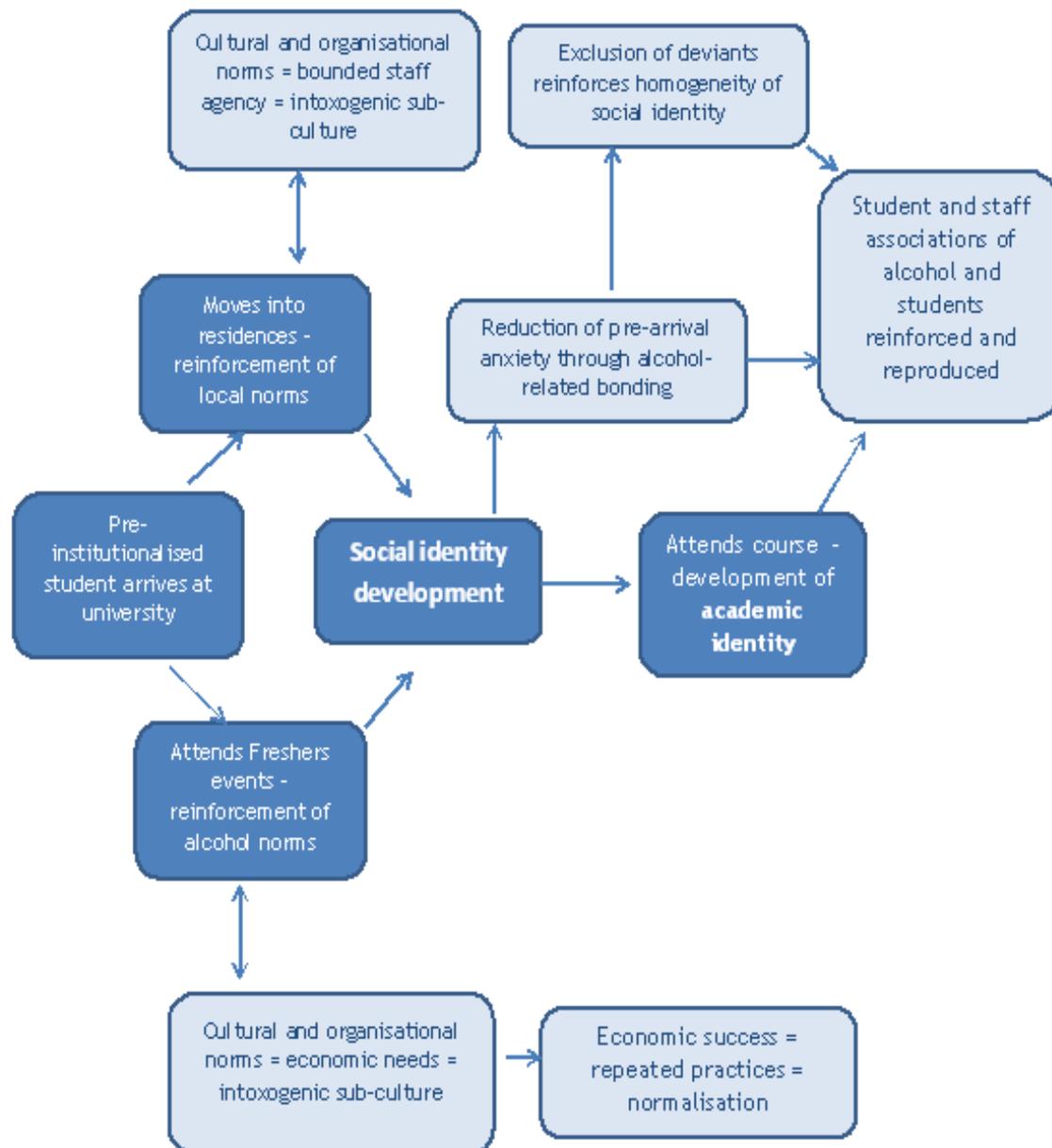


Fig. 11 The intersection of student transition and organisational processes

The psychological impact of transition events is mediated by the environmental context in which they occur (Clarke and Wheaton 2005), with certain

environments making certain transition responses more likely. As we have identified, transition to university for new students represents a move into an environment where the open system is impacted by cultural, economic, interpersonal and organisational process which intersect to co-create and reproduce settings that maintain heavy drinking norms. External pressures include the changing rights of student customers in a marketised system, as well as dominant youth cultural conceptions of young adulthood as a period of heavy alcohol use, co-existing within an economic framework which ensures alcohol is cheap and readily available to new students. The right to drink to excess is culturally, and legally, embedded ensuring that university responses are limited through both lack of willingness to challenge cultural norms and lack of knowledge of how change may be possible. Internal influences identified as shaping the organisational setting include heavy drinking expectations in staff as well as students, departmental and individual job role conceptions and modular student identities which act to prevent intervention. It was observed that departmental identity was significant in conceptualisation of alcohol issues and acceptable responses, with staff more frequently exposed to negative alcohol related behaviours more likely to rate issues as serious and to favour greater policy direction from the organisation. This contrasted with staff within daytime support services with less exposure to drunk students, who were likely to define the issue as smaller in scale and requiring less intervention. This patterning within the organisation has implications for the development of responses, with direction likely to be impacted by which staff are involved in planning.

The construction of student life ensures that social and academic functions are largely separated, with initial experiences of students weighted heavily to meeting social expectations, acting to reinforce pre-institutional learning. The complex interaction of multiple factors observed ensures that university transition represents an intoxicogenic drinking space, which is then enacted within constructed sub-cultural settings within the university in which heavy drinking is normalised and social experiences of students are relatively homogeneous. Deviation from normative standards of alcohol use creates difficulties for social integration, as evidenced by common conceptions of sociability and alcohol and the experience of students who do not consume heavily. Social integration and initial exposure to Freshers is based on homogeneity of behaviour and acceptance of the dominant social -alcohol related- offering of the period, ensuring reproduction of normative standards across student cohorts.

In terms of moderating alcohol behaviour, both students and staff express the view that learning from experience is preferred, reflecting the life-stage of young adulthood and associated expectations of enhanced agency. The university is expected to act as a safe learning space for the development of both adult and sensible drinker behaviours, however little evidence supports this. Expectations of reduced consumption among second year students is based on structural constraints as the likely source of this reduction, including move away from residences micro-environment where alcohol is embedded. This emphasis on structural factors provides limited evidence to suggest that learning has occurred to prompt reduced consumption. Furthermore, the intoxicogenicity evident within the learning space raises questions about the likelihood of experiential learning which deviates from dominant contextual norms and reduces ease of social integration.

There is little evidence of active constitution of an environment that would encourage students to learn to drink sensibly, with existing moderation practices limited by several factors. Current organisational processes result in lack of a suitable forum for the sharing of data on frequency and severity of alcohol-related issues and lack of incorporation of existing staff expertise and views means that practices that are implemented are not data-driven. Lack of student awareness of campaigns and services further illustrates limited penetration from current efforts and there was a suggestion of little prioritisation of this issue as well as a sense of fatalism regarding potential outcomes of any action in the face of the multi-level influences previously identified.

Findings indicate that influences acting on the university as open system are enacted by staff and students as knowledgeable agents, becoming routinised in organisational processes and student behaviour. Identified sub-cultures are recursively constructed through the action of this routinisation, resulting in the maintenance of modular student identities, with alcohol centrally located in social activity within the setting. These processes ensure that dominant alcohol norms are maintained and reproduced across settings and student cohorts, with limited likelihood of current challenges to practice.

8 Discussion and conclusion

8.1 Chapter overview

This thesis had two primary research aims; firstly, to enhance understanding of the role of alcohol in the social processes of new students during the transition to university; secondly, to explore the processes underpinning the development of policy and practice on alcohol in a university.

This chapter reviews the findings of the thesis, commencing with re-visiting the theoretical and methodological approaches utilised to meet these research aims. It considers the effectiveness of the frameworks underpinning collection and interpretation of data through assessing the contribution of the socio-ecological approach for theorising the impact of multi-level influences acting on both students and the university. This is followed by discussion of the use of a structure/agency approach to understanding the intersection of these multi-level influences and the contribution of this to the theorisation of student alcohol use. Reflections on the efficacy of the study design, including strengths and limitations of the approach, are then examined before discussion of policy and practice implications of key findings. The chapter closes with overall conclusions.

8.2 Review of the socio-ecological approach to data collection

Review of the literature illustrated a broad range of multi-level influences acting on individual students to facilitate consumption and on university settings in the development of responses. The broad range of proxal and distal factors identified led the thesis to argue for a socio-ecological approach in order to capture a wide view of student drinking. This drew on the framework proposed by McLeroy et al. (1988), which characterises multiple domains of influence as health determinants. The socio-ecological framework was applied to both data collection tools and data analysis and was supported by the inclusion of a temporal dimension to the study, drawing on life-course theory to consider transition as a process rather than a time-limited event.

The research was further informed by Jamal et al. (2013), who drew on Structuration theory (Giddens 1984) to describe educational settings as consisting of two domains: the student system and the institutional system. Incorporating this investigative framework into the research was effective in ensuring equal weighting was given to each system and cohort of agents within it. This dual focus

ensured that themes of specific relevance within each system were able to be explored and developed more fully, reinforcing its potential utility for research in educational settings when coupled with a socio-ecological approach. Key findings resulting from analysis of each system are now explored further.

8.2.1 The investigation of the student system

The addition of temporality to the socio-ecological analysis of the student system was effective in identifying the elongated acquisition of student alcohol constructions, overcoming the critique of static interpretations risked by analysis of post-arrival behaviour only. This approach illustrated the significance of multi-level influences both pre and post-arrival, with the key finding of the process of pre-institutionalisation indicating that normative expectations of university life and alcohol are formed prior to contact with the organisation. Influences on this process included internalisation of associations within wider youth culture between drinking and the life-stage of respondents as part of student experience in the UK (Seaman and Ikegwonu 2011), which was widely evident in the development of drinking expectations.

The intersection of wider cultural presentations of student drinking with interpersonal processes was also observed during pre-institutionalisation, with family and pre-university peers identified as important sources of pre-arrival information on the positioning of alcohol in student life. These pre-institutional influences acted to reinforce associations between alcohol and sociability (Griffin et al. 2009), which was frequently expressed in interviewee assumptions that much post-arrival bonding with new peers would be based around drinking together as part of the routine practice of Freshers. The homogeneity of student alcohol expectations and post-arrival behaviours observed suggests that internalisation of these influences results in normative localised expressions of drinking behaviour in this population, illustrating the intersection of macro and micro-level determinants.

As well as highlighting pre-arrival processes, the methodological approach illustrated that macro-level drivers were highly significant after arrival through shaping the context that pre-institutionalised students then transition into. The socio-ecological analysis illustrated national policy on alcohol sales as significant in ensuring ready access to affordable alcohol, facilitating constructions of drinking as a normal part of typical social behaviour (Engineer et al. 2003) both

for young adults more broadly and, specifically, for students (Roche and Watts 1999). The wider lens approach facilitated mapping of the intersection of national policy and community-level influences identified as significant in the post-arrival alcohol environment. The impact of economic policy in maintaining high levels of alcohol use was illustrated across multiple ecological levels, reinforcing the intersection of economic and health concerns and suggesting that student drinking cannot be addressed through health policy alone. Economic drivers for alcohol sales were observed in intensive promotion from local retailers, which was mirrored by organisational-level alcohol practices strongly driven by economic imperatives of the Student Union, including the need to compete with local providers. It was observed in the lack of constraints to sales in both the local community and organisation that economic motivation will override health concerns, not only at national level as stated earlier (Jayne et al. 2008) but also within local contexts. This intersection of factors facilitating ready access to alcohol meant that pre-institutionalised assumptions of heavy drinking as embedded in Freshers are then confirmed during initial institutionalisation.

The significance of pre-institutionalisation of alcohol expectations should be interpreted in light of findings indicating high levels of pre-arrival anxiety over meeting new housemates, cited as the primary concern for a strong majority. Examination of the post-arrival role of alcohol within interpersonal interactions with new housemates illustrated that drinking was commonly utilised to enhance speed of bonding, contributing to the formation of new peer groups and reducing anxiety through the externalisation of pre-institutionalised alcohol norms. Drinking together was considered an effective tool for aiding settling-in, with little presentation of consumption as a behaviour in need of moderation. Findings suggest that social motivations to drink are reinforced in this population by the associated reduction in transition anxiety, with implications for moderating practice where anxiety reduction is a beneficial outcome for the population in question. As integration is essential for successful adaptation to university life, the benefits obtained from alcohol use throughout the transition process would suggest that it is unlikely to change significantly unless alternative means of social integration are available.

The identified process of pre-institutionalisation through multi-level influences, followed by post-arrival facilitation by national and local norms, resulted in the central contribution of alcohol to the development of social bonds. This prior

acquisition of student alcohol norms and the pre-planned behaviour identified illustrates that 'student drinking' can not be considered as a decontextualized behaviour occurring after entering the confines of a higher education setting, but is instead part of the totality of UK drinking culture. This illustrates the benefits of the temporal approach adopted for this research, with temporality important in ascertaining the complex interaction of multiple influences across the transition process, contributing to the development and maintenance of current high levels of consumption in this population. The implications of this for policy and practice will be considered later.

8.2.2 The investigation of the institutional system

The wide-angle approach to the student system was also employed in analysis of influences on university policy and practice on alcohol. This was based on characterisation of the university as an open system, supporting the application of the socio-ecological framework to assessing influences acting on the setting. The benefits of this approach were evident in uncovering staff conceptions of multi-level constraints and facilitators impacting job roles and departmental function, with capacity to act on student alcohol use inhibited by multiple factors.

The contribution of cultural norms was apparent, with staff illustrating the internalisation of wider cultural portrayals of student drinking as a normal part of the experience which, coupled with liberal conceptions of the right of legal adults to self-determine, ensured limited willingness to intervene in alcohol use. National-policy approaches to marketisation in higher education were also cited as significant by many staff, enacted as an emphasis on customer satisfaction and the right for students to buy services from the university without acceptance of behavioural constraint, culminating in a reluctance to intervene in behaviour. As student drinking is a long-standing issue, it is unclear whether this reluctance to intervene represents a departure from previous approaches among staff or a reframing of non-intervention in light of a new policy direction. Although beyond the scope of the current study to consider this, it is of potential significance for the development of interventions in this setting where staff buy-in is required and where objections to delivery must be addressed.

The intersection of national and community-level practice was also acknowledged by staff as impacting university processes, with alcohol sales and promotion aimed at new students linked by staff to high levels of both residence-based and

on-sales consumption. This was cited as highly problematic to those staff in front-facing roles, particularly in residential and security services, with little intervention in local community actions on alcohol sales and promotions possible. The external factors identified contribute to understanding the difficult operating context for university processes, illustrating the efficacy of an open systems approach to analysis of the organisational setting.

In analysing internal function of the university, temporality was again a significant addition to multi-level analysis through identifying that institutionalisation of students occurs firstly into the social setting and, secondly, into the academic setting. The finding that social and residential systems are more influential in early processes, coupled with a non-interventionist ethos, results in little organisational challenge to early conceptions of student life and alcohol. Findings further illustrated a common staff conception of a divide between different departments within the institution, including academic and non-academic functions, resulting in a lack of cohesive approach to the management of alcohol issues.

A socio-ecological approach was also effective in identifying the role of staff agency and personal biography in the development of policy and practice, with frequent reference to own experience cited as further rationalisation for non-intervention. This showed variation across departments associated with the level of staff exposure to alcohol-related consequences, identifying sub-culture variations within the organisation and contributing to understanding of the complexity of the setting. The implications of these internal divisions for policy and practice will be considered later.

8.3 A structure/agency approach to theorising student drinking

As well as illustrating a strong rationale for using the socio-ecological framework, this study further enhanced theorisation of the development and maintenance of observed drinking behaviour through adoption of a structure/agency approach. This aimed to understand the functional role of alcohol in social processes during transition and to consider student agency in drinking decisions, thus moving beyond individualised conceptions of drinking as lifestyle choice which underpin many moderation strategies in university settings (Larimer and Cronce 2002). The recursive relationship between structure and agency evident in outcomes was interpreted through the application of Structuration theory to identify the

development and maintenance of structuring properties in the setting (Giddens 1984). Through this approach, issues such as the cyclical relationship between student expectations and alcohol provision at the university became evident as mutually reinforcing structuring properties of the setting.

Within the thesis, agency was theorised as bound by structural properties, identifiable through analysis. The concept of bounded agency (Evans 2007) was introduced to understand the constraining effects of multi-level pressures, including structural processes, on student behaviour, with validity of this illustrated in the identification of a broad range of pre-arrival influences that act to shape student expectations of alcohol use at university, developing agent knowledgeability of appropriate expressions of student behaviour. Echoing findings on the importance of peer acquisition to new students (Buote et al. 2007; Wilcox et al. 2005; McKenzie and Schweitzer 2001), participants reported significant levels of pre-arrival anxiety over new peer relationships in Residences. Findings illustrate that agentic responses to this (Scanlon et al. 2007) were then bound post-arrival by structuring properties presented, both pre-institutionally through normalisation of alcohol associations with friendship formation and, in the university context through initial, alcohol-heavy, institutionalisation into student life. Deviations from the norm meant risk of exclusion from social activity for those not confirming to typical alcohol profiles, reinforcing the acceptability of heavy consumption in the intoxicogenic environment (Seaman et al. 2013) structured to maintain heavy drinking norms. Although it was evident that many students actively utilise alcohol during transition, suggesting agency in alcohol decisions, the particular choice of behaviour was clearly shaped and facilitated by organisational, local and national contexts that ensure it is the most likely option.

To understand the university as the structural context for both staff and student actions, the socio-ecological interpretation of the impact of multi-level factors on alcohol processes was enhanced through the concept of organisational isomorphism, which aided in understanding the constraining effect of these influences in structuring the HE sector. Isomorphism (Heugens and Lander 2009) recognises that the university has key similarities to other organisations in the same field of operation which are similarly responsive to external coercion. This facilitated recognition of the role of external processes in the development of structuring properties which then act on students and staff in the setting while also recognising internal variations exhibited due to the enactment of agency.

This theorisation suggests a potential framework for considering macro and micro level processes operating within and around the university, which can be utilised to understand the context for intervention in student well-being. This framework incorporates the concept of bounded agency in interpreting staff actions, acknowledging that structural constraints not only shape levels of isomorphism observable in the organisation, but in turn act to limit capacity for staff expressions of agency. This was recognised by staff during interviews in describing limitations to possible actions in response to high levels of student consumption e.g. customer conceptions of students which in turn made certain interventionist approaches inappropriate. Marrying the theoretical concepts of isomorphism and bounded agency facilitates the development of a conceptual framework to understand internal function of complex organisations, which only requires them to occupy the same organisational field and suggests potential generalisability as an analytical tool. Testing of this approach in other HEI's would aid in interpreting findings of the present thesis as potential commonalities of student and staff experiences.

The current organisational analysis was effective in understanding constraints to action in challenging existing practices and norms around alcohol. As well as national and organisational factors of significance, the identification of variable processes within university sub-systems and the distinct sub-cultural attitudes and approaches evident in these systems also has implications for policy and practice development. A key study finding was the lack of uniformity in staff conceptions of alcohol issues, identified as correlating with personal exposure to negative outcomes and shaping conceptions of what may constitute effective and appropriate responses. This is highly significant in considering which staff are involved in campus alcohol responses and the conceptions they bring with them into this work. Observed sub-system autonomy of function ensures that staff agency is paramount in university approaches, meaning that individual opinions can have a disproportionate effect where lack of evidence-based practice is the norm. Identification of sub-cultures further suggests limitations for whole-campus schemes promoting joined up strategies towards student health promotion, such as the UK Healthy Universities programme, with implementation potentially undermined by contrasting views of the need to take action. Pre-intervention analysis of the organisational setting, including any evident sub-systems and variations within them, could identify barriers and facilitators to delivery created by these variations. Such analysis should be considered early in the development

stage for interventions in this setting to facilitate assessment of what is feasible at the organisational level, as well as illustrating potential avenues for external partnership working.

Although applied only to alcohol in this research, the organisational analysis described could potentially be used to consider multiple behaviours in any complex, open system to assess influences constraining and facilitating actions ahead of a settings-based health intervention. In a university setting, this could contribute to understanding the intersection of factors influencing and maintaining multiple risk behaviours for student populations, with organisational responses likely to involve many of the same staff and departments as for alcohol. This could potentially facilitate evidence-led, holistic, approaches to student well-being which recognise that multiple risk behaviours are often linked. Although beyond the scope of the current research, evidence indicates that issues such as online gambling (Leyshon and Sakhuja 2013) and risky sexual behaviour (Connor et al. 2013) frequently co-exist with alcohol use in student populations, suggesting a rationale for more joined up approaches. Further research is recommended, utilising the organisational analysis approach described, to explore this further.

Strengthening the evidence base on local impacts of alcohol use and ensuring communication of this across the setting may also aid in facilitating effective campus-based approaches. As stated, evidence-based moderation interventions are not widely practiced, with lack of routine data collection as well as reluctance from some staff to fully engage in the scale of issues caused by alcohol use. This acts to limit local and organisational responses as well as evaluation of existing university moderation approaches. The development of a standardised framework for the recording of alcohol-related incidents within routine practice in universities could aid in understanding alcohol impacts, thus informing processes as well as highlighting gaps in policy and provision. This would further provide a data framework for cost-effective evaluations of the implementation of new prevention interventions tested in university settings.

8.4 Reflections on the study design

This study adopted an instrumental case study approach, which acknowledges the complexity and unique configuration of the setting while still recognising its capacity to illuminate the research problem (Stake 1995). Although lack of

generalisability to other settings is commonly cited as a limitation in case research, it is argued that a single case must first be able to stand alone as an illustration of the phenomena under investigation (Easton 2010), necessitating understanding of levels of complexity evident in the case. A single case study underpinned by Critical Realism facilitates inclusive understanding of organisational processes through the layered social ontology inherent in the position (Reed 1997). This was reflected in the multi-level case study approach utilised (Yin 1989), which proved effective in incorporating multiple perspectives and factors of influence (Merriam 1988) and in unpicking the complexity evident in the setting (Easton 2010), providing rich data for theorising observed behaviours and interactions. This stand-alone quality further recognises that the student experience of starting university, although sharing some similarities with others at different sites, is impacted by distinct contextual features acting to constrain and enable behavioural outcomes.

Crowe et al. (2011) suggest that a potential pitfall of case study research relates to difficulties in defining the boundaries of the case, arguing that this can be minimised through a relational approach which is clear on what lies outside the scope of the investigation. Here, boundaries were drawn as a pragmatic research tool (Merriam 1998), with inclusion criteria focussed primarily on incorporating data that could contribute to an understanding of student drinking. The emphasis on understanding social processes in context through stakeholder perspectives favoured qualitative approaches (Gilbert 1990), leading to the primary data collection strategy of semi-structured interviews with staff and students. These incorporated key theoretical findings identified in review of the literature but also permitted exploration of emergent areas of importance to participants (Layder et al. 1991), aided by separation of the student and institutional systems described earlier. Interviews were accompanied by consideration of relevant university and wider policy documents as well as observations of alcohol-related activities on and around campus.

The incorporation of staff perspectives ensured the inclusion of micro-level analysis frequently absent from both organisational studies (Webb 2006) and from research on student alcohol use which predominantly situates it as an issue located with the individual student. In organisational analysis it is argued that theoretically-driven sampling minimises the risk of lack of rigour in case studies (Crowe et al. 2011), with institutional system sampling here guided by the IAD

framework (Ostrom 2005) previously referenced. This ensured access to interviewees from different levels of the organisation to capture higher process development and day-to-day practice, further refined through my own personal experience as well as reference to charts of organisational structure. This approach was well-supported, with staff responding favourably to being given the chance to discuss their role and own conceptions of this issue and data suggesting that many felt unable to do this within the communication structures of the university. My own understanding of university processes was also helpful in rapport building, with staff frequently using abbreviations, references to practice etc. on the assumed understanding that I did not need explanation, with this insider status (Adler and Adler 1987) contributing to the richness of data obtained. The flexibility of the semi-structured interview method further supported this richness, prompting identification of significant factors beyond formal job role information, including the intersection of role performance with personal biography and experiences.

Despite the depth of data acquired from staff interviews, limitations of the sampling approach can be identified. Although sampling was effective in capturing key personnel from relevant departments, full analysis would have been supplemented by sampling from the most senior levels of the university structure, including those with less obvious involvement in alcohol issues, to assess their understanding of how alcohol was dealt with as well as drivers behind the devolution of powers to act. Interpretation of this in relation to identified sub-cultural divisions may have added to understanding of the development of current practices.

While effective in capturing the drivers for policy and practice development on alcohol across the organisation, the approach was also limited in identification of people external to the university who could have contributed to understanding. Consultation with a broader pool of stakeholders from multiple ecological levels either impacting or impacted by student drinking, such as local authority policy makers, retailers etc., would have contributed to socio-ecological analysis. Capacity to action this was limited by time constraints, with the significance of external personnel often only understood after staff interviews where key partners were discussed. Further research aimed at understanding conceptions of the alcohol impact of the organisation as a whole, including local negative

outcomes, economic benefits, community relations etc. would aid in developing a full socio-ecological framework of student alcohol use.

In relation to investigating the student system, sampling was based on findings highlighting the importance of new peer relations to students moving into university accommodation (Buote et al. 2007). This selection was strongly supported in thesis findings emphasising pre-arrival concerns of participants, suggesting potential generalisability of this issue across student populations. Although data indicates that the halls setting is significant in both peer relations and patterns of alcohol consumption, the specificity of issues associated with first year transition into halls living would be further illuminated by research into the transition of second year students into the community. Understanding the impact of this on alcohol use and friendship processes would aid in the development of more accurately targeted intervention practices for specific student groups.

Further research is also recommended to understand the role of alcohol in the experience of students who stay in the family home, particularly in light of a recent rise in these numbers in the UK (HESA 2015). Findings in this thesis indicate a positive benefit to social group development for those living in halls, including utilisation of pre-drinking invitations to broaden social networks and overcome geographic barriers of halls structure. As study findings suggest potential exclusion from social opportunities for those not conforming to normative presentations of student life, further investigation into use of alcohol in network development for those outside this setting would add to current understanding.

Timing of data collection was a factor largely determined by context, with the structure of the academic calendar ensuring that terms are relatively short. Guidance from staff relating to their perceptions of a student 'settling in' period necessitated interview completion after the initial process of adaptation, but without activity in the third term, which is often associated with lower attendance during the exam and assessment period. The richness of data obtained suggests that timing was successful, with events recalled readily by students who frequently appeared to enjoy the opportunity to reflect on their experience. This time pressure, however, meant that data analysis was not always done immediately after interview which, although not impacting on quality of data, may have limited exploration of emerging issues. One such line of questioning was student awareness of moderation practices such as the Safety Bus service, which was not initially explored in questions relating to general understanding of

university alcohol practices. As one of the primary harm reduction efforts of the Student Union, it may have been valuable to more thoroughly establish student awareness and opinions of the service, to supplement observational analysis and as an assessment of levels of penetration of the service.

It was anticipated that student recollections of alcohol use and initial transition to university life would be aided by the use of visual elicitation techniques previously described. This was well-supported by a research literature highlighting the role of visual tools as a means to enhance the depth of the qualitative interview (Harper 2002), providing a point of focus other than the interviewer and challenging the potential power differential between researcher and participant (Collier and Collier 1992). After initially utilising visual prompts within interviews, it was quickly established that no significant benefit was gained from this and that the process of identifying visual aids instead acted as a barrier to the rapport-building process. Selection of images was left to student participants to maximise feelings of control and to avoid any potential ethical concerns over invasion of private space (Crilly et al. 2006). Although ethically favourable, this meant that the time required during interview to select images acted as a barrier to the flow of the session. On reflection, my selection of visual elicitation may have been prompted by some insecurity as an early-career researcher over my own capacity to successfully carry out interviews. This proved unfounded, with rapport readily developed and students generally happy to reflect on their early experiences, as evidenced by the depth of data obtained. It is further likely that the relatively recent nature of these experiences acted to negate the need for additional prompting.

As well as utilising interviews in the study design, document analysis was undertaken to examine formal guides to practice which may have contributed to the routinisation of university alcohol processes. Reflecting the Critical Realist ontology underpinning the thesis, the research as planned differed from the reality, constituting a distinct process within the study. Document analysis was more limited than anticipated prior to commencement due to limited formalisation of practices, meaning little source material to draw on. Where internal documents, such as disciplinary guidance, were referenced during interviews as impacting on practice these were then assessed however, as most practice was departmentally developed and often based on shared understanding rather than any formalised process, this was not a rich source of data. The

inclusion of national-level policy and guidance, although rarely cited by participants, reflected attempts to gain an ecological understanding of the operating context for universities and, as such, is considered a valid inclusion.

Research indicates that alcohol policy utilisation is sporadic across HEI's (Snow et al. 2003), with little evaluation of the impact of this on practice. In light of data illustrating staff reservations about the appropriateness and enforceability of a specific alcohol policy, further investigation could establish whether this was a worthy avenue for development. Comparative research on alcohol outcomes and practices at HEI's with and without student alcohol policies could provide insight into the potential efficacy of policy implementation as an intervention approach.

The research design further incorporated observations of practices on site, each of which were conducted on a single occasion, potentially limiting the range of data obtained. In relation to the observation of Freshers practices, a single visit was arguably sufficient due to the time-limited, annual nature of the event and it is reasonable to suggest that levels of alcohol promotion observed were a fair reflection of this brief period. Perceived intensity of this activity was corroborated during interviews, suggesting the value of the observation for contributing to data triangulation. The single-visit limitation was arguably more impactful in considering data obtained from the Safety Bus observation. In response to staff and student accounts of the changing nature of drinking patterns across the academic year, this would have benefitted from repeated visits at multiple time points to assess variations in issues faced and responses from students, further allowing for assessment of the attitudes and experiences of other volunteer teams.

8.5 Policy and practice implications of findings

This study highlighted the complex interaction of multi-level influences acting on both students and the university, contributing to the development and maintenance of current high levels of alcohol use observed in this population. The implications of findings for policy and practice are now considered.

The study began with an examination of the research literature on student alcohol use and identified that UK student drinking occurs within a wider cultural context of heavy consumption among young adults. The range of personal and societal impacts caused by excess alcohol use in this group has resulted in a significant policy focus (Gill 2002) based on problematisation of consumption. Although

national policy aimed at reducing consumption in student populations was identified in this research, findings showed limited permeation of this into university policy and practice, both in whole organisations and in observed sub-systems, suggesting limited translation of policy aims into actions at lower ecological levels. As stated, current alcohol policy is heavily weighted towards tackling the public impacts of drunkenness through regulation of spaces for drinking, primarily within the night time economy (Measham and Brain 2005; Measham 2006). Although NTE settings, such as bars and Student Unions, are locations of much social activity in student populations, this study supports evidence (Valentine et al. 2007) illustrating that they are not the main locations of alcohol consumption, with home drinking prevalent before attendance at other venues. This suggests limitations of current regulatory policy approaches focussed on moderating consumption in on-sales venues with the aim of addressing public behaviour.

This was further illustrated within organisational analysis of university practices, which identified staff awareness of macro-level drivers for alcohol use and the economic benefits to both on and off-sales retailers. Both staff and students characterise cheap off-sales and aggressive marketing as key drivers for consumption, evident in the frequency of pre-drinking reported in Residences and illustrating the intersection of national economic with local issues. Policy aimed at tackling the public results of drunkenness through focus on the NTE alone is therefore likely to have limited effect without concomitant strategies aimed at reducing overall consumption levels through off-sales. High levels of home consumption observed, including high-risk drinking practices, suggest that macro-level interventions such as minimum unit pricing (MUP) may have benefits in a university setting where heavy home drinking is normalised and where there is limited desire for change. MUP is currently under consultation in Wales and, if introduced, further research should be carried out to monitor the impact on student consumption in halls utilising routine incident data as well as self-reported alcohol use.

Current national policy on student alcohol use, although limited, argues that universities should do more to promote sensible drinking levels (HM Government 2012), locating student consumption as a problem primarily related to university settings. This not only overstates the capacity of universities to act, it decontextualises the issue from wider social and cultural contexts for youth

drinking which do not recognise moderation as the norm. The process of pre-institutionalisation identified in this study illustrates wider cultural and interpersonal contributions to pre-arrival conceptions of student identity and heavy drinking, with high levels of acceptance of these identity portrayals within the setting. Although there are a limited number of light and non-drinkers in this research, their expectations of the positioning of alcohol in generic 'student' life were broadly the same, illustrating the strength of normative presentations. As we have seen, post-arrival processes and the immediate dominance of the social aspects of student life, mean pre-institutionalised expectations are then confirmed through contextual norms, meaning later challenges from the university would be incongruous with observed behaviours. The study has contributed to understanding of how student agency in drinking decisions is evident prior to arrival, through pre-planned social activity and the expectation that bonding will utilise alcohol. Through the application of temporality, we have observed how student associations of alcohol and identity were developed across the whole timeframe of this transition, through processes of pre-institutionalisation. This suggests that policy aimed at addressing student drinking must consider the transition to student status as an elongated process occurring within a wider cultural context that locates alcohol centrally in student life, suggesting that challenges to these cultural presentations may be required earlier than arrival on campus. The role of pre-arrival factors and macro-economic processes illustrates key limitations in responses from HEI's who lack the capacity and, often the willingness, to intervene in these areas, suggesting that current policy approaches encouraging the promotion of 'sensible' drinking by universities are likely to have severely limited outcomes.

Study findings further added to understanding of how multiple aspects of the university setting reflect this acceptance of student drinking as a normal part of the university experience. Organisational practice was significant in the development and maintenance of drinking behaviour, through campus features which act to ensure an enabling environment (Thombs et al. 2009; Ward and Gryczynski 2009) viewed as permissive of heavy drinking by students. This was strongly reinforced in the current research, leading the organisation to be characterised as an intoxicogenic space (Seaman et al. 2013) where heavy consumption is normalised and expression is facilitated within specific sub-systems. It was further evident that, where university moderating strategies were identified, student awareness of them was limited, illustrating little evident

challenge to normative presentations of alcohol observed in university activities. Although universities are constrained in tackling student alcohol use, current processes contribute to the reinforcement of alcohol use through the segmentation of social and academic activities immediately after arrival. Should universities wish to effect more challenge to current consumption patterns, these organisational processes should be considered. Construction of the Freshers period ensures that alcohol and sociability are strongly associated at the commencement of university life, with little organisational challenge to this. In light of study findings illustrating high levels of pre-arrival anxiety in students and the associated use of alcohol as a means to reduce this, the construction of the period that students are first exposed to is significant. University approaches to the design of Freshers could take into account study findings illustrating utilisation of alcohol as an anxiety-reduction technique and consider additional contributions at transition that facilitate opportunities to meet wider peer networks in settings less strongly associated with drinking, potentially through challenging the separation of academic and social activities. If implemented, potential benefits to students who do not conform to alcohol dominant stereotypes and who were identified as finding social adaptation more challenging, should be further investigated.

Although potentially beneficial, this restructuring is likely to face challenges to implementation due to several factors. Firstly, it can be reasonably expected that aiming to reduce the alcohol associations with Freshers will be resisted by Student Unions who benefit from current high levels of consumption. In a marketised system alternative financial models for Student Unions are necessary in order to secure acceptance of potentially reduced sales. Secondly, wider cultural associations between alcohol and Freshers are internalised prior to student arrival, meaning that any institution reducing its alcohol offering is likely to observe students instead attending local retailers off-campus who have no incentive to limit the aggressive marketing currently in evidence. Furthermore, in light of findings on staff concerns over institutional reputation as a tool in recruitment, varying the programme from pre-arrival expectations of Freshers held by students can be interpreted as a bigger risk to recruitment than occasional negative media portrayals associated with excess drinking, illustrating little incentive for HEI's to amend existing practices.

In considering the role of universities in intervention and moderation of student drinking, this study contributes to the necessary debate on the nature and scope of potential activity. We have seen that the problematisation evident in policy approaches fails to recognise the social motivations underpinning consumption in peer groups and the associated positive outcomes of this during transition to university. Findings reflect evidence indicating that young drinkers conceive of drunkenness as highly significant in sociability (Griffin et al. 2009), with drinking together considered as important in the development of peer group bonds (Seaman and Ikegwonu 2010; Read et al. 2002). It was here evident that the social benefits of drinking were valued by participants who drank, with alcohol recognised as aiding in overcoming the pressures associated with transition to student status (Raffo and Reeves 2000; Buote et al. 2007). This research has added to understanding of the role of agency in drinking decisions through illustrating alcohol as a tool, actively selected by students as agents, to speed up the bonding process during a period where rapid acquisition of peer networks is advantageous to adaptation.

This research clearly illustrates that student and staff narratives of drinking do not reflect the problematised discourse evident in public health policy responses and agendas based on promotion of moderation as a desired outcome. In light of stakeholders conceptions of positive benefits, as well as limited impacts of policy in this population and little appetite at national policy level to use potential broader levers of change such as minimum unit pricing, alternative approaches should be considered. It is valid to suggest that a more realistic policy and intervention focus with this population would involve acceptance of the utilisation of alcohol in this young adult population, with focus instead on reduction of alcohol-related harm.

It has been argued that, philosophically, policy approaches to alcohol have one of two aims: reducing the total amount of alcohol in society or reducing the harms associated with certain types of drinking such as bingeing (Room 1992). Where these aims are not articulated clearly in policy and programme descriptions, interpretation of impact is problematic e.g. in the classification of a short term harm reduction outcome as unsuccessful if it doesn't show long-term cultural change. Further, an explicit harm reduction rationale has often met with objections based on elevation of abstinence as the superior long term outcome (Logan and Marlatt 2010), which is problematic in UK culture where alcohol is

strongly associated with drunkenness and, specifically in student populations where the majority see no cause for concern in their drinking. Logan and Marlatt (2010) argue that focus on harm reduction approaches would involve re-defining success e.g. aiming for reduced negative outcomes rather than reduced drinking. Focussed activity aimed at reducing alcohol harms during the Freshers period, or the whole first year, would reflect understanding of the potential vulnerability of new students who are dislocated from previous support networks. As discussed in Chapter 2, harm reduction interventions often show short term outcomes but no longer term reductions but it is arguable that this still constitutes an acceptable outcome in the current study population with their time-limited student status. This change of focus would still be feasible in a context where multi-level influences act to facilitate an environment which supports heavy consumption, recognising that the impact of moderation-led policies are limited by their contrast with economic aims. We have seen that, nationally, these favour limited market regulation and the redevelopment of local areas through provision of more venues for consumption (Jayne et al. 2006; Bell 2005), as well as being reflected here in the conflicting roles of the SU as both dependent on alcohol sales and widely expected to promote moderation.

It is evident that alcohol awareness practices aimed at limiting consumption, specifically in individualised behaviour change strategies emphasising a choice to adopt 'sensible' drinking, contrast with participant understandings of the embedded position of alcohol within broader cultural conceptions of student behaviour. This understanding reflects culturally-sanctioned presentations of student drinking as expected and as constituting a rite of passage during this life-stage, with little evidence to suggest desire to change current behaviour among students. As such, promotion of individual-level moderation can be expected to have little effect in a university setting. Although limited, alcohol awareness work during Freshers was observed to be directly contradicted by environmental norms promoting heavy alcohol use. Messaging targeting individual behaviour change is of limited effect when contradicted by environmental influences (AMA 2002), suggesting potential requirement for a package of interventions targeting different socio-ecological levels and delivered with multiple partners with the aim of reducing alcohol-related harm.

This study illustrated a preference for harm reduction over interventionist approaches from a majority of participants, including rejection of the type of

alcohol education experienced throughout compulsory education. Findings suggest potential avenues for trialling harm reduction interventions in universities. Exploration of the delivery of Brief Alcohol Interventions is recommended, drawing on findings of potential teachable moments, such as when a student presents to the health centre after an alcohol-related incident, or after an incident in halls or SU where the student is called in for a sanction. This would reflect much US research on alcohol brief interventions, where sanctions for alcohol-related behaviour are utilised as potential moments of increased motivation (Borsari and Carey 2005; Barnett et al. 2004).

Harm reduction interventions for this population should reflect the dispersed practice of student drinking, through engagement with the locale. Recognition of the embedded nature of student drinking in local areas is not always evident in intervention approaches, such as the current UK Alcohol Impact trial being jointly run by NUS and the Home Office. This includes various measures strongly focussed on SU practices, such as targeting selling to drunk patrons and bar server training in the SU. Although potentially valuable as harm reduction approaches, the limited focus would benefit from expansion to town venues, delivered in partnership with local authorities with delivery emphasis during Freshers. Such a joined up, consistent approach would be more reflective of the observed dispersal of student alcohol use. As well as enforcing the same selling standards as in SU's, potential roles for local partners in harm management could include consideration of alcohol licensing processes in areas with high levels of reported negative outcomes, as well as a potential ban on multi-buy deals as implemented in Scotland to challenge home drinking practices (Chick 2012). This may be pertinent to the strong pre-drinking processes observed here and the associated increased in negative consequences at follow-on venues previously discussed.

8.6 Conclusion and recommendations

8.6.1 Recommended approaches to the study of university settings

In this thesis, influences on the university context were interpreted with reference to the socio-ecological framework (McLeroy et al. 1988), incorporating consideration of multi-level factors acting on the institution. Many of the issues identified in review of the literature emerged naturally during staff reflections on practice, illustrating the utility and applicability of the framework for the study of this issue.

Interpretation of the action of multi-level influences drew on structure/agency approaches, specifically in considering isomorphism in university profiles. Understanding drivers for university practice through identification of coercive isomorphic processes facilitated analysis of the capacity to act otherwise as an organisation. This was coupled with consideration of internal function, which identified sub-cultures as significant in shaping the operating context for bounded agents to construct responses to alcohol issues, successfully illustrating constraints and facilitators to action. The theoretical and methodological framework adopted supported detailed understanding of the development of alcohol policy and practice in the setting, resulting in a generalisable process that retains the capacity to recognise unique features of the context. It is recommended that this approach be operationalised to develop a framework for organisational analysis of university settings, which can underpin the development and implementation of university approaches to student well-being.

8.6.2 Recommended approaches to student drinking

By drawing on the socio-ecological framework, this thesis has illustrated that student alcohol use cannot be approached as a problem located solely within higher education settings, but instead should be understood as embedded in wider cultural frameworks of youth consumption and the young adult life-stage. Utilisation of a socio-ecological approach incorporating temporal analysis has illustrated that students are pre-institutionalised into alcohol norms, illustrating that challenges to these norms attempted after arrival may have limited success. It is established that delaying onset of alcohol use reduces alcohol related harms (Johnston et al. 2007), suggesting that focusing on evidence-based approaches to this at an earlier age may have a positive impact on later harms in student populations. Longitudinal socio-ecological analysis could aid identification of the changing influences on alcohol conceptions throughout the youth to young adult transition to more effectively identify potential intervention points.

A temporal socio-ecological analysis could further be utilised to consider the development of multiple risk behaviours in student populations and associations with the new setting. This may be effective in highlighting influences on co-existing behaviours, such as drinking with high risk sexual activity or gambling. Longitudinal research over the pre and post-arrival period can enhance identification of factors contributing to the development and maintenance of

these behaviours and facilitate the development of more holistic approaches to reducing harms in student populations.

As we have seen, policy on alcohol use is predominantly focussed on either the location of outward expressions of drunkenness, e.g. in night-time economy settings, or on recommendations for the promotion of sensible consumption, such as that directed at universities. Neither of these decontextualised strategies reflects the complex intersection of factors underpinning student drinking, including the pre-institutionalised normalisation of heavy consumption as well as the predominance of home drinking in this population. It is therefore argued that, if policy approaches to student drinking are to be effective, they must operate across multiple ecological levels, with macro-level levers such as pricing controls implemented in conjunction with local regulatory strategies and organisational responses focussed on reducing harms.

Although constrained in their capacity to act, universities can be viewed as contributors to the maintenance of intoxicogenic drinking spaces (Seaman et al. 2013) and should consider their approach to alcohol policy and practice. This study has shown that high levels of pre-arrival anxiety experienced by new students contributes to the active utilisation of alcohol as a means of enhancing peer bonding, which is readily facilitated by the immediate institutional environment. It is therefore suggested that university approaches to transition, including the construction of post-arrival processes, are examined in light of this finding. Challenges to the homogeneity of student social behaviour and presentations of alternative means to attain goals of adaptation are recommended.

In conclusion, the complex intersection of external and internal factors contributing to the development and maintenance of student drinking suggest that policy-led change would require a multi-level, multi-agency response, incorporating national and local authorities, as well as universities and retailers. Limitations have been identified in current national government approaches encouraging universities to adopt ineffectual education-based strategies which aim to promote the adoption of sensible drinking levels by individual students, contrasting with pre-institutionalised expectations and local situated alcohol norms. In common with policies aimed at practices in NTE settings which characterise the NTE as the location of both the problem and the solution to excess drinking, such decontextualised approaches to university practice are likely

to lead to limited change. As little support exists for more interventionist approaches aimed at reducing consumption, contrasted with high levels of acceptability in both staff and student populations for harm reduction approaches, these are recommended. Wherever intervention is attempted, it is essential when developing any strategies aimed at tackling alcohol in higher education to focus on realistic, evidence-based approaches which clearly articulate aims and objectives and are supported by robust evaluation of outcomes.

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Appendix 1 - Glossary of key terms

Agentic response: a term applied by Scanlon et al. (2007) to describe the active expression of agency evident in student attempts to develop new friendships after arrival in the university setting, as differentiated from passive receipt of the constraints of the situation.

Agency: This thesis draws on Giddens (1984) definition of agency which characterises it as the capacity of the agent to act otherwise in a given situation.

AMOSHHE: Name for The Student Services Organisation, which is a non-profit membership organisation acting to support and advise managers of student services provision in UK Higher Education settings. It is a membership organisation working with publicly-funded HEI's (below), to provide training and practice sharing opportunities.

ASRA: The Association for Student Residential Accommodation, which acts as a network for residential staff in higher education to provide information and support and to represent member interests.

Binge-drinking: pattern of alcohol consumption defined in the UK as drinking more than twice recommended daily amounts in one sitting, equivalent to 8 units for men and 6 for women.

Bounded Agency: A concept developed by Evans (2007) to describe the capacity for expression of agency as influenced by the previous experiences on which the agent draws to guide actions. Agency is further impacted by the contextual constraints and enablers surrounding the agent, constituting their social situation, which further act to influence decisions and actions.

Critical Realism: Primarily associated with Bhaskar (1975), Critical Realism is a philosophy of science rooted in Kantian Transcendentalism, which argues that what we see in the world is filtered through who we are, meaning objective representation is unachievable. Ontologically it argues that there is an external world which can be considered real, but that our understanding of it is mediated by our perceptions and is therefore an interpretation, thus bridging the realist/interpretivist divide in social theory. The position argues that, through empirical study, it is possible to establish the generative mechanism underlying observed actions within open social systems.

Cultural systems approach: This approach to organisational theory suggest that complex organisations are comprised of sub-systems which, through autonomous working practices, develop their own internal cultures as a result of staff biographies and expression of agency. These sub-cultures then shape the practices within the sub-system and are transmitted to new members through routinised practices.

Culture of intoxication: This phrasing was developed to describe UK alcohol culture, which normalises drunkenness over moderate consumption of alcohol, particularly within the young adult life-stage.

Drinkaware: An independent charity funded by key stakeholders in the UK alcohol industry, which aims to reduce alcohol-related harms through provision of resources, evidence-based information and advice.

Emerging Adulthood: A phase of life described by Arnett (2000), as the period between adolescence and full adulthood. It is characterised by lack of adherence to the traditional markers of full adulthood, with opportunities for self-discovery and exploration as well as identity formation.

Epistemological fallacy: refers to the observed tendency in the Late Modern Age (below) to minimise the impact of structure on individual action and to overstate the significance of, and capacity, for agency. Underpinned by individualism and the conception that individual skills and efforts are solely responsible for outcomes.

Experiential Learning: within the thesis this draws on the work of Kolb (1984) where experiential learning is defined as the process of learning through reflection on doing, with new insights gained then applied to novel situations.

Freshers: Refers to the period colloquially known in the UK as 'Freshers Week', which signifies a period of welcome activities for new arrivals at university, commonly associated with high levels of alcohol consumption. The term **Freshers** is also often used to describe first-year students.

Group norm: Refers to the, often unwritten and informal, standards of behaviour present in all social groups, which members draw on to guide behaviour within the group context. These vary between social groups and members will often vary behaviour as they shift occupancy of different settings.

Halls of residence: The standard residential configuration found in UK universities, comprised of multiple flats within larger houses constituting halls and generally occupied by first years, although a few dormitory structure halls still remain. Halls of residence are predominantly owned and operated by universities directly although there has been a recent growth in the operation of halls run by private providers, which are open to non-first year students.

Health determinants: Defined by the World Health Organisation as the complex interaction of factors combining to impact the health of individuals and communities. These factors can be social, physical, environmental, economic and individual and often operate beyond the control of the person affected.

Healthy Universities UK: This is a national network aimed at facilitating HEI's in adopting a whole campus approach to student health and well-being. It is a membership organisation providing guidance and resources to university staff.

HEI: Higher Education Institution (Tertiary level) referring to UK universities

Homogeneity: The quality or degree of sameness identified, in this case within social groups.

Institutionalisation: The dynamic process of acquiring the norms and behaviours embedded in an institution, which are then reproduced and embedded through repeated practice.

Institutional system: From Jamal et al. (2013), who described educational settings as comprised of two systems: the institutional and the student. The institutional system refers to processes and structures impacting and impacted by staff.

Intoxogenic drinking space: A concept drawn from Seaman et al. (2013) to refer to an environment in which multiple factors intersect to normalise and reproduce heavy drinking behaviour, including policy approaches to pricing and availability levers, as well as acceptance through local cultural norms. This environment may be societal, local or organisational.

Isomorphism: refers to the degree to which organisations operating in the same field and providing the same services will resemble each other in terms of structure and activity.

Knowledgeability: A concept described by Giddens, detailing the result of the reflexive monitoring undertaken by active agents to understand how to act in a given situation. Agent knowledgeability is evidenced as understanding of rules guiding and constraining action, including normative standards of behaviour and the enactment of roles.

Late modern age: A characterisation of the current era, whereby modernity gives way to late modernity, underpinned by rapid technological and social shifts and the reduction in influence of traditional social institutions, such as family and community. The period is lived a more transient and lacking in clear guidance on how to 'be', leading to enhanced requirement for reflexivity among agents.

Life-course approach: Refers to a multi-disciplinary approach to studying impacts on people's lives over time to understand the effect of key events and the social and cultural contexts they occur in. The approach suggests that health will be differentially impacted across the life-span by socially defined events and roles, as well as variations in the wider context experienced by the individual.

Liminality: refers to a transitional period of life, such as that occupied by students, whereby they are conceptualised as neither full adults nor as adolescents, but instead are deemed as being in an in-between status. This has been utilised to describe the whole experience of university, where full adult roles are delayed by the uniquely constructed environment (Banister and Piacentini 2008).

Marketisation: Refers to the exposure of an industry or sector to a market forces model. Within education, this involves reduction of state subsidy and the replacement of central funding with a competition-based approach, focussed on customer choice of services.

National Union of Students (NUS): A voluntary membership organisation for Student Unions in the UK, which campaigns of a range of social and political issues including rights of students within higher and further education. Also operates as a purchasing consortium for alcohol and food, with resulting purchasing power allowing Student Unions to sell at reduced rates.

Night-time economy (NTE): Although no standard definition exists, the phrase is commonly used to refer to evening and weekend retail practices in town and city centres, focussed on entertainment services including bars, clubs, restaurants etc.

Reflecting the centrality of alcohol use to the NTE, most regions in the UK operate NTE strategies aimed at reducing crime and disorder associated with excess consumption in town centres.

Open systems approach: In organisational theory approaches, an open system is one which has loosely defined boundaries but is permeable to external influences and is constantly engaged in an information-exchange process with other systems. This contrasts with non-permeable closed systems which, arguably, are not found in the social world.

Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion: refers to an international agreement on a series of actions to promote health, to be taken at supranational, national and local government levels. This charter acknowledged a broad range of health determinants as significant in impacting health outcomes, including environmental conditions, social relations, economic structures and personal skills, signifying a move away from illness-based approaches to health care.

Peer group: Refers to a group of people of approximately the same age and status who share interests. The phrase alone does not indicate degree of closeness of a peer group, for example in referring to all students in a cohort as peers, despite limited contact with each other, however it is commonly utilised to refer to an immediate friendship group.

Pre-drinking: The practice of drinking alcohol at own or others home prior to attending other night-time economy venues. This is commonly identified in student populations.

Pre-institutionalisation: refers to the period prior to arrival at university for new students, during which norms and attitudes towards student alcohol use are formed as a result of multi-level influences, including wider culture and interpersonal relationships. This acts to reinforce and reproduce stereotypical presentations of the relationships between students and heavy drinking.

Public university: Refers to HEI's funded predominantly by central taxation through national government.

Reflexive self: Refers to an agent who actively considers their identity through self-reflection, which in turn provides feedback which is incorporated into future presentation of self, creating a reflexivity loop.

Sociability: Drawn here from Griffin et al (2009) to refer to the cultural association commonly identified in young adult populations in the UK between alcohol and social activity. This predominantly manifests as an association between drunkenness and more satisfying social interaction within peer groups.

Social Identity Theory: A social theory developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979), arguing that our sense of self-worth and esteem is strongly associated with the groups of which we are members. These in-groups are highly beneficial to psychological well-being, leading members to strive to maintain group association and integration, even where membership may be associated with health harms, such as in heavy drinking peer groups.

Socio-ecological framework: This is a framework developed with the aim of mapping and understanding interactions between a range of factors that impact health outcomes. The framework exists in multiple forms, with some variation in composition, but all versions broadly encompass wider national and supranational influences impacting whole societies and groups, through to intrapersonal factors such as individual biology and psychology.

Structuration theory: a social theory developed by Giddens (1984) which describes the development and maintenance of social systems as constituted through the interaction of agent and structure, with giving primacy to either. The central theoretical point is that of the duality of structure, defined as:

...the essential recursiveness of social life, as constituted in social practices: structure is both medium and outcome of reproduction of practices. Structure enters simultaneously into the constitution of the agent and social practices, and 'exists' in the generating moments of this constitution. (p.5)

Structure: see above

Student Room: A web-based forum for students to discuss issues relevant to student life, university experiences etc. through open forums. The site also provides advice and information for students on a range of topics, including health, employment safety and more.

Student Safety Partnership: (Can also be referred to as Student and Community Safety Partnership, Student Community Partnership). Refers to joint task forces set up between local statutory services (local authority, police, health) with

universities in order to develop cohesive approaches to student health and safety. Remits generally include crime prevention and alcohol and drug awareness.

Student system: From Jamal et al. (2013), who described educational settings as comprised of two systems: the institutional and the student. The student system refers to processes and structures impacting and impacted by students and their peers.

Student Union: Student led organisations providing a range of services for students, who constitute their members. Services include advocacy in academic affairs, provision of social spaces, support and advice services and sports and social societies. Although not all Student Unions provide clubs and bars, they are still the predominant on-campus alcohol retailer within the UK higher education system.

Sub-systems: Drawn from organisational theory approaches, which identify that complex organisations are necessarily constructed through sub-systems, each with responsibility for key tasks that contribute to the overall continuation of the organisation. These sub-systems may have varying degrees of autonomy in determining working practices. In universities, these are observed as a broad range of departments, including residential services, academic schools, well-being services etc.

Temporality: Refers to the intrinsic property of the object, in which it exists over time in past, present and future states.

Transition: Refers to the act of changing from one state or condition to another. It can occur over a non-specified period of time as either a singular event or an elongated process.

Appendix 2 Literature review search strategy

The literature drawn on for chapter 2 of this thesis was utilised to provide an insight into key risk factors for the development and maintenance of student alcohol use and to understand some of the limitations inherent in current moderation approaches. This was not a systematic review but was used primarily to inform the research questions and subsequent design.

A range of relevant databases and search engines were explored to access materials including: Cardiff University Voyager Library Catalogue; PubMed; Ovid; CINAHL; Google Scholar. Grey literature was also included in search processes through the OpenGrey search tool, providing access to conference proceedings, doctoral studies and other source material. Broad search terms were initially applied, utilising various combinations of key words including: *alcohol, student, university, college, higher education, drinking*. Further searches were then completed adding to this wording with combinations of more specific terms including: *halls, campus, drinking games, interpersonal, peers, family, transition*.

A vast range of results were returned, including frequent false responses featuring studies of school settings. Further, the dominance of US-based studies was highlighted which, although containing transferable elements, are limited through the differing legal framework around alcohol use applicable to US universities. This led to utilisation of snowballing as the most effective means of narrowing the literature, including using citation frequencies and reference lists from the work of prominent authors in the field, including Wechsler, Griffin, Measham, Jayne, Banister and others. This strategy was significantly more effective on narrowing the focus to tertiary education.

In relation to the second literature chapter of the thesis, material in Chapter 3 was sought to understand and theorise the construction of the university setting after identification of its significance in Chapter 2. This was aimed at a broader understanding of the cultural context of operation as well as applications of organisational theory perspectives which were applicable to this context. This necessitated a different, more theoretically-driven, search with utilisation of specific organisational and education policy sources, including database searches of Emerald Insight and ERIC, as well as accessing political strategies through general internet searches. Due to the more theoretically-driven content of this discussion, snowballing was heavily utilised, with key thinkers in organisational

theory identified from reference lists and texts, including Silverman, Rollinson, Stake and others. This provided understanding of methodological approaches to the study of complex organisations, as well as approaches to locating these organisations in wider political and cultural fields, which were then formative in subsequent development of the research design.

Appendix 3 - consent for interview form (students)

This consent form relates to PhD research being carried out by Rachel Brown, DECIPHer, School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University.

Consent to participate in a research interview.

- I understand that no personal information will be used and that I will not be identified in the data.
- I understand any other individuals that I refer to in the interview will be anonymous and the institution is also anonymised.
- I understand that the interview will be recorded electronically and is expected to last around one hour.
- I am aware that information is available from the researcher on alcohol support services should I feel that this would be helpful.
- I understand that I can refuse to answer any questions that I do not wish to answer.
- I understand that I can withdraw from participation at any stage prior to submission of the thesis and that, if I request it, my information will then be destroyed. The researcher has provided their email address for me to contact them to arrange this, should I wish to do so.
- I understand that I will receive a £10 Amazon voucher for participation
- I have been informed of the purpose of this research and understand that the information I provide will be used as part of a PhD project published as a thesis, and which may be published in a book or journal in the future. Anonymised data will be kept in accordance with Cardiff University regulations, which require that data is retained for no less than five years after collection or at least two years after publication.

Interviewee

Name.....

Signature.....

Date.....

Researcher

Name.....

Signature.....

Date.....

Appendix 4 - Student interview schedule

Interview length: 45-60 mins.

Date:

Location:

Interviewee name:

Job role:

Introduction

Firstly, thanks for agreeing to be interviewed for this project. Just to confirm, your name will not be used in the data. Anyone else you mention, and also the university, will be anonymised. I'd also like to confirm that you're happy for the interview to be recorded. The purpose of this is to ensure accurate transcriptions later on. The recording will be destroyed after transcribing.

Do you have any questions?

I'd like to start by explaining the aims of the project. I'm gathering data in order to try to understand more about how new students use alcohol in the process of making friends and settling in when they arrive at university. I'd also like to know more about your understanding of the way the university deals with a range of alcohol related issues, including policies and practices. The aim of the interview is to gain both your understanding and your opinions on these issues.

Section 1 - Transition

I'd like to start by talking a bit about things before you arrived here at university.

- Why did you choose Cardiff?
- What did you know about it before you arrived? (Explore views of both the university and the city. Where did this information come from?)
- What do you expect from your time here at university? (Academic and social expectations.)
- (If social life is referenced in previous question) Did you read anything about places to go out drinking before you arrived here? (Where did you read this?)

I'd like to talk now about your early experiences at university and how you found it.

- What were you most worried about as a new student? (before starting and in early stages)
- Do you think you arrived at university with any expectations about going drinking? How have they worked out? Has it been the way you expected?
- What did you do to get settled in at university? (initial exploration of activities and peers for potential follow up later)
- How did you find out about places to go?

Section 2 - Peer acquisition

Moving on now, I'd like to talk about your experience of meeting people since you arrived. As I mentioned in the information sheet I gave you before, it would be useful here if we could look at photos that you took of your friends and your nights out when you were first here, to jog your memory of what you were doing and where you went. I won't be using the names of anyone you talk about. Are you happy to do this? It's no problem if you've changed your mind about using photos, we'll carry on without them.

Questions with photos

- Who are you with? (explore closeness of relationships)
- How did you meet those friends? (explore whether drinking was involved)
- Where are you in this? (Explore why this venue, how often attended)
- Discuss drinking as part of the event shown in the image (any participation in Fresher's events)

Questions without photos

- Where did you go to meet people when you first arrived? (how did you know about these places?)
- What did you do together?
- Where do you socialise now? (explore role of alcohol)
- Do you think drinking helped you meet people and make friends? (Why?)
- What events did you take part in during Fresher's? (How did you know about them? Who did you go with?)

Section 3 - Institutional presentation part 1 (practices)

I'd like to move on a bit now to talk about what your awareness of what goes on around campus.

- Do you know where you can buy alcohol on campus? (Have you used these outlets?)
- What alcohol promotions have you seen around the university? (Who by? Where? Did you go to any advertised events?)
- Have you joined any societies? (Why this one? Who with? Explore alcohol within the society).

Section 4 - Institutional presentation part 2 (policies)

Staying with what goes on around campus, I'd like to talk now about what you know about university rules and policies.

- Do you know of any policies that the university has on alcohol? (what is in them? How did you know about them?)
- Do you know of any rules around alcohol in halls of residence? (what are they?)
- Did you read anything about alcohol on the residences website during your induction?
- Where would you go if you wanted any information or advice on alcohol or alcohol issues? (explore awareness of support)

Section 5 - personal reflections

Finally, I'd like to get your views on some general issues that might affect students. There are no right or wrong answers here. I'd just like to know your views based on your own experience.

- What advice on settling in would you give to a new student? (Why? Explore what own unmet needs may have been.)
- What kind of advice on alcohol (if any) do you think new students need?
- Do you think alcohol is a big part of student life? (explore understanding of this, what is meant by student life)

Closure

That's all the questions I have. We've covered a lot of issues and I appreciate your patience but is there anything else you would like to add? Do you have any

questions about the interview or the research as a whole? Please feel free to contact me if you have any queries at a later date. Would you like to see a transcript of the interview?

I'll be sending out a summary of research findings at a later date and you're welcome to have a link to the full project report.

Thanks again for your time and your contribution to the project.

**Are you a first year student living in
University Accommodation?**

**Earn a £10 Amazon voucher for taking
part in a research interview.**

I'm a PhD student conducting research on alcohol use and settling in at University. I'd like to interview you on what it was like to start at University, including how you made friends, and your thoughts and experiences of drinking alcohol as a new student.

Interviews are confidential and will take 45-60 minutes.

You will be emailed a £10 Amazon voucher after the interview as thanks for taking part.

If you're interested in knowing more please email me with your contact details and I'll get in touch



Rachel Brown

Brownr14@cardiff.ac.uk

Appendix 6 - Gatekeeper letter for staff interviews

Rachel Brown
DECIPHer
School of Social Sciences
Cardiff University
1-3 Museum Place
Cardiff
CF10 3BD
Tel: 07503210702
Email: brownr14@cardiff.ac.uk

Date:

Re: PhD Research project

Dear.....

My name is Rachel Brown and I am a PhD student at Cardiff University, researching student alcohol use and peer relationships. This project involves interviewing staff and students to look at alcohol policy and practices, and specifically how alcohol impacts on the way students meet and maintain friendships on arrival at university.

I am looking to interview staff in your department to gain understanding of their knowledge and views on alcohol policy, alcohol use and related issues. Your department has been selected as you are in a key position with regards to this subject, and I am contacting you to seek consent to contact them. Within the data, the university will be anonymised and staff will be informed that participation is voluntary and they can withdraw from the project at any time.

Ethical approval has been gained from the University research ethics board and your department head has consented for me to contact you. Please note that their names will not be reported in the data but the area of

work/department will be included. Interviews will be written up in a PhD thesis and may be published in a journal or book.

I would be happy to provide you with further details of the content of the interviews or to answer any questions you may have before making a decision. I will contact you by telephone in the next week to discuss your decision.

I appreciate you taking the time to consider this.

Kind regards

Rachel Brown

Appendix 7 - Information sheet for staff respondents

Rachel Brown
DECIPHer
School of Social Sciences
Cardiff University
1-3 Museum Place
Cardiff
CF10 3BD
Tel: 07503210702
Email: brownr14@cardiff.ac.uk

Date:

Re: PhD Research project

Dear.....

My name is Rachel Brown and I am a PhD student at Cardiff University, researching student alcohol use and peer relationships. This project involves interviewing staff and students to look at alcohol policy and practices, and specifically how alcohol impacts on the way students meet and maintain friendships on arrival at university. I am aiming to interview staff to gain understanding of the function and context of the university, followed by interviews with new students early in the next academic year.

I am contacting you as your job means are in a key position with regards to this subject and your knowledge would provide valuable information for my research. I am hoping that you would be willing to be interviewed to discuss this further.

Ethical approval has been gained from the University research ethics board and your department head has consented for me to contact you. Please note that your name would not be reported in the data but your area of work will be included. Interviews will be recorded and the data generated will be transcribed. All electronic files will be deleted after transcription and paper

copies will be kept in a locked cabinet, accessible only to myself. Interviews will be written up in a PhD thesis and may be published in a journal or book.

If you are willing to be interviewed or would like further information before deciding, I would be very grateful if you would complete and return the reply slip attached. I will then contact you to discuss this further.

I appreciate you taking the time to consider this.

Kind regards

Rachel Brown

Appendix 8 - Staff interview schedule

Interview schedule - Summer 2013

Interview length: 45-60 mins

Date:

Location:

Interviewee name:

Job role:

Introduction

Firstly, thanks for agreeing to be interviewed for this project. Just to confirm, your name will not be used in the data but your department will be stated. Anyone else you mention will be anonymised. I'd also like to confirm that you're happy for the interview to be recorded. The purpose of this is to ensure accurate transcriptions later on. The recording will be destroyed after transcribing.

Do you have any questions?

I'd like to start by explaining the aims of the project. I'm gathering data in order to try to understand more about how new students use alcohol in the process of making friends when they arrive at university. Part of this involves understanding the way that the university deals with a range of alcohol related issues. The aim of the interview is to gain both your understanding and your opinions on these issues.

Section 1 - Organisational issues 1 (policy)

Question	Expansion
<p>Q1. Firstly, could you tell me a bit about your job role?</p> <p><i>I'd like to go on now to talk about alcohol policy.</i></p>	<p>Contact with first year students. Reporting too? Responsibility for?</p> <p>Where it is, who writes it, applicable to</p>

Q2. What is your understanding of alcohol policy at the university?	staff and students? Do/did you have any contribution?
Q3. Do you see the policy as impacting on your daily work? In what way?	What are the limits of effectiveness for alcohol policy?
Q4. Are students made aware of the university position on alcohol?	How is this communicated? Do you have any role in this?
Q5. Is there anything you think is missing from current policy?	Could you expand on that? Potential impact of this? Who do you think should devise it?

- **Section 2 - Organisational issues 2 (practices)**

Question	Expansion
<i>I'd like to move on to discussing alcohol availability and promotion now.</i>	
Q1. Can you tell me what you know about where alcohol is available on and around campus?	Where? Sold by who?
Q2. What do you know about promotions aimed specifically at students, both on and off campus?	Students favourite venues. Student nights?
Q3. What is your understanding of how decisions are made regarding promotions and sales practices?	External companies. Advertising. Internal committees - membership? Do you sit on any of these? The remit of this? Barriers to effectiveness?
Q4. What do you know about alcohol awareness campaigns at the university?	Who is responsible for these? Frequency? Reach? Limitations? What would you like to see? Who from? Can

<p>Q5. Where can students find advice on alcohol issues?</p>	<p>you make contributions to these?</p> <p>Would you like to see anything else in place?</p>
--	--

- **Section 3 - Social/interpersonal issues 1 (student behaviour)**

Question	Expansion
<p><i>I'd like to talk now about your observations of alcohol use among students.</i></p>	
<p>Q1. Can you describe the kind of alcohol related issues or incidents involving students that you see in your role?</p>	<p>Accidents, breakages, frequency.</p>
<p>Q2. How are these addressed? Who by?</p>	<p>Links to policies, sanctions, enforcement.</p>
<p>Q3. Do you notice any patterns to these, for example, over the academic year?</p>	<p>Days of week, term times. Is there any planning for this e.g. campaign timing?</p>
<p>Q4. Can you describe any patterns to drinking specific to first years students?</p>	<p>Can you expand on that (<i>use where appropriate</i>)</p>
<p>Q5. I'd like to talk about your thoughts on Fresher's, in terms of impact on staff and students.</p>	<p>Who can or should make these?</p>
<p>Q6. What, if any, changes would you like to see At Fresher's? Why?</p>	

--	--

- **Section 4 - Social/interpersonal issues 2 (student peer relationships)**

Question	Expansion
<p><i>I'd like to talk now about your views on student friendship processes.</i></p> <p>Q1. Do you think new students are anxious to meet people? How does this show?</p> <p>Q2. How do staff react to this?</p> <p>Q3. How do you think new students go about making friends?</p> <p>Q4. Does the university help with this? How?</p> <p>Q4. Where are they most likely to meet people to socialise?</p> <p>Q5. Do you think alcohol is involved in this in any way?</p>	<p>Which staff? Roles and responsibilities? Wardens roles? Student union roles?</p> <p>Venues, clubs and societies.</p> <p>Social events, social spaces. Any guidance on arrangement of events, welcome packs etc? Policies on homesickness/mental well-being?</p> <p>Elaborate where applicable</p>

Closure

That's all the questions I have. We've covered a lot of issues and I appreciate your patience but is there anything else you would like to add? Do you have any questions about the interview or the research as a whole? Please feel free to contact me if you have any queries at a later date. Would you like to see a transcript of the interview?

I'll be sending out a summary of research findings at a later date (Spring 2015) and you're welcome to have a link to the full project report.

Thanks again for your time and your contribution to the project.

Appendix 9 - Consent for interview (staff)

This consent form relates to PhD research being carried out by Rachel Brown, DECIPHer, Cardiff University.

Consent to participate in a research interview.

- I have been informed of the purpose of this research and understand that the information I provide will be used as part of a PhD project published as a thesis, and which may be published in a book or journal in the future.
- I understand that no personal information will be used and that I will not be identified in the data.
- I understand any other individuals that I refer to in the interview will be anonymous and the institution is also anonymised.
- I understand that the interview will be recorded electronically and is expected to last around one hour.
- In the event that this interview raises any issues of concern for me, I am aware that information is available from the researcher on alcohol support services should I feel that this would be helpful.
- I understand that I can refuse to answer any questions that I do not wish to answer.
- I understand that I can withdraw from participation at any stage of the research and that, if I request it, my information will then be destroyed.

Interviewee

Name.....

Signature.....

Date.....

Researcher

Name.....

Signature.....

Appendix 10 - Consent for observation

This consent form relates to observed activity, as part of PhD research being carried out by Rachel Brown, DECIPHer, School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University.

- I understand that myself, the institution, and anyone I mention during the activity will not be identified in the data.
- I confirm that I have invited the researcher to accompany me during this activity and that the researcher is acting as a volunteer at this time. The researcher will defer to my decisions and will follow any instructions given during the activity.
- I understand that the researcher may make notes during the activity and also immediately afterwards. I am able to see these notes should I wish to do so.
- I understand that I can withdraw from participation at any stage prior to submission of the thesis and that, if I request it, my information will then be destroyed. The researcher has provided their email address for me to contact them to arrange this, should I wish to do so.
- I confirm that no students encountered during this activity will be identified in written work by the researcher.
- I have been informed of the purpose of this research and understand that the information I provide will be used as part of a PhD project published as a thesis, and which may be published in a book or journal in the future. Anonymised data will be kept in accordance with Cardiff University regulations, which require that data is retained for no less than five years after collection or at least two years after publication.

Participant

Name.....

Signature.....

Date.....

Researcher

Name.....

Signature.....

Appendix 11 - Observation schedule

1. Alcohol promotional activity

Researcher name:

Date of activity:

Time:

Location:

Purpose of visit: to directly observe the promotion of alcohol products and alcohol-related activities in and around university premises.

Observation notes:

Factors to note:

- public or semi-private space
- materials on display (authors, target audience)
- messages contained in them
- alcohol-related special offers on display
- tactics used
- active or passive promotion
- any personnel involved

2. Student Safety Bus

Researcher name:

Date of activity:

Time:

Location:

Purpose of visit: to directly observe the activities of the SU safety patrol

Observation notes:

Factors to note:

- public or semi-private space
- alcohol-related advice or information offered)
- issues observed
- student responses to intervention
- personnel involved (attitudes, own backgrounds, motivation)

Appendix 12 - Coding plan for university documents

(Derived from Rapley 2007)

1. Actors (descriptions of available services and people)
2. Rules governing alcohol activity
3. Omissions and silences e.g. major policy guidance not cited, lack of policy in key areas
4. Who is the text is targeted at?
5. How is text structured and organized? Does it cite evidence? If so, where from and how is it used? Is there any presentation of expertise and who is this aimed at?
6. Are there any obvious biases present or does the text aim for neutrality? What about any stereotypes and preconceptions e.g. of the roles of men or women.
7. Look for assumptions embedded in text.
8. What discourses can be identified from the text, e.g. alcohol as a social problem, alcohol as a disease, alcohol as normal for student identity.

Appendix 13 - Coding plan for student interview data

Codes

Coding types for first round of coding:

- **Descriptive codes** - summarises the primary topic
- **'In Vivo' codes** - quotes from participants
- **Process codes** - word or phrase capturing action
- **Simultaneous coding** - data reflects a broadly similar category but with internal variations you can code it into more than one category simultaneously. For example, when people talk about alcohol policy, that is one category of 'policy views' but the views held may differ and form further coding categories, e.g. 'positive view', 'negative view'.

Themes from theory

Categories related to student alcohol use and peer relationships:

9. Actors (demographics, personal history)
10. Patterns of Interaction (contact with staff, contact with other students, contact with external parties)
11. Physical conditions of the setting (awareness of campus locations including services and social settings, references to local area including bars and retailers)
12. Awareness of rules, subdivided into formal and informal
13. Peer relationships - meeting, maintenance, locations, alcohol use
14. Personal history - prior knowledge and experience of drinking, and of university
15. Transition - impact, process, taking part in university events, role of alcohol
16. Identity construction - positioning of alcohol
17. Tactics for adaptation

Appendix 14 - Coding plan staff interview data

Codes

Coding types for first round of coding:

- **Descriptive codes** - summarises the primary topic
- **'In Vivo' codes** - quotes from participants
- **Process codes** - word or phrase capturing action

Themes

Themes for identification - derived from review of literature

18. Actors (job roles, position within the structure, personal history)
19. Patterns of Interaction (who they work with within and across departments, contact with students, contact with external parties)
20. Physical conditions of the setting (range of activity within campus, cross-campus activity, descriptions of locations, references to local area)
21. Awareness and contribution to rules, subdivided into:
 - Formal rules developed within departments or whole organisation
 - Informal rules and habitual practices: proactive or reactive?
22. Community attributes, subdivided into:
 - Trust - the level of trust between members and expectations of mutual support
 - Reciprocity - mutual co-operation between members
 - Common understanding - shared values and goals
 - Social capital - resources, including social networks, that members can draw on
 - Cultural repertoire - the formal and informal guidance available to members to guide action

Theoretical concepts

Developed in relation to the socio-ecological framework and Structuration theory:

- National-level influences - policy reflections relating to alcohol, student welfare, marketisation
- **No table of contents entries found.**

- Conceptions of community alcohol activity - impact on university, own department and own role
- Views of university practices - real and ideal
- Processes acting to constrain or enable job roles
- Agency - incorporation of self into practices

