

## Population based latent class analysis of drinking behaviour: related psychological problems and cognitive impairment.

### Introduction

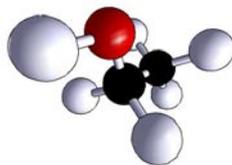
There have been theoretical and empirically developed typological schemes used to classify alcoholics. For example, one typology described four prevailing alcohol typologies which were labelled 'binge', 'episodic', 'sporadic', and 'steady'. Although some of these typologies have been found to have predictive and clinical utility, they have been invariably derived from relatively small samples of alcoholics. There have also been attempts to develop population based typologies of alcohol use, rather than focusing exclusively problematic alcohol consumption. Such studies have tended to focus on measures of consumption and frequency (includes graduated frequencies and averaging intake using these measures) and develop the typology based on cluster analytic techniques. This research, carried out by Mark Shevlin and Gillian Smith, aimed to develop a population based typology of alcohol drinking based on a large nationally representative sample of British participants. It was hypothesised that the heterogeneity of alcohol related behaviours could be described in distinct patterns based on both the consumption of alcohol use and related alcohol use problems.

### Findings

Latent class analyses were carried out based on the Alcohol Use Disorder Test (AUDIT). Analyses were performed on data from participants in the second "Psychiatric Morbidity Among Adults living in Private Households, 2000" survey (N=7849). Six classes were found to adequately explain the AUDIT scores. These were labelled as -

- Class 1 Heavy consumption with multiple negative consequences (n=406) 5.7%
- Class 2 Heavy consumption with negative consequences (n=461) 6.4%
- Class 3 Moderate/heavy consumption (n=2369) 25.7%
- Class 4 Moderate consumption (n= 2921) 38.5%
- Class 5 Very mild consumption with negative consequences (n=574) 7.4%
- Class 6 Baseline/Mild consumption (n=1118) 16.3%

Poor mental health status was associated with membership of Class 1.



### Implications

- The findings from this study indicated that drinking behaviour cannot be simply described along a continuum based on either frequency of drinking or consumption of alcohol.
- Based on this analysis drinking patterns can be considered to be quantitatively different but also qualitatively different. For instance, high levels of consumption are not necessary for memory loss or injury to occur.

The AERC grant also supported the research that led to the following paper that has been accepted for publication by *Alcohol and Alcoholism*.

The factor structure and concurrent validity of the Alcohol Use Disorder Identification Test based on a nationally representative UK sample.

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#### ALCOHOL INSIGHTS

*Alcohol Insights* are brief summaries of the findings made from research or development grants.

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