

“Don’t blame the booze”: News media analysis of representations of parent’s role in youth drinking in Australia.

MEGAN COOK¹, AMY PENNAY¹

¹Centre for Alcohol Policy Research, La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia.

Presenter’s email: M.Cook@latrobe.edu.au.

Introduction and Aims: News media can reflect and contribute to the shaping of public sentiment and discourse, and previous research has shown reporting on alcohol, and in particular on youth drinking, to be prolific. Given that parents are a primary source of information and support for young people, we focus on representations of parent’s role in youth drinking in Australian news media, to understand if public sentiment on this topic has shifted and what this tells us about the evolution of the topic of parent’s involvement in youth drinking.

Method / Approach: Factiva was used to search for newspaper articles from major Australian publishers over a 20-year period, on youth drinking. Using content analysis, this study specifically focuses on articles relating to parents of young people.

Findings: This study identified a focus on parental supply, parental modelling and parental alcohol-related communication, with the predominance of these topics fluctuating over time in response to policy focus and shifts, research findings, newsworthy “incidents” and seasonality (for example, summer months which corresponds with schoolies).

Discussions and Conclusions: Overall, there was a strong emphasis on parental involvement and responsibility for youth drinking across the study period. However, the foci identified represent a small portion of the ways in which parents can support introducing and engaging young people around alcohol.

Implications for Practice or Policy (optional): These findings have implications and will be of use for researchers and public health experts wishing to support parents in engaging with young people around alcohol.

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