

The influence of gender roles in alcohol consumption: a qualitative study of adolescents and young adults in Asturias

La influencia de los roles de género en el consumo de alcohol: estudio cualitativo en adolescentes y jóvenes en Asturias

MARÍA ARÁNZAZU FERNÁNDEZ RODRÍGUEZ*, SANDRA DEMA MORENO**, YOLANDA FONTANIL GÓMEZ***.

* Doctoranda del Programa “Género y Diversidad” de la Universidad de Oviedo y Directora del Área de Prevención de la Fundación C.E.S.P.A.-Proyecto Hombre. ** Profesora Titular de Sociología de la Universidad de Oviedo. *** Profesora Titular de Psicología de la Universidad de Oviedo.

Abstract

Despite the implementation of prevention policies aimed at addressing alcohol consumption among both adolescents and young adults, there has been a considerable increase in those who abuse alcohol in Spain over the last decade. Official surveys on this phenomenon show that both the prevalence and risky consumption of men and women are reaching similar levels, with even higher figures for these behaviours in the case of girls at the end of adolescence.

The aim of this article is to understand the influence of gender roles in the consumption of alcohol among adolescents and young adults. To this end, focus groups have been employed to identify similarities and differences both in drinking patterns and alcohol abuse among young males and females, as well as in the social meaning that both groups attribute to these practices.

The results obtained show that the variables gender and age act in a combined way on the learning of alcohol consumption, as well as on the motivations and expectations that adolescents and young adults have regarding these practices. In addition, in this study three differentiated stages are identified: in the first, gender roles are clearly defined; in the second, there is a certain transgression of these roles mainly by young women, and in the third, there is a return to traditional gender roles.

Keywords: Gender; Alcohol; Adolescence; Young adult; Qualitative research.

Resumen

A pesar del desarrollo de políticas de prevención dirigidas a abordar el consumo de alcohol en adolescentes y jóvenes, durante la última década se ha producido un aumento considerable de quienes realizan un consumo abusivo de esta sustancia en España. Las encuestas oficiales sobre este fenómeno muestran un acercamiento entre varones y mujeres en las prevalencias de consumo y en los consumos de riesgo, e incluso una mayor incidencia de estas conductas en el caso de las mujeres al final de la etapa adolescente.

El objetivo de este artículo es conocer la influencia que ejercen los roles de género en estas pautas de consumo en adolescentes y jóvenes. Para ello, se han realizado grupos focales que han permitido identificar las similitudes y diferencias que se producen tanto en las prácticas de consumo y abuso del alcohol que desarrollan estos colectivos, como en el significado social que unos y otras atribuyen a las citadas prácticas.

Los resultados obtenidos muestran que las variables género y edad actúan de forma combinada en el aprendizaje del consumo de bebidas alcohólicas, así como en las motivaciones y expectativas que los y las adolescentes y jóvenes tienen sobre dichas prácticas. Además, en este estudio se identifican tres etapas diferenciadas, en la primera de ellas los roles de género se encuentran claramente definidos, en la segunda se observa cierta transgresión de los mismos fundamentalmente por parte de las mujeres y en la última se advierte una vuelta a los tradicionales roles de género.

Palabras clave: Género; Alcohol; Adolescencia; Juventud; Investigación cualitativa.

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Send correspondence to:

Sandra Dema Moreno, Facultad de Ciencias Económicas, Edificio Departamental, 2ª planta, Campus de El Cristo, 33006 Oviedo.
E-mail: demasandra@uniovi.es.

According to the World Health Organisation's 2014 Global Status Report on Alcohol and Health, the harmful use¹ of alcohol causes 3.3 million deaths annually, which represents 5.9% of deaths in 2012. This report also indicates significant differences in relation to sex, with 7.6% of male deaths attributed to alcohol, while for women this percentage drops to 4% (World Health Organisation, 2014). A considerable proportion of these deaths is made up of young people, with 25% of deaths among people aged 20 to 39 attributed to the use of alcohol. Furthermore, this type of abusive consumption increases the risk of contracting certain physical (cardiovascular disorders, cirrhosis, etc.) and mental diseases (anxiety, depression, etc.), in addition to increasing the likelihood of suffering some type of accident or getting involved in violent acts. It is therefore hardly surprising to see that abusive alcohol consumption ranks third among the main health risks in the world, constituting a major public health problem and generating substantial social and health costs for the users, for those around them and for society in general.

In Spain, the most recent national Survey on the Use of Drugs among Secondary School Students (ESTUDES), conducted by the Spanish Observatory on Drugs and Drug Addiction (OEDT) in 2014, indicates that alcohol is by far the most widely used substance among the school population of 14 to 18 years of age. Indeed, 78.9% of the adolescent population admits to having drunk alcohol at some time in their lives, with a slightly higher figure for women, regardless of the time period under consideration.

The aforementioned survey puts the onset for alcohol consumption at the early age of 13.8 years, with very similar data for male and female adolescents at 13.8 and 13.9 years respectively.

Regarding the abuse of this substance, one in four people aged 14 reported having suffered from alcohol poisoning at some time in their lives, rising to 56.5% at age 16 and reaching 74.1% at age 18. For at least a decade, the proportion of adolescents admitting to getting drunk sometime in their lives has been higher among females than males (51.4% of girls versus 48.7% of boys).

After reaching the age of 18, changes appear in the prevalence and patterns of alcohol use conditioned by age and sex. On the one hand, drinking ceases to be centred on the weekend, its use extending to weekdays with increasing age, particularly among men. On the other hand, the latest national Survey on Alcohol and Drugs in Spain (EDADES 2015-2016) shows that daily alcohol use is 3.5 times higher among men compared to women, with a correspondingly

greater prevalence among men of alcohol abuse (alcohol poisoning and binge drinking), despite a decrease in the prevalence of this type of practice with increasing age. Comparing the male-female figures for binge drinking, for example, there is a difference of approximately 5 percentage points among the 15 to 19 age group, increasing to approximately 10 points in the case of 20 to 24-year-olds, with the percentage of men binge drinking doubling that of women beyond this age.

Incorporating the gender perspective into the study of alcohol consumption among adolescents and young people is a relatively recent development, particularly in Spain. Quantitative research has focused on identifying gender differences in alcohol use among these age groups (Galán, González & Valencia-Martín, 2014; Colell, Sánchez-Niubò & Domingo-Salvany, 2013; Roberts, 2012; Emslie, Lewars, Batty & Hunt, 2009; Delgado, Bautista, Inglés, Espada & Torregrosa, 2005), with studies addressing motivations and consequences on health associated with abuse figuring among the most important (Bousoño Serrano et al., 2017; Díaz-Mesa et al., 2016; Secades Villa, López Núñez, Fernández Artamendi, Weidberg & Fernández Hermida, 2013; Measham & Østergaard, 2009; De la Villa Moral Jiménez, Rodríguez Díaz & Sirvent Ruiz, 2005).

Research of a qualitative nature, on the other hand, has tried to understand the meaning of alcohol abuse among adolescents and young adults, showing that the beginning of this behaviour is connected to the idea of it as something characteristic and normative of this stage (Davies, Martin & Foxcroft, 2013), closely linked to the acquisition of maturity (Romo Avilés, Marcos Marcos, Gil García, Marquina Márquez & Tarragona Camacho, 2015; Ortiz García & Clavero Díaz, 2014). The incorporation of women into this practice during the last decade is therefore not surprising since they increasingly identify alcohol as a constituent part of their social life, one which facilitates incorporation into leisure spaces and practices traditionally considered male (Gómez Moya, Arnal Gómez, Martínez Vilanova & Muñoz Rodríguez, 2010).

This convergence between young men and women regarding alcohol use has been considered by women as a way to break traditional gender codes (Romo Avilés et al., 2015). From some feminist positions, drinking alcohol in public has been interpreted as a reflection of male dominance in public and leisure spaces. A greater female presence in this type of space and the adoption by women of the same behaviour traditionally associated with males would therefore mean the end of such dominance. However, in this transgression of gender roles, one should not ignore the potential danger to which women are exposed when carrying out these risky behaviours (Rolfe, Orford & Dalton, 2009).

Literature shows us that alcohol consumption is a gender influenced activity, but gender roles are not static.

1 Term introduced by the Global Strategy to Reduce the Harmful Use of Alcohol, referred only to the effects of alcohol consumption on public health, without prejudice to religious beliefs and cultural norms (WHO, 2010).

The redefinition of these and the influence of alcohol has been analyzed in some studies which have concluded that changes in the normative patterns of consumption reveal significant breaks in gender roles during adolescence (Romo Avilés et al., 2015; Romo Avilés, Meneses Falcón & Gil García, 2014; Gómez Moya et al., 2010). However, such investigations do not usually differentiate how such gender role changes occur at different stages of adolescence and youth, a time when alcohol use begins, according to the information provided by the principal surveys, and when the riskiest behaviours (alcohol poisoning and/or binge drinking) occur.

Using qualitative methodology, the present article seeks to examine this question in more depth by analysing the experiences, perceptions and meanings that adolescents and young adults attribute to the use and abuse of alcohol in three different age cohorts: 13-15, 16-18 and 19-24 years of age. The goal is to find out how gender roles influence alcohol consumption among these population groups, identifying similarities and differences in terms of gender in their practices and the reasons they use when defending said practices. This should help increase current knowledge of how the process of initiation into alcohol by young males and females occurs, and how the drinking patterns and their connection with adult life are established during their youth.

Method

To carry out the research used for this article, a qualitative methodology was employed, consisting of the administration and analysis of six focus groups for adolescents and young people. This information collection technique proved successful, given that it favours the interactions between members of each group, which in turn enables us to gain a deeper knowledge of the life experiences of adolescents and young adults in relation to alcohol and, moreover, allows an analysis of the influence of social and cultural context on the meanings attributed to their behaviour.

The selection of focus group participants was based on the following variables: sex, age, socioeconomic diversity and educational level, following the criteria set forth by Sánchez Gómez (2004): I) purposive and reasoned sampling; II) selection of informants who can best explain the phenomenon studied; III) cumulative and sequential sampling to saturation point; IV) comprehensive information, rich in nuances, deep and complete. The selection process has sought to guarantee both homogeneity and heterogeneity. The former is necessary in order to show the collective discourse beyond the individual one. While the latter would allow the existing diverse social discourses to appear.

The fieldwork was carried out from March to May 2013 in Oviedo, capital of the Principality of Asturias, an auton-

mous community in northern Spain. Following the selection criteria outlined above, six focus groups were set up, composed of adolescents and young people, half of them female, the other half male. This distribution was considered appropriate to ensure that conversation flowed freely without being conditioned by the presence of members of the other sex in the group. Especially, as we thought in advance and indeed did occur, because issues related to sexuality, violence, stereotypes and gender roles could arise in the groups. This might happen alongside other issues which may be experienced differently by boys and girls and also by opposing discourses that would have hindered the group dynamic. In addition, and according to age, three cohorts differentiated by developmental criteria were established around the cognitive and emotional maturity of each age group: 13-15, 16-18 and 19-24 years of age.

With regard to socio-economic diversity, habitual criteria such as educational level, parental income and profession were considered, but given that this information was difficult to gather during the selection phase for potential group members, we opted as an alternative for combining place of residence together with school type (state, private or private financed by state allowances) of those studying for the compulsory secondary education certificate or the Baccalaureate (high school certificate). Thus, the selection of participants was spread across four areas: centre, periphery, rural, and URBAN². Oviedo can be described as a city that has developed territorially in a concentric way. The centre of the city is populated by people with high socioeconomic level, largely the regional bourgeoisie, whose purchasing power is reflected especially in those families whose children go to private schools and, to a lesser extent, private schools financed by state allowances. In the peripheral neighbourhoods we find mainly working-class families of medium to low social profile, while the URBAN area is mainly inhabited by disadvantage population, with high rates of unemployment, lower educational level, weak rates of economic activity and high level of poverty and exclusion compared to the rest of the city (Ayuntamiento de Oviedo, 2008). Our focus groups also included people who live in the rural areas covered by the council, although despite the particular characteristics of this geographical environment, we did not find that discourses of adolescents and youngsters involved differed greatly depending on their urban or rural origin. In order to guarantee diversity in terms of educational and/or cultural level, in those age groups where several options were available, subjects were selected from each of the possible educational and training paths: Baccalaureate, vocational training and uni-

2 This zone includes neighbourhoods or spaces in which, at the time of the research, economic, environmental and social regeneration actions were being carried out through an URBAN project co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (FEDER).

versity degrees. Apart from those at school or studying, the discussion groups also contained working and unemployed people wherever possible.

Finally, the main criterion for inclusion in the sample was that alcohol was drunk during leisure time, or that the subject belonged to a peer group in which drinking was associated with leisure.

As can be seen in Table 1, the sample consists of 44 adolescents and young adults, 23 female and 21 male, aged 13 to 24. These subjects were recruited by professionals who habitually work with this population: teachers and managers at schools and occupational training centers for unemployed people under 25, staff in social intervention units and different municipal services and programs. In addition, and in order to ensure the participation of people with certain profiles, the snowball technique was used, although being a sample of a qualitative nature, it was not intended to be representative of the population in any way.

The focus groups were moderated by a sociologist and two trained psychologists. Sessions generally followed this pattern: presentation of the research, initial stimulus aimed at generating conversation, secondary stimuli directed at guiding it when it did not occur naturally and/or needed to be redirected, and a final stimulus. Each focus

group session lasted between 60 and 90 minutes approximately.

The focus groups were recorded and transcribed, for later codification and analysis using the ATLAS.ti computer program, version 7. For greater reliability in this process, each of the researchers carried out a separate coding of the focus group discussion, which were pooled in successive meetings with the rest of the team, leading to a common list of codes (Table 2). Based on these codes, each one of the coded fragments was analyzed in the same way, i.e. first by each researcher individually and subsequently together in the team, until a consensual interpretation was arrived at. In this way a triangulation of the results was obtained through independent and contrasted analyses of the three authors of this article.

This investigation was carried out according to the professional deontological principles required in dealing with people, such as guarantees of confidentiality and anonymity. In addition, the ethical guidelines that regulate work with adolescents were followed, with parents of the participating adolescents being informed about the characteristics of the research, the objectives addressed, and the method used, and being required to provide written consent.

Table 1. Profile of the focus groups and sociodemographic variables of selected participants

Group code	Nº Participants	Sex	Age	Resident in	Studies and type of educational centre		
GF01	8	Female	13-15 years	Centre	2	Compulsory Education State School	4
				Suburb	3	Compulsory Education Private School with public funding	4
				URBAN	1		
				Rural	2		
GF02	8	Male	13-15 years	Centre	2	Compulsory Education State School	6
				Suburb	5	Compulsory Education Private School with public funding	2
				URBAN	1		
				Rural	-		
GF03	10	Female	16-18 years	Centre	2	State High School	7
				Suburb	4	Private High School with public funding	3
				URBAN	3		
				Rural	1		
GF04	5	Male	16-18 years	Centre	1	State High School	3
				Suburb	2	Private High School with public funding	3
				URBAN	1		
				Rural	1		
GF05	5	Female	19-24 years	Centre	2	Occupational Training Program for unemployed	1
				Suburb	1	At university	3
				URBAN	1	Degree/Diploma	1
				Rural	1		
GF06	8	Male	19-24 years	Centre	1	High School	1
				Suburb	3	Occupational Training Program for unemployed	3
				URBAN	4	Voc. Training	1
				Rural	-	At university	2
						Degree/Diploma	1

Table 2. *List of codes*

Codes	Subcodes
Weekend routine associated with drinking	Day(s) going out Frequency Area Time How to reach going out area and how to get home
Strategies to convince parents to be allowed to go out	
Type of group with which to go out and drink	Number / sex Age Sociodemographic characteristics
Type of alcohol consumption	Drinking place Drinking strategies Choice of bar <i>Botellón*</i> Reasons for drinking Self-image, attributed reputation
Negative experience associated with drinking	Risk taking associated with this pattern
Risk reduction strategies	
Perception of public safety	Police intervention Fights
Use of social networks when and/or after drinking	
Intra-family communication on the subject of drinking	
Training/information programmes	Effectiveness Proposals
Gender	Gender identity Gender roles Gender stereotypes Gender differences/similarities

Note. * Meeting of young people in public areas to chat, listen to music and drink alcohol bought in stores.

Results

Stage 1: The influence of gender relations on the beginning of alcohol consumption

The process leading up to the first alcoholic drink is narrated in detail in the focus groups with 13 to 15-year-olds. Discourses of both sexes coincide by pointing to older men as the key figure in this initiation rite who sometimes also facilitate access to alcoholic beverages, especially in the case of girls.

In the following fragment, adolescents between the ages of 13 and 15 relate how other men, whether they are friends or family members, introduce them to alcohol. And as some of them indicate, they even have their first alcoholic drink in the company of their male parents:

Moderator: Who were you with when you had your first alcoholic drink?

Boy 1: With friends.³

Boy 2: With my brother.

Boy 1: With friends, a fine example they set, eh?

Boy 3: Yes, with friends, always.

Boy 4: With friends, and there are times when even my parents or relatives get you to try it.

Boy 5: I always drink with friends, I never drink alone. With friends on Saturdays and that.

Boy 6: Me, the first time with my father, the second time with my father, the third time, not yet. (GF02, boys, 13-15 years old)

Apart from the ironic comment of participant 1, the group is completely in agreement about this role of initiator, as befits a socially accepted behaviour. These boys perform a double function. On the one hand, they initiate the others in the consumption of alcohol. On the other, they facilitate the learning of a series of strategies aimed at managing alcohol consumption in order to avoid risks and to confront them might they occur.

Boy 3: Well, whatever your friends tell you.

Boy 1: That's it, whatever they tell you. I learn these tricks from them, I had no idea.

Boy 4: I sometimes ask my parents, especially my father; they advise me what I can do and so on. (GF02, boys, 13-15 years old)

³ In Spanish the word "friend" has different ending for men and women. In this fragment and in the next one, the male form is referred to.

Adolescent girls aged 13 to 15, meanwhile, similarly report that they go through this process with boys who are slightly older than them and who already drink occasionally and are therefore more experienced:

Girl 1: Us girls, there are people who might be older than you and who have already gone out more often and who teach you tricks for not getting drunk so much: don't mix, no... There are always little tricks that they teach you... and which bars are more suitable than others that are not so good. So, maybe they tell you not to go to this or that area because they sell illegal stuff or... stay in well-lit areas, and... that is, never get too drunk because you know what happens... don't leave the glass standing about. Always cover the glass... (GF01, girls, 13-15 years old)

As can be seen, these tips are full of socially assigned gender roles. Girls are warned about the kind of environments which are most suitable for them, as well as about the possible aggressions they may suffer in these contexts, along with the recommendation not to drink too much and to beware at all times of what could happen.

These males, who are usually boyfriends of one of the girls in the group, or older brothers, not only teach how to drink and manage the risks associated with drinking, but accompany and protect the girls during this learning process:

Girl 2:... the boyfriend of a friend of ours is two years older than us so he's been out more and when we go out he comes with us and, yes, he tells us to be careful. (GF01, girls, 13-15 years old)

(...)

Girl 3: Ah, well, yes, there are people who use the older ones, that is, those of legal age for that, to buy you whatever or to look out for me if I want to go I don't know where, or that you pretend to be my brother, things like that. So, we have a friend whose boyfriend's buddy is over eighteen, and then of course, thanks to him, she gets, I mean, the boyfriend can go to bars that aren't meant for minors... that is, as if they are together with others and get more than they could get alone. (GF01, girls 13-15 years old)

As we can see in these two stories, boys play a clear role in the beginning of alcohol consumption for adolescent girls. It is they who facilitate the girls' approach to the places where alcohol is drunk and access to the substance itself. But they also play an important role in the learning of the rituals around drinking and the protection of young women against the risks and dangers they may be subject to in bars and other similar leisure spaces.

In addition, younger adolescents also refer in their conversations to a third person who takes responsibility for

keeping an eye on those who are under the influence of excessive drinking. This role can be exercised by either a male or a female member of the group, but there are important gender differences with respect to the value and meaning given to this figure.

In adolescent groups, when this protective role is exercised by a male, a control function is attributed, usually by a boy over his girlfriend, as can be seen in the following story:

Girl 2: Yes, we and our friend's boyfriend are the ones who control the rest of the group. He does it because he wants to control his girlfriend and helps us control ourselves. (GF01, girls, 13-15 years old)

Conversely, when a girl takes this role, it is seen as linked to the idea of caring and immediately establishes an association between caring and motherhood, which is then also devalued by the group, criticising the girls who do this as being spoilsports:

Girl 2: Yes, those of us who normally almost don't drink at all get called spoilsports because we're like: "Stop drinking".

Girl 3: "Stop drinking", you know because then you're falling over, you don't remember, then the hangover and... they don't listen to us. Then they say the typical thing: "Yes, mummy". (GF01, girls, 13-15 years old)

Curiously, when a male behaves in the same way in the group of younger boys, unlike what happens in the group of girls, this caring does not appear to be devalued by the other members, but is desired by them and also valued positively by both the group and by those exhibiting this behavior:

Boy 4: It was me and it's still me. They even tell me to do it: "because you don't drink much, please help me if I overdo it". Or if they don't ask, I do it quietly anyway and feel good about it. You're taking care of them, in inverted commas, and helping them not to make mistakes. (GF02, boys, 13-15 years old)

Stage 2: The generalization of risky alcohol consumption in adolescence and the adherence to/break with assigned gender roles

The stories of adolescents aged 16 to 18 show that abusive drinking is a common and normalised practice, linked to weekend leisure. Although there are no gender differences linked to prevalence and patterns of use in their conversations, this is not the case when describing the way one behaves after excessive drinking and the meaning that young women and men attribute to their actions. In this stage, a certain transgression of gender roles is observed, especially in the case of females.

Young males and females both identify the exaggerated expression of emotions after abusive alcohol consumption as typically female behaviour. But while the conversations of the girls strongly approve of affective behaviour, boys in theirs talk pejoratively about crying girls, as can be seen in these two fragments:

Girl 2: Yes, but you know, the boys, huh? There are boys who drink and when they drink, in general, with some it seems they haven't drunk at all and others, yes they have. But, well, the girls, whenever they drink, they show it and it's much more noticeable.

Girl 3: We are more affectionate, us girls. Me, at least I am more... huggy.

Girl 2: They can be very drunk and so on and you wouldn't notice. Some people, anyway. Others yes, of course you notice. But the girls, I think you always notice them.

Girl 3: Yes.

Girl 2: Because they're, like, much more expressive.

Girl 3: Much more. (GF03, girls, 16-18 years old).

Boy 3: The girls, half of them end up crying. Over nothing.

Boy 1: I see a row of girls crying, one starts crying and the other one cries because she cries.

Boy 2: Yes.

Boy 3: All crying.

Boy 1: Yes. (GF04, boys, 16-18)

It is striking how stereotyped both conversations are; they clearly link the externalisation of emotions with women, as opposed to men, who can either cope with abusive amounts of alcoholic without it affecting their behaviour or, as shown below, they express themselves aggressively. But as mentioned above, while the girls emphasise that they express positive emotions, such as affection, boys perceive that women cry when they drink excessively, ridiculing their behaviour, which they see as group driven and unjustified. On the one hand, the irrational and unfounded side of female behaviour is highlighted, as for example participant 3 says with "over nothing". And, on the other, they interpret it as if it were an almost contagious reaction, that is, inevitable, occurring because of group pressure which nullifies the individual capacity of each one of the girls, who let themselves get carried away by their emotional side.

The behaviour of male adolescents appears to be more varied. Girls point out that when boys drink more than they should, it is either not noticeable, as female participant 2 states, or their behaviour turns aggressive.

For their part, the way male adolescents see their behaviour is very similar to that expressed by their female counterparts, stating that the typical male behaviour in the

contexts of leisure and drinking involves violence, which is reported by some of the participants in the focus group as being motivated by excessive drinking and/or fighting connected with affective relationships:

Girl 6: And they become more aggressive than usual.

Girl 5: Yes, that's right.

Girl 3: They get jealous

Girl 6: Yes, that too. And they mess with everyone. There are more rows, more accidental pushing and shoving, I do not know what else.

Girl 3: Well, they get a bit too cocky (GF03, girls, 16-18 years old).

Moderator: And what do you think might be the reason that there are quite a lot of fights in the bar areas of town?

Boy 1: Alcohol.

Boy 2: Because of alcohol or a girl.

Boy 1: Alcohol makes you furious, when you drink you don't think and before you know it you've already been in a fight and everything. (GF04, boys, 16-18 years old)

These discourses highlight a relationship between aggression and masculinity which again refers to traditional gender roles. Women perceive that men fight to demonstrate their superiority over others, their masculinity. Although this masculine aggressiveness is not valued positively by women, who in fact use the term "cocky" contemptuously to refer to this masculine behaviour. On the other hand, males consider violence as a typically masculine conduct, which is normalized and accepted.

However, there are two striking issues that need to be analysed. On the one hand, the discourse of both male and female participants refer to the male intrinsic violence, which is exacerbated by excessive drinking: "they become more aggressive than normal", "alcohol makes you furious". This indicates that, despite the social advances against gender violence, the male one continues to be a type of socially normalised behavior and perceived as such by both sexes. But, additionally, when this violence coincides with abusive alcohol consumption, it seems that intentionality and male responsibility are diluted, they do it "unintentionally", as claimed by both male participant 1 and female participant 6.

On the other hand, in the discourse of both male and female adolescents there are references to what either constitutes gender violence or at least violence in affective relationships which however, is not identified as such, but only labelled as a matter of 'jealousy', as pointed out by female adolescent 6, or implied when male adolescent 2 says "by a girl". This would re-legitimise violent masculine behaviour and refer to an interpretation of violence linked to

the emotional relationships as typical of past eras in which jealousy and passionate character justified it.

In contrast to the expression of emotions, which, as we have seen, is considered a fundamentally feminine capacity, aggressive behaviours are no longer exclusive to men. Examples of female aggressiveness linked to excessive drinking appear in the discourses. But again, the meaning that both sexes assign to such behaviours differ. In this stage of the end of adolescence, women identify masculine aggression as part of the construction of traditional masculinity, not with female identity. Thus, when women are violent they are perceived as going against the norm, breaking with traditional gender roles:

Girl 7: I see more men than women, but I see men doing it because they want to show how manly they are, but with women, sometimes we care much less about all this, but there are also some women who have their character and pride and say: "Well, here I am, I'm the most".

Girl 8: There are some girls that are worse than men.

Girl 7: In fact, once I saw one knocking a guy out.

Girl 8: Oh, wild! If I'd been there, I'd have cheered her on.

Girl 7: I don't know, that also depends, but usually it's more the men, to prove... (GF03, girls, 16-18 years old)

In these discourses we can observe how female aggressiveness is perceived as a challenge to traditional femininity. The participants in the focus group assign a positive value to the behaviour of those few who dare to use violence, which they interpret as a kind of instrument of personal self-affirmation, of overcoming the traditional passivity and devaluation imposed on women: "There are some with character, with pride," even feeling all powerful: "Look at me, I'm the most". Nevertheless, the expression of surprise and even admiration in relating the fight between a woman and a man observed on one occasion, with the former coming off best, shows that such behaviour is not socially normalised.

This same narrative appears among male adolescents, who also talk about an example of female violence after drinking too much:

Boy 3: It might seem more normal for boys to fight, but just last year, I think you were there too.

Boy 4: Yes.

Boy 3: At the door of [mentions a well-known late night bar], I do not know if you know it, there was a girl who threw a glass into the face of another girl and left her bleeding and everything. (GF04, boys, 16-18 years old)

Paradoxically, male and female adolescents hardly speak about the habitual aggressive behaviours of men, but they

do comment on how and when they saw a woman hit a man or throw a glass in the face of another woman. Although infrequent, such actions acquire great visibility precisely because they go beyond the traditional gender norms, as some authors have shown when analysing processes of gender role transformation (Dema Moreno, 2008).

Finally, another gender difference that appears in the focus groups has to do with forms of physical and virtual interaction among adolescents. In the girls' narratives, their need to interact and establish social relationships outside their own peer group is revealed, while the boys prefer interaction within it:

Girl 3: For example, we, I often end up sitting, or my friends too, because your feet hurt. The boys don't have that problem, they're lucky, and well... But yes, they're always like more, at least in my group, they're, the boys, okay? they're with us, but they're like over there doing their thing, and we're just the ones who, well, go over and say hello, or let's go somewhere, let's go for a walk. They're more like, more static, you know. But they also drink three times as much. (GF03, girls, 16-18 years old)

The boys also indicate that they interact mostly with the group they're out with, giving two types of reasons in their discourse: mainly, on the one hand, highlighting how they value the group that welcomes them, offering them a space of well-being and autonomy and, secondly, the drinking, which makes them feel good, so they feel no need to establish social relationships or interact with other people outside the group:

Boy 1: Well, you also drink and you're with friends and because you feel in a warm atmosphere with your friends you feel comfortable and when you are already a little... when you've had a couple, you feel good, even if you've drunk... I know what I mean but I don't know how to explain it. It happens with him and another friend, when we're together and we've had a bit to drink...

Boy 3: We're on our little cloud.

Boy 1: It feels good that there's no one else around us.

Boy 3: That's right.

Boy 1: But, and that, okay? We like that, too.

Boy 3: That's right, even without being drunk.

Boy 1: Yes, without being drunk.

Boy 3: We're always doing our thing. (GF04, boys, 16-18 years old)

It is rather striking to observe these differentiated behaviours of young men and women, which highlight a break in traditional gender roles. In contrast to traditional forms of masculine sociability, in which males occupy a space

and connect with other groups, in these fragments it can be observed that female adolescents are the ones who establish links beyond the peer group itself, occupying different spaces in leisure venues. Conversely, male adolescents report that they remain in the same place, in a static manner, relating only to members of their peer group, a practice that alludes to the roles that women traditionally played in public spaces.

As far as the virtual space is concerned, there are comparable patterns. Both sexes coincide in pointing out differences in the use of social networks and the role they play in their weekend leisure related to alcohol consumption. As can be seen in the following fragments, both emphasise that the use of information and communication technology by girls is related to taking photos that they subsequently upload to social networks:

Girl 1: I think I've never seen a guy with a camera.

Girl 3: Me neither. The photos uploaded are always like a big bunch of girls and just four boys.

Girl 1: Yes.

Girl 3: And they're always about football. (GF03, girls, 16-18 years old)

Boy 4: I never left the house with a camera to go out on a Saturday. If there are any photos of me it'll be because someone else takes them, not because I go taking pictures of others.

Boy 1: Me neither. You meet a girl that you know and she's like: "Oh, photo, photo, photo."

(...)

Boy 4: Me too, if they get uploaded it's by other people... Anyway, you can see: "male 3 photos, male 3 photos and female 35 photos, male 3 photos". (GF04, boys, 16-18 years old)

The narratives of both groups come together in this regard, with girls responsible for taking pictures with which they tell the stories of their night-time outings, while boys are not involved in this to the same extent. Their conversations reflect that they clearly see this feminine practice as excessive ("You meet a girl that you know and she's like: Oh, photo, photo, photo"). Girls, meanwhile, refer to the traditional male roles in the content of their photos ("They're always about football").

Boys on the other hand do not use social networks to the same extent, so they voice a stereotyped criticism from a gender perspective of the way girls use ICTs:

Boy 4: I don't know, I think that, I don't know if they do it to make out, but sometimes it seems that there are groups of girls who, more than going out to socialise, go out to take photos to put on Tuenti. That's the feeling I get.

Boy 1: Yes, yes.

Boy 4: Yes, I don't know, they go and say: "Well, I'm going to show off here a bit in front of these people and then I'll go home and upload the photos I took this evening". And sometimes that's what they do, just that and nothing else.

Boy 3: Photo, Tuenti. (GF04, boys, 16-18 years old)

This conversation shows how male adolescents interpret female use of ICTs as abusive and responding to a need for social approval. They consider that girls dedicate their time to showing an image of themselves, and even see this practice as constituting an end in itself ("Sometimes that's what they do, just that and nothing else"), as if they did not go out to have fun but only to take photos, with the aim of making out, as indicated, albeit tentatively, by participant 4.

Stage 3: Towards an adult mode of alcohol consumption mediated by gender identity

In this final stage, women aged 19 to 24 continue to associate weekend leisure with going out to bars and having alcoholic drinks, but they state that at this age they exercise greater control over their bodies and their behaviour and, thus drink moderately without seeking intoxication, as was the case when they were younger:

Girl 1: It's what my friends and I call "heat stroke", which is when you're not out to look... I know there are people of my age, I'm 24, they're out every weekend, especially guys, that want to get drunk one way or another. (GF05, girls, 19-24 years old)

Conversely, they do not perceive men as having gone through this change with age, but instead continue to drink large quantities with the aim of getting drunk and losing control:

Girl 1: And when you're on an Erasmus year and you're in a mixed group it's true that the guys have an attitude towards alcohol that is totally different, they're like: "We can hold our drink better, so we drink more and it's only natural we end up drunk as skunks and smashing up public property" and, well, poor guys, it's not all of them, but I think that in general the attitude towards alcohol is really different. (GF05, girls, 19-24 years old)

As can be seen, young women understand that this behaviour is connected to the male need to reaffirm their masculinity, which they in turn link to a greater physical tolerance to alcohol. As we saw in the 16-18 stage, this in a way works to legitimise greater male aggressiveness. The violence in this case is no longer restricted to just involvement in fights, but also leads to acts of vandalism, such as destruction of public property.

In male conversations, the association between leisure and alcohol also appears, although this consumption is not constrained to the weekend, but also to weekdays:

Boy 5: Depends on... (all laughs) Thing is, it doesn't have to be the weekend to go out partying, or... to have a good time out there, right? I mean, going out, I don't know... sometimes, say a Monday, you might want to do something with some friends, let's have a drink, and in the end you've had four. I don't know, it's just spontaneous... spontaneous moments... (GF06, boys, 19-24 years old)

In their conversations, as young women do in theirs, young men also refer to moderate drinking, but in this case it is usually associated with weekdays, while at weekends they continue drinking excessively:

Boy 4: On Wednesdays and Fridays for sure. Maybe... depends on the week, and in addition to Wednesday and Friday, Thursday and Saturday as well. But Thursdays and Saturdays can vary (laughs). But... let's see... it's not about going out all night and getting all those times. On Wednesdays, you go out for a couple of beers in a certain bar that... well, has different beers that aren't Mahou and Carlsberg... (GF06, boys, 19-24 years old)

Regarding their abusive consumption of alcohol, the main reason they give is strong peer group pressure, as well as the difficulties they have in managing it:

Boy 3: And me too... above all avoid... show off your courage, like "Why don't we have two Jägermeisters in a row or an absinthe? I don't know..."

Boy 5: Exactly... (laughs).

Boy 3: Well, you know, me... you have to keep a bit of a cool head to avoid falling for those provocations that... (laughs)... there are many throughout the evening...

(all laugh)

Boy 4: Don't lie, don't lie, you fall for it...

Boy 2: Every time... (all laugh). (GF06, boys, 19-24 years old)

On the whole, it seems that a change towards lower-risk alcohol use sets in among young women in this age group, but not so much in the case of men. With their new patterns of alcohol use, women aged 19 to 24 make strong and stereotyped criticisms from a gender perspective of drinking by underage persons, especially cutting in the case of female adolescents:

Girl 2: Let's see, we always talk about it, we live in the centre and when we go out on a Saturday it's... it's rea-

lly shocking to see the girls, wearing those heels they don't know how to walk in, ok, just like we did too, but you see them and then they get really drunk and cry. I remember one day going up [mentions a well-known street of bars] and I really didn't see anyone having a good time, but some boys fighting, some girls crying and everything... And I said, mother of God, what is this?... And, yes, they seem to be very young, but I think it's because we are getting older and then you see the difference more, but if you'd recorded me back then maybe I'd have been just like them. (GF05, girls, 19-24 years old)

Through these narratives, the existence of greater social sanction can clearly be observed for female adolescents whose behaviour deviates from the female role, as well as the internalised gender stereotypes that are used to describe these behaviours. It even seems that it is through the behaviour of younger girls that the older ones become aware of the transgression which, from a gender perspective, they were themselves guilty of during their own adolescence: "OK, like we did too, but you see them and then they get really drunk and cry". Thus, there is a need to establish a clear difference between their actions and those of younger generations.

Young men, meanwhile, also criticise the drinking of girls, which, like their female peers, they describe as abusive, but they seem to attribute the phenomenon to social change. From their perspective, girls and young women today drink more than in previous generations, exceeding the quantities of male drinkers, which they also consider inappropriate from the point of view of gender roles:

Boy 6: People's attitudes have been changing a lot, I think, in recent years, I think that a few years ago everything changed loads. Girls even drink more than boys and then act in a very different way than I did, for example, when I was 16. My sister herself, just a kid, has changed completely from how I was at her age. I don't know, they get drunk, when they get home they can't stand up, when, you know, once, okay, but when it happens several times... And then, I don't know, you walk down the street and they're lying there on the ground... and, I don't know, I don't know what the change is due to or what... (GF06, boys, 19-24 years old)

Through these discourses we can again observe the extreme visibility, already explained above, of behaviours that transgress gender roles. As in the case of women evidencing violent behaviour, it is still surprising that female adolescents will drink until they reach the point of alcohol poisoning and that they do so in public spaces. According to these narratives it seems that it is only the girls who get drunk and are "lying there on the ground", when the diffe-

rences in the prevalence of drunkenness between the sexes barely reaches three points according to the ESTUDES Survey conducted in 2014.

In short, we can see in the conversations provided by young adults how they approximate to assigned gender roles, which leads to a differentiated prevalence and patterns of alcohol use according to sex, as well as the need to confirm these gender roles through criticism of and distancing from transgressive behaviours that occur in adolescence and early adulthood.

Discussion

The results of this study reveal first of all the clear influence of gender roles on patterns of alcohol use during adolescence and the first stage of adulthood. Secondly, having taken into account the different age cohorts established for the configuration of the focus groups, it has been possible to see how this influence manifests itself in three different stages: the process of initiation and learning about alcohol use, the development and the generalisation of risky drinking in the final stage of adolescence and, finally, the consolidation of alcohol consumption in the first stage of youth, which is likely to mark the drinking patterns of these people in adulthood. These results also reflect drinking at an early age, the routines and social relationships established around such use, the different values these have depending on gender, the development of motivations when consuming alcohol and the reduced perception of risk that accompanies drinking throughout the process.

The few Spanish studies that have incorporated a gender perspective indicate that changes in the patterns of male and female alcohol use reveal a series of breaks with the traditional gender system (Romo Avilés et al., 2015; Gómez Moya et al., 2010). However, as they did not take into account the existence of the three stages analysed in this article, they were not able to identify the gender differences that occur during adolescence and early adulthood, something that only becomes apparent with an intersectional analysis such as the one carried out in this study and which may also have special relevance in social interventions with this type of population, as will be explained below.

This study indicates that during the first phase of adolescence, gender roles are still clearly defined, and coincides with other research to identify that alcohol use and leisure contexts are male practices and spaces which both boys and girls access through older figures, usually males with whom there is some family bond and/or affective friendship (Romo Avilés et al., 2015; Gómez Moya et al., 2010; Lyons & Willott, 2008). In this initial phase, it is striking to note the existence of a practice related to the care and protection of both male and female adolescents in leisure spaces after abusive alcohol intake. Some authors have identified that the peer group works as a protective community that

favours the safety of its members when risky drinking occurs (Romo Avilés et al., 2015). However, our study shows that the caring role does not correspond to the group as a whole, but fundamentally to those members who drink less.

From a gender perspective, our analysis highlights how the social value attributed to this practice differs when performed by a young man or woman. In the case of women, it is associated with the traditional value of care, which results in a devaluation of the behaviour and of the person who performs it, while, conversely, when it is the men who carry out said tasks of care and control, such action is recognised and valued by the peer group.

The discourses analysed in this article concur with data provided by the ESTUDES Survey, which indicate that at the end of adolescence a normalisation and generalisation of abusive drinking takes place in both sexes, associated with weekend leisure, especially in the case of young women. But more important than the prevalence of alcohol use is the role that alcohol plays in the construction of the identity of both boys and girls, as evidenced by the literature (Romo Avilés et al., 2015; Romo-Avilés et al., 2014; Lindsay, 2012; Rolfe et al., 2009; Peralta, 2007). The results obtained in the analysis of the focus groups show that male adolescents build their masculinity on abusive drinking and that peer group pressure is central to this process, particularly in the incitement to drink. The narratives of both sexes also connect excessive drinking and male violence as a normalised and accepted expression of masculinity, in accordance with the traditional masculine role.

In the case of female adolescents, however, there is a subversion of traditional female gender roles. Not only because of the higher prevalence of alcohol consumption at this vital moment, as reported in the ESTUDES Survey, but also because of the way in which they occupy physical and virtual spaces that they talk about in the focal groups. Contrary to the traditional division of public-private space, where the former is associated with men and the latter with women (Murillo, 1996), the conversations analysed refer to women occupying physical and virtual spaces to a greater extent than men. This practice is related to questions of gender identity, such as the feminine need to feel part of a larger community than the group itself, which provides young women with greater security in their night-time outings (Alcedo Rodríguez, Dema Moreno, Fontanil Gómez & Solís García, 2014). Furthermore, female adolescents use ICTs to capture their nights out in images and disseminate them on social networks. Such posts allow them to display their carefully prepared image publically, thus representing a key element in the construction of the female identity, in such a way that by using social networks they show they can participate in traditionally masculine practices and spaces, while at the same time seeking as far as possible not to compromise their femininity (Hutton, Griffin, Lyons, Niland & McCreanor, 2016).

Although male violence, both in the public and private space, has been a traditional object of study in research with a gender perspective, violence by females has only recently begun to be analysed, with the work of Day, Gough and McFadden (2004) standing out in the field of night-time leisure. In the focus groups, both sexes report some violent episodes by women that are interpreted as a break with traditional gender roles, but also, above all, by women as a type of subversion and even as a form of female empowerment. Despite the fact that these events are infrequent, they become quite visible in the narratives, which could be interpreted as the beginning of a process of change in gender roles that has not yet been normalised. Some authors have shown that it is precisely when processes of change in gender roles are under way that extreme visibility of those behaviours going beyond the norm is observed (Dema Moreno, 2008).

Finally, during the first stage of adulthood the transgressive characteristics of the previous stage disappear and the young women move closer to assigned gender roles. At this crucial time, and coinciding with the perception of our focus groups participants, the EDADES Survey shows that women begin to reduce risky alcohol use, while men maintain and consolidate it. It is also at this time that both men and women start voicing strong criticism when discussing behaviours of the adolescents in the previous stage that go beyond gender norms. Although young women may have behaved transgressively themselves during their own adolescence, gender roles are so deeply rooted that there is a manifest need to break with past behaviour and direct it towards the socially accepted model. Thus the patterns of alcohol consumption that characterise adult women and men begin to emerge at this stage, with a higher prevalence in men in terms of greater alcohol intake and the various problems associated with the harmful consumption of alcohol (Observatorio Español de la Droga y la Toxicomanía, 2015).

It should be noted once again that the sample used to carry out this research is not statistically representative of Spanish adolescent and youth, given that purposive sampling was used with the aim of establishing the influence of gender roles in the process of initiation and development of alcohol use. With this goal in mind, some issues that appear in the conversations of adolescents and young adults have been mentioned, without in-depth analysis, such as the meaning of gender violence in leisure contexts and particularly when linked to alcohol, and this could well be featured in future lines of research.

As we have tried to show throughout this article, gender and age are interrelated and act in a combined way. By incorporating an intersectional approach, it has been possible to gain a comprehensive understanding of the meanings that adolescents and young adults attribute to alcohol use, as well as the behaviours they develop in relation to this substance. This approach is not only useful from a

theoretical point of view, but could be considered when intervening socially in this field, as other female authors have also indicated (Jiménez Rodrigo & Guzmán Ordaz, 2011). In short, for actions, particularly preventive ones, to be more effective, not only gender roles have to be taken into account, but also different moments of developmental stages that people go through during adolescence and early adulthood have to be considered.

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Conflict of interests

The authors of this article declare that there is no potential conflict of interests related to its preparation and publication.

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