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INTRODUCTION



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Alcohol use is widespread among Australian adolescents. The 2001 National Drug Strategy Household Survey, for example, found that two-thirds of 14-17 year olds had recently consumed alcohol, with approximately one-fifth reporting regular alcohol use. Similarly, longitudinal data from the Australian Temperament Project showed that 25 per cent of 13-14 year old adolescents had consumed alcohol within the past month, and noted a sharp escalation in alcohol use across adolescence, with 60 per cent of these adolescents consuming alcohol in the past month at 15-16 years and 85 per cent at 17-18 years (Smart, Vassallo, Sanson, Richardson, Dussuyer et al. 2003).

Adolescent alcohol misuse is a serious and growing problem. Although many adolescents experience no alcohol-related problems (Bonomo, Coffey, Wolfe, Lynskey, Bowes and Patton 2001), a large sub-group engage in risky drinking. For example, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW 2003) found that 35 per cent of Australian adolescents aged 14-17 years and 64 per cent of those aged 18-24 years were reported to drink at risky or high-risk levels in the short term. The incidence of risky alcohol use is reported to be even higher among Indigenous youth (AIHW 2003).

Numerous individual, family, school and community characteristics have been identified as risk factors for the development of adolescent alcohol use and misuse¹ (Hawkins, Catalano and Miller 1992). This report aims to review and synthesise the research concerning the impact of parenting factors on adolescent alcohol use. It is anticipated that a better understanding of parenting influences on adolescents' uptake of alcohol and risky alcohol use will provide valuable guidance for prevention and intervention initiatives, enabling the provision of more effective family support services.

This report is in fulfilment of a contract between the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing and the Australian Institute of Family Studies. The report aims to:

- Review and summarise the literature concerning parenting influences on adolescent alcohol use, focusing particularly on recent Australian research and research with Indigenous and other cultural sub-groups; but also including influential research conducted in other countries.
- Analyse the current body of knowledge concerning parenting influences on adolescent alcohol use, identifying gaps and weaknesses and detailing how such deficiencies might weaken the strength of conclusions that may be drawn and that may impact upon intervention strategies.
- Elucidate the implications emerging from the research findings for the development of policies and prevention/intervention initiatives directed

1 The term "adolescent" is used here to describe young people aged from 11 to 21 years, covering the age span from the onset of puberty to the early adulthood stage of development.

towards adolescent alcohol use and alcohol harm minimisation, highlighting the ways in which parents can be assisted to guide adolescents more effectively in responsible alcohol use.

- Identify related issues that may affect the relationship between parenting and adolescent alcohol consumption.

Prior to the review of relevant research, an account of the study's search strategies is provided, and some of the critical methodological issues are discussed; these are covered in Section 2. Material is presented in Section 3 on the prevalence of alcohol use by Australian adolescents to provide a picture of the extent of normative and problematic alcohol use.

Discussion of the parenting factors linked to adolescent alcohol use is organised according to the parenting model developed by Dishion and McMahon (1998) (referred to as the "Parenting model" throughout). This model is nested within the Social Development Model developed by Catalano and Hawkins (1996), which was used to highlight the broader ecological framework in which parenting and parent-adolescent interactions take place. (For a broader discussion of parenting itself and the factors which influence parenting, the report *Parenting Information Project: Volume Two: Literature Review*, published by the Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services in 2004, provides a comprehensive review.)

Using these theoretical guides, a review of the parenting behaviours and beliefs that have been shown to influence adolescent alcohol use is provided in Section 4. These include: parental monitoring; parental behaviour management; parent-adolescent relationship factors; and parental norms, values and goals.

An emphasis has been placed on longitudinal research, although cross-sectional and clinical studies are also included, particularly those of importance to the Australian context. Cross-sectional studies examine connections between predictors and outcomes which are both measured at the same point in time, whereas longitudinal studies follow the progress of a particular sample over an extended period of time, exploring across-time connections between predictors and outcomes. Additionally, previously unpublished research findings from the Australian Temperament Project are included to augment the Australian database.

Section 5 provides a discussion of some specific parental characteristics, such as parental use of alcohol, the biological transmission of alcohol dependence, and other ecological and environmental factors which affect parents and their parenting practices. The implications of broader cultural norms and laws for adolescent alcohol use are discussed and a review of research conducted with Indigenous adolescents is also provided in Section 5.

The contrasting roles of parents and peers are examined in Section 6. Some gaps and deficiencies in the literature are discussed in Section 7.

Following the analysis of relevant research findings, Section 8 presents intervention research that has attempted to manipulate parenting factors to reduce adolescent alcohol initiation or consumption. These experimental studies play a pivotal role in understanding the importance of parenting for adolescent alcohol use, as they provide the most direct evidence of "cause and effect" relationships.

A synthesis of the findings is presented in Section 9, and the review concludes with a discussion, in Section 10, of implications for research and policy, highlighting key conclusions that may be drawn from the findings reviewed.