

<p>Institution: Bath Spa University</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: UoA36-Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management</p>
<p>Title of case study: Alcohol, culture and public policy</p>
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>This case study refers to research on British drinking cultures and alcohol policy carried out by James Nicholls, Reader in Media and Social Policy, Department of Film and Media Production/HCI (2004-September 2012). In this role, Nicholl's research and his public engagement contributed to shaping the UoA's research reference frame of cultural behaviour, cultural practice and public policy (see <i>Ref5</i>). Following the publication of his book, <i>The Politics of Alcohol</i> (2009) Nicholls developed as a specialist advisor involved in the analysis and planning of alcohol policy at national and regional levels. His work and influence has been cited in key policy documents (including the House of Commons Health Select Committee Report, <i>Alcohol: First Report of Session 2009-10</i> HC151-1) in 2010. This work has subsequently helped to shape regional and national alcohol policy in both England and Scotland. This case study provides evidence of this impact in regard to the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influence on alcohol policy at a national level, particularly regarding the role of historical perspectives in the development of policy. • Impact on alcohol policy at a regional level through knowledge transfer activities.
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Key researcher: Nicholls, J. Reader in Media and Social Policy, School of Humanities and Cultural Industries, Bath Spa University (2004 to September 2012); now Research Manager at Alcohol Research UK and Honorary Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Public Health Policy, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.</p> <p>Nicholls' research has contributed to public and political debate on alcohol policy across the UK, in particular through helping place contemporary drinking cultures in historical perspective (1, 2). Through his knowledge transfer activities, Nicholls has had an impact on the activities of licensing and health authorities in a number of UK regions. More recently, his work on conventional and social media representations of alcohol has led to international collaborations (3). Nicholls' research covers a number of key areas of alcohol related practices and policies.</p> <p>1. Histories of drinking culture and policy in the UK</p> <p>Nicholls' book <i>The Politics of Alcohol</i> has become established as a <u>key text</u> and reference point for understanding the history of drinking in Britain. He has a particular interest in the impact of alcohol policy on cultural behaviour and practice and his research has directly informed local and national policy debates across the UK. His research led to the award of a <i>Knowledge Transfer Fellowship</i> by the Arts and Humanities Research Council in 2009, which involved working closely with a Regional Alcohol Manager and service providers across the South West of England.</p> <p>2. Alcohol and the media</p> <p>Nicholls has published two key articles on alcohol in the media (3, 4). His study of alcohol and the news was one of the first to document the rising influence of public health advocates on media framing – a trend which has subsequently been confirmed in other studies. It contributed to the award of a <i>British Academy Mid-Career Research Fellowship</i>, which led to a number of presentations and a peer-reviewed publication looking in detail at the role of media in influencing policy (5). Nicholls' work on alcohol, news reporting and policy making has been presented at national and international conferences and was a keynote for the June 2012 annual symposium of the Kettil Bruun Society in Stavanger, Norway. The KBS symposium is the leading international conference for alcohol research. His work on social media marketing was an early explorative study of marketing content on Facebook and Twitter, which has since been cited in a number of studies (4).</p>

3. Alcohol licensing policy

Nicholls' 2009 *Knowledge Transfer Fellowship* involved a series of regional meetings which attracted licensing officials, public health, police and trade representatives.

<http://www.swpho.nhs.uk/resource/item.aspx?RID=89492> This was one of the first systematic attempts to create a licensing and public health forum. Subsequently, Nicholls was part of an expert group convened by Alcohol Focus Scotland (AFS) whose report *Re-thinking Alcohol Licensing* provided the basis for a major proposed reform of licensing in Scotland (6). Nicholls also established a UK-wide network on licensing and public health including representatives from the NHS, the Local Government Association, the Department of Health, and a number of alcohol charities. Nicholls wrote an invited commentary on the 2012 Government Alcohol Strategy for *Drugs: Education, Prevention and Policy*, as well as Alcohol Research UK's formal response to the Strategy consultation (7).

3. References to the research

- 1) Nicholls, J. (2009) *The Politics of Alcohol: A History of the Drink Question in England*. Manchester: Manchester University Press
- 2) Nicholls, J. (2011) 'On the Origins and Progress of Temperance', *The Social History of Alcohol and Drugs* 25.1.
- 3) Nicholls, J. (2011) 'UK News Reporting of Alcohol: An Analysis of Television and Newspaper Coverage', *Drugs: Education, Prevention and Policy* 18.3.
- 4) Nicholls, J. (2012) 'Everyday, Everywhere: Alcohol Marketing and Social Media – Current Trends', *Alcohol and Alcoholism* 47. 4.

Cited in: McCreanor, T. et al., (2013) 'Youth Drinking Cultures, Social Networking and Alcohol Marketing: Implications for Public Health', *Critical Public Health* 23:1; Fogarty, A. and Chapman, S. (2012) 'Advocates, Interest Groups and Australian News Coverage of Alcohol Advertising: Content and Framing Analysis', *BMC Public Health* 12: 727; Brodmerkel, S. and Carah, N. (2013) 'Alcohol Brands on Facebook: The Challenges of Regulating Brands on Social Media', *Journal of Public Affairs* 13.3; de Bruijn, A. et al. (2012) *Report on the Impact of European Alcohol Marketing Exposure on Youth Alcohol Expectancies and Youth Drinking* (Auropean Commission / Alcohol Measures for Public Health Research Alliance); Laaksonen, C. et al. (2012) 'Health Promotion in Adolescence: What about the Social Media?' *Journal of Finnish Universities of Applied Science* 4; 'Burton, S, Dadich, A. and Slobodova, A. (2013) 'Competing Voices: Marketing and Counter-Marketing Alcohol on Twitter', *Journal of Non-Profit and Public Sector Marketing* 25:2.

- 5) Nicholls, J. (2012) 'Time for Reform: Alcohol Policy and Culture Change in England since 2000', *British Politics* 7.3.
- 6) Nicholls, J. (2012) 'The Government's Alcohol Strategy 2012: Alcohol Policy at a Turning point?', *Drugs: Education Prevention and Policy* 19.5.

Grants at Bath Spa University

2011-12: British Academy Mid-Career Fellowship (£78,233): *The Altered State: Public Discourse and Alcohol in England and Wales since 2000*.

2008-12: Alcohol Education Research Council (with Alcohol Focus Scotland, £6,722).

2010-11: Arts and Humanities Research Council (£33,295): *Alcohol and Public Health – Culture Policy and Delivery*.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

1. Histories of drinking culture and policy in the UK

Nicholls' book *The Politics of Alcohol* received positive reviews, including selection as a *Choice* 'Outstanding Academic Title' in 2010. Nicholls was invited to present key findings from the book in both oral (Evidence: 23rd April 2009) and written form to the Health Select Committee in 2009. He is cited in the final report of the committee, January 2010(1), which contains an introductory chapter dedicated to putting alcohol policy in historical context. Nicholls' evidence on the impact of policy on drinking culture was key to the Committee concluding that Government had a clear capacity to influence drinking behaviours. His contribution to the Alcohol Focus Scotland expert group on licensing provided historical support for the assertion that drinking behaviours could be influenced by policy. His evidence on the downturn in consumption in the 1930s and 1940s has been used extensively by Alcohol Focus Scotland in their work with the Scottish Government, and *Rethinking Alcohol Licensing* has directly shaped proposed amendments to Scottish licensing legislation (2). The published version of his report to Alcohol Focus Scotland is currently the only single-article overview of Scottish licensing history available (3).

Nicholls' 2009 Knowledge Transfer Fellowship was designed to explore the relevance of historical knowledge to frontline alcohol service providers. Four day-long workshops (Plymouth 14/2/11; Bristol 28/2/11; Taunton 7/3/11; and Poole 17/2/11) brought together a total of over 100 participants from across the South West of England, including senior NHS commissioners, heads of local authority licensing teams, police officers, service providers, trade representatives and academics. The final report of the project has been downloaded from the South West Public Health observatory over 500 times and is also available on the Public Health England Alcohol Learning Centre website. In addition to four day-long workshops, Nicholls ran shorter workshops at the Dartington Hall public health residential school in October 2009 and September 2011, each attended by around thirty senior health commissioners.

Nicholls' work on the history of alcohol has attracted widespread public attention beyond policy forums. He was commissioned to write an article which formed the cover story for the January 2010 edition of *History Today*. His book provided a key source for the 2010 Radio 4 ten-part series *Britain on the Bottle*, for which Nicholls was also interviewed July 2010 (3). He has given public lectures on alcohol history at the Wellcome Institute (20/4/12) and he has discussed alcohol history on *Thinking Allowed* (Radio 4) twice (19/10/09 and 6/2/12).

2. Alcohol and the media

Nicholls' research and publications on social media marketing and his involvement in the early stages (March 2011) of revisions for the fifth edition [Portman Group Code of Practice on Alcohol Standards](#) (November 2012) helped ensure that social media activity was captured by the revised regulations:

3. Alcohol licensing policy

Nicholls involvement in the *Rethinking Alcohol Licensing* project with Alcohol Focus Scotland has had a demonstrable and significant impact on Scottish licensing policy at a national and local level. The key recommendations from the report formed the basis of proposed amendments to the 2005 Licensing Act which were released for consultation in 2012 (2). As part of this and the follow-up project 'Licensing and Public Health: From Principles to Practice', Nicholls established (June 2011) a UK-wide stakeholder network on licensing and public health. This led directly to the co-production of a Local Government Association / Alcohol Research UK guidance paper on licensing and public health which has been very widely accessed by local health commissioners and licensing teams in England and Wales (5). The network activities have informed the work of the Safe, Sociable London partnership including the development of a licensing and public health toolkit for all London authorities; they have also informed the activities of two major alcohol advocacy organisations: DrinkWise North West and Balance North East, both of whom are strongly supporting the development of links between health and licensing in their regions. Nicholls has spoken at events organised by both groups.

Nicholls was directly involved in discussions (July-September 2012) with the Department of Health prior to the launch (in November) of the consultation on the 2012 Alcohol Strategy, specifically regarding the role of public health in licensing practice. He took part in two invited technical groups (at the Department of Health and the Home Office) which guided Government thinking on key aspects of the Alcohol Strategy. He has had numerous meeting with alcohol policy leads at the Department of Health and Home Office outside of these forums and, and he was also asked (July 2012) to provide a historical overview for an initial symposium on alcohol harm chaired by the Chief Medical Officer as part of her work towards revising national guidelines on alcohol. Since leaving Bath Spa University, Nicholls continues to contribute to the development of national and regional policy initiatives in his work at Alcohol Research UK.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- 1) Report: Health Select Committee (2010) *Alcohol: First Report of Session 2009-10* HC151-1. <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmhealth/151/15102.htm>
- 2) Report: MacNaughton, P. and Gillan, E. (2011) *Rethinking Alcohol Licensing*. Edinburgh: Alcohol Focus Scotland. <http://www.alcohol-focus-scotland.org.uk/view/article/104-re-thinking-alcohol-licensing>
To read in conjunction with Scottish Government, *Further Options for Alcohol Licensing – Consultation Paper* <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0041/00411123.pdf>
- 3) Report: Nicholls, J., Juett, L., Miller, R. (2011) *Alcohol and Public Health: Culture, Policy and Delivery* (Final report of the Alcohol Culture Exchange project). <http://www.swpho.nhs.uk/resource/item.aspx?RID=89492>
- 4) Broadcast: *Britain on the Bottle: Alcohol and the State*, Radio 4 – first aired 2010. Available online here <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00t1q76>
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0041/00411123.pdf>
- 5) Broadcast: Radio 4, *Thinking Allowed: The Politics of Alcohol - Cooperation* <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01bb7jt>
- 6) Report: Local Government Association and Alcohol Research UK (January 2013) *Public health and alcohol licensing in England*. London: LGA and ARUK. http://www.local.gov.uk/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=a9c78d54-db3f-4d8f-bef2-d915dc8db1d5&groupId=10180
- 7) Individual: Chief Executive, Alcohol Focus Scotland. Impact on public policy.
- 8) Individual: Chief Executive, Alcohol Research UK. Impact on public policy.
- 9) Individual: Senior Public Health Communications and Policy Manager, Office of the Director of Public Health, Plymouth City Council. Impact on public policy, regional.