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**“If she’s drunk, she’s easy”: Femininity, binge drinking and
music videos**

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Abstract

Young New Zealand women continue to drink more than previous generations. Research demonstrates that legislation, access, changing gender roles, identity, marketing and culture contribute to the current desire that many young people, including women, have for the excessive consumption of alcohol. The current study sought to explore popular youth culture, namely music videos, to understand the ways in which young women engage with and understand such media and the role it plays in drinking cultures. Three music videos were used to stimulate discussions surrounding gender, identity and alcohol consumption among four friendship groups, each containing three female participants. Participants were aged between 18-25 years and came from mixed ethnic backgrounds in Auckland, New Zealand. Three music videos were selected for their inclusion of portrayals of femininity and binge drinking (by Katy Perry, The Paradiso Girls and Cobra Starship). The music videos were shown to the groups, and questions prompted discussion following each. The discussions were transcribed verbatim, and subjected to a discursive analysis which identified four key discourses that participants drew on during their discussions. The “contemporary feminist discourse” constructed women as agentic; making conscious choices regarding identity, behaviour and consumption. Limits and boundaries were emphasised in relation to alcohol consumption and self-presentation. The “gender inequality discourse” illustrated women’s inferior positioning in relation to men. It highlighted a tendency to define equality by comparing women directly to men and the tensions this creates. In the “female objectification discourse” music video representations of women were constructed as exploitative, objectifying and unrealistic. Concern was raised over female vulnerability to sexually motivated crimes and exposure to the music videos prompted body image concerns for some participants. Finally, the “normative teenage phase of experimentation discourse” discussed binge drinking in terms of a necessary process for discovering identity and consumption limits, while emphasising the limited temporality of this period. These discourses highlighted a tension between the realities of young female experience and competing ideals presented in popular culture, which illustrates the dilemmatic nature of contemporary femininity.

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