Women, work and wine

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ABSTRACT

AIMS – There are many grey zones between work and leisure time, where colleagues drink together. Managers are more often involved in grey-zone situations than other employees, and the managerial arena is dominated by men. What is the significance of female managers' visibility in their understanding of their own consumption of alcohol? What leads female managers to moderate their work-related alcohol consumption? DATA AND METHODS – To capture the female managers' perspectives, we conducted 13 in-depth interviews. The female managers represented various kinds of work within care or nursing, media or publishing, public administration and commodity trading. RESULTS – The female managers' reflections and experiences of consuming alcohol in grey zones explain how their heightened visibility as women leads them to moderate their alcohol consumption. Three themes were especially salient: (1) need to be in control, (2) concern about stigmatisation, and (3) life stages marked with caring tasks. CONCLUSIONS – The results show the importance of external factors in work-related drinking. Women's visibility is significant in relation to cultural dimensions, moderating work-related drinking even when women are managers. The women place demands upon themselves based on their own conceptions of others' expectations of female managers.

KEY WORDS – alcohol, women, work, consumption, culture, expectations, in-depth interviews.

Introduction

Alcohol is drunk here, and I prefer to drink rather little in these contexts, since I am a manager, you see? (Informant 13)

The Norwegian culture of alcohol has changed. Drinking has become common (Horverak & Bye 2007). Women's alcohol consumption has been increasing for several decades (Snare 1989; Bergmark 2002; Horverak & Bye 2007; Ravndal 2008; Vedøy & Skretting 2009), but even so, women drink less, and less often than men do (Ravndal 2008; Østhus et al. 2011). Gender differences are not constant, however,

as women's and men's lifestyles have become more similar. Women earn their own money, have more leisure time and have many occasions to drink alcohol (Ravndal 2008). Changes in women's lifestyles and opportunities have led to a convergence hypothesis: changing gender roles are thought to counteract biological differences in women's and men's reactions to alcohol consumption (Wilsnack et al. 2000). Gender roles may have changed, but the hypothesis has not been confirmed. Bergmark (2004) shows that alcohol consumption has generally increased both among women and men and that social background and

demographic factors have become less significant. A Swedish study indicates a convergence from 1979 to 2003 with 'binge drinking' increasing among women and decreasing among men (Bergmark 2004). The multinational study by Wilsnack et al. (2009) found gender differences in drinking patterns, and they propose that 'gender differences in drinking behaviour are modified by cultural and not just biological factors' (Wilsnack et al. 2009,1496).

Horverak and Bye (2007) have pointed out that alcohol consumption tends to increase with higher levels of education and income and that the difference in women's and men's drinking patterns is less pronounced among civil servants than among labourers. This may imply that women's and men's drinking patterns are more similar among managers. Alcohol is easily available to managers in the context of work. A survey in Norway of 13 female-dominated companies (N=6300)[1] demonstrated that managers have a more risky alcohol consumption than other employees, but that female managers drink alcohol less often than male managers do. The same study showed that female employees also have less risky alcohol consumption than men in terms of the AUDIT Alcohol Screening Test (Skutle et al. 2009). We wanted to gain a better understanding of the findings of the survey, and with the help of individual in-depth interviews, conducted in connection with the original study with 13 female mangers in the same companies, this article takes some of the results by Skutle et al. somewhat further.

Female managers

In a formally equal rights Norway, management still remains a typically male do-main, while caring is seen as a typically female task (Gullikstad & Rasmussen 2004). Power and masculinity in working life are closely linked. With respect to equal rights at work, studies commonly look at the number of women in managerial positions (Ellingsæter & Solheim 2002). Men still dominate many areas of Norwegian working life: they are in the majority as owners, founders, daily managers and directors. Statistics Norway (SSB) figures show that in 2008 women made up 31 per cent of all managers. The proportion of female senior executives was lower, at 20 per cent, whereas the share of middle managers was somewhat higher, at 30 per cent (www.ssb.no). Gulbrandsen et al. (2002) also demonstrate the conspicuousness of male dominance at the managerial level in most sectors. What we have aimed at is not to find out why there are fewer female managers or which conditions can explain this disproportion, but we have rather sought to understand another aspect of gendering: what is the significance of the fact that female managers are few and thereby especially visible, and more precisely, how this impacts on their drinking patterns.

That there are few female managers means that they are often alone in a male-dominated environment. Kanter (1993) stresses the importance of recognising the significance of being a lone woman among men at work. She believes that this very condition of being a rarity – not being female in itself – places female managers in a special position. Kanter discusses how female managers can feel that they are being observed, both for how they as *women* tend to their managerial tasks, and how they as *managers* live up to being women. Women in managerial positions must

often work harder than men to be able to show that they are competent, and so they tend to develop security-seeking behaviours and refrain from taking risks (Kanter 1993).

Elin Ørjasæter, a Norwegian commentator and former headhunter, describes how being a woman in certain areas of work equals standing out. One would have to be born with an unusual amount of social self-confidence and intelligence to be able to deal with such an alien situation day after day (Ørjasæter 2004). Women are thus an interesting group precisely because they are in a situation in which they experience being so visible. What does this visibility suggest in terms of their alcohol consumption?

Studying a group of female media students, Lalander (1998) found that they distanced themselves from men and other women by consuming alcohol in a controlled manner and that they thereby gained an imaginary feeling of control over those who drank with less control. Through their moderate drinking manners the women feel that they are stronger and more in possession of self-control in the drinking setting than others, that is, men and women who get drunk and out of control. Alcohol thus acquires a symbolic meaning and can be used in the process of identity construction.

Alcohol and working life

Drinking is affected by the social context. One group's drinking patterns comprise a variety of drinking situations that occur in particular social contexts (Horverak & Bye 2007). Working life lays the groundwork for drinking situations in the 'grey-zone' space between working hours and spare time. Changes in working life have created new occasions for alcohol consumption. Less is drunk during working hours, but more in situations of a more social sort that can be related to collegiality (Nesvåg 2005). A growing proportion of alcohol consumption among adults occurs in this grey zone between working hours and spare time (Nesvåg & Lie 2004). Porsfelt (2007) has studied drinking situations among colleagues *after work* and sees the bar as a *company's third space*. Sagvaag (2007) also shows how employees may find it hard to distinguish between private and job-related drinking because the working-life arena is not limited to the job itself, but also encroaches on the spare-time arena for men and the familial arena for women who have caring responsibilities.

It is because alcohol consumption occurs in a context, in this case the context of work, that it is fruitful to use a cultural model to see the connection between the work environment and alcohol consumption. Ames and Janes (1992) have examined how a company's culture can promote a problematic drinking pattern among employees. They have studied how normative regulation, the quality and organisation of work, and external factors can affect the development of drinking subcultures. Clearly, cultural aspects of the workplace and relationships in the family arena influence work-related use of alcohol. The cultural aspects at the workplace affect the development of drinking subcultures, which are likely to lead to increased drinking and drinking problems, including work-related drinking problems.

The absence of social controls at the workplace can cause increased alcohol

consumption. There are norms that pre-scribe an acceptable standard for work-related alcohol consumption in drinking situations in all workplaces. These norms contribute to regulating behaviour. The social controls can be made clear through written formulations (such as company policy on intoxicants), or informally through values, attitudes and expectations practised at the workplace. Social controls also affect the availability of alcohol, both the opportunities of drinking alcohol at work (physical availability) and the man-ner in which the people around them drink (social availability) (Ames & Janes 1992).

Ames and Janes give examples of the quality and organisation of the work itself influencing the employees' alcohol con-sumption. Work-related stress or aliena-tion in being unable to influence the work process are both factors of the quality and organisation at work. Also, external fac-tors beyond the workplace can impact on alcohol consumption, such as the em-ployee's own life stage. These factors can advance or obstruct the development of limited collegiality where much alcohol is consumed, that is, drinking subcultures (Ames & Janes 1992). We challenge the ho-listic model of Ames and Janes about how cultural factors influence work-related problems by highlighting the opposite: how cultural factors can work as protect-ing factors on drinking problems.

The question

How we drink together depends on the context of drinking. In working life, there are many grey zones where colleagues drink together. Managers are more often involved in grey-zone situations than oth-er employees (Skutle et al. 2009), and the managerial arena is dominated by men. In such circumstances, female managers are often especially visible. Unlike with men, alcohol dependency is more preva-lent among women in higher occupational positions (Head et al. 2004). This is con-sistent with the finding of Skutle et al. (2009). Female managers consume alcohol in a more risky manner than do women at lower levels in the company (Skutle et al. 2009).

In this study we highlight women's re-flections on their work-related use of alco-hol as female leaders. We are interested in the relevance of their position as leaders, as women and as female leaders: What, ac-cording to the interviewees, regulates their work-related drinking?

Methods and data

We investigate the perspectives of female managers through their experiences of re-lationships with colleagues and the work environment when alcohol is drunk in the grey zone. The objective is to describe the social patterns from the position in which the actors find themselves. To investigate the female managers' perspectives, we con-ducted in-depth interviews.[2] We recruited the interviewees via contact persons in the business.[3] The interview guide was em-pirically anchored in a survey conducted at the informants' workplace (Skutle et al. 2009; Buvik & Frøyland 2010), and some of the quotes analysed in this article serve as illustrations in the survey report (Skutle et al. 2009; Buvik & Frøyland 2010). The survey report focuses on the alcohol use among all employees in order to identify a kind of 'business diagnosis' based on the overview of the alcohol culture and the

Table 1. Summary of the informants' work status

	Private enterprise	Public enterprise
Senior manager	2	3
Middle manager	4	4

informants' descriptions of their experiences. The article focuses on the female leaders' reflections about what influences their work-related drinking and what influences the trends in general. In order to highlight the deeper meaning of the reflections and to explore the 'business diagnosis' as a phenomenon, we examine the qualitative interviews in accordance with methods for analysing and interpreting social phenomena (see below). This makes it possible to reflect on drinking trends among female leaders and on the relationship between cultural factors and possible protecting factors. This will help us to develop knowledge for intervention instead of just describing trends and defining a 'business diagnosis'.

A randomly selected sample of female managers was recruited from the project group.[4] The female managers represented various kinds of work within care and nursing, media and publishing, public administration and commodity trading. Thirteen female managers were individually interviewed in depth. Half of them came from private companies, the other half from public enterprises. The interviewees included both middle and senior managers (see Table 1).

The women in our study were between 35 and 60 years of age, most between 40 and 50. The senior managers were somewhat older than the middle managers, which probably reflects that it takes longer to reach a senior position. One of the informants had young children, and the rest had either teenage or adult children.

The interviews followed a semi-structured interview guide. The themes were not followed strictly. The themes to be viewed against the survey report were the company's alcohol culture; grey zones; leadership role; gender differences; boundaries of acceptable behaviour; and responses to unacceptable behaviour. We strove to follow the interviewees' unforeseen trains of thought and to ask spontaneous questions (Kvale 1997). We sought to follow up on the informants' answers, grouping them into themes, and were attentive to the raising of new themes (Widerberg 2010). Such flexibility is both a necessary condition for studies of social phenomena and a strong point of qualitative methods. The interviewer (Buvik) was open to the informants' focus, also presenting provisional interpretations from time to time, which could be corrected by the informants. The interaction between the interviewer and the informant was important and became an integral part of the material (see Järvinen 2004).

The interviews lasted between one and two hours, and took place at the informants' workplace. Widerberg (2001) underlines the advantages of conducting interviews at the interviewee's workplace, which gives the interviewer experiences and information that matter both in terms

of the interviews and the ensuing analysis. The interviews were marked by interruptions by colleagues and the telephone (cf. Johannessen et al. 2007). Interviewing at the workplace nevertheless offered interesting opportunities, such as one of the informants showing her electronic diary and going through all the grey-zone activities of the previous month.

Extensive notes were taken during the interviews and were written out immediately after the interview while the informant's voice was still present. This affected the material because the interpretation of the data began during the interview situation itself, where the interviewer had already determined what was important and thus noted it. At the same time, the quotations were less exactly reproduced, a word or two could be missing, but the meaning was not lost. The written notes represent the first step of the data reduction on the background of themes identified in the survey rapport (Skutle et al. 2009) and are as such a theory-driven template of analysis (Miller and Crabtree 1999; Malterud 2003). The notes were then analysed by content analysis (Kvale 1997; Malterud 2003): they were reduced to minor themes, which again were categorised to identify major themes. We ended up with three superior themes that were shared by all the informants and were linked to the outside variable of being a female manager (Ritchie and Lewis 2003).

When managers are interviewed, there is a chance of their giving prepared presentations that are only expressions of the organisation's official views (Repstad 1993). This occurred in some of the interviews. In some, it was evident that the informants wished to present a picture of themselves as purposeful and controlled managers. The informants' self-presentations and stories can be regarded as a negotiation of presenting an identity that is as reasonable and meaningful as possible in the current context (see Järvinen 2004). The fact that the interviewer was employed at the Workplace Advisory Centre (AKAN)[5] probably also influenced the informants. In response to an opening question such as 'Can you say something about your workplace?', certain informants replied, 'We have no problems with alcohol here', or 'There is not much drinking at this workplace.' (Skutle et al. 2009, 17). Some informants asked for confirmation that the interviewer did not think that they drank too much. This was perhaps due to the fact that the interviewer represented an organisation which works with preventive strategies. In these situations it was important that the interviewers were empathetic and supportive (see Repstad 1993).

Repstad (1993) has pointed out that managers are often effective and rational, and that they like to talk about facts rather than feelings. Many managers are used to setting the conditions and taking the initiative, so they do not appreciate preliminary small talk by the researcher. This seemed to be the case in most of the interviews. For questions about the workplace, the interviewer was adviced to turn to the organisational chart on the enterprise's homepages. In all the interviews, the managers became more relaxed and willing to take the interviewer into their confidence during the course of the interview, and the contact between the interviewer and the informant appeared to be good.

Results

The female managers' reflections and experiences with alcohol consumption in grey zones explain how their heightened visibility as women and leaders leads them to moderate their alcohol consumption. In order to understand what female leaders mean regulates their work-related drinking, three themes arise as especially salient: (1) the need to be in control, (2) a concern about stigmatisation, and (3) life stages marked with caring tasks of motherhood. Below, we discuss these factors and relate the findings to previous studies. We seek to understand the women's experiences in relation to Ames and Janes' (1992) model of the significance of cultural dimensions of drinking subcultures.

1. The need to be in control

Several of the informants say that they drink in many more situations than they would if they were not in a managerial position. Yet it appears that they consume alcohol moderately in the context of work. They participate in many situations, but drink modestly. This quotation from a senior manager in the media industry illustrates the point:

I taste a little of each glass, and then I leave it. We women do not tolerate alcohol as much as men. I cannot drink all that is served. Informant 10

Several of the women explain their moderate consumption as a result of a need to be in control. Some connect this requisite to the managerial role in general, while others feel that as women they have a greater need to be in control as they are more vulnerable to criticism than male managers.

In the interviews, we focused on what it meant to be a manager in an enterprise and how this possibly had an effect on job-related drinking. One middle manager from the mental health care sector said:

I am a manager; I am not part of the gang. And so I am always the manager. I have taken this position in all areas. I would never go with someone from the company to a home party, where both discussion and the intake of red wine increase throughout the night. That is not how I want to do things. I am always conscious of that. Informant 6

The need to be in control that the women expressed reflects how they wish to be regarded as responsible and reliable, and they thus also feel that they should drink moderately in work-related contexts. As one school principal said:

Yes, to be sure, I have to be more careful about how much I drink. I certainly feel that I have that responsibility. I cannot drink like the others; it wouldn't be very smart. Informant 1

Some of the female managers commented: 'Well, I'd rather have a couple of glasses in my hotel room afterwards.' It appears that all the female managers we interviewed said that they were concerned about how they appeared as managers, also on occasions where alcohol is served. The women presented themselves as being responsible and controlled – and they did not wish to be drunk in front of their employees. This could also be true for male leaders, but the female managers felt that they were in an especially visible position as both women

and managers. A senior manager from the media industry reported:

> We female managers notice it very much. More demands are imposed on female managers than on male managers. Women are more exposed to criticism and negative expectations. Working life is not equal with respect to attitudes to women and men. There are utopias for female and male managers, and I also believe that women expect more of women. (…) And alcohol is a part of the picture, because if you don't have control over alcohol and your intake of alcohol, then you don't have control over yourself. Informant 9

The informants related the visibility of being a female manager to the need to be in control. Because they were so visible as a woman *and* a manager, they had to exercise even more control. At the same time, it was clear that many felt that they had to perform better as a female manager. This also affects work-related alcohol consumption. As one middle manager in a big public company put it:

> But it is certainly true that female managers need to be better. They have to prove themselves more than men. (…) There are more demands on a female manager – and this applies both to our conduct with alcohol and to our conduct with flirting at the workplace. Informant 8

She continued:

> Women get noticed more easily and they are more visible. I have rarely seen a female manager drunk. That would be noticed. I have seen few women in central positions drunk, but I have seen men [in corresponding positions] who have had too much. Informant 8

The female informants clearly showed that they were preoccupied with the expectations they had to live up to as female managers. The expectations functioned as a social control and as a moderating factor of work-related alcohol consumption. None of the informants gave examples of themselves having lost control or having become more intoxicated than was desired. They were very demanding on themselves and gave themselves little room for error.

The social controls were regarded differently when managers met other managers. The female managers took part in managerial groups, which have their own norms, values and expectations on drinking situations. How often managers gathered together varied, but there were many examples of the female managers in work-related situations where alcohol was a central part. A middle manager in a private company said: '*Managers have indeed several meetings with a dinner afterwards, and then there is certainly more drinking.*'(Informant 5) A middle manager from the public health care sector mentioned: '*As managers we have several gatherings throughout the year and have higher priority to participate in seminars, study trips and foreign travel – all of these are forums where there is drinking.*' (Informant 3)

Several of the women reported that there were different expectations about drinking situations within managerial groups. It is easier to relax at managerial meetings,

since one does not have to be concerned about how they appear to their subordinates. A middle manager from the public health sector talked about the managerial gatherings that she is involved in: '*There I meet colleagues on my own managerial level, and it is more legitimate for me to become a little more intoxicated.*'(Informant 13). Another middle manager from the public health care sector said much the same: '*But I have a more relaxed attitude to alcohol with my equals. When we are more equal, there is also more drinking.*' (Informant 12). It appears as though managers allow themselves to drink more alcohol when they are with other managers and in a more closed environment where there are other normative regulations of alcohol consumption.

This did not apply to all of the informants, however. Even if many of the managers said that there were many drinking situations, most were keen to point out that alcohol consumption is still moderate in these situations, depending on the alcohol culture in the managerial groups. Again, we see that the female managers present themselves as responsible and in control. One middle manager from the mental health care sector declared:

> *And it is certainly true that managers meet more often than other employees who only have a Christmas dinner and a summer party. I believe that managers have more opportunities, but there is not much drinking anyway; it is quite modest.* Informant 8

Most of the managers confirmed that there were many situations of alcohol being served, but that alcohol consumption in each situation was limited. A senior manager from a private company reported:

> *And as a manager I certainly participate in many conferences and other functions, and then, you know, there are dinners where wine is served with the food. And then there is also a lot of entertainment and international meetings. And so wine is served, but it is always in moderate amounts. We are rather strict, and intoxication is not accepted.* Informant 9

This citation also shows that there is not necessarily a discrepancy between the limits the women create themselves and the company's official guidelines. Managers have greater access to work-related situations where alcohol is served, and they can develop their own cultures of alcohol consumption, where the normative regulations and social controls can become different from the 'official' ones of the enterprise, but we see that female leaders themselves have strict standards for drinking.

2. A concern about stigmatisation

It appears that the enterprises have a culture of alcohol that imposes a special kind of expectation on female managers. The women feel that they have to behave according to other values and norms than men do. These women experience the imposition of stricter social controls.

In this study we sought to elicit the women's experiences of whether there were different boundaries for women and men for work-related intoxication. The informants believed most often that it was acceptable to have *fun*, but that no one

should be *intoxicated*. The quotation below, from a senior manager in the media industry, is typical of how the women described the expectations placed on drinking situations: '*One should not get drunk; that is not the intention. The culture is to drink, but at the same time to be in control.*' (Informant 10).

She continued:

> *The expectations in these situations are that no one is to get drunk, but if you were to drink everything you are served, you would get drunk! I could not manage to drink everything that is served.* Informant 10

In reflecting on their own work-related alcohol consumption, the women in our study explained that they drank moderately because they found that female intoxication was inappropriate and stigmatising. Drunken men, in their view, are regarded differently. The principal at one school said:

> '*It is much more socially acceptable for a man to get drunk (…) Drunken women are considered to be whores, and men would certainly not want to have whores if they are free.*' (Informant 1).

Another middle manager from the mental health care sector spoke of the same thing:

> '*We women are the ones who need to be in control in such situations. Men can take more liberties and become loutish, but it does not suit a woman, you know.*' (Informant 13).

The informants were asked to describe concrete episodes where female or male employees had become intoxicated. It was quite interesting to note that several of the female informants described what men *did* when they were drunk, but they also talked about how women *appeared* when they were drunk in the context of work. The informants themselves raised this topic. One middle manager from the publishing industry said:

> *Good-time guys grin and talk and suddenly start smoking, even if they don't normally do that – they quite simply become good-time guys. Meanwhile the girls are tripping about in short skirts and with high heels.* Informant 7

She continued to talk about how an intoxicated woman ought not to appear:

> *Women get noisier when they drink. That they scream and cackle is totally ok, but when they get heavy eyelids and take off their high heels because they cannot walk in them in anymore, then it is not ok.* Informant 7

The informants themselves raised the problems connected to the stigmatising nature of female intoxication – which they agreed on. It appears that the informal normative regulations at the workplace, here expressed as a concern about stigmatisation, is an important factor in explaining why female managers drink relatively moderately.

Several of the women said that they were a little embarrassed by their own attitudes, admitting that '*I certainly have a few stereotypical opinions, but that is indeed*

how it actually is!' (Informant 7). It seems that they regard their own views as insufficiently 'politically correct', and they wish that they believed that it was just as acceptable for a woman to be intoxicated as it is for a man. All the same, they claimed that drunken women were not as acceptable as drunken men. As a middle manager from the public health care sector declared:

> *But it is quite true that glamour abandons us when we get drunk. First, one uses a lot of time dressing up, and then you have to be carried home. There is not much glamour in that.* Informant 14

Even if the women thought that their own attitudes were old-fashioned, they seem to abide by these norms or notions – and when this happens, the norms become truths.

We have seen that the female managers' alcohol consumption in the context of work may be moderated by their own need to be in control, their self-discipline, and their experiences of female drunkenness as being stigmatising. Work-related drinking is not exclusively dependent on social control at the workplace, for other conditions are also significant. A third factor that the women stressed was that their caring responsibilities at home can reduce work-related alcohol consumption.

3. Life stages marked with caring tasks

Having responsibility for young children clearly had an effect on drinking habits in general and on work-related drinking situations in particular. One woman, a journalist, around 45 years old with teenage children, expressed succinctly what most of the women specified:

> *When I had young children, I didn't have the energy to go out so often (…) I knew that I had to get up early if I wanted to see my kids.(…) I was so busy when I had young kids, so I wasn't really able to drink so much then.* Informant 12

One senior manager in the publishing industry, a 46-year-old woman with two teenage children, spoke about drinking more at work before she had children: '*And that also changed when I had kids; then I couldn't go along so much. Having children and having a managerial position led to less drinking.*'

The age of the children had a significant effect on alcohol consumption. Younger children led to lower alcohol consumption. The next quotation is illustrative of several of the female managers' accounts, here expressed by a 50-year-old senior manager in the media industry: '*I have four children; the youngest is 11 years old, and so I am not a mother of small children anymore. I drank less alcohol when they were small.*' (Informant 10).

Several of the informants maintained that having children at home led to less work-related alcohol consumption. In one of the enterprises, it was not normal to meet up for an after-work beer on Fridays. The female managers attributed this to colleagues' having small children. One 40-year-old middle manager with two children said: '*It has something to do with the life stage as well. Many of us here are parents of young children, and so we are not used to drinking so much.*'(Informant 8).

Another middle manager, a 55-year-old woman with grown-up children and grandchildren, said that the company's managers tried to meet after work, but many of them did not want to join in:

'Our section has tried, but haven't managed it. And it says something about how it is not really wanted. I don't know why people don't want to come along, perhaps because they have children, but it ought nevertheless to be possible to have a beer before one goes home.' (Informant 5).

The female managers in this study openly showed that caring for children affected their alcohol consumption. They had very little free time and thus encountered fewer drinking situations, and they did not wish to give priority to a Friday after-work beer with colleagues over a Friday 'taco night' with their kids. The female managers tended to their responsibilities at home, not setting aside their role as a mother in order to maintain their managerial responsibilities. One middle manager from the public health care sector, aged 30 with small children noted that she did not want to go out so often with colleagues, because she had children at home:

It is not so important for me to participate so often; every month is too often, and it is completely unnecessary. But it is perhaps because I have young children, so I can't be bothered to use my free time on that. Informant 14

So far we have raised three factors moderating the female managers' alcohol consumption: the need to be in control, con-cerns about the stigmatisation of female intoxication, and caring responsibilities for young children. With the insights from relevant studies on women's alcohol consumption, we consider female managers to be in a special situation in that they do not conform to the norm of what it is to be a manager, which is to be a man. We understand the women's need to be in control in light of the very fact that they are *female managers*. They see themselves as being especially visible at the workplace, in a kind of precarious position. They fear stigmatisation if they were to drink as men do, a fear connected to the norms and expectations directed towards female drinking behaviour. The women also considered life stages with small children as controlling their work-related alcohol consumption.

Norms and expectations tied to being a woman appear significant in all three factors that the women believed had a moderating effect on their alcohol consumption. Ames and Janes (1992) show how cultural dimensions can be risk factors in the development of drinking subcultures at the workplace. We shall now try to understand how cultural dimensions at work influence work-related alcohol consumption for female leaders. By challenging Ames and Janes's model, we can investigate moderating factors, not only those which pose a risk.

Cultural dimensions of female managers' work-related drinking

Control

How can we understand the female managers' focus on the need to be in control when they reflect upon their own experiences with alcohol consumption in grey-

zone situations? Goffman (1968) used the theatre as a metaphor for social life, where actors play their roles both on the stage and backstage. We care about what others think of us, and we normally try to establish or maintain a positive impression through a process of the 'presentation of self'. In Goffman's perspective, situations are seen as being socially organised: they are established and marked with cultural norms of how one ought to behave. Each setting therefore has its own behavioural model of what is appropriate. People have general knowledge and a set of skills that enable them to understand which setting is currently in effect and what is appropriate in it (Goffman 1968). These expectations connected to the managerial role are reinforced when the manager is a woman, precisely because she is more visible. Women therefore meet more exacting expectations of self-control tied to the managerial role.

Goffman has shown how individuals present a self to others. The 'front stage' denotes how one presents oneself to the world, where one is concerned with how others apprehend oneself. One tries to give an impression of oneself that is in agreement with the rules that are in force in society. In contrast, there is also a 'backstage'. Here the individual can relax, engage in activities that are understood to be private and do things that would otherwise be contrary to the expectations of the roles one performs on stage. There are different behavioural expectations front stage and backstage: on the front stage one is more controlled and more formal, as well as less intimate and less personal (Goffman 1968). In the light of this theory, it seems that female managers are on the front stage when they are with employees in the context of work. They are temperate and they consider alcohol to be an element of the backstage, where there is latitude to behave in a less controlled and less formal manner. Alcohol, then, belongs to closed managerial groups or to their private lives.

Kanter (1993) claims that female managers have to work hard to show their competence. Consequently, they behave in a cautious manner and avoid taking risks. Borgen (2006) points out that it is more daunting for women to let their guard down and to get drunk than it is for men, because women are supposed to be controlled and to represent the 'respectable culture'.

That all the women in our study – with one exception – emphasised the value of maintaining control, and that they did not talk about situations where they were not in control, can be understood as a part of their own self-presentation (see Järvinen 2004). They regarded themselves as being sensible and aware, but they painted a picture of other people drinking too much. In our view, the women presented their moderate alcohol consumption as a 'good thing', distancing themselves from excessive intoxication, which was a 'bad thing' (see Järvinen 2004). This kind of self-presentation can be found in Honkasalo's (1989) study on working women who had such a strong work ethic that they went to work even though they had a hangover. For women in managerial positions, it is probably inconceivable to go to work with a hangover, and also impossible for them to work with a hangover. So they have to take care not to end up in that condition. Similar to Lalander's (1998) study, the controlled use of alcohol is a way of gaining imaginary power and control over one's own identity as a female manager. Even if

they do not make a distinct group among their managerial colleagues because they are so few, female managers – like those in the media industry in Lalander's study – obtain an imaginary upper hand over male managers by drinking less than them. In this way they win control over their own identity and can become more successful.

We may not have identified all the situations in which women in leading positions could have drunk too much, because, as Repstad (1993) points out, when it comes to interviewing managers, presentations may be coloured by the organisation's official views. Without prompting, many pointed out that their workplace did not have any problems with alcohol. This may indicate that managers were expressing the organisation's official views.

Stigma
Goffman (1968) describes stigma as being socially constructed. Something is stigmatising because the social environment considers it to be so. Stigma is an unwanted characteristic, deviating from what we expect of a person of a certain type. Whether a characteristic is stigmatising for a person depends on *which* person it is, that is, what we expect of such a person.

We regard the strong need to be in control as being connected with expectations on female alcohol consumption, which Ravndal (2008) has also noted. This point was elaborated on when the women were asked to reflect on what respectable alcohol consumption for men and women meant, and what the boundaries for unacceptable behaviour were in the grey zone.

The female managers' view was that they, as women, by having a high level of alcohol consumption, are more easily stigmatised than men. This appears to remain the case, even though Bergmark (2002) has shown how new cultural patterns and new habits of alcohol intake are normalising well-functioning women who have a high level of alcohol consumption. It appears that cultural norms in society still limit women's drinking (Snare 1989), also at the workplace. Labelling or stigmatising women who consume a lot of alcohol continues to occur (Ravndal 2008).

The traditional female role involves the notion that it is 'not appropriate for women to be drunk', and the same applies to female managers. Snare (1989) claims that drunken women are harshly labelled by their surroundings, and one comes across denunciations of drunken women more often than of men. Many claim that the sight of a drunken woman is repulsive. The antithesis of the sober Madonna is a drunken whore. Drunken women are considered to be not very feminine, but they are sexually more available in men's eyes, hereby the link between drunkenness and the labelling of a woman as a whore (Snare 1989; Borgen 2006). This is in accordance with what some of the female managers said.

The female leaders related their concerns about stigmatisation to their visible position as women, which led to a strong need to be in control. Alcohol had no place in how the women wished to present themselves on the front stage (Goffman 1992). They took few risks (Kanter 1993) and they represented a 'respectable culture' by supporting the norm that women ought not to get drunk (Borgen 2006). Goffman (1992) calls it a façade when a person acts in a general and established manner with an eye to defining the situation for those who are watching.

Experiences with one's own work-related use of alcohol represented a self-representation that is in line both with what is 'good' (Järvinen 2004) and with moral self-control (Honkasalo 1989). The expectations tied to the role of a female manager imply that intoxication would be considered stigmatising (Goffman 1992). That the female managers expressed a concern about stigmatisation as being relevant to their work-related alcohol consumption is something that we regard as a *normative regulation of drinking*, as is it called in Ames and Janes' (1992) model. The informal norms and expectations connected to female managers' behaviour in grey-zone situations were especially meaningful.

Care

Many of the women referred to how periods of caring for small children made their participation in grey zones less relevant. It could be that the job as a social arena is more important for women without children (Ørjasæter 2004). Further, children perhaps have a bigger effect on women's drinking than men's (Room 1996). Having the role of an adult, establishing a family and caring for children restrict alcohol consumption for both women and men, but more so for women (Haavio-Mannila 1991; Ravndal 2008). Women are traditionally seen to be bearers of certain 'female qualifications' for caring. In this way gender itself becomes a qualification, and the job of caring becomes a woman's work (Gullikstad & Rasmussen 2004). Ravndal (2008) believes that there is a myth tied to *Madonna with child*. Women are foremost considered to be caring persons, which is difficult to combine with high levels of alcohol consumption. The norms for female

behaviour thereby protect women from drinking too much (Ravndal 2008).

Regulating drinking

The culture of alcohol at the workplace is important for understanding work-related alcohol consumption. The cultural dimensions in Ames and Janes' model comprise a *normative regulating of drinking, the quality and organisation of work* and *external factors*. These factors can be meaningful in examining the development of drinking subcultures at work.

The normative regulation of alcohol consumption at the workplace is affected by social controls and the availability of alcohol (Ames & Janes 1992). Social controls can be formal, such as policies on intoxicants, which show the enterprise's attitudes towards the use of intoxicants among employees, but they can also appear as unspoken rules that are part of the enterprise's culture. The informants in our study were women in managerial positions, and they seemed to emphasise their position as women and its significance in the social controls at the workplace. Characteristics of the managerial culture can also affect the employees' use of alcohol (Ames & Janes 1992).

The normative regulation of alcohol consumption at a workplace also applies to the availability of alcohol and exposure to drinking situations. The way that colleagues drink affects one's own drinking (Ames & Janes 1992). According to the interviewees, managers are more involved than other employees in grey-zone situations and they thus have greater access to alcohol. Another study has demonstrated that the more grey-zone situations an enterprise offers its employees, the more

work-related drinking there is, along with the development of riskier patterns of consumption (Buvik & Frøyland 2010). Simultaneously, the social availability that is experienced is also significant in that others' drinking patterns affect one's own consumption (Ames & Janes 1992). In our study, while the managerial role and the high physical availability represented a risk of alcohol use, this role also appeared to be a preventative factor because of social controls at the workplace. Still, consumption could increase in situations of managers only. Such managerial gatherings can therefore be seen as a backstage for the female managers (Goffman 1992).

The female leaders reported a work situation they felt comfortable with. They did not feel any alienation. They had a lot to do, could feel significant work-stress, but the challenges were manageable. The quality and organisation of work gave them a kind of well-being.

A common theme that the women stressed as a moderating factor on their work-related use of alcohol was *the need to be in control*. Notions that it is inappropriate for women to get drunk, that it is not very feminine, along with the perception that drunken women are regarded as sexual objects (Snare 1989; Borgen 2006) show that the need to be in control can also be understood as a normative regulation of drinking.

The women also underscored that the *need to be in control* was related to their being managers. However, it is difficult to say whether this experienced need to be in control can primarily be explained by the fact that they are *women* or whether it is the *managerial role* that demands control. It is probably both. It could be that

the women have to live up to even higher expectations tied to the control required of a managerial role inasmuch as they experience being more visible as women. The frameworks for women's behaviour set standards for what is acceptable behaviour in various situations (Goffman 1992). Their self-presentation of being in control (Järvinen 2004) accords with the expectations that managers are to have control. The cultural dimension in Ames and Janes' (1992) model emphasises the lack of control over work relations and the lack of flexibility as possible factors contributing to increased drinking. Even if this dimension appeared to be less relevant in our study, other studies have shown that a larger proportion of female managers experience more stress than is experienced by other female employees (Skutle et al. 2009). Moore, Grunberg, and Greenberg (2003) have also established grounds for believing that female managers may use alcohol to escape. They did not find this explanation among male managers or women in subordinate positions. Richman et al.'s (2006) study of retired university employees also demonstrated a connection between work-related stress and alcohol use. It appears that significant levels of job stress can lead to more work-related drinking. Some of our female informants exemplified this by relating stories about how they had to wind down with a little wine after a hectic day at work, without this leading to problematic alcohol consumption (Sagvaag 2007).

Relationships outside the workplace, for example, the individual's background or life stage, can also be significant for work-related drinking. Periods with small children, which involve caring responsi-

bilities, made participation in grey zones less attractive. This was prominent in the interviews, and it is part of the dimension of external factors in Ames and Janes' (1992) model. The women related that having caring responsibilities at home had a moderating effect on their alcohol consumption, even at work. Ames and Janes give examples of how persons with high alcohol consumption at work to a large degree considered colleagues their most important reference group, whereas persons who drank moderately in the context of work had their identities tied to family and were less involved in the work network.

Having to care for children leads to restricted alcohol use and perhaps has a greater effect on women's drinking than on men's (Room 1996; Haavio-Mannila 1991; Ravndal 2008). Women's 'female qualifications' in caring turn gender into a qualification, and caring work into women's work (Gullikstad & Rasmussen 2004). Earlier, we have seen that being a woman in certain areas of business means standing out, sets higher expectations on the employee and on how the job should be done. According to Ørjasæter (2004) being a senior executive in business and being a woman with children is quite a hazardous combination that can only turn out well for very, very few.

Other relationships also appear to regulate and moderate female managers' use of alcohol in the context of work. Caring responsibilities are preventative factors for work-related use of alcohol, both because the women *wish to* and *must* prioritise time at home. Normative regulations at the workplace are significant, and in our study these regulations seem to be

the most important factor for moderating women's alcohol consumption in the grey zones, whether the enterprises had a clear policy on intoxicants or the norms were more informal. It seems that the female managers were occupied with being good role models for the enterprise and for the culture of alcohol use at the workplace. Moreover, informal social controls were important. The women felt that there were tough demands placed on them: they were expected to be good and controlled managers – also in settings where alcohol was served. The managerial role along with the visibility they experienced as female managers gave the women a need to be in control, which may contribute to a moderate use of alcohol. In addition, we have seen that the women themselves felt that female intoxication was stigmatising, and so they wished to avoid it.

On the other hand, according to the interviewees, alcohol is more available to managers. They participate in several grey-zone situations and are therefore exposed to developing riskier consumption. At the same time, subgroups can emerge, and managers can then develop more bibulous drinking patterns along with other managers. We have also seen that female managers experience significant work-related stress. This can put female managers in a risky position.

The women in the study spoke about themes that we connect to a *normative regulation of drinking*, *external factors* and a certain degree of *organisation and quality of the work*. We shall discuss further how these dimensions affected the women as managers, the dimensions' reciprocal relations and the significance of the emergence of subgroups.
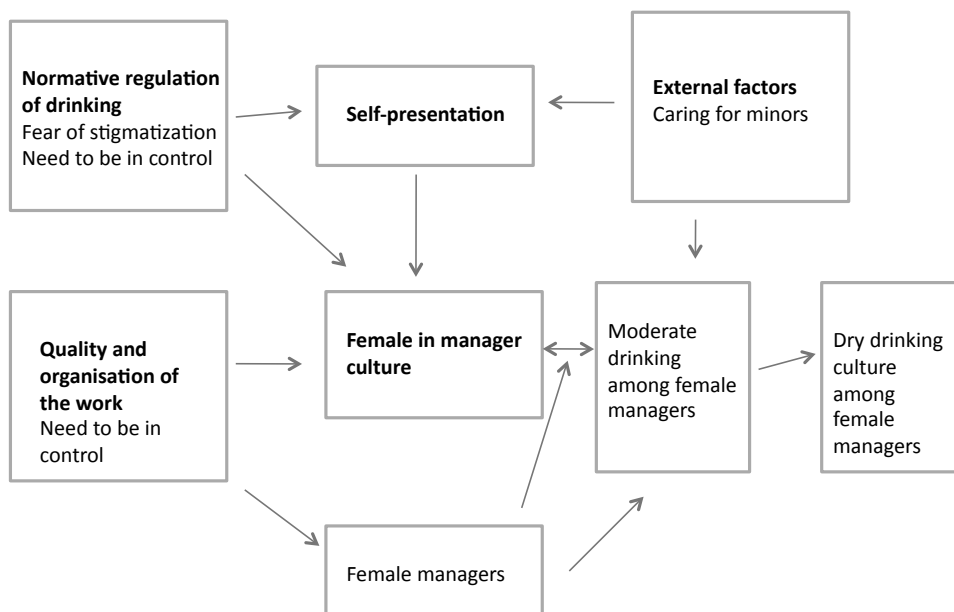
Figure 1. A cultural approach on 'dry' work cultures among female managers, inspired by Ames and Janes' model of an overview of the significance of cultural dimensions on work-related use of alcohol and the development of drinking subcultures.

When the female managers met other managers, belonging to the group seemed to be relevant, while social controls from the employees were absent. One could drink more, which corresponds to Buvik and Frøyland (2010), who point out that homogeneous groups in working life drink together more often in the grey zones. Ames and Janes (1992) claim that the formation of groups can be the foundation of, for example, group solidarity, work identity and life phase.

The interviews suggest that the managerial groups in each workplace can be considered to be subgroups, but in light of the moderate drinking that they reported, we can hardly consider them to be *bibulous subgroups*. There was one exception: managers meet to a greater degree in the grey zone, and these groups employ other types

of norms and expectations, which amounts to another kind of social control. Ames and Janes note that even if subgroups can have positive effects by reducing stress or advancing organisational objectives, the environment can be a risk factor in the development of a drinking pattern that leads to alcohol-related problems (Ames & Janes 1992).

This may be connected to informal norms, attitudes and expectation that exist at the workplace. We have seen how the female managers' need to be in control is grounded in their view of themselves as women in managerial positions. They feel that they are visible and that there are strong social controls for how they ought to behave, and so they feel they should drink moderately when they present themselves on the front stage. Informal normative

regulations at the workplace clearly have a moderating effect on alcohol consumption. On the basis of the themes that have arisen in our study, we challenge Ames and Janes' model. We have attempted to understand how cultural factors hinder work-related drinking instead of promoting bibulous subcultures.

Conclusion

In the introduction, we emphasised that all drinking is contextual and that it is important to see *how* alcohol is drunk and *which meaning* the alcohol has for the women's self-representation. Drinking is affected by the social context in which it occurs, and the culture of alcohol at the workplace has significance for the scale of work-related drinking. In this study we have not examined drinking culture at work in general, but we have rather focused on female managers' work-related alcohol consumption. Women drink more than before, but the expectations attached to the woman's role still seem to check women's consumption. We have shown that the female managers' experiences with work-related alcohol use were strongly affected by their being women and managers. They stressed that they felt *the need to be in control*, which we regard as a normative regulation of drinking. This is affected by the quality and organisation of the work through the women's positions as managers in the organisation. The women also stressed that having to care

for young children contributed to moderate drinking. This shows the relevance of external factors in work-related drinking. Inspired by Ames and Janes' (1992) model of the significance of a cultural dimension in the emergence of bibulous subcultures, we used the model to understand the value of cultural dimensions and the reciprocal relations that lead to the development of a moderate work-related drinking culture among female managers. We see that women's visibility is significant in relation to cultural dimensions, moderating work-related drinking even when women are managers. The women make demands on themselves on the basis of their own conceptions of others' expectations of female managers. The experienced need to be in control can probably be explained by the fact that they are *women* in a *managerial role*. We wanted to highlight the female leaders' understanding of what regulates their work-related drinking and have therefore not focused on men. This requires further study.

Declaration of Interest None.

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NOTES

1 The 13 companies, both small and large companies in the public and private sectors, were chosen by The Bergen Clinics Foundation, an independent private non-profit organisation working to help people overcome drug-addiction, health issues, lifestyle problems and other addictions through treatment, prevention, research and education.

   The survey was sent electronically to the employees' email addresses. Two-thirds of the respondents were women, and about 25% said they were in a management position. The AUDIT Alcohol Screening Test was used as an instrument to assess the prevalence of risky alcohol use (see Skutle et al. 2009).

2 This project has been approved by the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD) and the Data Protection Agency of Norway (Datatilsynet). The form of informed consent was signed. Research ethics demands that anonymity or confidentiality is preserved, and that the informants are notified that they can withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences for them.

3 The survey went to all employees at 13 workplaces (see Skutle et al. 2009).

4 A contact person in each company was asked to give a list of 8–12 female leaders, and we contacted one or two of them. We picked names from the lists randomly, and we did not tell the contact person who we interviewed. The interviewees represented various kinds of work within care and nursing, media and publishing, public administration and commodity trading.

5 The employees at The Workplace Advisory Centre for issues relating to alcohol, drugs and addictive gambling (AKAN) offer advice, guidance and instruction on how Norwegian enterprises can deal with problems of work-related use of intoxicants.

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