

**Third Annual Workshop of the International Research Group  
on Gender and Alcohol**

**Porto, Portugal, June 6-8, 1995**

The International Research Group on Gender and Alcohol (IRGGA) held its third annual workshop June 6-8, 1995, in conjunction with the Kjetil Bruun Society Alcohol Epidemiology Symposium in Porto, Portugal. IRGGA members share an interest in gender-related influences on drinking behavior and drinking problems, and many have conducted community, regional, or national surveys of women's drinking behavior. Twenty-four persons attended the workshop, representing Australia, Canada, the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Israel, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden, and the United States. This year's workshop focused on three areas: (a) discussion and critique of IRGGA members' first collaborative paper to be submitted for publication; (b) presentation by IRGGA members of correlational analyses of consumption and problem consequences variables; and (c) future projects to be developed and implemented by IRGGA members.

**Discussion and Critique of First IRGGA Paper**

IRGGA's first paper to be submitted for publication (probably to the journal Addiction) is based on last year's workshop, in which comparable measures of drinking patterns and problem consequences were used to describe drinking behavior in gender x age subgroups in 10 countries. The summarized IRGGA data strongly supported the universality of gender differences, with males exceeding females on all measures of drinking and drinking-related problems in all countries represented. The paper proposes a theoretical basis for gender differences in drinking patterns and problem consequences that synthesizes biological and sociological influences.

IRGGA members made a number of suggestions for improving the paper, including (a) the need for a better description of the comparison questions from each data set (many of which are approximate comparisons rather than identical questions); (b) restating the hypothesis section as alternative explanations for the observed findings, rather than as specific hypotheses; (c) possible inclusion of the raw data showing how drinking within genders changes across the lifespan, in addition to letter codes for directions of change (Tables 4A and 4B); and (d) general agreement that proposing a theoretical basis for the findings was an important contribution of the paper, and that suggesting additional, alternative theoretical explanations would strengthen this aspect of the paper. After making changes based on the group feedback, another draft of the manuscript will be sent to all co-authors for a final review before submitting the paper to Addiction.

**Presentation of Correlational Analyses**

For the Porto workshop, IRGGA members were asked to bring correlational analyses of selected comparison measures of drinking with problem consequences measures. The

following participants presented their data: J. Fleming (Australia); S. Bondy and J. Ferris (Canada); K. Graham & J. Lock Kunz (Canada; also presented at the June 7 KBS paper session sponsored by IRGGA); L. Kubicka and L. Csemy (Czech Republic; also presented at the IRGGA paper session); R. Neve and R. Knibbe (The Netherlands); F. Spak (Sweden); and R. Wilsnack, S. Wilsnack, & N. Vogeltanz (United States). The University of North Dakota group (Wilsnack, Wilsnack, & Vogeltanz) agreed to take responsibility for summarizing correlational data from the current workshop and preparing a first draft of a paper for publication. K. Graham expressed interest in working with the UND group on this paper.

Following the presentation of findings, IRGGA members discussed limitations of using a correlational analysis for this study, including both statistical and practical considerations. Several alternative methods were suggested, but time did not permit us to reach a consensus. Instead, group members agreed to give the matter more thought, consult their statistician colleagues, if necessary, and send in their recommendations regarding how the analyses should be conducted. Each contributor should send her or his response to the North Dakota group by October 1, 1995.

### **Future Projects and Plans**

K. Graham suggested that some type of correction factor should be used when computing alcohol consumption levels to take into account the fact that women reach higher blood alcohol levels than men when consuming equivalent weight-adjusted amounts of alcohol. Most members agreed with the need to examine this issue, but also agreed that the matter was too complex to reach a decision at the Porto meeting. A work group was formed to examine this issue and prepare recommendations to the larger group. K. Graham will chair this group, which also includes F. Andrews, D. Dawson, T. Greenfield, F. Spak, R. and S. Wilsnack, and N. Vogeltanz. It was suggested that this “gender quantity adjustment group” might address broader measurement issues as well, perhaps including proposing a core set of drinking-related problems and alcohol dependence symptoms that should be included in all drinking surveys. As many members of this work group as possible will meet during the workshop on social consequences of alcohol consumption to be held November 13-17, 1995, at the Addiction Research Foundation in Toronto. Three additional work groups were formed to coordinate collaborative analyses during the coming year. G. Rahav and M. Teichman (Israel) will coordinate a project that will examine personality, family, and gender variables as related to drinking behavior. Other members expressing interest in this group include J. Fleming, K. Graham, S. Weiss (Israel); T. Greenfield indicated that his colleague Karen Trocki may also be interested. L. Kubicka and L. Csemy will coordinate a study examining the associations between gender roles (both individual-level and aggregate-level measures) and drinking patterns; other members include S. Ahlstrom (Finland), K. Bloomfield (Germany), and R. Neve. J. Wiseman (USA) will coordinate a group of IRGGA members interested in qualitative research on gender and alcohol; others interested in this group include F. Andrews, I. Vogt (Germany), and Jim Rooney (USA, suggested by J. Wiseman). R. Neve and N. Vogeltanz volunteered to explore ways of expanding and improving Internet communication among IRGGA members.

### **1996 IRGGA Workshop**

The fourth annual IRGGA workshop will be held in conjunction with the 1996 KBS meeting in Edinburgh, Scotland, probably for 1-2 days preceding the main Symposium. Persons wishing additional information about IRGGA activities should contact Sharon Wilsnack, Department of Neuroscience, University of North Dakota School of Medicine, P.O. Box 9037, Grand Forks, ND 58202-9037, USA. FAX 701 777-3894; Internet address; [sharon.wilsnack@medicine.und.nodak.edu](mailto:sharon.wilsnack@medicine.und.nodak.edu).