

Jane Scott | University of West London, UK

# STUDENT PROFILE



**Jane Scott**

**Course**

PhD Psychology

**Year completed**

2017

**Title of thesis**

*Towards a clearer understanding of the relationship between binge drinking, unplanned sexual behaviour and impulsivity*

In her thesis, Jane examined the relationship between binge drinking, unplanned sexual behaviour and impulsivity. Episodic-style consumption of alcohol is of primary concern from both a physiological and socio-economical perspective and has been associated with an array of negative outcomes including physical injury, drink-driving, criminal involvement and sexual promiscuity. The co-occurrence of binge drinking and unplanned sexual behaviour in young adulthood is broadly acknowledged; however, the psychological factors underlying this relationship remain largely unresolved. There has been a paucity of research incorporating the three elements of binge drinking, unplanned sexual behaviour and impulsivity concurrently.

The aim of the research was to incorporate all three elements utilising both quantitative and qualitative methodology. The quantitative findings revealed significant differences between low and high-binge drinkers on various measures of impulsivity. Most notably, in accordance with the overriding objective, Jane's research found that higher levels of both binge drinking and trait levels of impulsivity uniquely predicted the proclivity to engage in unplanned sexual behaviour. The qualitative analysis revealed that initially the participants had all engaged in a period of unabated drinking driven by their expectancy of the sociability and tension reducing effects of alcohol, an appetite to explore their identities, and a desire to conform to social and peer norms. The participants divulged regretted drunken episodes of behaviour (including unplanned sexual behaviour) to varying degrees, and subsequently, described a detachment from their previous (drunken) selves, an increased self-efficacy to moderate their drinking, and a change to the priorities in their lives.

A unique contribution of the current research has been to determine a positive relationship between binge drinking and unplanned sexual behaviour, utilising the same population, and incorporating diverse methods. In addition, specific dimensions of impulsivity were found to be related to both binge drinking and unplanned sexual activity. Collectively, these findings reflect the ongoing concern regarding potential short and long-term negative consequences to students and young adults who abuse alcohol in an episodic pattern and/or engage in unsafe and unplanned sexual practices.

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**Supervisors:**

**Dr Julia Townshend and Dr Frances Hunt**

Dr Julia Townshend is Research Fellow (Psychology) at the School of Human and Social Sciences at the University of West London

Dr Frances Hunt is Head of Subject (Psychology) at the University of West London