# **Drinking Occasions**

## Comparative Perspectives on Alcohol and Culture

by
Dwight B. Heath

### What is the main purpose or message of this book?

The main purpose of this book is to provide insight into the wide variety of drinking occasions which exist around the world. It is the outgrowth of the author's nearly 40 years of research on drinking practices and about a dozen years of concern about national and international policies as they relate to this important part of human culture. As such, this volume consciously does not focus upon drinking problems, alcohol abuse, or harmful drinking patterns, although those topics are certainly not ignored. Rather, the scientific and epidemiological literature on the adverse health and social consequences of irresponsible drinking is put into the broader context of how people drink, what they do and what they say. In making available an unbiased account of the diversity of normal drinking behavior and largely beneficial drinking patterns, this book seeks to describe how drinking behavior is integrated with a wide range of other human activities instead of existing as an isolated phenomenon.

#### For whom is the book intended?

This book is intended for all those with an interest in the rich variety of drinking practices which exist throughout the world. It is written in a style designed to make it accessible and informative for the general reader while retaining its utility for social scientists, social psychologists, anthropologists, and public health professionals.

#### How can the contents of the book best be summarized?

This book is primarily divided into six investigative chapters. Chapter 1 analyzes the key question of *when* people drink, providing a framework for the manner in which drinking occasions fit into the rhythm of life for individuals, communities, and even whole countries and cultures. Chapter 2 shifts the focus to *where* people drink, showing how the setting often affects the meanings and outcomes of drinking. Chapter 3 then examines *who* drinks, turning the spotlight on such social categories as age, gender, education, occupation, class, ethnicity, and religion. Chapter 4 looks at *how* people drink, any occasion being framed by a certain set of etiquette and paraphernalia. Chapter 5 provides a natural extension to this discussion by introducing *what* people drink, and how different types of drinks relate to each other. And Chapter 6 deals with the issue of *why* people drink — or choose not to drink. It examines medical, religious, esthetic, moral, and other kinds of reasons as well as questions of relevance.

In addition to these 6 main chapters, there is a final chapter which draws upon the broad panorama of human experiences presented in order to offer a few conclusions and implications. This and an extensive list of references offer a springboard for those interested in pursuing a particular topic in more depth.

The International Center for Alcohol Policies (ICAP) is dedicated to helping reduce the abuse of alcohol worldwide and to promoting the understanding of the role of alcohol in society through dialogue and partnerships involving the beverage alcohol industry, the public health community and others interested in alcohol policy. ICAP is a not-for-profit organization supported by twelve major international beverage alcohol companies.

#### **Titles in the Series on Alcohol in Society:**

Drinking Patterns & Their Consequences. (1998). Edited by Marcus Grant & Jorge Litvak.

Alcohol and Emerging Markets: Patterns, Problems, and Responses. (1998) Edited by Marcus Grant.

Alcohol and Pleasure: A Health Perspective. (1999) Edited by Stanton Peele & Marcus Grant.

Drinking Occasions: Comparative Perspectives on Alcohol and Culture. (2000) By Dwight B. Heath.

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