

Review of: "[Commentary] Balancing the bio in a biopsychosocial model of hazardous drinking and alcohol use disorders"

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I have given a close read to both the commentary, as well as the original MacKillop and colleagues' review. Overall, I believe the commentary raises important concerns with respect to the risks associated with viewpoints that are overly deterministic—both genetic and environmental contributions. The commentary also highlights several critical areas that were not adequately captured in the original review, including population-level strategies (e.g., pricing policies) that could have a more rapid and widespread impact on alcohol use. The commentary also emphasizes a potential danger in work that purports that AUD is largely biologically driven by contributing to stigma and misconceptions that place undue responsibility on the individual. Despite this, the commentary concludes that MacKillop and colleagues place an overly biological interpretation on hazardous drinking and alcohol use. I perceived the original article to be more balanced. Moreover, numerous caveats and future directions are offered regarding genetic factors and other biological determinants. There is a large body of work, albeit still nascent, that supports neurobiological underpinnings in the development of AUD and there is also risk in minimizing its etiological role. AUD is a complex disorder, and it behooves us to gain a greater understanding of the various systems (e.g., biological, social, societal) that contribute to its emergence (both large and small effects) in order to inform preventative and treatment interventions. What is largely missing from both groups of authors is acknowledging that hazardous drinking, AUD, and substance use treatment is also a social justice. That is, individuals from marginalized groups suffer disproportionately from social and physical consequences of hazardous drinking, they are at elevated risk for a chronic course of AUD, and yet have less access to quality treatment and more likely to be referred to justice settings. This may further strengthen this thoughtful commentary.