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“There’s never a good time to give up alcohol because there are so many social implications”:

A social practice approach to understanding student drinking.

INTERVENTIONS

- Some interventions may be seen as patronising, preachy, giving information students already know (de Visser et al., 2013).
- Targeting individual cognitions e.g. attitudes and knowledge fails to address social and environmental influences on drinking

SOCIAL PRACTICE APPROACH

- Acknowledges the context of behaviour
- Drinking alcohol is not one single behaviour, but a set of behaviours
- Behaviours are transmitted through 'performances' and these are different depending on context

SOCIAL PRACTICE APPROACH

- **Materials**

such as the bars and the social media used to arrange drinking occasions

- **Meanings**

such as expectations about what it means to be a student and social pressure

- **Competencies**

such as knowing what and how much to drink

INTERVIEW STUDY

- 18 participants were students
- Five participants were working as interns in their first role since graduating

“What would you do if you were part of the interviewer’s research team in order to encourage students to cut down the amount that they drank and reduce the negative consequences from drinking”

THE ROLE OF ALCOHOL

You get TV programmes where they just follow students and see them getting really drunk and getting into a mess and people watch that and think that's funny and that's why you're meant to do and I think then that a lot of people who then go into university feel like they have to replicate that, otherwise they're not having a good time (Laura)

DRINKING TRANSITIONS

Yeah, [when I leave university and I am older] I think that I will only really drink once a week and that's again at the pub and it's quite civilised rather than going to a club and having a full session. So I'd only do it on special occasions really. So I think that what I'm doing now is acceptable (Molly)

PREVENTION CHALLENGES

If clubs had more to do other than just drink, like if they had actually decided had better music that you don't need to be drunk to enjoy (Samuel)

There's never a good time um in the in the school year to give up alcohol because there are so many social implications (Jack)

PREVENTION CHALLENGES

Present them with them alternative that isn't seen as that uncool, just to know that there are other options out there (Ellie)

Instead of using alcohol to have a good time, just have a good time (Isabella)

SOCIAL PRACTICES

- **Materials**

Alcohol is embedded in student socialising

- **Meanings**

Being a non-drinker is transgressive and challenging, drinking culture is transmitted to applicants before arriving

- **Competences**

Learning from experience how much to drink is more important than thinking about guidelines or health

IMPLICATIONS OF UNDERSTAND DRINKING THROUGH A SOCIAL PRACTICE APPROACH

- Stop targeting individuals (knowledge, behaviours, attitudes)
- Focus on disrupting materials, meanings and competencies



Photograph by Sober Rave collaborator Dr Kimberley Hill, University of Northampton, taken for images of research exhibition

INITIAL FINDINGS FROM THE PROJECT: WHY DO PEOPLE ATTEND 'SOBER RAVES'

(dis) Connection

- Its much cheaper and I feel like everyone is much more connected while sober.
- I have always loved to dance without having to connect with anyone else, these events are mostly done with the eyes shut, with really great tunes, so I just have time or me, to get out of my head. This is a rare space of non-judgment, that feels really safe to have any experience that I need, whether this is physical, emotional, mental or spiritual.

WHY DO YOU ATTEND?

Therapeutic

- I love dancing and I don't need alcohol to dance. It makes me feeling alive and happy and liberates me from restricting mindsets. Dancing can have a therapeutic effect on me and alcohol wouldn't be supportive as it can blurr my consciousness and awareness.

WHY DO YOU ATTEND?

Fun

- Because sometimes its good to realise that you can have fun without alcohol
- Me and my friend attended just out of curiosity as we don't like drinking but we wanted to go out and have fun

DISCUSSION

In your groups we would like you to reflect on the quotes we have given you

What is your response to the quotes, what comes to mind?

What kinds of alcohol free events do you run in your setting?

What else could you do?

IMPLEMENTATION

(How) could you run this type of event (or similar) at your Uni?

What would work? What would not work

Are there any barriers?



FEEDBACK