Women's experiences of recovery via online sobriety communities: introduction to research

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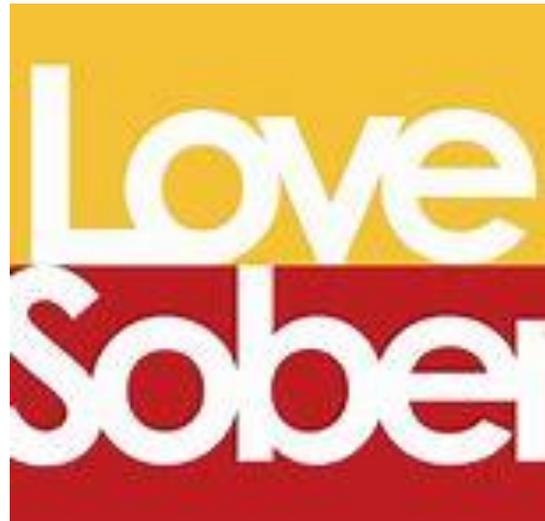Supervisors: Prof. Shane Blackman & Dr Ruth Sanz Sabido

Agenda

- An overview of online sober communities

- A need for positive stories of sobriety

- What about informal social-media based recovery communities?

- Women supporting women

- Reworkings of gender, sexuality and feminism in sobriety

- PhD project research methods and questions.

Online Sober Communities

KEY THEMES:

IDENTITY

GENDER

SEXUALITY

More JOMO

Less FOMO

What we know:

- Young people are drinking less
- Non drinking can be a stigmatised identity
- Non drinkers viewed in context of drinkers, or drinking places

What we need more of:

- JOMO
- Non-campus-based research

From The Rooms to online spaces

What's been explored?:

- An increase in internet-based, non-12 step recovery pathways (IBIs) and Temporary Abstinence Initiatives (TAIs):
  - ✓ Online Screeners
  - ✓ CBT-based tools
  - ✓ Real-time therapy sessions
  - ✓ Dry January (other international alternatives available)
- Proven to reduce problematic drinking

What's missing in the research?

- How women construct sober identities online
- Informal social-media based recovery communities
- Understanding of multi-use

'Sisters are doing it for themselves'

Who are the participants/founders?

- Women

- 25 to 50

- White

- Employed

- Educated to degree level+

How would they describe their experiences of sobriety?

How has it impacted their gendered and sexual identities?

Spaces to practice and perform

What we know about online spaces?:

- Used to practice identities
- Provide greater freedom to re-shape and restage performances of identities

What we need to know more about:

- Communications within these communities
- How sobriety is performed
- How gender & sexuality re-worked in sobriety
- Whether these are feminist spaces

Research Methods

- Semi-structured 1:1 interviews with community participants

- Semi-structured 1:1 interviews with community leaders

- Online community observations

- In-person community observations

- Podcasts

- Community Blog posts

- Community Webinars

Research Questions

How is the identity of sobriety performed within the online sober community and how does this intersect with other dimensions of women's identities, i.e. sexuality and gender?

By what means is feminism employed by these women to negotiate non-drinking practices?

To what extent can the online sober community be interpreted as a cohesive, singular community or movement?

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