

Abstracts for BSA Alcohol Study Group Workshop – 15th September 2021

Lubricating the field: reflections on wine, emotion, and the research process

Zara Babakordi, ESRC PhD student, Newcastle University

This paper offers reflexive insights grounded in ethnographic research that explores, through the case of wine, the entanglements between ethics and consumption in the everyday lives of people living in Cape Town, South Africa. Within this broader context, the paper pays particular attention to the ethics in consumption from the perspective of researcher, including their relationship to wine, within the everyday of the research process. The paper reflects on the entanglements of wine and emotion, mediated by feelings of ambivalence towards practices, performances, and spaces of consumption in the Western Cape. Through this, the paper offers a multi-scalar perspective on the use of alcohol in the research process; while paying attention to the researcher's relationship to wine (and the ways in which this shapes the research process), it also contextualises this relationship within post-apartheid South Africa, where mainstream discourses on wine continue to be framed through social locations that are mediated by race, ethnicity, class, and gender. Hence, while engaging in wine consumption throughout the research process, the paper considers how these performances and practices of consumption are indicative of the researcher's racialised and classed privileges

The Personal is Pedagogical? Using lived experience and vulnerability in teaching settings

Dr Sharon Greenwood, Lecturer, University of Glasgow

This paper reflects on the potential for using lived experience within teaching settings. My PhD (2013-18) examined the impact of parental substance use on young adults – driven by my personal experience of maternal bereavement, aged 22. During my PhD, I was frequently 'warned' about the 'dangers of disclosure' to participants, readers, and potential colleagues. This view felt at odds with my underlying values as a feminist researcher: why are accounts of our personal lives and connections we have to a topic viewed as 'unscholarly' within academia?

I found this critique to be ubiquitous in educational spaces: to what extent do we expose our personal histories in our teaching? In 2019, I started a teaching-track lectureship, where my research focus switched to consider my practice, rather than wider social phenomena. Reflecting my approach to research, my pedagogical approach draws from wider feminist principles of relational thinking, empowerment, and of diverse ways of 'knowing'. This paper discusses how I grappled with this tension, advocating for a more integrated, explicit discussion of one's relationship to the topic. I argue we present a stronger understanding of the 'personal is political' through reclamation of one's personal history and position – in this case, in educational spaces.

Webb, LM., Allen, MW., & Walker, KL. (2002). Feminist pedagogy: Identifying basic principles. Academic Exchange, 6(1), 67-72.

Alcohol – The Friendly Foe

Diane Goslar , Expert by experience

Alcohol is often seen as a welcome “friend” when celebrating, commiserating or just enjoying a night out but, in reality, alcohol can have a far darker side leading to addiction and even death. In her presentation Diane will describe her gradual but inexorable descent into alcoholism and what she duly became. She will spell out the toll that this took on herself and her family and how it affected relationships with her family, friends and work colleagues. She lived a hard and difficult life where drink was the only thing that mattered. Diane will explain the impact that alcohol has on physical, mental and social situations. She will explain how, after battling to try and control her drinking, she unwillingly came to the conclusion that there was no alternative but to detox. She did this but it was not easy and remaining sober is similarly challenging. Diane will explain the difficulties she has to overcome in staying sober and the behavioural adjustments she has had to make in a society which places enormous emphasis on alcohol.

Whose harm is it anyway? Representativeness of lived experience voices in the context of alcohol use and policy

Dr James Morris, Centre for Addictive Behaviours Research Fellow, London South Bank University

The use of lived experiences plays a number of important roles in the context of health, addiction and other research and policy spheres. We argue that there are two dominant lived experience narratives present in the field of alcohol research, policy, and treatment. The first is the historically embedded narrative of alcoholism as disease, and the second is the more recent narrative of positive sobriety. We present an argument that these two dominant narratives alone do not capture the wide and heterogenous experience of alcohol harms, and as such a more diverse range of lived experiences are required to reach and resonate with the broader community of people who experience harms from their alcohol use. We reflect on the fact that these dominant narratives are both abstinence focused, and therefore exclude many drinkers who are not willing, and may not need, to consider abstinence in order to reduce their risk or experience of harms, yet could benefit from reductions in their alcohol use. We ask that alcohol policy professionals, researchers and lived experience advocates consider these issues and support diversifying the range of lived experiences to support goals including public health outcomes, stigma reduction and engagement.

“Tell me about your drinking...?” Pints, Personal Stories and Positionality in Alcohol Research

Dr Emily Nicholls, Lecturer, University of York

Whilst reflecting on one’s own positionality as a qualitative researcher is nothing new, the ‘imperative to intoxication’ (Griffin et al. 2009) in Western cultures means that alcohol researchers working in these contexts are likely to experience drinking - or non-drinking - as something personal and bound up with their own everyday lives. As researchers, how do we negotiate this? And what happens when our own personal relationship with alcohol undergoes a profound change that (re)shapes the trajectory of our research? In this paper, I reflect on a decade of alcohol research that took me from a boozy ‘girls’ night out’ to domestic drinking in a global pandemic via communities for women who stop drinking, considering the ways in which my research has remained entangled with my own shifting relationship with alcohol. Drawing on my experiences, I also consider issues of

reciprocity, trust and 'disclosure' in qualitative research when fielding personal questions from participants on the potentially sensitive topics of both drinking and sobriety. When we elicit the at times highly personal or emotional drinking stories of our participants, do we owe them some of our own stories, no matter how complex and 'messy' these might be?

From de Quincey to the inflatable penis: Teaching undergraduates on the problematisation of intoxication

Dr Rachel Ryder, Senior Lecturer, Anglia Ruskin University

In 2019 I was asked to devise a module to fill a gap in the second year of a criminology course. I jumped at the chance: In 2017 I completed my PhD on the comparative study of the regulation of women's drinking conduct in the mid 19th century and post 2000s period in Britain. As a historical sociologist, I drew on the benefit of all the interesting bits I had learned from attending conferences (especially the BSA ones) and devised a module focused on 'problematisation'. This broad theme has been welcomed, and the last delivery of the module was to 76 students, across 5 different degree courses. This includes criminology, sociology, psychology, politics, and humanities. This presentation will explore which themes have particularly captured students attention, as they are developing an appreciation for the historical longevity of problematising intoxicants, and the people consuming them. Taking an 'observational lens' approach, students examine a wide range of topics, from cannabis decriminalisation, raves and the post 2000s drinking landscape, harm reduction methods, and social class in the consumption of alcohol. I will present some of my student's interactive discussion boards, and reflect on the challenges and benefits of cross-discipline teaching on intoxication.