

# **Exploring the making and re-making of self and social worlds by adolescents in residential substance use treatment: A qualitative study in Vancouver, Canada**

Category: Poster Presentation (in person)

## Abstract Body

**Background:** The overdose public health emergency in British Columbia has prompted increased efforts to scale up residential substance use treatment beds for young people between the ages of 14 and 18 in Greater Vancouver. Despite well-documented systemic barriers to accessing residential substance use treatment among young people who use drugs, little research has examined how young people, and in particular adolescents, navigate these treatment programs.

**Methods:** This qualitative study draws on a critical phenomenological framework to describe and contextualize experiences and understandings of residential substance use treatment among 38 young people ages 14 to 18 in Vancouver, Canada. Data collection involved in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted between 2018 and 2021. Analysis followed a phronetic iterative approach, delineating the dialectical relationship between deductive (i.e., existing theories and research questions) and inductive (i.e., raw textual data) analyses.

**Results:** Findings underscore that young people are actively engaged in making, unmaking and remaking their social worlds and senses of themselves (e.g., self-appraisals) prior to and throughout residential treatment. Many participants expressed a willingness and interest in initiating treatment, envisioning new possibilities for their future selves. However, participants' imaginings of recovery existed in tension with histories and expectancies related to institutionalization, including in foster care, criminal justice, and mental health care systems.

**Conclusions:** This study demonstrates a need to better support young people as they navigate both residential substance use treatment and shifting care and supervision landscapes. Findings about how adolescents actively engage in re-making themselves and their social worlds in and across these settings allows for a re-imagining of youth treatment and recovery programming and services that better align with the needs, desires, and priorities of young people themselves.

## Key Words

- Adolescent/Young Adult Populations
- Caring in Crisis
- Social Models
- Sociocultural Factors
- Treatment Models/Programs

## Learning Objective # 1

Attendees will gain insight into the different ways that young people who use drugs engage in re-making their self and social worlds before and during residential treatment.

## Learning Objective # 2

Attendees will develop a more nuanced understanding of how care interventions can be optimized (e.g., adapted, integrated) to best support young people who use drugs.

## Reference # 1

Fast, D. (2021). Going nowhere: Ambivalence about drug treatment during an overdose public health emergency in Vancouver. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 35(2), 209–225. <https://doi.org/10.1111/maq.12638>

## Reference # 2

Sibley, A. L., Schalkoff, C. A., Richard, E. L., Piscalko, H. M., Brook, D. L., Lancaster, K. E., Miller, W. C., & Go, V. F. (2020). “I was raised in addiction”: Constructions of the self and the other in discourses of addiction and recovery. *Qualitative Health Research*, 30(14), 2278–2290. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732320948829>

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