Residential treatment for adults with severe substance use disorder - what works, for whom and in what circumstances? An initial theory.

SSA PhD Conference

Henry De Salis 3 November 2021
You suffer from addiction and have endured poverty and trauma, and until this year had never received rehabilitation for your addiction issues or counselling to address your background."

Judgement B

“When someone like [this] is a critical component to the programme ... How do I put aside that ‘institutional knowledge’ and come to the conclusion that [he], as a president in the Mongrel Mob [a gang], is able to rehabilitate those afflicted with methamphetamine addiction?”
Realist Evaluation
Pawson & Tilley (1997)

What works?
For Whom?
Over what timescale?
In what circumstances?
Scope

- Ontology
- Setting
- Initial Programme Theory
- Compare and Contrast
## Ontology and causation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Realist ontology</td>
<td>What exists</td>
<td>Explains that reality exists in layers (Empirical, Actual and the Real) only some of which is observable. Reality also exists at the levels of micro (individual), meso (organisational) and macro (societal).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causation</td>
<td>O=f(C.M)</td>
<td>Outcomes follow from the effect of Contexts on Mechanisms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contexts</td>
<td>Conditions that activate the mechanisms, leading to positive or negative outcomes.</td>
<td>Phenomena connected in space and time. Can be structural (network or organisational), cultural, resource-based (skills, knowledge), motivational.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanisms</td>
<td>The underlying latent process / structure that generates outcomes.</td>
<td>Mechanisms are hidden and sensitive to changes in context. Interventions are not mechanisms.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Setting

• 26-bed residential treatment programme for
  • Adults
  • Moderate to severe substance use disorder
• Operated by the Salvation Army
• Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand
• Staff – clinicians, caseworkers, recovery coaches
• Data collection – funding agreements; 5 x interviews (n=4)
Initial Programme Theory

Outcome = f(C.M)

Outcome = Programme completion.
Intermediate Outcome = Change of Identity.
Context = (Presence of structure + support)+(absence of chaos).
Mechanism = (Sense of belonging + sense of hope and purpose.)
Residential rehabilitation for addictions: successful change through a realist lens v2 (Outcomes)

Domain of the Empirical (experiences / perceptions of events / phenomena)

- Abstinence / harm reduction
- New narrative about identity
- Stories about successful change
- Staff notice and name the grief, loss
- Active engagement in the programme. Eg. Participation in groups
- Experiencing peers & staff celebrate your success
- Thinking clearly

Context (Conditions that activate the mechanisms)

- Being supported through discomfort of change
- Experiencing wins
- Experiencing & enjoying being clean
- Supportive, structured, boundaried staff culture
- Presence of structure / absence of chaos.
- New skills to manage chaos / stress
- Supporting peer culture
- Relatable coaches

Domain of the Actual (events and actions)

- Successful Recovery
- Programme completion
- New identity

Mechanisms (The underlying latent process / structure that generates outcomes)

Domain of the Real (exists independently of human awareness)

- Sense of Hope and Purpose
- Sense of Belonging
Residential rehabilitation for addictions: successful change through a realist lens v2 (Mechanisms)

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- Supportive, structured, boundaried staff culture
- New skills to manage chaos / stress
- Reliable coaches
- Supporting peer culture

Presence of structure / absence of chaos.

Domain of the Real (exists independently of human awareness)
- Sense of Hope and Purpose
- Sense of Belonging

Start: “Rock bottom” - disconnected
Residential rehabilitation for addictions: successful change through a realist lens v2 (Contexts)

Domain of the Empirical (experiences / perceptions of events / phenomena)

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- New narrative about identity
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- Active engagement in the programme. Eg. Participation in groups
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Outcomes

- Successful Recovery
- Programme completion
- New identity

Context (Conditions that activate the mechanisms)

- Being supported through discomfort of change
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Mechanisms (The underlying latent process / structure that generates outcomes)

- Sense of Hope and Purpose
- Sense of Belonging

Domain of the Real (exists independently of human awareness)
Compare and Contrast
# Potential Theories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Potential Theories</th>
<th>Initial Programme Theory</th>
<th>Candidate Theories</th>
<th>Factors of Effective Treatment (Moos, 2007)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mechanisms of change</strong></td>
<td>Sense of Hope &amp; Purpose</td>
<td>Hope Theory (Snyder, 2002)</td>
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<td>Spiritual Transformation Process (Neff &amp; McMaster, 2005)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sense of Belonging</strong></td>
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<td>Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1974)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Contexts</strong></td>
<td>Presence of structure &amp; support</td>
<td></td>
<td>Support, structure &amp; goal direction ✓ Rewards for abstinence ✓ Building self-efficacy &amp; coping ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Absence of chaos</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion

Strengths

• Causal model
• Separates Contexts and Mechanisms
• Explains positive and negative outcomes

Limitations

• Interview population
• Indigenous clients?
• Treatment length?
• Non-completers & successful recovery?
References:


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