Recovering from Substance Misuse: The Role of Mastery and Unity Revealed through the

'Life as a Film'

David Rowlands

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for

the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

UNIVERSITY OF HUDDERSFIELD

June 2019

Copyright Statement

i. The author of this thesis (including any appendices and/or schedules to this thesis) owns any copyright in it (the "Copyright") and s/he has given The University of Huddersfield the right to use such Copyright for any administrative, promotional, educational and/or teaching purposes.

ii. Copies of this thesis, either in full or in extracts, may be made only in accordance with the regulations of the University Library. Details of these regulations may be obtained from the Librarian. This page must form part of any such copies made.

iii. The ownership of any patents, designs, trademarks and any and all other intellectual property rights except for the Copyright (the "Intellectual Property Rights") and any reproductions of copyright works, for example graphs and tables ("Reproductions"), which may be described in this thesis, may not be owned by the author and may be owned by third parties. Such Intellectual Property Rights and Reproductions cannot and must not be made available for use without the prior written permission of the owner(s) of the relevant Intellectual Property Rights and/or Reproductions.

Abstract

A growing body of research highlights the importance of identity changes to recovery from substance misuse. Current models emphasise communal *or* self-agentic factors in the process (e.g. Best et al., 2016; Dunlop & Tracy, 2013). This represents a limitation of focus, and there is a requirement for models that recognise the rich interplay of both personal and relational factors underpinning behaviour. Life story interviews of substance misusers indicate key underlying themes (Singer, 1997, 2001), alluding to the benefit of developing a narrative approach, and directs research towards examination of personal narratives in active and recovering substance misusers to uncover dynamic factors supporting either behaviour.

The aim of this project was to develop a new narrative approach to substance misuse recovery, proposing that agency *and* communion themes, as well as broader narrative forms, are important to recovery outcomes. This objective was addressed by sampling from both active and recovering populations, a methodology lacking in the extant literature, and trialling the 'Life as a Film' (LAAF) approach to data collection and thematic analysis, since the model has proved useful in studies of life narrative with related populations (Canter & Youngs, 2015).

Interviews were conducted with 32 participants (23 males, 9 females). All participants interviewed at baseline were retained at six-month follow up. Problems encountered with collection of life story material in marginalised populations were addressed using the LAAF technique, and a repertory grid was designed to compare narrative with personal construct data. A Recovery Inventory (RI) was used to compare this data with indicators of recovery.

A fundamental contribution of this research is in highlighting a relationship between both agency and communion and recovery across several corroborative studies. Significantly, joint agency and communion themes in LAAF narratives were shown to correspond with the best recovery outcomes, either theme with moderate outcomes, and neither theme with poor outcomes, expanding ideas of current social and narrative identity theories. Illustration of a successive agentic path, advancing from *effectiveness, empowerment* to *self-mastery* is given, and a communal path, advancing from *friendship/love, caring* to *unity*, with improved recovery outcomes, suggesting a new two-dimensional framework of progressive identity transformation. Matching behavioural change with personal growth pathways represents a key theoretical advance, carrying important implications for interventions corresponding with individual narrative presentation.

Further analysis expanded on these findings, revealing two contrasting life narratives, reflective of either recovery or non-recovery: a Victory narrative, showing themes of *self-mastery*, *unity*, *redemption*, *healer* identity, and *happy ending*, which corresponded with high scores on the RI, and a Defeat narrative, showing themes of *compulsion, avoidance, contamination, escapist* identity, and *sad ending*, which corresponded with low scores on the RI.

The thesis advances the literature in four important ways: (1) introduction and validation of the LAAF model for understanding recovery (2) highlighting the centrality of both agency and communion themes to recovery (3) uncovering distinct agentic and communal growth scales (4) revealing overarching life narratives suggestive of recovery and non-recovery. These contributions follow from the decision to sample from both active and recovering substance misusers and introducing powerful multidimensional scaling methods to the field. In total, the findings lend considerable support to a life narrative interpretation of substance misuse and recovery, combining social identity and narrative identity concepts into a greater appreciation of the complex psychosocial processes important to substance misuse recovery.

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

Part III - Studies

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Abbreviations

AA – Alcoholics Anonymous

ANOVA – Analysis of Variance

COA – Coefficient of Alienation

CY-NEO - Canter-Youngs Narrative Experience of Offending Protocol

DAPA – Dominance, Affiliation, Power and Avoidance (narrative groups model)

FT – Facet Theory

HUDAP – Hebrew University Data Analysis Package

LAAF – Life as a Film

MDS – Multidimensional Scaling

NA – Narcotic Anonymous

NRQ -Narrative Roles' Questionnaire

POSAC – Partial Ordered Scalogram Analysis of Coordinates

PCT – Personal Construct Theory

PHE – Public Health England

SIMOR – Social Identity Model of Recovery

SSA – Smallest Space Analysis

RDS – Respondent Driven Sampling

RI – Recovery Inventory

SVD - Standard Value Decomposition

TAT – Thematic Apperception Test

TOP - Treatment Outcome Profile

WHOQOL - World Health Organisation Quality of Life Questionnaire

Part I. Introduction

Chapter 1. Thesis in Brief

1.1 Background

The platform for this project is a growing body of psychological literature supporting the idea that recovery from enduring substance misuse involves changes to identity. Biernacki (1986) first highlighted this process, observing that in chronic substance misuse an addict identity predominated, and that it was through changing identity concepts that recovery occurred. Subsequent research, such as McIntosh and McKeganey's (2002) interviews with ex-heroin users and Burrell's (1999) observations with drinkers in recovery, supports this idea. Going further, a recent study by Dingle and colleagues revealed that concepts of 'recovery identity' preceded reductions in substance use, indicating a developmental path through which identity changes influenced behaviour (Dingle, Stark, Cruwys & Best, 2015). This finding refutes arguments of attribution theorists (e.g. Newman & Davies, 2007) that self-concepts are merely interpretive rather than instrumental and more robustly establishes the value of identity perspectives in understanding substance misuse and recovery.

Two identity perspectives have emerged in the literature. The first is the social identity model (Frings & Albery, 2015; Best, Beckwith, Haslam, Haslam, Jetten, Mawson, & Lubman, 2016), which proposes that a 'recovery identity' arises as the dominant mode through a process of social modelling within new recovery-supportive groups. This model derives from research highlighting the influence of peer networks on positive outcomes (e.g. Litt, Kadden, Kabela-Cormier, Petry, 2009; Longabaugh, Wirtz, Zywiak, & O'Malley, 2010; Jetten, Haslam, Haslam, Dingle, & Jones, 2014). A second body of literature adopts a narrative identity perspective, drawing on McAdams' (1993, 1997) Life Story Model, and has shown that personal narratives framed with themes of redemptive agency predict better abstinence outcomes (Dunlop & Tracy, 2013) and more prosocial behaviours (Stone, 2016).

These theories reflect two different components of identity: communal and agentic. A narrative study by Hanninen and Koski-Jannes' (1999) highlighted recovery stories that drew on agency, communion or both themes, illustrating a significance of both factors. A further piece of the puzzle is given in life story research by Singer (1997, 2001), which illustrated agency and communion deficits in chronic addicts. This literature suggests that agency, communion, and redemption themes may be integral to recovery identities, though studies have yet to show this, prompting further research.

On this point, certain drawbacks to research methodologies can be identified which may limit recording of important psychological processes. Standard life story elicitation techniques used by McAdams and colleagues (McAdams, 1993; Bauer & McAdams, 2004; Adler et al., 2015) produced psychologically limited accounts in a study with offenders (Canter & Youngs, 2015), the researchers arguing that biographic disruption and the stigma attached to marginalised lifestyles may present an obstacle to narration of personally relevant material. However, using the 'Life as a Film' (LAAF) format produced rich and thematically detailed narratives (Canter & Youngs, 2015; Youngs, Canter & Carthy, 2016; Tkazky, 2018).

Reflecting ideas that hypothetical interview formats are less threatening (Bamberg, 2011), the projective LAAF question may help circumvent conscious resistance to narrating psychologically relevant material (Youngs et al., 2016). These issues are salient to research in substance misuse; perhaps even more so, since along with the shame and stigma often associated with such lifestyles, studies highlight difficulties with explicit communication and a greater aptitude for creative exercises (Moore, 1983; Johnson, 1990; McGranahan & Lynskay, 2018). This suggests that the fictional framing of the LAAF task may offer a more suitable way of collecting psychologically rich personal narratives.

Another study with heroin users completing a rehabilitation programme adopted a personal construct perspective (Ng, 2002). Using repertory grids to self-retrospect identity changes over time, data indicated *self-competence* and *connection with others* as transformative constructs in the rehabilitated cohort. In this, the study observed twin agency and communion-related construct changes with the move to recovery, further highlighting the demand to address both factors. Following these related discoveries, the LAAF task and repertory grid analysis may be important innovations in advancing richer and more integrative models of substance misuse recovery.

1.2 Research questions and aims

From the literature, the question arises as to whether the LAAF is a useful tool for the collection of narrative material in the target population, and further, whether it is useful for discriminating themes important to identity, identity transformation, and recovery. The first purpose of this research is to test the suitability of LAAF model for researching stories of substance misuse and recovery. This will be done through an examination of the richness of data produced in participants narratives and detailed examination of themes as they relate to recovery and non-recovery. The thesis proposes that agency, communion, redemption and other key narrative themes will be illustrated in recovery stories and limited or absent in stories of non-recovery, expanding current models to argue for the appropriateness of the LAAF model for studying recovery from substance misuse.

1.3 Data collection methods

Following the above considerations, the LAAF was used for collection of personal narratives, and repertory grid data recorded to compare material from LAAF accounts with personal construct reports. To compare narrative and personal construct data with recovery outcomes,

the study deployed a 12-item Recovery Inventory (RI), drawing on concepts of recovery assessment that, as well as abstinence, include broader psychosocial indicators (Valentine, 2011; Groshkova, Best & White, 2013).

Thirty-two participants took part in two interviews. This included 23 males and 9 females, with an age range of 29-60. Thirty-one participants identified as White British and one as Asian. All participants identified as either having current or historic substance misuse problems. A diverse range of substance issues and numerous different pathways to recovery were reported. Interviews were conducted via videocall and recorded. The first interview involved completion of the LAAF interview, collection of background information, and completion of the RI. In a second interview, 6-months later, participants completed a repertory grid and a follow up RI.

1.4 Data analysis procedures

The research used mixed data analysis and introduces the LAAF model to the substance misuse field. The model draws on similar narrative research and coding dictionaries validated with effective individuals (e.g. McAdams, 1993) and mental health patients (Adler, 2012; Holstrom et al., 2015). Narratives were coded for themes of agency and communion, along with redemption, contamination, and other themes, serving to enrich the interpretation procedure (Youngs et al., 2016; Tkazky, 2018).

Deriving from McAdams (1993) model, this thesis defines agency as 'personal competence', concerning self-expansion, wheareas communion refers to 'relatedness' or union and concerns relationships with others. Agency and communion have been posited as motivational and growth themes central to identity changes in numerous studies (McAdams, Hoffman, Day

& Mansfield, 1996; Bauer & McAdams, 2004; McAdams, 2006; Adler, 2012). Thus, they are appropriate for studying identity change processes.

In this endeavour, multidimensional scaling (MDS) is introduced to the substance misuse field. MDS has been broadly useful for understanding the psychology of complex phenomena, such as intelligence (Levy & Guttman, 1971), self-esteem (Dancer, 1985), decision making (Porter & Alison, 2005) and offending behaviour (Youngs & Canter, 2012). The use of MDS in Investigative Psychology for transforming rich qualitative material into quantitative data and differentiating criminal narratives was influential in the decision to employ such methods, since the procedures have provided powerful predictive multivariate models with practical applications (Canter & Youngs, 2011; Youngs & Canter, 2012; Ioannnou, Canter, Youngs, & Syncott, 2015). This fresh approach begins to address the requirement for empirically verifiable theories distinguishing identity attributes of individuals in recovery from those chronically active in substance misuse.

Since the research is exploratory, drawing on a small sample, analysis of personal construct systems was used to triangulate indications from the narrative analysis, and following corroboration of these patterns, more standard Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and correlational analysis was used to examine the significance of differences among narrative groups and how these related to recovery outcomes.

1.5 Main findings

The first study, discussed in Chapter 8, reports on a content analysis of LAAF narratives, revealing a strong suitability of the method for the study of substance misuse and recovery, highlighted in three key findings: (1) a constellation of themes common among the population, including interpersonal conflict, high emotionality, a *survivor* role, and

chemically-assisted agency, (2) themes discriminative of recovery or non-recovery, such as *contamination* and *redemption*, and (3) a relationship between more psychologically complex LAAF narratives (more ideas, characters and events) and recovery outcomes. These findings suggest that similar plot foundations among the population are positively restructured in recovery narratives, some of which may be accounted for by more complex cognition and recognition of a greater number of significant characters and pivotal events. The findings go beyond the extant literature in illustrating high frequency themes, discriminative *redemption* and *contamination* themes and their component elements, as well as elucidating increased psychological complexity in recovery narratives.

Building on these ideas, Chapter 9 reports on structural analysis of LAAF content. The analysis revealed four conceptual narratives corresponding with themes of agency and communion, case examples of which suggesting a relationship between participants' theme presentations and substance misuse or recovery (Rowlands, Youngs & Canter, 2019a). Chapters 10 and 11 expand on this, examining elements of agency and communion in LAAF narratives. Partially ordered scalogram analysis of coordinates (POSAC) and ANOVA revealed four different narrative groups corresponding with cumulative theme presentations and significant differences on RI scores between groups. Specifically, those narrating agency *and* communion themes showed strong recovery, those narrating agency *or* communion scored moderately, and those narrating neither agency nor communion showed non-recovery (Rowlands, Canter & Youngs, 2019b).

More in-depth examination of the data revealed agency and communion growth scales, with agency progressing through descriptions of *effectiveness, empowerment* to *self-mastery*, and communion progressing from *friendship/love, caring*, to *unity*. Participants' positions on these scales related to their RI scores, those depicting more potent presentations showing stronger recovery outcomes. The results represent three paths to identity change: one agentic,

one communal, and a joint agency and communion path, whereby the combined elements of *self-mastery* and *unity* corresponded with the highest RI scores (most robust recovery outcomes). This latter result indicated a two-dimensional growth arc, perhaps suggestive of agency and communion in duality. Diminishing theme profiles related to progressively reduced RI scores. Findings suggest that life narratives are progressively re-storied towards greater thematic agency and communion as part of recovery, serving to develop current perspectives by incorporating agentic and communal growth into identity theories of recovery from substance misuse (Rowlands, Canter & Youngs, In Press).

In Chapter 12, subsequent analysis of agency and communion construct dimensions reveals corresponding results. Comparison of participants repertory grid data showed that expansion towards higher agency and communion constructs was central to identity change, convergence with ideal self-concepts, and recovery. In contrast, chronically addicted participants reported fixed low agency and communion construct systems. Findings corroborate earlier results and suggest bipolar agency and communion construct dimensions (Rowlands, Youngs & Canter, 2020).

Chapter 13 reports on a correlational study that revealed two different LAAF narratives: Victory, relating to recovery, and Defeat, relating to non-recovery. Analysis showed that recovery stories contained themes of *self-mastery, unity, redemption, healer* and *happy ending*, whereas non-recovery stories contained themes of *compulsion, avoidance, contamination, escapist* and *sad ending*. Illustration of two distinct, detailed LAAF narratives enriches the agency and communion model reported in previous chapters, suggesting a constellation of interrelated growth themes that correspond with recovery.

The thesis indicates suitability of the LAAF approach for eliciting narrative material, results supporting interpretation of recovery and non-recovery from substance misuse through the

lens of LAAF narratives. This builds on previous uses in demonstrating strength for discriminating problem from resolution stories. Further, it develops social and narrative identity models to appreciate a richer context of themes important to substance issues and recovery.

Chapter 2. Stories of Substance

2.1 Substance misuse - casting a long shadow

Substance use problems present an ongoing concern for society. Despite great effort, national and global strategies have failed to adequately address the issue (HM Government, 2010, 2017), and drug and alcohol misuse continues to have a detrimental effect on individual lives and communities (Howard, 2007; Bennett & Holloway, 2010; Winstock, Eastwood & Stevens, 2017). The total estimated cost to society in England of substance misuse is over £15 billion (Public Health England (PHE), 2014), and in the USA, 8-10 percent (20-22 million) percent of people over 12 are addicted to alcohol or other drugs (Volkow, Koob, McLellan, 2016).

For the purposes of this report, substance misuse is defined as the use of alcohol, illicit, prescription, or legal psychoactive drugs to the extent that it is personally problematic, impacting the functionality of the individual. Most people use alcohol and/or drugs with no significant detrimental consequences (Askew, 2016). The report does not concern this group.

2.2 Complex causes

The causes of substance use problems are complex and diverse, including biological influences (Bierut, Dinwiddie, & Begleiter, 1998; Verhulst, Neale & Kendler, 2015; Edwards, Heron, Vladimirov et al., 2017; Savage, Long, Kou et al., 2017), traumatic personal experiences (Oliver, 2009; Hong, Davis, Sterzing et al., 2014; Oshri, Carlson, Kwon et al., 2017), and wider social factors, such as poverty and sub-culture (Khan, Murray & Barnes, 2002; Laub & Sampson, 2004; Barros, Matijasevich, Santos et al., 2018). According to research, the personalities of individuals with substance use issues are distinguishable from those of the general population, with studies consistently finding drug and alcohol users

higher on measures of sensitivity, impulsivity and proneness to boredom than control groups (Wills, Vaccaro & McNamara., 1994; Ersche, Turton, Pradhan et al., 2010).

2.3 Disease and determinism

The neurobiological approach remains the dominant etiological perspective, contending that enduring substance misuse reflects a chronic illness, characterised by significant impairments in health, social function and control over substances (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). This represents the 'disease model'. The disease model adopts neurobiological analysis to describe a process of habit formation and dependency, explaining that psychoactive drugs activate reward centres in the brain, triggering dopamine release and associative learning which motivates substance-seeking behaviour (di Chiara & Behay, 2002; Volkow, Wang, Telang et al., 2006). It is proposed that over time ordinary rewards lose motivational power to a focus on the potent dopamine release produced by psychoactive substances. As the habit continues tolerance occurs, with diminishing increases in dopamine when the brain becomes less sensitive to reward (Volkow, Tomasi, Wang et al., 2014; Hagele, Schlagenhauf, Rapp et al., 2015). A corollary to this 'resetting' process is an increase in stress-reactivity, leading to negative emotions which motivate further psychoactive substance use (Kaufling & Aston-Jones, 2015). Dopamine downregulation in the pre-frontal cortex also reportedly disrupts normal executive function, weakening self-restraint and decision making, further supporting substance use (Britt & Bonci, 2013).

A limitation of the neurobiological model is that only a tiny fraction of people who use drugs and alcohol go on to develop a problem (Lewis, 2017). Thus, it is an etiological explanation of substance use problems that fails to distinguish problem substance use from non-problematic substance use. Some evidence suggests that variations in the mid-brain

dopamine system involved in reward (Baker, Stockwell, Barnes et al., 2016) and serotonin pathways (Brox & Ellenbroek, 2018) may predispose certain individuals to substance use problems. However, few specific genes have been identified (Lars et al., 2018). Certainly, the risk of developing substance use problems is higher in people with substance-using family members (Bierut, Dinwiddie, & Begleiter, 1998; Verhulst, Neale & Kendler, 2015; Edwards et al., 2017; Savage et al., 2017), but such evidence only illustrates a correlation. It fails to separate genetic influences from the influence of personal experiences. These results could equally suggest experiential factors. Even where specific genes are identified, it is difficult to tease apart environmental interactive influences (Lewis, 2017).

A further shortcoming of the neurobiological interpretation is its explanation of cognitive and behavioural processes in terms of chemical determinism. Thus, it fails to appreciate substance use problems at a human level, occurring within the context of a person's life. Moreover, the brain changes that occur in substance use dependency are indistinguishable from those observed in the normal development of strong habits and are, therefore, unlikely to signal an 'addiction' process, per se (Lewis, 2017), refuting the idea of a specific 'addiction' disease.

2.4 Social and cultural context

An examination of social factors shows that social inequalities may be etiological to substance use problems. Khan and associates (2002) explored the effects of poverty and unemployment on alcohol abuse in a longitudinal study of 795 community residents completing a health and drinking survey, finding that increased poverty predicted alcohol issues (Khan, Murray & Barnes, 2002). Reflecting this, in a study of 3701 young adults, Barros et al. (2018) showed that socioeconomic status at birth predicted subsequent substance misuse. Data showed that individuals in the lowest income quartile had up to a five-fold greater likelihood of

experiencing substance misuse issues than the highest income quartile (Barros, Matijasevich, Santos et al, 2018).

Assessing the relationship between substance misuse and sub-culture, Mason and colleagues recruited 344 participants for a study of lower income residents in a Birmingham, Alabama neighbourhood. The researchers found that substance-use promoting peer networks were the fundamental influence on substance misuse among participants, with peer messages of discouragement reducing risk (Mason, Mennis, Light et al., 2016). The research expands on Kahn et al. (2002) and Barros et al.'s (2018) ideas to elucidate the significance of peer group messages rather than poverty, per se, in supporting substance misuse. A culture of encouragement versus discouragement was central to establishment or avoidance of substance misuse.

2.5 Choice behaviour

Sociodemographic research highlights vulnerability factors that help explain differences among those who use substances and those who go onto develop substance misuse issues, while avoiding the deterministic propositions of many neurobiological theories. However, primarily the research speaks to the impact of external social structures on behaviour, rather than intrinsic human agency. Other researchers emphasise self-governance, even in destructive and maladaptive behaviours like substance misuse. Lewis (2017), for example, asserts that substance misuse should be viewed as a choice rather than a pathology or socially mediated outcome. Observed through the lens of drug dependency such behaviour may appear maladaptive, yet use of substances offering relief from difficult life conditions, such as social isolation or psychological suffering, can be a rational response (Alexander, 2008; Heyman, 2009; Hart, 2013). Lewis (2017) adopts a developmental-learning perspective, in which

substance misuse is a consequence of consolidated habitual patterns of thinking and feeling. Such patterns do not represent the implacable symptoms of a chronic disease, he argues, rather developmental learning that is past purpose. Lewis contends that these patterns can be re-trained.

Lewis claims the model recognises social factors and early life adversity in establishing addiction problems but asserts that recovery must be conceived and empowered by individual efforts (Lewis, 2017). Whilst highlighting the centrality of the individual to substance misuse, Lewis' model may under-appreciate the power of social context and biographical disruption in establishing intractable patterns of substance misuse, since a review of psychosocial risk factors suggests that pre-existing psychological function, life events and social environment are the primary predictors of chronic substance misuse (Nation & Heflinger, 2006).

2.6 Traumatic events and substance misuse

Certainly, across many studies, traumatic life events prove to be powerful predictors of substance misuse. A cross-sectional study of 87 intravenous heroin users by Taplin and colleagues showed that adult drug and alcohol use was significantly associated with childhood abuse, and increased severity of childhood trauma was associated with earlier onset of injecting drug use (Taplin, Saddichha, Li et al., 2014). In a longitudinal study of 865 schoolchildren, aged 10-15, Walters and Espelage (2018) revealed that both parental and peer physical abuse and victimisation predicted substance misuse at 18-month follow up. Similarly, a study by Ruth Howard and colleagues found that 70 percent of female prisoners reporting childhood trauma had substance use problems (Howard, Karatzias, Power et al., 2017). Expanding on these findings in a study of 1863 adult females, Ullman and colleagues

discovered that use of substances often served as a means of coping with PTSD following child abuse (Ullman, Relyea, Peter-Hagene et al., 2013).

This literature observes a clear relationship between traumatic life events and subsequent substance misuse, but importantly also hints at the adaptive purpose that substance misuse affords victimised individuals. A study of 723 youths in residential treatment for antisocial behaviour further supports this idea. The research examined the relationship between trauma history, substance misuse and psychological distress, finding that that effects of trauma on psychological distress were self-medicated with drugs, providing emotional relief (Garland, Pettus-Davis & Howard, 2013). This research highlights the palliative function substance use provides in medicating emotional dysregulation, offering a coping mechanism (Garland, Bell, Atchley et al., 2018), and the psychologically deep-rooted challenge to achieving agency towards recovery that theorists such as Lewis (2017) may not fully appreciate.

2.7 A concept of 'recovery'

The common goal for researchers in understanding addiction problems is providing insights that help to develop useful models of recovery and effective interventions. Recovery is a curious and varying concept. Certainly, there is growing agreement that recovery represents more than abstinence. A number of different definitions exist, and whether or not abstinence is a prerequisite for recovery is a moot point. The UK Drug Policy Commission (2008) suggests not, defining recovery as: 'voluntarily sustained control of use which maximises health and wellbeing and participation rights, roles and responsibilities in society', while White (2007) focuses more roundly on subjective indicators, such as emotional and personal wellbeing. Deegan (1988) and Valentine (2011) also emphasise a phenomenological perspective, but expand on the concept, arguing that recovery constitutes the lived experience

of individuals as they establish a new sense of self and purpose that overcomes personal challenges. This idea marries self-identity and social context with behavioural indicators of change, and corresponds with the author's concept of recovery. However, in assuming this definition care has to be taken in assessing a range of behavioural and lifestyle indicators.

Specifically, this thesis recognises that since substance misuse impacts lives across many psychological and social markers, any concept of recovery needs to take account of not only personal experience or abstinence outcomes, but broader psychosocial influences and changes. In this, the study follows Groshkova, Best and White's (2013) consideration of a rich spectrum of recovery indicators, drawing on research by McIntosh, Bloor and Robertson (2008) highlighting the importance of sustained employment, Sampson and Laub's (1990) work showing the relationship between desistance from crime and postive changes, Best's (2012) assessment of wellbeing, Leamy and colleagues CHIME model (Leamy, Bird, Le Boutillier et al., 2011), and other research revealing the benefit of supportive social networks (e.g. Litt, Kadden, Kabela-Cormier et al., 2009). The assessment of recovery used in this project takes account of these indices by measuring and defining recovery in terms of no one feature, rather an aggregate score (or profile) across a broad range of psychosocial indicators, reflecting the spectrum of issues confronted and addressed in the practice of substance misuse interventions (Welch, Caiels, Jones et al., 2013; Turton, 2014).

2.8 Addict and recovery identities

Modelling substance misuse and recovery is central to identifying processes of change. One idea that is gaining support proposes that addiction and recovery are mediated by identity. Biernacki (1986) first proposed that chronic substance misuse represented a disorder of identity transformation. Identity perspectives consider the individual's place in the social

world, contextualising psychological experience. This expands on ideas discussed so far. In Biernacki's account, the decision to stop using drugs and/or alcohol occurs when the 'addict identity' conflicts with different rising self-concepts and values. The notion of self-concept shifts reflects the findings of Weisz (1996) and Downey et al. (2000), illustrating how the recognition of dissonance between substance-using and valued identities can motivate recovery processes. Burrell and Jaffe (1999) see the relationship between substance use and self-organisation a central, arguing that other approaches have neglected this and assume a static identity in the drug-using individual.

Research supports the concept of identity transition in recovery, such as Buckingham and colleagues' study of 61 Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous (AA/NA) users in specialist treatment, which showed that identification with a recovery identity was associated with better outcomes (Buckingham, Frings & Albery, 2013). More recently, a prospective study by Dingle and associates conducted interviews with 132 participants enrolled in a therapeutic community, assessing identity ratings at three fortnightly intervals and at exit. Data revealed that user identities decreased over time while recovery identities increased. Furthermore, decreases in substance use and increases in life satisfaction were observed following shifts to a recovery identity, indicating that identifying oneself by the recovery role provided an instigator of action. The researchers concluded that the transition from a 'user' to a 'recovery identity' constituted an important step in substance abuse treatment (Dingle et al., 2015). Another analysis showed that those who graduated from the therapeutic community showed social identities aligned with the therapeutic community after just two weeks compared to those who dropped out (Beckwith, Best, Dingle et al., 2015), highlighting social mechanisms through which progressive identity changes can occur.

2.9 Social identity

Mason et al.'s (2016) study, discussed above, illustrates that peer networks mediate the impact of poverty on substance misuse, demonstrating the influence of social group membership on behaviour. Considerable evidence shows that when individuals change from social networks supportive of substance use to those supportive of recovery, abstinence outcomes are significantly better (Litt et al., 2009; Longbaugh, Wirtz, Zywiak et al., 2010). Assessing the importance of recovery support following specialist detox treatment, Litt and colleagues (2009) assigned a cohort of 186 recovering alcoholics to either 'standard aftercare' or to a 'recovery network'. The recovery network condition entailed adding at least one substance-abstinent individual to the individual's social network. Outcomes revealed that the network support group were 27 percent less likely to relapse over the next year than the standard aftercare group (Litt et al., 2009). Unsurprisingly, networks supportive of recovery provided the most positive influence, though belonging to a variety of different social groups was also a significant factor. Mirroring these findings, a study of 141 cocaine-using individuals found that those with larger social networks and enjoying more social contact with these networks showed better treatment outcomes (Zywiak et al., 2009). Whilst being 27 percent less likely to relapse over the next year by no means explains the all variance in relapse indicators, it certainly suggests an influence of initial recovery support which may be key in fostering further recovery-supportive social bonds.

Expanding on this work, Best and colleagues followed 98 heroin users and 107 drinkers as part of the Glasgow Recovery Study. Recruitment criteria was 12-months' abstinence from primary substances and a self-perception as 'recovered' or 'in recovery'. Data revealed that time spent with social networks comprised of non-users in recovery was positively associated with higher quality of life and self-efficacy (Best, Know, Knox et al., 2012). A subsequent larger scale study of 537 recovering substance users provides further support of peer network

influences, illustrating that social connectedness and use of 12-step recovery networks corresponded with the emergence of a recovery identity (Bathish, Best, Savic et al., 2017). Though these studies show a role for recovery-supportive social networks on psychological health and fostering recovery identities, limiting data collection to users 'in recovery' means that comparative data on active substance users either involved with treatment and recovery networks or part of other social groups is not available.

However, the research has led to the adoption by prominent theorists of social identity models of substance misuse recovery (Frings & Albery, 2015; Best, Beckwith, Haslam et al., 2016). The Social Identity Model of Recovery (SIMOR) (Best et al., 2016; Best, Irving, Collinson et al., 2017) provides a theory of identity change orientated around the central proposition that a 'recovery identity' manifests through a process of social-modelling in new recovery-supportive groups. In other words, a recovery identity emerges through new group identification, superseding the 'addict identity' with a corresponding recession in substance-supporting network contact (Best et al., 2016). The theory draws on Tajfel's (1979) idea that people's sense of who they are is based on group membership. Just as Stott and Drury (2017) explained crowd behaviour as individuals' assuming the social identity of the group, or collective self, so Best and colleagues argue that recovery from substance misuse is achieved through identification with recovery communities to assume the collective recovery identity (Best et al., 2016, 2017).

Further research elaborates on these ideas, illustrating that whilst instrumental in the transition to a dominant recovery identity, those using 12-step meetings retained their 'addict identity', though it was held in abeyance by the recovery-supportive environment (Best et al., 2017). This finding supports the idea of concurrent identities, with a dominant identity enabled through adoption of a purposeful, coherent personal narrative (Singer & Conwy, 2011). However, retention of the 'addict identity' may also be facilitated by acceptance of the

'disease model' in fellowship organisations, where it is understood that addiction is an intractable condition requiring enduring effort and recovery network support to 'abate', rather than a habitual mechanism for managing life that can be conclusively resolved (White, 2007).

This argument contrasts sharply with the position of theorists such a Lewis (2017), who see deterministic notions as unhelpful impediments to personal responsibility and agency, which raises a more general criticism of social identity models in their explaining addiction and recovery according to emerging communal identities, irrespective of variation in or primary potential for self-governance and agentic change mechanisms (McConnell, 2016). Mindful of this, though social identity models offer an important advance for understanding communal processes in transition from addiction to recovery identities, awareness of the potency of self-motivational factors in mediating positive change (e.g. Downey, Rosengren & Donovan, 2000; Lewis, 2017) urges the requirement for more equitable theoretical approaches attentive to different psychological contexts. Indeed, Best et al. (2012) and Buckingham et al. (2015) discuss the correspondence of self-efficacy reports with new social identities, but with reference to social networks as the priming influence on wellbeing and competence reports, whereas perhaps a more complex duality of factors nourishes the rise of recovery identities.

2.10 Tales of fellowship

Certainly, the 12-step approach marries neatly with Best and colleagues' theory. Fellowship organisations provide collective support on which to model a new identity, or, it could be argued, coherent 'narratives of recovery' to absorb through shared life stories (Thune, 1977; Denzin, 1987; Diamond, 2000; O'Halloran, 2008; Weegmann, 2009). Indeed, such a perspective may offer a more meaningful understanding of identity change processes. Much of the success of 12-Step approaches has been attributed to the connection afforded through

mutual storytelling among members in fellowship meetings (Riordan & Walsh, 1994; Piwowoz-Hjort & Weegmann, 2005; O'Halloran, 2008), life story exchanges between those in recovery and active users providing a formula for reframing destructive accounts into narratives of recovery.

A criticism of the 12-step paradigm, however, is the same as that of social identity theorists, which is an overemphasis on communally driven processes in articulating addiction resolution. While offering an interesting case study on which to premise a theory of substance misuse recovery, the first principle of the 12-Step programme is the addict's recognition of powerlessness over addiction (Thune, 1977; White, 2007). Though Levi (2016) contends that far from undermining the individual, the subversion of ego and recourse to network support cultivates empowerment through unity. However, the disconcerting admission of personal impotence again over-emphasises peer networks and underestimates potential for personal agency, especially since many people resolve substance use problems without recovery groups, or indeed formal treatment (Lewis, 2017).

2.11 Narrative transformation

What appears central to our understanding addiction and recovery is not only the social but psychological underpins of substance issues and resources. Self-narratives are stories individuals tell about their experiences, reflecting the interface between the personal and social world (Bruner, 1987; Singer, 2004). As such they are psychosocial constructs that can be useful in contextualising identity and identity shaping forces that guide behaviours (Singer, 2001). Narrative research represents a growing body of literature in substance misuse which has provided many fresh insights.

In their study of 70 ex-heroin users, McIntosh and McKeganey (2002) identified the importance of adopting different self-narratives in ex-users assuming a new non-addict identity. That is, identity transformation was observed to involve a narrative reinterpretation through which recovering drug users disassociated from their drug-using towards prosocial goals, such as gaining employment or improving relationships. The researchers argued that this new narrative was socially constructed in correspondence with perceived notions of recovery promulgated by treatment providers and the wider culture, rather than representing an intrinsic process. To this extent social identity concepts are reflected, albeit from a storied perspective, and Biernacki's (1986) concept of shifting values is supported.

In a more recent longitudinal study, Dunlop and Tracy (2013) examined whether the production of narratives containing redemptive sequences predicted positive behavioural change. The researchers found that drinkers who told more self-redemptive stories following their last drink at baseline were significantly more likely to have maintained sobriety at follow-up. The study highlights the strength of redemptive agency in personal narratives for sustaining abstinence from alcoholism. Adopting a similar narrative identity perspective, research by Stone (2016) followed 30 substance-using pregnant women, from which she had collected life story narratives. The stories were coded for themes of agency, communion and redemption, revealing that an ability to shape a redemption script from past behaviour enabled participants to reformulate their identity, achieve narrative coherence, and have greater agency to pursue prosocial lives. The study again revealed a confluence of agency and redemption in the rebuilding of narrative identity, specifically that moral agency enabled participants to resist stigma and progress to more productive lives.

Stone (2016) and Dunlop and Tracy's (2013) studies reveal findings similar to Maruna's with ex-offenders (Maruna, 2001), and Adler and colleagues research in psychotherapy demonstrating agentic growth as instrumental to positive change (Adler, 2012; Adler, Turner,

Brookshier et al., 2015). These narrative studies correspond in suggesting that agency and redemption themes push recovery processes. Importantly, such findings may identify shortcomings in the social identity model, and reflect other narrative case studies highlighting growing self-governance, narrative reconstitution and recovery (McConnell, 2016; McConnell & Snoek, 2018). However, signally, the research fails to illustrate the centrality of communal identity themes highlighted by the very same social identity studies (e.g. Best et al., 2017), and may suggest some intrinsic limitation to the standard life story methodology, or perhaps a more general resistance to revealing such themes in a personally storied form. Earlier narrative research adopting a more interpretative approach may shed some light on this issue. Hanninen and Koski-Jannes' (1999) explored narratives of recovery, collecting autobiographical stories from 51 ex-addicts, noting how ex-users understood and personally communicated their change processes. Emphasising the importance of this interpretation process in articulating the new narrative identity, they observed that recovery identities could manifest through different narratives. In forming their stories, people draw on the limited stock of narratives and myths available to a given sub-culture, choosing a formula among possibilities that fits with their experience. Three observed narratives were relevant to the present study, pertaining to accounts of ex-substance users (alcohol and drug users), and may reflect a spectrum of available recovery plots. The first narrative was the *AA story*, which described a personal rock bottom and identification of a change need but insufficient individual powers to affect recovery. There was a pivotal 12-step meeting involving identification with other recovering users and the acceptance of powerlessness over addiction, which could only be resolved with the help of other recovering users. The second narrative was the *growth story*, carrying a theme of pleasing others and falling into oppressive relationships, from which substance use provided a means of coping or escape. Recovery was found through the strengthening of will and self-understanding, which allowed the protagonist

to learn trust and find more healthful relationships. The overarching theme of this story was growth from 'victim' to personal independence. Finally, the third narrative was a *co-dependence story*, where recovery came through insight that the protagonist was vulnerable to addiction to anything. There was a background of unexpressed negative feelings, where the hero lacked insight and, thus, continued to repeat the same mistakes in fostering destructive dependence, governed by anxiety. A recognition that all past attachments had been addictions brought the protagonist insight and stimulated change.

The case studies reveal three story types that reflect emphasis on different processes. The *AA story* emphasises connecting with other people and merging into a greater whole as key to recovery, marrying neatly with the 12-Step paradigm (Thune, 1997; Denzin, 1987), and Best and colleagues' SIMOR (Best et al., 2016); whereas the *growth story* strikes more of a personal agency note, and has parallels with Dunlop and Tracy's (2013) and Stone's (2016) research. The co-dependence story, in which personal insight enhances connections to others, indicates a combined personal and interpersonal development story.

Reflecting on clinical cases, Weegmann (2010) concurs that narratives of recovery can take different forms, observing that stories are sometimes mixed, with further inquiry needed to examine how themes integrate in substance misuse and recovery narratives. Hanninen and Koski-Jannes' (1999) study indicates that ideas of self-determinism and communal support can both be pivotal to recovery stories, illustrating the power of narratives for articulating personal rationale in identity transformation and the value of developing a narrative approach; although, again, focus on recovery narratives makes it impossible to establish differences in narrative constructs among active users.

In related personal constructs research, Ng (2002) investigated changes in drug users completing a religious rehabilitation program in Hong Kong. Interviewing 86 incumbent heroin addicts, Ng used repertory grids comprising the identity elements: Actual Self, Ideal

Self, Social Self, Drug Self, Jesus, Helper, and Religious Person, and the construct categories: Social Interaction, Self-Sufficiency, Morality, Tenderness and Involvement. Cross-sectional analysis showed pronounced changes at different stages of rehabilitation. Most salient was the separation of the Drug Self from the Actual Self following religious conversion, and the Actual Self's convergence with the Ideal Self. The relationship between the elements and constructs was reflected in the image of an Actual Self as moral, confident, and self-reliant person, who wanted to connect with others following religious conversion, as opposed to the image of being isolated from people and lacking in confidence prior to the program. The study illustrates multiple processes in identity transition, centred around the interpersonal desire to connect with others and achieving a new self-confidence.

In contrast to most of the narrative research, Ng's study also draws attention to the opposing constructs of the substance-using identity. Expanding this line of inquiry in a theoretical paper, Chen (2018) posits that hitting rock bottom provides motivation to acquire both personal and social resources from a position where neither is present. Extrapolating Chen's argument to amalgamate with Ng's findings, perhaps this position of personal powerlessness and social isolation describes the underpinning themes of substance misuse narratives.

Recognising that personal narratives provide the building blocks by which people's identities are constructed, Larsson and colleagues maintain that the challenge for the narrative researcher lies in getting to the complexity of the underlying story (Larsson, von Braun, Lilja, 2013). The authors propose an exhaustive plethora of psychological and social perspectives to draw upon in uncovering the vicissitudes of fragmented narrative identity. While their model signals an effort to encompass the complexity of substance misuse issues, it loses in parsimony what it gains in richness of data. However, an interesting proposition is given in Larsson et al.'s (2013) revival of Denzin's (1996) contention that identity is composed of many selves, where conflicting identities create dissonance, from which use of substances

offers an escape. The authors propose that this escape mechanism may be crucial in understanding substance misuse problems, chiming with the idea of self-medication for emotional dysregulation posited by Garland and colleagues (Garland et al., 2013; Garland et al, 2018). This notion fits with Biernacki's (1986) argument that recovery from substance misuse reflects the resolution of identity conflicts, and that the sustainability of a recovery identity and psychological wellbeing relies on a coherent underpinning life narrative (Hanninen & Koski-Jannes, 1999; Koski-Jannes, 2002; Singer, 2013). In the absence of this coordinating narrative, chaos (addiction) reigns.

Overall, the literature seems to suggest that self concepts of personal agency and community may each play an important role in identity changes that are related to recovery from substance misuse. Another piece of the puzzle is given in Singer's (1997, 2001) case study findings with 13 chronically addicted primary alcoholic males, in whom through qualitative examination of life story narratives he was able to observe agency and communion deficits. Singer's findings with long-term addicts indicate the relevance of agency and communion in life stories of substance misusers, suggesting that both themes may be central to recovery. Along with related studies with recovering populations, they point to the value of this type of narrative approach. Further investigations need to examine narratives of chronic active users with those of recovering users to elucidate differences, since little research has compared populations. This dearth of studies represents another limiting factor on narrative theories of substance misuse that must be redressed in subsequent work.

An exception to this pattern is a recent study by Kougiali and colleagues, examining narratives of active and recovering users to explore how the trajectory from addiction to recovery is constructed (Kougiali, Fasulo, Needs and Van Laar, 2017). In a sample of 21 participants at different stages of substance use and recovery, life story accounts were analysed to demonstrate that change pathways are discontinuous, with repeated relapses and periods of

abstinence. The researchers argue that this pattern formed part of a learning process through which lasting recovery could eventually be achieved. The study sought to address epistemological and ontological concerns of recovery being defined as a fixed linear notion in the addiction literature, rather than a process of fluctuations in behaviour gradually adapting to changing circumstances. Though certainly interesting, as Kougiali and colleagues admit, one of the most dominant models of recovery from substance misuse, the 'cycle of change', accounts for this discontinuity, with regression to previous stages being a part of the stated change process (Smedslund, Berg, Hammer, Steiro, Leiknes, Dahl et al., 2013).

Kougiali et al. (2017) accept several limitations of the study, which guide considerations for the current undertaking. Firstly, the results are limited by participants' subjective definitions of recovery, with no external measures being used. As discussed, it is increasingly recognised that recovery concerns much more than abstinence or self-report pronouncement of 'in recovery', consisting of numerous personal and social indicators of change. Mindful of this, recent studies have drawn on a spectrum of psychosocial markers supported by the literature, along with drug reduction and abstinence measures, to more richly gauge recovery (e.g. Groshkova et al., 2013; Best et al., 2016; Rowlands, Youngs & Canter, 2019b). Such comparative data is important for elucidating the practical value of narrative and identity approaches in understanding active substance use and recovery. Accordingly, this thesis seeks to build on Kougiali et al.'s (2017) mixed data collection to elucidate psychological constructs of recovery, whilst heeding the demand for external psychosocial measures to compare data and substantiate claims.

A further limitation of Kougiali et al.'s (2017) study is noted with all recovering participants deriving from the same recovery community and treatment service, which the researchers inform provided '… a uniformity in the structure of the narratives and the way explanations of past use and recovery-oriented goals were presented' (p.17). This may bias results towards

a specific intervention modality, impacting any generalisability. Heeding this, the decision was made by the author to recruit more diverse 'recovery settings', from those accessing formal treatment, informal modalities, 12-step organisations and self-help pathways, to reflect different routes to recovery, and explore pattern variations in reconstructed narratives.

Where Kougiali and colleagues research is signal, however, is in exploring active and recovery narratives, recognising the value of subjective causality in reconstructing experiences (Elliot, 2005; Adler, 2012). In this, the work offers insight as to how individuals gradually gain agency over a period of fluctuating progress. Though the researchers adopt McAdams' (1993) concept of narratives as personal myths speaking to identity, they state that patterns of recovery appear unique to every individual. Counter to this argument, previously cited research highlights certain common themes underpinning psychological change processes (Singer, 1997; Adler, 2012; Dunlop and Tracy, 2013; Stone, 2016), further investigations of which may reveal fresh insights. Certainly, a platform is provided for studying in more detail psychological growth factors important in recovery.

2.12 Agency and communion concepts

The approach adopted by Singer (1997, 2001) examined life story accounts given by participants, drawing on the research of McAdams and others observing identity-shaping themes of agency and communion in personal narratives (McAdams, 1993; McAdams, Hoffman, Day & Mansfield, 1996; Bauer & McAdams, 2004). Agency can be defined as 'personal competence', concerning self-expansion, wheareas communion refers to 'relatedness' or union and concerns relationships with others (Bakan, 1966; McAdams, 1993). Bakan (1966) argued that agency and communion represent the two fundamental organismic drives and twin human strivings, with which others concur (McAdams, 1988; Buchanan and

Bardi, 2015). Thus, it is posited that frustration of primal drives can give rise to identity problems (Singer, 2004). Accordingly, agency and communion have been described as motivational themes (Adler, Turner, Brookeshier, Monahan, Walder-Biesanz, Harmeling et al., 2015), research showing that theme presentations are measureable in narrative accounts and correspond with dominant values and incentives for power (agency) and intimacy (communion) in westernised societies (McAdams et al., 1996; Canter & Youngs, 2009; Buchanan & Bardi, 2015).

The present thesis adopts Bakan's (1966) concept of agency as 'competence' and communion as 'union', whilst following McAdams' (1993) further atomising of the superordinate concepts into theme elements such as *effectiveness, empowerment* and *self-mastery* (agency) and *friendship, caring* and *unity* (communion) for examination of themes in self-narratives. These components are accorded strict coding descriptions for the purposes of structured content analysis (McAdams et al., 1996; McAdams, 2000 - see Chapter 3 for a more detailed discussion).

The impetus for examining agency and communion in studying constitutive identity deficits and change processes in addiction and recovery is clear. Though Singer's (1997, 2001) case studies are revealing and provide an important platform, his findings need building on through examination of more cases of active and recovering substance misusers, as well as female participants. This is a primary objective of the present thesis.

2.13 Post hoc attribution

It is important to mention at this point the arguments of attribution theorists, who contend that stories are framed post hoc according to behaviour patterns as a means of reducing dissonance, a device that serves to preserve the status quo (Eiser, 1982; Newman & Davies, 2007). Thus,

preserving a user identity may invoke themes of *bravado, struggle* or *impotence*, while a recovery identity calls upon substantiating redemption narratives, celebrating prosocial motives and attributing self-agency. However, the proliferation of prospective studies illustrating the influence of narratives on positive behavioural change (Dunlop & Tracy, 2013; Dingle et al., 2015; Stone, 2016) suggest that the truth may be closer to Bruner's argument that both life and narrative influence each other (Bruner, 1987), and that self-narratives provide personal justifications *and* devices for instigating actions (Presser, 2009; Canter & Youngs, 2013; Adler., 2012; Singer et al, 2014).

2.14 Summary

In summary, whilst there are biological influences on substance misuse and addiction, deterministic theories of brain chemistry are of limited use for understanding differences between individuals who become addicted to substances and those who do not. In ignorance of personal circumstances, they divorce behaviour from its context and fail to articulate the spectrum of psychosocial factors involved in substance misuse and recovery. Clearly there are social influences on substance use and addiction problems, including poverty (Khan, Murray & Barnes, 2002; Barros et al., 2018) and peer networks (Best et al., 2016; Mason et al., 2016); however, a criticism of marco-level perspectives is that they de-emphasise the personal experience of individuals embroiled in lifestyles of chronic substance misuse and the personal journey those with addiction problems take to achieve recovery. Indeed, research shows that there are complex experiential and psychological influences on substance misuse, such as victimisation (Taplin et al., 2014), emotional self-regulation (Garland et al., 2013) and isolation (MacNeill & Brunelle, 2016).

It is argued in this thesis that social and psychological influences on personally problematic behaviour are contextualised in self-narratives and can therefore be understood by collecting

and studying the personal stories through which individuals articulate their experience (McAdams, 1993; Singer, 1997). Positive behavioural change and recovery must involve some resolution of the above factors, thus, likewise, it is proposed that these psychosocial processes can be illustrated and understood by studying the personal stories individuals in recovery tell of their lives (Hannenin & Koski-Jannes, 1999) and differences with those active in addiction. Respectful of biological influences and broad sociological factors impacting on behaviour, the thesis represents an emphasis on the psychology of substance misuse and recovery; that is, the way that individuals embroiled in substance misuse and those in recovery narrate and experience their lives.

Chapter 3. Adopting a Narrative Approach

3.1 Individual experience

The shift to psychosocial approaches in the field of substance misuse (Turton, 2014) recognises the importance of personal and relational factors in development, maintenance, and recovery from problematic drug and alcohol use (Larsson, et al., 2013). This interface between the psychological and social world is at the heart of individual experience and personal issues (Rogers, 1954; Laing, 1961). Amongst theoretical perspectives, the narrative approach provides a uniquely powerful method for capturing subjective experiences and self-understanding by placing the person at the centre of enquiry (McAdams, 1985, 1993; Crossley, 2000; Mclean & McAdams, 2013). Personal narratives offer a method through which the narrator can communicate a sequence of consequential, personally meaningful events (Elliot, 2005), and in so doing, comes closest to providing researchers with the texture of how individuals experience and understand themselves (Singer, 2001). This unique insight is crucial for grasping the personal context of substance misuse and recovery processes, and tailoring interventions to person-centred needs.

Beyond the collection of rich phenomenological accounts, the depth of narrative enquiry also facilitates in revealing, among samples of individuals, themes and constructs cooccurring in stories (McAdams, 1993; McAdams, 2006; Stone, 2016). These insights can build on the detailed source of psychological material elicited from narrative accounts to illustrate discriminative patterns important in developing explanatory theories of behaviour. Thus, from rich experiential reservoirs of material empirical models of behaviour can emerge that carry important practical implications (Youngs & Canter, 2012). This reasoning marks a real potential for narrative research methodology, which is already being observed in applications of narrative findings to police investigations (Youngs & Canter, 2011) and psychotherapy (Adler, 2012), signalling potential for models of addiction recovery.

3.2 Person as expert

As early as 1955, George Kelly advanced the idea that the individual provides a fundamental resource in understanding human behaviour (Kelly, 1955, 1970), arguing that while research cannot directly access a person's reality, a ready expert is available in the individual themselves. Kelly proposed that people are scientists, constructing personal meaning and making sense of the world through propositions they test. Through this process, repeated themes are detected that come to consolidate personal construct systems, or ways of interpreting that enable individuals to characterise themselves within the world, giving them a sense of identity. In some cases, construct systems may prove to be problematic and therefore serve as a focus for intervention, as they were in Kelly's clinical practice (Burrell, 1999). Kelly argued that examination of people's self-characterisations offered the best means of psychological assessment and intervention, sometimes using a method where the patient was invited to portray themselves as a character in a play (Bannister & Fransella, 1971). Kelly's ideas serve as an important orientating influence on the narrative approach to understanding problematic behaviour.

3.3 The metaphor of life

Heralding the arrival of a powerful new perspective in 1986, Theodore Sarbin declared that narrative may offer the 'root metaphor' for understanding all human behaviour (Sarbin, 1986). His bold statement refers to the human proclivity of interpreting experience into a storied form. Forming experiences into meaningful sequences, or narratives, McAdams (1985) relates, creates order from a raft of incoming information, establishes coherence, and prepares experience for the telling, and repeated self-telling. This storied merging of intra- and interpersonal worlds characterises us psychosocially, constructing a meaningful position in life. Thus, narrative offered a logical method for understanding human behaviour. The

subsequent breadth of narrative research is testament to this contention (McAdams, 1985, 1993; Baumeister, Stillwell & Heatherton, 2001; Bauer & McAdams, 2004; McLean & Pasupathi, 2011; McAdams, 2012; Bauer, Graham, Lauber et al., 2018). Importantly for this thesis, narrative approaches are gaining currency in clinical discussions of human behaviour, where they are providing important explanatory, assessment and therapeutic options (Crossley, 2000; Diamond, 2002; Lysaker, Ringer, Maxwell et al., 2010; Ward, 2010; Adler et al., 2015; Jarman, Harkin & Monaghan, 2017; Fenton & Stickley, 2018; Holms, Thomsen & Bliksted, 2018).

3.4 Natural storytellers

Following the narrative concept of human psychology is the idea that humans naturally communicate through storytelling. Interpretation of life events into storied forms provides coherence to experience which facilitates communication. The idea of narrative and storytelling being a natural form of cognition and expression can be traced back to Sartre (1938), who proposed that people live by the stories they tell themselves and others. As a natural mode of thinking, stories explain sequences of events, making them more memorable and purposeful (Bruner, 1987). This chimes with the idea that storytelling becomes a form of identity integration (McAdams, 1985; Singer, 2001), where their moulding to reflect individually meaningful interpretations is most revealing about the person and helpful in explaining behaviour (Presser, 2009).

Following Kelly's argument that self-characterisation offers a powerful method of psychological assessment, personal stories provide the perfect means of contextualising experiences and problems. Accordingly, the connection created by telling stories is key to establishing bonds and forming relationships, as well as providing a key means of resolving discord, processing trauma, and collaboratively exploring change (Weegmann, 2010;

Lederman, 2015; Wulbert, 2018). Perhaps through narratives, method, theory and therapy find natural harmony (Diamond, 2002; Singer, Singer & Berry, 2013).

Nonetheless, until relatively recently 'stories' were not considered the substance of empirical investigation, as McAdams relates '…. stories are too soft and human lives too big, as well as too singular. One should not be surprised, therefore, if life stories attracted only the most romantic of psychological investigators.' (McAdams. 2001, p. 100). The tide began to change in the mid-1980s when personality psychologists turned their attention to people's lives, finding stories to be useful in capturing personal meaning through significant events/memories pertaining to the self in the world (McAdams, 1988). Since stories conformed to expressions of culturally dominant themes, rich personal data could be reduced to scientifically verifiable constructs and narrative models of identity could be developed, contrary to earlier apprehensions (McAdams, 1988, 1993, 2018; Canter & Youngs, 2012; Singer et al., 2014; Bauer et al., 2018).

3.5 Relatively thinking

The stories people tell of themselves may differ depending on who they are telling and the circumstances under which they are told. Relativist thinkers emphasise the flexibility of stories, holding that narratives are not fixed structures but are formed and dissolved in social interactions - the joint work of actor and audience, reflecting constantly remodelled and multiple selves (Gergen, 2009). As such, proponents of relativist approaches present an internal world of fragmented multiplicity (Smith, 1993). This idea contrasts with 'life story' theorists, such as McAdams (1985), who consider narratives unique and coherent personal stories conveying enduring meaning and intention. Realist theorists like McAdams accept the idea of multiplicity, however the distinction is in their argument that the act of self-storying

itself serves to generate coherence and inner unity from the chaotic and fragmented external world (McAdams, 1988).

3.6 Cultural influences

Another consideration for the construction of narratives is the impact of culture, with different perspectives on the extent to which culture shapes stories. Some post-modernist thinkers caution against phenomenological perspectives, arguing that individualistic culture encourages people to construct heroic narratives with themselves as a governing identity (Gergen, 1992; Greenburg, 1994). These stories, they argue, are illusory, with peoples' narratives being externally shaped (Gergen & Gergen, 2010). In contrast, McAdams' (2006) redemption stories provide a prominent example of constructivist interpretation, intention and self-agency. However, as with 'relativism versus realism', the two positions are not mutually exclusive, rather reflect variations in emphases. McAdams (2018) attempts some reconciliation with post-modernist criticisms, accepting that narratives are co-constructed by cultural subgroups, positing the existence of narrative types associated with different roles or problems in society.

McAdams' (2018) proposition of subcultural groups sharing narrative anchors and themes reflects ideas underpinning the current thesis: that life events are interpreted according to available cultural and sub-cultural plots, with stories being less or more available depending on sociocultural *and* psychological factors. Cultures offer different possible narratives through which to structure life events and barriers to other storied accounts. It is within these limited frames of reference that stories are constructed and communicated. Singer (1996) observes that any narrative enquiry should appreciate how cultural and socio-historical contexts help to frame who we are, but that within these barriers different possibilities exist.

Following theorists like McAdams (1988), Singer (2004), Adler et al. (2015), and Canter and Youngs (2011), the author proposes that whilst culture impacts heavily on the narratives people can adopt, opportunities to restructure events may arise offering individuals agency in re-storying their existence (McAdams et al., 2001; Maruna, 2001; Stone, 2016). It is these interpretative processes upon which this thesis is focused.

3.7 Life narrative

Drawing on relevant supportive literature, McAdams' (1993) idea of a unifying self-orientating inner narrative that speaks to identity is endorsed. This is seen to represent a 'life narrative', referring to a subjective sequence of personally significant events entailing a reconstructed past, conceived present and anticipated future. The concept seeks to address what Presser (2009) alludes to as the vagueness of the term 'narrative', since it can represent different forms of elicitation, from that of 'accurate record', 'interpretation of reality', to 'shaper of experience'. The author rejects any notion that personal narratives provide an accurate record of events, rather narratives are understood to be an interpretation of reality and shaper of experience, upholding that such purposeful storying serves to rationalise, justify and guide actions (McAdams et al., 1996; Adler, 2012), representing the coordination of self-understanding and mediator of behaviour (Presser, 2009). This essential experiential nature is proposed to speak directly to psychological issues (Singer, 2001).

In recounting a life narrative, the narrator can describe different aspects of the self, including disowned, imaginary, or hope for parts (Presser, 2009). According to Bruner (1987), the 'life narrative' is an interpretative feat, reflecting key memories and ways of conceptualising and telling that become scripts for structuring experience and directing the future. This concept of self-storying reflects something substantive, intrinsic and instrumental. Whilst surely over-concretising the process of human storying, the idea that narratives offer valuable insights at

the point of behaviour is supported by empirical studies (Adler, McAdams & Skalina, 2008; Youngs & Canter, 2012; Dunlop & Tracy, 2013). Building on Bruner's (1987) idea of consolidating patterns, McAdams (1993) argues that elicitation of life story accounts can reveal this essential life narrative. Singer (1996) proposes that a 'life story theory of identity', in drawing together various threads and roleplays, ameliorates some relativist tensions around narrative flexibility and multiple communicable selves (Gergen, 1992; Smith, 1993).

Appreciating the cultural context of self-storying, life narratives are observed to be in accordance or opposition to the accepted idea of a 'good' life (Bauer et al., 2018). Life narratives that stand in opposition to culturally acceptable lives may broadly evince a theme of inner conflict, or dissonance, and thus require subcultural justification, overarching rationalisation, or provide a stimulus for change (Biernacki, 1986; Singer, 2001; Youngs et al., 2016). Considering this, some scholars argue that narrow options exist for re-storying deviant narratives, such processes relying on external changes and culture shifts (Denzin, 1987).

Agency for stimulating change, either via instrumental re-storying, re-culturing or some combination of the two presents a contentious issue; nonetheless, narrative research in Personality and Criminology has focused on the potential for re-storying and differences between 'problem' and 'resolution' narratives (Maruna, 2001; Adler, 2012). Reasoning that people understand themselves through stories, 'problems' are only intelligible within a given story; thus, to re-story one's life is to dissolve the problem and open up new life trajectories. Examining how re-storied accounts differ from fixed or problem stories, researchers have highlighted certain central themes distinguishing narratives, such as *agency* and *redemption* (Adler, 2012; Singer et al., 2013). This line of enquiry has predominantly taken a life narrative perspective to examine identity differences among populations. Focal to these investigations is the idea that narrative and identity are intimately related.

3.8 Narrative identity

It has been posited that narratives and identity represent the same constructs; that since human lives are understood through storied interpretation, this constitutes who we are: identity (Bruner, 1987; McAdams, 1993; Singer, 2004). Lieblich et al. (1998) follows this reasoning: 'The story is one's identity, a story created, told, revised, and retold throughout life' (p7). Though this concept of 'self-knowing' makes intuitive sense, Gergen and Gergen (2010) caution the idea, suggesting that it conceptualises life entirely in terms of language, as narratives are a linguistic feat. However, since symbolism is how humans conceptualise reality (Wittgenstein, 1922), such life stories may provide the best means of self-identifying and through which others may identify us (Ezzy, 1998; Eakin, 1999).

Accordingly, McAdams (1988) described the narrative as a cultivator of personal identity over time and across circumstances. Much of the psychological narrative literature has focused on this idea of narrative identity (Singer, 2004; McAdams & Pals, 2008; McClean, 2008; Singer et al., 2012)**,** being concerned with establishing meaning in the personal and social world of the individual (McAdams, 1985). The perspective has its roots in the work of Erik Erikson (1963). Erikson's theory of identity proposes that in adolescence people begin to reconstruct memories in accordance with their present and imagined future, building a personal identity through the stories they tell. Such a concept of identity demands a robust narrative to structure experiences and connect them logically and temporally. It is accepted that people play multiple roles in life that may find expression in the life narrative. As such, McAdams and advocates believe that multiple roles or 'selves' are reconciled into a unified identity through the narrativizing process of life-storying (McAdams, 1993; Singer, 2004; Bauer et al., 2018). In other words, narrative identity is understood as the way we organise our different roles and experiences to give them unity and purpose (McAdams, 1995). With

this idea of what life narrative and identity constitutes, McAdams (1988) argues that examination of life story accounts provides an ideal method for revealing the underlying structures that connect affects and cognition to patterns of behaviour.

This line of reasoning proposes that narrative identity reconstruction matches the degree to which life circumstances challenge the underlying life narrative. In this sense, life transitions and challenges can prompt processes of narrative restructuring and associated identity transformation (McAdams, 2001). Crossley (2000) illustrates the breakdown of narrative identity in illness and trauma, and the importance of rebuilding meaning, highlighting the positive instrumentality of configuring experiences into a purposeful story in establishing healthy lives and psychological wellbeing. Likewise, Maruna's (2001) ex-offenders and Stone's (2016) pregnant drug users narrativizing redemption in the pursuit of prosocial lives. Singer and Conway (2011) make a similar case to Crossley (2000) for the importance of coherence of experiences and personal meaning to healthy narrative identity.

This research highlights differences explanatory of behavioural processes among individuals and groups, expanding subjective experiences into real world patterns: if transformation of problematic life narratives supports positive identity and behavioural change, then understanding the stories underpinning substance misuse and recovery may be fundamental to our understanding mediatory identity processes. Following this theorisation, the author considers life narrative accounts a reflection of current identity. Identity and identity differences are being studied through an examination of narrative differences.

The work follows a trend of identity and identity change research in Personality (Pals & McAdams, 2004) Criminology (Maruna, 2001), Psychotherapy (Adler, 2012), and Addiction (Stone, 2016). It is justified by a wealth of findings in psychology highlighting the importance of identity in addiction recovery (McIntosh & McKeganey, 2002; Dingle et al., 2015; Best et

al., 2016). Therefore, it is differences in narrative identity between those in recovery and addiction that this thesis seeks to address.

3.9 Chapter summary

To summarise, the position of this thesis is that narratives are not an objective account of an individual's life, rather, individuals subjectively construct narratives through a selection and interpretation of meaningful events, storying experiences logically and temporally (Presser, 2009). This process proceeds within the bounds of culturally available stories (McAdams, 2018). By this means, narratives are continuously reconstructed, interpreting and guiding behaviours. In this storied construction, the past is interpreted to give congruity and coherence to experiences, justifying the present position and serving as a guide for subsequent actions, orientating a unified, purposeful identity towards the future (McAdams, 1993). Over time, characteristic interpretations and constructs can become self-perpetuating ways of being, or narrative scripts (Bruner, 1987; McConnell & Snoek, 2018), establishing an overarching self-narrative (McAdams, 1993; Singer, Blagov, Berry & Oost, 2013). This storied self reflects an effort to draw multiple narrative threads into a coherent life narrative that speaks to identity and can offer insights at the point of action (Singer, 2004; Youngs & Canter, 2012).

The narrative theory adopted by the author derives from the McAdams' Narrative Identity Model used extensively in the field of Personality Psychology (McAdams et al., 1996; Bauer et al., 2018) and fields related to the present subject matter. This body of research primarily uses content coding of life story accounts to reduce complex qualitative material to quantifiable data (Adler, Dunlop, Fivush, Lodi-Smith, Pals, McAdams et al., 2017). The methodology has proved useful for revealing patterns and structures in rich narrative material, modelling explanatory differences in narratives according to measurements on themes such as agency, communion, redemption and contamination, showing them to be important in the

shaping of identity (McAdams et al., 1996; Bauer & McAdams, 2004; McAdams, 2006; Adler et al., 2015).

The thesis speaks primarily to realist psychological research on recovery from substance misuse, since these approaches have offered insights with correlates in external outcomes (Dunlop & Tracy, 2013; Stone, 2016). These findings can be built on to deepen our understanding of narrative growth themes motivating behaviour and potentially instrumental in positive behavioural change and recovery, indicating practical benefits (Singer, Singer & Berry, 2013). It is argued that this approach strikes some balance between a recognition of the richness of human experience while upholding the principal tenets of realism in examination of substantive phenomena underpinning and differentiating psychological processes (Crossley, 2000).

Drawing on McAdams' (1993) model, the following definition of life narratives is adopted in the present study:

Life narrative refers to the selective account of various episodes and events that have occurred, are currently occurring, or might occur in the future life of the narrator. Heeding Presser's (2009) contention in relation to this understanding, the narrator can discuss different parts of a single self, including phased out, disowned or hypothetical parts, and can stand at a distance from all these parts; however, it is proposed that the account expresses a significant and psychologically meaningful essence useful for the study of identity.

Chapter 4 Life Story Narrative Identity Theory

4.1 Chapter aims

As stated in Chapter 3, the author adopts the theory of narrative identity proposed by McAdams and others for interpretation and understanding of life story accounts, as well as examination of individual differences (McAdams. 1993; McAdams & Pals, 2008; McLean & Pasupathi, 2011; Canter & Youngs, 2015; Adler et al., 2017). Following discussion of issues and tensions among narrative theorists in the preceding chapter, the present chapter seeks to delineate McAdams identity theory, discussing supportive literature as well as limitations of the model identified through related research with marginalised populations, and consequent research directives.

4.2 Levels of understanding

It has been proposed that personality can be understood at three levels (McAdams, 2011). Level one refers to dispositional traits, or temperament, such as neuroticism, openness to experience, extraversion, agreeableness and conscientiousness. This level is represented by the Big Five Theory (Tupes & Christal, 1961; Goldberg, 1993; O'Connor, 2002), and refers to stable personality factors (Jang, Livesley & Vernon, 1996), but provides no unique information about the individual and leaves little scope for personal change. Level two - characteristic adaptations, gets closer to the individual, addressing values, motives and goals, and reflects what people want out of life, but communicates little of the context through which psychological phenomena arise and the personal experience of the individual (Singer, 1996). The third and deepest level of personality is identity (McAdams, 1985), which captures meaning and purpose in a person's life and thus speaks to the phenomenology of experience (Polkinghorne, 1988). At this level we discover what makes the person unique and the texture

of individual reality. Singer argues that discovering the person at this level may negate the need for other more superficial personality discourses (Singer, 1996).

McAdams (1985) states that a person's identity is a function of their life narrative. As discussed, this personal narrative constitutes a meaningful interpretation of significant experiences threaded together into a coherent, unfolding life story. Ergo, McAdams (1993) advocates that collection and analysis of life story accounts provides the suitable means for studying identity, and understanding the essential psychology of individuals and individual differences (McAdams, 2011).

4.3 Personal myths

Since the mid-1980s, McAdams and his associates have built an impressive body of theoretical and empirical work on the premise that identity is the evolving narrative we construct about our life (McAdams, 1993; McAdams et al., 1996; McAdams, 1997; McAdams et al, 2001; Bauer & McAdams, 2004; McAdams & Pals, 2006; McLean, Pasupathi, and Pals, 2007; McLean & McAdams, 2013; McAdams, 2018). During adolescence, McAdams argues, individuals reach a degree of cognitive and social maturity that enables them to cast themselves as protagonists in a life narrative (Erikson, 1963; McAdams, 1995; Habermas & Bluck, 2000).

McAdams relates that the life story departs markedly from an objective chronicle of a person's past in that it selects only those events that the individual deems significant. Sequences of personally meaningful events create a storied representation which orientates the individual towards an imagined future, giving them a coherent sense of who they are and who they will be, or narrative identity (McLean & McAdams, 2013). The life story is, therefore, more like a personal myth than a life biography. It tells how a person reconstructs their past, complete

with self-defining scenes, characters, plots and themes (McAdams, 1985; Singer, 2004; McAdams & Pals, 2006; McLean, 2008).

McAdams' approach emphasises the subjective experience of the individual. In this way the life story method is redolent of Kelly's (1955) proposition that the individual is an expert at the centre of a drama, and that the individual's interpretation of life and self-organisation is key to understanding personality and personal issues. This emphasis on the subject as a central and reliable resource speaks primarily to psychological perspectives on identity and behaviour. The roots to this approach may be the publication of Tomkins (1979) script theory, after which personality psychologists began to appreciate the role of narrative in articulating meaning in people's lives, and that differences in the structure and content of life stories were significant and measurable aspects of personality (McAdams, 1988; Hooker & McAdams, 2003).

Today, McAdams approach is used by personality, clinical and forensic psychologists in examining what differentiates the development and maintenance of healthy narrative identity from more problematic and dysfunctional forms (Maruna, 2001; Singer et al., 2014; Adler et al., 2015), since the definition of key factors in healthy identity translates into valuable information for assessment, treatment, and resolution of personal issues (Singer et al., 2013). Such real-world implications are central to the current thesis with respect to substance misuse and recovery.

4.4 Agency and communion

As stated in Chapter 2, McAdams (1988) theory draws on the writings of Bakan (1966) identifying agency and communion as the dominant themes around which stories are constructed, reflecting human needs for competence and union and central dual pursuits for power and intimacy. Agency broadly refers to ideas of competence and is exemplified by such

motifs as autonomy, power, competence and mastery; whereas communion refers to relatedness and encompasses intimacy, nurturance, and unity. McAdams proposes that personal stories can represent extremes, focusing predominantly on agentic themes (emphasising personal gain), or communal themes (emphasising relationships); they can combine both agentic and communal themes, or can show neither agency and communion (emphasising personal impotence and social isolation) (McAdams, 1993).

Reflecting these different emphases and drawing on Jungian archetypes, McAdams (1993) distinguished a set of personal roles, which he refers to as imagoes, that personify variations of agency and communion in protagonists' roles, that are played out in narratives (McAdams, 1993). McAdams (1993) uses these imagoes to highlight characterisations of identity by narrators in central protagonists. These are personal myths and can be multiple within the life narrative, reflecting different roles. Examples include highly agentic personas, such 'Warrior' or 'Sage', highly communal (Caregiver, Lover), both agentic and communal (Healer, Teacher), or neither communal nor agentic characters (Escapist).

For McAdams, agency and communion are both highly positive themes. Singer (2004) argues that western culture demands something of a balance between both factors. Correspondingly, research shows that agency and communion are positively related to personal wellbeing (Helgeson, 1994; Fournier & Moskowitz, 2000; Sheldon & Cooper, 2008). Thus, limitations in these self-attributes may signify stifled needs for power and intimacy that require succour through pursuit of superordinate potency or dependency. Signally, these propositions may hint at psychological underpins for predatory modes and addiction, respectively (Canter, 1994; Singer, 1997).

The importance of agency and communion to identity and self-concept has been highlighted across numerous studies. Recently, a longitudinal study of 276 primary school pupils, aged 6-11, assessed the role of agency and communion in the development of self-esteem.

Achievement was used as a measure of agency and *social relationships* was used as a measure of communion. The results showed that both dimensions were integral, though the importance of social relationships in younger children gave way to achievement of goals in significance as children aged (Chen, Zu & Bi, 2018). The research highlights the centrality of both agency and communion to psychological development, where their conceptual distinction provides means of distinguishing each theme's relative importance to developmental processes. The move from communal to agentic emphasis, as much as exemplifying a child's move to greater psychological independence, may reflect the growing inculcation and balance of society's obsession with achievement.

While paradoxical tensions can exist between agency and communion, effective leadership demands both agentic and communal qualities. Zeng and colleagues (2018) were interested to determine how leaders achieved role congruity in their relationships with their employees. They discovered that executives were able to align both qualities by activating agency or communion tendencies according to demand, sequentially, or by establishing common ground (Zeng, Surgevil & Kark, 2018). The research demonstrates the importance of balancing agentic and communal qualities in effective, cooperative leadership, and indicates the value of both qualities to successful roles in western culture.

As motivational themes, agency and communion are often thought of as being in tension, however in a study of 25 moral exemplars with matched controls, Frimer and colleagues showed that moral exemplars consistently showed more combined agency and communion themes in life review accounts than matched controls, and that they were more likely to integrate the themes within their personality. The research shows the exalted role of combined agency and communion themes in the development of moral personality and the self-identity benefits of overcoming theme tensions (Frimer, Walker, Dunlop et al., 2011). Overall, the

findings suggest that self-attributes of joint agency and communion confer self-identity advantages.

4.5 Twin underpinning psychological processes

The idea that twin psychological processes underpin differences in human behaviour was first conceived with Freud's distinction between 'love' and 'work' as the primary motivators of human behaviour (Freud, 1953). Although the vocabulary may differ, this distinction has emerged across a breadth of psychological literature (Leary, 1957; Wiggins, 1991; Blackburn et al., 2004; Buchanan & Bardi, 2015). Leary (1957) proposed the two dimensions of dominance/submission and love/hate in considering interpersonal aspects of personality, a contention that found support in subsequent research (Mahony & Stasson, 2005). Likewise, Herman (1996) distinguished motives for superiority and power and those for contact and intimacy, in conceptualising personal identity, mirroring McAdams' (1988) narrative identity framework.

Accordingly, research by Abele and Wojciszke (2007) examining 300 personality traits in 320 Polish students found that most traits could be subsumed under the two independent superordinate factors of agency and communion. A follow-up study assessed how the two dimensions related to social cognition and interaction, finding that agency related to *self-profit* and communion to *other profit*, revealing the relationship between the dimensions and behavioural incentives. Subsequent work corroborated earlier findings, showing negative correlations between trait adjectives' agency and communion ratings, serving as a standardised operationalisation of the two fundamental content dimensions (Abele et al., 2008).

Assessing the relationship between narrative themes and motivational intent, McAdams et al. (1996) carried out three studies on 350 adults and students, in which participants provided narratives of personally important scenes in their lives. The accounts were coded for themes of agency and communion. The agentic themes *self-mastery, status, achievement* and *empowerment* were positively correlated with Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) measures of achievement and power motivation, self-report scales of dominance, and personal strivings concerned with being successful, while the communion themes of *love/friendship, dialogue*, *care/help* and *community* were associated with intimacy motivation, needs for affiliation and nurturance, and personal strivings concerning close relationships. The findings suggested coherence among narrative themes, social motives and self-direction, indicating a relationship between agency and communion, incentives and behaviours. This result is important in terms of connecting self-identity attributes with action.

More recently, Buchanan and Bardi (2015) examined agency and communion in a sample of 371 American adults. The study showed that agency values, goals and behaviours were all highly correlated, as were communion values, goals and behaviours. This result illustrates consistency between meaning (values), intention (goals) and actions (behaviour) with respect to the two dimensions. Thus, whether considering differences in interpersonal disposition or self-strivings, variations can be related to two central psychological constructs that concern agency and communion (Youngs & Canter, 2013). The findings support an agency and communion framework for addressing individual thematic, value, motivational and behaviour differences.

4.6 Measuring agency and communion

Personality psychologists measure agency and communion themes in life stories according to specific coding dictionaries in which the superordinate concepts are atomised into different

elements, or components. For example, definitions of *effectiveness, empowerment* and *self-mastery* have been used to code narratives for the agency theme, and definitions of *friendship*, *caring*, and *unity* have been used to code different attributes of communion (McAdams, 1993; McAdams et al., 1996; Canter & Youngs, 2015; Tkazky, 2018; Rowlands et al., 2019). McAdams contends that the coding elements used express highly agenctic and communal ideas and are indicative of Baken's (1966) original concepts of agency and communion as they are theorised to pertain to human lives.

Though it is recognised that other definitions of 'agency' and 'communion' may exist, as per the narratvie identity persepctive on which this thesis primariliy draws, McAdams' (1993) understanding of agency as narrated in storied accounts is adopted. Accordingly, consistent definitions of *effectiveness, empowerment* and *self-mastery* are used to code and compare narrative agency, and definitions of *friendship/love, caring* and *unity* to code and compare narrative communion (Canter & Youngs, 2015). Other themes central to the study of narrative identity, such as 'redemption' and 'contamination', are likewise coded in the narrative material, following definitions used by narrative identity researchers in Personality (McAdams & Bowman, 2001; Bauer, Graham, Lauber & Lynch, 2018), Mental Health (Harkness, 2011; Adler et al., 2015) and Criminology (Maruna, 2001; Canter & Youngs, 2015; Tkakzy, 2018). More detailed descriptions of the full LAAF content coding dictionary used for this project can be found in Chapter 7.

4.7 Redemption and contamination

As alluded to, McAdams (2001) identifies two further dominant themes in the construction of life stories and identity: redemption and contamination. Redemption refers to narrative movement from bad to good, whereas contamination refers to movement from good to bad.

Life narrative researchers pay close attention to scenes in stories that stand out (Adler et al., 2017). McAdams (2001) draws on the ideas of Tomkins (1979) in identifying nuclear episodes that provide important turning points in narratives. In his research, Tomkins identified pivotal scenes that start out positive and satisfying but turn negative with the appearance of a contaminating factor, which jeopardises the good scene, turning it frightening, sad or shameful (Tomkins, 1987). According to Tomkins, these nuclear scenes can lead to the establishment of broader scripts or life story patterns. In some life stories efforts to resolve *contamination* fail and the protagonist repeats the sequence over and again, establishing a contamination theme in the life narrative. Other life stories tell of bad scenes becoming good. In the redemption sequence, the protagonist is delivered from a state of suffering to one of emotional positivity. In the same way that contamination sequences can become established, redemption sequences may also come to signify broader story types (McAdams, 2001).

The concept of repeated life sequences becoming established as de facto identity themes in the life story is key to McAdams (2001) formulation, reflecting a thickened and self-defining thread in the life narrative. As discussed previously, this assertion of consistency in personal storying, or identity, with external correlates is anathema to some postmodernist thinkers emphasising flexibility and multiplicity in narrative constructs (e.g. Smith, 1993). However, the theorisation has underscored a wealth of identity research (McAdams, 1993; Singer, 1997; Maruna, 201; McAdams, 2006; Canter & Youngs, 2011; Adler et al., 2015).

4.8 Identity transitions and growth

Adler et al. (2015) argue that agency, communion, redemption and contamination represent master narratives of life's challenges. This means that whilst accepting the concept of a coherent narrative identity, Adler proposes that under significant life challenges certain changes can occur, and these changes are mediated by storied growth themes – agency,

communion and redemption. This contention is borne out by research on life transitions. A study by Bauer and McAdams (2004) coded agentic and communal growth themes in narrative descriptions of 67 American adults making career or religion transitions. Agentic growth themes were coded for episodes that emphasised: *impacting one's environment*, *achieving valued outcomes* and *self-mastery*, whereas communal growth themes were coded for *attaining friendship*, *dialogue* and *sharing and connecting with groups*. Agentic growth themes predicted transition satisfaction and communal growth themes predicted sense of global wellbeing. The findings show that themes of agency and communion are important to satisfying life transitions, though they may differ in their positive influence.

In a later study, McAdams and colleagues analysed the life stories of 40 highly generative people and 30 less generative people to distinguish the extent to which the two groups constructed different identities. They found that the highly generative people reconstructed the past positively and orientated themselves towards an optimistic future with prosocial motives (redemptive), whereas the second group were more likely to frame contamination sequences (McAdams, Diamond, De St. Aubin, & Mansfield, 1997). The research illustrates how redemption and contamination themes are important to identity construction and future orientation.

Influenced by McAdams' theory, Shadd Maruna (2001) explored identity differences expressed in the narratives of persistent versus desisting offenders, finding that ex-offenders reconstructed their identity according to a redemption script, which was associated with a higher sense of personal agency and pro-social goal-setting. In contrast, active offenders' stories followed a contamination script, invoking an external locus of control in narratives of hopelessness (Maruna, 2001). Maruna's work revealed the importance of agency and redemption to positive identity reconstruction, the contrasting contamination narrative, and their relationship with observable behaviour patterns.

In subsequent research by McAdams and colleagues, midlife adults and college students were asked to provide narrative accounts of meaningful episodes, such as highpoints, low points and turning points. Across the sample redemption sequences in the narrative accounts were associated with self-reports of wellbeing, while contamination sequences predicted low levels of wellbeing, highlighting the relationship between redemptive framing and psychological health. In the midlife sample, adults scoring high on self-report measures of generativity showed significantly higher levels of redemption and lower levels of contamination sequences, suggesting that adopting a redemptive frame facilitates in being productive (McAdams et al., 2001). Other research corroborates these findings (see for example, McLean & Breen, 2009).

The generativity script represents the outline of the story's ending and is related to the redemption theme (McAdams et al., 2001; McLean & Breen, 2009). It addresses the question of how the life story will turn out and refers specifically to one's legacy. The generativity script comes in the form of stories about both self-agency and communal acts (McAdams, 2004).

Redemption and generativity scripts are served by cultural notions of what constitutes a 'good life'. Bauer et al. (2018) expanded life story theories by examining how ideas of 'goods' in life supply personal meaning to narratives. Theories of life stories often explain the meaning-making process but lack a model of the goods in life around which the meaning is constructed. Using a similar methodology to McAdams, participants in two studies provided narrative descriptions of pivotal life episodes which were then coded for *redemption, self-improvement*, themes of *eudaimonic growth* (values and motives aimed at cultivating meaningful activities or relationships), and self-report of wellbeing. The studies found that themes of eudaimonic growth were more closely tied to wellbeing than were themes of redemption or self-

improvement. Though there is some ambiguity over terminology, the results may suggest that meaningful communion is more central to psychological wellbeing than redemption.

Studies linking redemption themes with reports of wellbeing indicate that such life-storying confers psychological benefits which map onto behaviour. Accordingly, other research shows that narratives of contamination are associated with lower levels of mental health (McAdams, 2001). For example, Harkness (2011) used self-defining memories narrated by 105 participants to analyse variables that might differentiate participants with and without depression. Data showed that depression was positively associated with narrative contamination and negatively associated with agency, whilst those without depression narrated more redemption sequences and greater narrative agency, indicating the relationship between narrated agency, redemption and good mental health, and narrated contamination, limited agency and poor mental health.

The idea that poor mental health is associated with compromised levels of both narrated agency and communion was highlighted in a recent study comparing life story accounts of individuals diagnosed with schizophrenia with control participants (Holms, Thomsen & Bliksted, 2018). Holms and colleagues observed that patients' narratives included more unfulfilled agency and communion needs than controls, indicating a sense of powerlessness and alienation from other people consistent with previous research using different methods (Lysaker et al., 2005; Moe and Docherty, 2014). Perceived limitations in capacity for self-determinism and lack of reinforcing social relationships may impact on meaning-making and narrative coherence (Lysaker et al., 2015). The study implicates self-attributions of powerlessness and isolation in narratives of poor mental health, in contrast to agency and communion in narratives of psychological wellbeing, providing an important orientating concept for the current thesis.

4.9 Narrative transitions and mental health

The above studies indicate the merit of narrative identity research for examining differences among psychologically problematic versus unproblematic research samples. Further support for use of narrative identity models to distinguish psychological health differences comes from recent studies linking narrated agency, communion, redemption and contamination to subsequent mental health. A study by Bauer and McAdams (2010) looked at longitudinal differences in wellbeing among a sample 145 participants, finding that both agentic and communal goals in narrative reports predicted increases in psychological wellbeing at three-year follow up. The results illustrate the role of narrative identity in promoting psychological health. Similarly, a study by Lodi and colleagues examined how individual differences in 170 college students' narratives related to longitudinal wellbeing, revealing that narrating lower levels of contamination at baseline predicted better mental health at four-year follow up (Lodi, Geise, Robert et al., 2009. In a series of studies, Adler and colleagues demonstrated that individuals with better therapy outcomes emphasized the development of enhanced agency over the course of treatment. Tracking the sequence of improvement in psychotherapy, the researchers found that narrating increased agency preceded reports of enhanced psychological health, suggesting that the stories helped to determine well-being, highlighting the instrumentality of identity growth themes on personal wellbeing (Adler, McAdams & Skalina, 2008; Adler, 2012).

In a more recent study of mid-life adults, Adler et al. (2015) used life story interviews to investigate individual differences in narrative identity and trajectories of mental health over four years. Results showed that agency and redemption themes were positively correlated among participants, with those whose narratives depicted higher levels of agency and redemption showing more positive mental health over time. Those whose narratives described

contamination sequences illustrated more negative mental health trajectories. Interestingly, there were no differences in outcomes based on communion themes.

4.10 Life story and substance misuse

As discussed in Chapter 2, the findings reported above have been replicated in studies of substance misuse. That is, adopting narrative identity perspectives derived from McAdams' (1993) work, narratives depicting agency and redemption have been found to predict better substance use outcomes. Specifically, Dunlop and Tracy's (2013) study of alcohol users found that self-redemptive narratives following a last drink predicted abstinence outcomes at follow up, and Stone's (2016) study of pregnant drug using woman showed that narrative redemption facilitated agency in pursuing prosocial lifestyles. Interestingly, these recent studies using life story methodology have failed to implicate narrative communion in successful outcomes, which is curious considering the wealth of social identity research emphasising communal processes in fostering identity changes (e.g. Best et al., 2016), earlier narrative research illustrating a communal recovery narrative (Hannenin & Koski-Jannes, 1999), and an entire addiction recovery movement predicated on communal storytelling (Thune, 1997). Certainly, Singer (1997, 2001) indicates agency and communion deficits in his addiction case studies, suggesting that both themes are significant, at least in their limitations. As Chen (2018) and others, such as Larsson et al. (2013), theorise it is likely that both factors are integral to identity processes in addiction and recovery.

This discrepancy may highlight something in the standard life story methodology that is preventative of illustrating communal psychological processes whilst being facilitatory of agentic storying, and relates to criticisms of the validity accorded life-storying levelled by Greenburg (1994), invoking the illusion of self-centrality, or heroism, in western self-storying. Further, proclivity for presenting oneself as a plot-driving protagonist in narrating

triumph over challenges meets with the social desirability of self-redemptive tales in western society (Gergen & Gergen, 2010); however, the appeal of this narrative resolution may undermine the communal dimension in positive identity shifts. This presents the opposite problem to social identity recovery models and is equally concerning to valid theorisation of identity transformation and addiction recovery.

Relatedly, whilst studies have revealed the significance of redemption to positive outcomes, research has yet to illustrate significance of contamination for persistent substance misuse, though parallels with offender (Maruna, 2001) and psychiatric narrative studies (Harkness, 2011) must surely be posited, considering population similarities (i.e. mental health issues, prevalence of offending). This literature deficit may in part be accounted for by the dearth of recent studies examining narratives of chronically active substance misusers.

These theoretical gaps need addressing. Principal to this analysis is the recruitment of both active and recovering participants to distinguish underpinning narrative differences, and through which to propose identity growth trajectories exemplary of recovery. However, for this endeavour, in considering the curious absence of communion themes revealed in narratives of improved psychological health and addiction recovery, perhaps a subtler research methodology is required. This calling chimes with the critique of self-storying given by psychodynamic thinkers, that such accounts are sanitised to protect against internal conflicts whilst meeting the dictates of popular story forms (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000).

4.11 New directions for substance misuse studies

A solution to this dilemma may come from research in Investigative Psychology. Combining theoretic influences from the literary tradition and McAdams work, Canter and colleagues propose that personal stories assume one of several narrative forms woven around

combinations of agency and communion themes. The work draws on McAdams (1988) idea that agency and communion provide the dominant themes shaping life stories, proposing that these primary factors correspond with narrative forms derived from stock literary myths.

The idea that stories conform to a limited number of narrative formulas was first raised by Aristotle in *Poetics* and has been elaborated by subsequent literary theorists. In his pioneering work *Anatomy of Criticism*, Frye (1957) identified four narrative plots, or *mythoi,* that stories could take: *comedy, romance, tragedy* and *irony*. Adopting this concept of narrative forms, Canter and colleagues developed a framework for examining offender narrative roles organised around the central themes of agency and communion, that may predict offence behaviour (Canter, 1995; Canter & Youngs, 2009).

To study narrative processes as instigating factors called for a methodology that differentiated themes characterising specific offences. Youngs and Canter (2012) developed the Narrative Roles' Questionnaire (NRQ) from interviews with offenders about offence episodes. Multidimensional analysis of the NRQ completed by 71 prisoners revealed life narrative themes identified by McAdams with effective individuals (McAdams, 1993). Results showed that variations in agency and communion themes in narrative descriptions related to different offence roles, giving rise to four dominant narratives that related to Frye's (1957) fundamental plots (Canter & Youngs, 2013):

High agency-communion: the individual sees themselves as powerful and others as significant to his *Romantic Quest* narrative, acting out a *Revenger* mission.

Low agency-communion: the individual sees themselves as having little control over their actions and little concern for others, playing the role of the *Tragic Hero* within the underlying *Tragedy* narrative.

High agency-low communion: the individual sees themselves as in control, enjoying their power, but other people are insignificant, representing the *Adventure* narrative and the *Professional* role.

Low agency-high communion: the individual sees themselves as having no potency and as alienated from other people, forming the *Irony* narrative and the *Victim* role.

Further work has shown that different narrative roles are associated with different offences. The *Professional* and *Hero* role were revealed to be associated with property crime, while *Revenger* and *Victim* roles were associated with violent and sexual offences (Ioannou, Canter, Young et al., 2015). Identifying different offence roles is instructive for police investigations, and knowing the motives and meaning offenders give to their offences is key to understanding their behaviour and focussing interventions (Youngs, Canter & Carthy, 2016). More recently, research has examined affect and offence roles, using Russell's circumplex of emotions (Russell, 1997). Based on analysis of 120 cases, four themes were revealed in line with the theoretical framework: *Elated Hero*, *Calm Professional*, *Distressed Revenger*, and *Depressed Victim* (Ioannou, Canter, & Youngs, 2017). This impressive body of work presents an empirical framework of narrative forms, differentiated by constellations of associated themes that map onto and guide offence behaviours (Canter and Youngs, 2011; Youngs & Canter, 2013). The model illustrates a potential for agency and communion themes to characterise narrative differences that relate to additional cognitive and emotional processes to flesh out rich narrative forms supporting behaviour.

Recently, Spruin and colleagues replicated the study with mentally disordered offenders, showing that whilst the population experienced difficulties in understanding their actions, they nonetheless conformed to descriptions of the specified narrative roles (Spruin, Canter, Youngs et al., 2014). The results suggest that recognition of narrative roles may provide an

inroad to insight in resistant or self-unaware populations and an avenue for addressing psychological issues governing behaviour from a narrative perspective. Canter et al.'s studies reveal an applicability of narrative identity to roleplaying and action through adaptation of narrative methods to specific study populations.

Building on McAdams' work exploring life stories, Canter and Youngs (2015) sought to extend their research on narrative roles to broader life narratives. The method for generating life story accounts favoured by McAdams involves a semi-structured interview, often extended over several sessions, which is sometimes constructed in the form of a book with distinct chapters (McAdams, 1993; McAdams, 2006). This methodology presented problems for use with prison populations, primarily due to their protecting against personal revelations concerning prohibited and socially stigmatised lives, as opposed to the prosocial stories of McAdams' participants. Using the format, the researchers found that offenders responses were typically limited to formal autobiographical accounts of events, rather than revealing intrinsic factors in an unfolding story. The criminals also struggled with the concept of 'Life as a Book', since their stories lacked a linear developmental trajectory (Canter & Youngs, 2015).

These findings raise similar questions to those mooted earlier concerning potential constricts of explicit life storying in terms of revealing personally difficult or socially undesirable psychological phenomena, becoming especially salient when considering marginalised populations. The 'Life as a Film' task (LAAF) was developed to meet the requirements of a subtler, non-threatening and engaging elicitation procedure (Canter & Youngs, 2015). In recognition of limits to typical self-narrating related by psychoanalytic scholars (Hollway & Jefferies, 2000), the LAAF format follows somewhat in the tradition of projective techniques, such as the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) (Murray, 1938; Lyndsay, 1959), in which an ambiguous picture is presented to an individual for interpretation, who in the absence of a

clear template for expression orientates the telling around personally central concerns (Rapaport, 1942; Holstom et al., 2011). The reasoning behind the format is that the hypothetical, or fictional, framing of the LAAF combines strengths of projective tests with the relevance of the life story to facilitate revelation of aspects of the self that may otherwise be guarded against in marginalised populations, thus reducing the influence of social desirability (Bamberg, 2011).

With a sample of 61 incarcerated male offenders, Canter and Youngs (2015) trialled the LAAF method, inviting participants to imagine their life as a film and answer questions concerning plotlines, characters and key events ('If your life were to be made into a film, what type of film would it be?' 'What would happen?' 'Who would the main characters be?' 'How would it end?'). The task proved more engaging than standard narrative methods for the population and elicited psychologically complex narrative accounts, capturing key structural story elements as well as themes central to life stories such as agency, communion, redemption and contamination (Canter & Youngs, 2011; Youngs & Canter, 2013). Structural elements crucial to life story accounts, such as main characters, past and present, were also captured in offenders' descriptions. Importantly, accounts included a conclusion, since films require an ending (Canter & Youngs, 2015). This is key in understanding an individual's future orientation, important to identity, and chimes with McAdams' (2001) theme of generativity. The detailed material reported in offender narratives supports use of the method for life-storying and life narrative analysis in marginalised social groups.

In a study comparing the LAAF accounts of incarcerated offenders and non-incarcerated individuals, Carthy (2013) found that narratives of offenders were associated with a contamination theme, while the non-incarcerated individuals showed few contamination sequences, reflecting research highlighting contamination themes in unhealthful compared with healthful life narratives (Maruna, 2001; Adler et al., 2015). Significantly, the four

dominant narratives indicated by Youngs and Canter's (2012) earlier research on narrative roles were identified, revealing *hero, victim, revenger* and *professional* narrative forms. This finding substantiates the LAAF framework for differentiating dominant underpinning life narratives themes among study populations.

A further study by Youngs and colleagues expanded on these findings, identifying unresolved identity dissonance as a distinguishing feature of LAAF narratives in offenders when compared with non-offender populations. The theme centred on tension between the pursuit of material gain and a desire for good relationships, with a corollary undertone of negativity. This finding highlights conflicting motivation towards personal agency and communion with others, which manifests in a dissonant identity and might relay a key feature for psychological resolution. Reflecting on cited limitations of standard narrative enquiry, the result indicates a capacity in the LAAF model for revealing consciously protected against psychological dynamics, especially since such identity conflicts have been unrecognised through decades of forensic research (Youngs et al., 2016). Moreover, these benefits perhaps denote a potential for uncovering agency and communion dynamics significant to self-storying in substance misuse populations.

More recent research corroborates advantages of the LAAF over other narrative methods in avoiding stock biographical accounts, accessing subjectively relevant experiences, chronicling narrative at different points in time, and depicting a story conclusion (Kang, Kruttschnitt & Goodman, 2017). Canter and colleagues' findings support judicious adjustment of McAdams' narrative approach for marginalised populations (Canter & Youngs, 2015; Youngs, Canter, & Carthy, 2016). The LAAF format provides a method for eliciting life narrative material in cohorts where life stories do not easily conform to the idea of chapters in a book and may not be easily told, while capturing themes central to identity, motivation, behaviour and psychological wellbeing (Canter & Youngs, 2015).

Though the LAAF has not been used in substance misuse research, it proposes a highly suitable elicitation procedure. Many of the issues evident with offender populations can be observed in substance misuse. As with offenders, individuals embroiled in substance misuse represent a stigmatised population enduring atypical and chaotic lives, whose stories are often fragmented (Singer, 2001; Larsson et al., 2013; Chen, 2018). Furthermore, research shows that substance users have difficulty directly expressing themselves and are more suited to creative tasks (Moore, 1983; Weegmann, 2010; Megranahan & Lynsky, 2018).

Examining 20 items of literature on the subject, Moore (1983) identified barriers to explicit communication of inner issues in substance abusers and a greater proclivity for creative self-expression. Though this review primarily addressed artist expression, the creative angle of the 'life as a film' question, nonetheless, prompts participants to engage their imagination in the task of story construction. Similarly, in research using cinema narratives, substance users have been shown to relate theme plots to their own life interpretations, screen presentations of stigmatised and difficult life stories being prevalent and amenable reference points for participants' stories (Correia & Barbosa, 2018). In this, popular film narratives provided hooks for framing relevant experiences. Accordingly, in her research on prisoners' LAAF narratives, Tkazky (2018) found that popular film titles were often used to orientate storytelling, affording a device for personal elaboration. With these numerous benefits, the LAAF technique proposes important advantages over standard life-storying for eliciting essential inner narratives, and therefore offers a viable method for comparing narrative identity in substance misusers and recovering users.

Chapter 5 – Thesis Aims

5.1 Aims and objectives

A shortfall in the literature is presented with: (1) the failure of narrative research to appreciate the role of communal processes in recovery from substance misuse while emphasising self-redemptive agency, and (2) a contrasting emphasis in the social identity literature on communal processes at the expense of potential for agentic growth. In the case of social identity research, sampling from recovery communities may enhance the likelihood of results supporting communal identity interpretations, while the popularity of self-redemptive stories in American culture - where much of the addiction narrative research has been conducted - may account for emphasis on redemption (Gergen & Gergen, 2010). However, social desirability and disclosure resistance may be at play in a population averse to explicit communication. Considering recent findings with other marginalised samples (Canter & Youngs, 2015), these discrepancies may, in part, be consequent to research tools that rely on explicit event recall and overt communication of experiences. The author also proposes that a paucity of recent comparative narrative studies with substance misusers means that twin agency and communion deficits and a prevalence of contamination stories have remained unidentified in the population.

To examine these issues, subtler, less-threatening data collection tools may be necessary. Studies also need to compare stories of active with recovering substance misusers, to identify important transitional growth themes distinguishing self-narratives conducive to substance misuse and those supportive of recovery. Addressing these questions, this thesis aims to test the usefulness of the LAAF model for researching stories of substance misuse and recovery. That is, to assess the richness and relevance of the narrative material collected for exploring and comparing differences among the sample. This objective builds on previous deployment of the LAAF method for studying criminal populations with meaningful results (e.g. Canter

& Youngs, 2015). It represents an expansion not only in terms of the study population, but also use of the LAAF to examine differences between problem and resolution narratives.

The LAAF procedure represents a development of McAdams' (1993) life story methodology for studying narrative identity, adjusting for certain characteristics of marginalised populations (Canter & Youngs, 2015). Following this theorisation, the thesis aims to build on findings from other narrative studies of substance misuse recovery (e.g. Dunlop & Tracy, 2013) to reveal the importance of both agency and communion themes for differentiating recovery from non-recovery narratives, and the themes' role in identity changes that are related to recovery. Developing this idea, the role of other themes differentiating recovery from non-recovery narratives, such as redemption and contamination, is also examined, following directives from related forensic and mental health studies (Maruna, 2001; Ader, 2012; Harkness, 2011; Adler et al., 2015; Tkazky, 2018).

5.2 Studies

In addressing these aims, the following studies were conducted:

Study 1 (Chapter 8). The study tests the usefulness of the LAAF procedure and coding framework applied to criminal narrative research for the study of narratives in a substance misuse sample, assessing value for capturing psychologically complex narratives and themes central to identity processes both common to and discriminating of narratives within the population.

Study 2 (Chapter 9). The objective of this study was to use content derived from the thematic analysis in Study 1 to examine the relationships among each of the study variables. Structural analysis was used to reveal underlying components, the proposition being that content is structured into regions reflecting combinations of agency and communion. Through

examination of LAAF case examples, the study aims to illustrate that narrative domains are expressed in individual stories and relate to recovery or non-recovery from substance misuse. Satisfaction of this objective suggests the value of studying life narratives in the population with consideration of these orientating themes.

Study 3 (Chapter 10). Building on the conceptual model of Study 2, this study examines differences in theme profiles and scores on the RI among individuals to show that cumulative elements of agency and communion in LAAF narratives relates to better recovery outcomes. The aim here is to illustrate that both themes are important to recovery, building on existing narrative and social identity models.

Study 4 (Chapter 11). Developing the agency and communion model, this study aims to reveal significant differences between individuals in terms of recovery outcomes according to the cumulative presence of agency and communion themes in LAAF accounts. Triangulating findings from Study 3, it serves to support the idea that life narrative themes of agency *and* communion, rather than one or the other, are key to identity transformation and recovery.

Study 5 (Chapter 12). This study assessed perceived changes in participants personal constructs over past and present identity modes. The aim was to illustrate changes to constructs towards more agentic and communal self-evaluations in recovery, whilst showing enduring low agency and communion constructs in chronic substance misusers. It will highlight self-observed identity transformation in recovery and a fixed identity in chronic substance misuse.

Study 6 (Chapter 13). With the agency and communion recovery model established in the previous four studies, this final study draws additional themes from the structural analysis and related substance misuse research to propose richer life narratives indicative of either recovery or non-recovery. The study expands the previous findings to provide a more inclusive

articulation of the literature with a broader life narrative model of substance misuse and recovery.

With these studies, the overarching aim of the thesis is to show the usefulness of the LAAF approach for engaging individuals with substance misuse issues or history, and for revealing a richer appreciation of themes involved in identity transformation processes that are related to recovery. In doing this, the project introduces a new method for studying addiction narratives and a richer theoretical framework for understanding narrative and identity processes distinguishing recovery and non-recovery.

Part II Methods

Chapter 6. Research sample

6.1 Sampling methods

Most recent studies of identity in substance misuse have examined populations of substance users in treatment and recovery (e.g. Hannenin & Koski-Jannes, 1999; Ng, 2002; Dingle et al., 2015; Bathish et al., 2017). Others have examined issues in chronic substance misusers (Singer, 1997). Few studies have looked at individuals at different stages of addiction, intervention and recovery, examining narrative differences among these populations, an exception being Kougiali et al. (2017). Uncovering factors distinguishing individual differences is important for understanding recovery processes and constitutive issues impeding recovery from chronic substance misuse.

Addressing identity differences among substance misuse and recovery groups is the focus of this thesis. To compare differences, the present study recruited individuals at various stages of their substance misuse and recovery. Recruitment was initiated through contacts in Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA), which gathered an initial small sample (n=10). Then snowballing was used, through a similar method to Kougiali et al.'s (2017) Respondent Driven Sampling (RDS), in which participants themselves recruit from the community. This method gives access to individuals that would be hard to reach by researchers. In this way, individuals actively involved in substance misuse that may be missed by standard methods, such as those not accessing treatment, were able to be sampled. Not only this, but also recruitment of individuals known to participants who had progressed from substance using and recovery communities was made possible. This enables the landscape of substance misuse and recovery to be better reflected than through researcher driven sampling alone. In these two key respects, RDS has proved a valuable method for this study.

6.2 Preparation

Prospective participants were given an information sheet detailing the nature of the research (see Appendix 1). The document informed participants that the study was about personal stories and identity, and the importance of identity and personal stories in substance use and in people who have problems with drugs and/or alcohol. A document detailing confidentiality, information sharing, and information storage protocols was also provided (see Appendix 2). The confidentiality document was signed following agreement to take part in the study. Several individuals declined to take part following their review of the information sheet. All participants in agreement to take part communicated being comfortable with the research topic.

6.3 Sample composition

Thirty-two participants agreed to take part in the study. There were no dropouts at six-month follow-up. The sample comprised 23 males and nine females, and the ethnic breakdown of the study population was 31 identifying as White British and one Asian male. The age range of the sample was 29-60, with a mean age of 39.85. According to McAdams, life narrative and identity form in late adolescence, as people begin to view their lives from a historical perspective (McAdams, 1996), and by young-to-middle adulthood the narratives have established meaning (Singer et al., 2007). The sampling age range is therefore fortuitous in ensuring that fully formed life narratives were represented.

The study population is small; however, the methodology follows a pattern of important research in substance misuse using in-depth narrative analysis to provide fresh insights into addiction and recovery (Hanninen & Koski-Jannes, 1999; Singer, 2001; Stone, 2016). Singer (1997) adopted McAdams' (1993) life story approach in interpreting 13 case studies of alcohol-dependent males, illustrating how an incoherent identity and lack of meaning led to

despair, surrender and self-destructive alienation, deducing that finding ways of connecting to the sober world may be crucial for recovery. Likewise, Singer's (2001) case study of a chronic heroin addict, depicting conflicted identity modes predicated on seemingly irredeemable alienation. Subsequently, a plethora of research has borne out these findings, showing the centrality of meaningful connection in constructing a recovery identity (e.g. Best et al., 2012; Beckwith et al., 2014; Bathish et al., 2017). In a narrative study of 69 substance users, McConnell and Snoek (2018) also confirmed many of Singer's case study observations, showing intractable substance users embedded in self-perpetuating addiction narratives showcasing compromised self-governance.

These studies, as well as others in related fields (e.g. Porter & Alison, 2005), illustrate how small-scale research can produce rich data, generating clear findings, and pave the way for subsequent corroborative larger scale studies. This background literature provides the current undertaking both justification and impetus. Following this pioneering trend, the present study presents 32 psychologically complex case studies, offering a rich source of life narrative material apt for examining intrinsic personal processes, establishing common patterns, and providing new insights.

6.4 Sampling criteria

Criteria for inclusion in the study was self-reported history of an enduring substance misuse problem. The criteria are in accordance with the research perspective, recognising substance misuse as a phenomenological issue where the person provides a central resource and expertise, whose subjective experience is vital to understanding behaviour, and thus advancing its resolution. There was no restriction placed on the type of substances used or the

duration of the substance use problem. It should be noted, however, that no one taking part in the research reported a substance use problem of under two years duration.

6.5 Mixed sampling

The present research addresses a dearth of identity research sampling from substance misuse populations. In this research, 13 of the 32 participants reported abstinence at the time of study and identified as being in recovery. Nine of these individuals reported abstinence for over 12 months. Crucially, 19 participants reported still being active in substance use. Eight substance-using participants described their use as non-problematic and identified as being in recovery, while the remaining 11 reported ongoing problematic substance misuse. Nine of the 11 problematic substance users reported poly-substance use.

The sample reflects variations in nature of substance misuse, from more organised behavioural profiles to chaotic lifestyles. In depth case study analysis can be used to examine how these patterns reflect deeper narrative themes. Substance use profiles may also denote different points in the narrative journey. The cohort of 8 subjectively non-problematic substance users and recently abstinent participants may represent progress towards recovery, distinguished from more problematic users. The diverse population allows for assessment of how growth themes may be associated with intermediate phases. Mixed sampling protocol facilitates this important cross-sectional analysis.

Life stories provide the context of substance use and the sequence of narrative changes fostering recovery. By examining the life narratives of individuals at each stage of substance use and recovery (habitual use, active dependency, contemplating change, addressing the problem, in recovery), a cross-sectional comparison of the underlying structures supporting behaviour is possible and elucidation of the identity transformation process.

6.6 Patterns of substance use

Another strength of the current research is the representation of different substance use careers. The sample comprised 4 participants with a history of singular heroin misuse, 2 with singular cocaine misuse, 2 with a history of singular amphetamine misuse, 1 with a history of singular benzodiazepine misuse, and 2 with a history of singular cannabis misuse. The remaining 21 participants described histories of poly-substance misuse. Nine participants reported histories of combined crack cocaine and heroin misuse. This represented the most frequent drug combination in the sample. Three participants reported combined alcohol, benzodiazepine, crack cocaine and heroin misuse. Two participants reported combined alcohol and heroin. Two reported combined alcohol and cocaine. Two reported combined amphetamine and heroin, and two participants reported combined amphetamine, benzodiazepine and heroin misuse. Finally, one participant described a history of combined crack cocaine, gabapentinoid and heroin misuse.

The perspective of this research instructs that enduring misuse of psychoactive substances often reflects a purposeful response to biographical disruption (Singer, 2001; Suh et al., 2008) and seeks to substantiate the corollary proposition that these underlying narratives establish identity constructs which facilitate ongoing substance misuse, rather than specific substance use patterns (McConnell & Snoek, 2012). However, it is important to examine the narratives of a diverse range of substance issues in the effort to support this theoretical claim. Illustrating similar stories across different substance categories will provide support to the theory that underlying psychological structures and identity issues drive substance misuse, rather than vice versa.

6.7 Intervention and change pathways

It is important to note that not all participants had a background in AA and NA fellowships. These represent two of a range of treatment and recovery modalities accessed by members of the study population. Others include informal and formal statutory community-based interventions, voluntary sector community interventions, detox and rehabilitation units, and self-help. The study recruited participants from a variety of treatment and recovery pathways. This is a rare feat in this type of research, highlighting limitations in many previous studies (e.g. Bathish et al., 2017 Kougiali et al., 2017), and an important advance since interventions may impose and facilitate different change factors and support adoption of different alternative narratives. The method may therefore allow us to observe benefits and limits of different interventions on identity processes. Prior sampling limitations are a limitation on our understanding. As far as possible, variation within the sample should reflect positions on the addiction-recovery spectrum, as well as different intervention modalities and pathways to recovery. This project made efforts to satisfy this variability.

An important point to make in this discussion is that many participants engaged in multi-agency interventions over time, or at the time of the study, so the sample breakdown observes considerable overlap, and is thus more for illustrative purposes to show the spectrum of intervention modes/pathways recruited. Specifically, 14 of the sample had at some point used AA/NA fellowship organisations. Of these, nine described themselves at the time of study as being in recovery, one of whom still used substances, and four reported still being active in substance misuse. Nineteen participants had at some point been in structured community treatment, seven of whom described being in recovery, of which two still used substances. The other 10 were still active in substance misuse. Ten participants had at some point been in inpatient rehabilitation, seven describing themselves as being in recovery at the time of the study, one of whom still used substances. The other three reported activity in substance

misuse. Six participants had not received any specific intervention for substance misuse. Four of these described themselves as being in recovery, of which two still used substances, and two of whom reported activity in substance misuse.

6.8 Follow-up sample

All 32 participants were interviewed again at six-month follow-up. There were no dropouts. To the author's knowledge, this has not been previously achieved. Similar research on substance misuse populations frequently shows a considerable attrition rate at follow-up. Examining social identity changes in a therapeutic community, Dingle et al. (2015) interviewed 132 participants at baseline, which dropped to 60 at six-month follow-up. The authors account for this, in part, as consequent to unplanned discharges from the therapeutic community due to rule violations, making subsequent contact difficult. McConnell and Snoek (2018) interviewed 69 substance users, collecting detailed narrative material; however, one-year follow-up saw almost a 60% attrition rate, with only 28 participants, and at three-years 49 participants had dropped out. Though the time frame is longer, this represents a significant drop-out rate, while the retention of all participants at follow-up in the present research attests to the level of engagement in study tasks and suggests that the participants enjoyed the initial interaction (see later chapters for a more detailed discussion of participant engagement). Since there can be numerous reasons for drop-out, attrition rates may confound follow-up data in myriad inscrutable ways.

Considering the above, the significance of retaining all participants should not be understated, in terms of conferring robustness on follow-up results and facilitating valid conclusions. Crucially, since recovery measures were taken from each of the participants in both phases,

data from the initial interviews can be used to predict outcomes six-months later. This is a rare achievement for this sort of study.

6.9 Demographics

Expanding on Singer's (1997) research using McAdams' narrative identity model, the study recruited both males and females to take part in the study, meaning that examination of patterns among genders was possible. Twenty-three males and nine females were interviewed. While males and females were not equally represented in the population, the ratio is reflective of research examining gender differences, with males being 2-3 times more likely to experience, or at least report, substance misuse problems. This pattern exists across all psychoactive substances (Becker & Hu, 2008).

Peoples' stories and behaviours are a manifestation of their sociocultural context and influences (Singer, 1996). This is an important factor to consider in researching problem and change behaviours. The participants in this study were drawn from a range of socioeconomic, sociocultural, and educational backgrounds. Specifically, looking at educational indicators, nine had completed university education, three of whom were currently nurses, 12 had completed A levels, 18 had completed GCSEs or O' levels. The remaining 14 participants had no formal qualifications. In terms of parental background, five participants had at least one parent in a professional employment role. Eight of the participants experienced at least part of their childhood away from their parents, in care.

Drawing from a range of backgrounds means that trends and patterns in the data common to substance misuse can be identified, as well as those more illustrative of a specific cultural, economic, or educational background. Though this study recruited from diverse sociodemographic backgrounds and collected important indicators from the participants, the

data collected was not comprehensive. Future studies should more deliberately seek to recruit from a spectrum of backgrounds and gather more detailed information concerning parental education, employment, and time spent with birth parents or in the care of others. This will help to identify demographic differences demonstrating explanatory power on narrative and behaviour patterns.

6.10 Sample limitations

The study sample recruited is small, which challenges the reliability and validity of any findings. However, as highlighted above, small samples offer certain advantages over larger study populations. Clear findings from small scale in-depth research can offer fresh insights, stimulating subsequent corroborative studies with larger populations. Overall, nonetheless, the sample size of the current exploratory project means that any conclusions must be drawn tentatively, pending more reliable analyses with broader samples.

Specifically, the representation of fewer females in the sample, while reflective of substance misuse patterns, should, nonetheless, be addressed in future research, since the different substance misuse presentations among this mixed sample means that numbers representing specific groups and outcomes were very small. The study is also limited with respect to age categories. Individuals under 30 are poorly represented, so the findings cannot be generalised to this demographic, especially since patterns of substance use are changing for this cohort, with more novel psychoactive substances being used (Measham et al., 2011; Iacobucci, 2018; Rychert & Wilkins, 2018). The prevalence of which is also not represented in the current study sample. These considerations are important for any further research, mindful of different psychological and social influences on personal narratives and different available stories for this population.

Likewise, the study recruited 31 White British participants, with one Asian participant, making it a poor ethnic fit. This means results cannot be generalised to different ethnic populations, which is salient to the research topic, since cultures often show distinct patterns of substance use and accessibility to interventions. Additionally, as with younger populations, and perhaps more significantly, different dominant narratives may be more applicable and accessible to various ethnic groups.

Another important note is that two participants interviewed in the study were previous clients of from the author's clinical practice. Though the author had not spoken to either of them for two years prior to contact through recruiting, certain unique interaction effects may have presented. Certainly, their being familiar with the interviewer may have influenced accounts. Efforts were made by the author to remove any confounding impact through use of standardised protocol with the same interview prompts and data collection procedures applied. Nonetheless, the pre-existing relationships needs to be recorded since it gives the author pre-knowledge of the individuals' lives, which may create expectations and social desirability issues beyond those already discussed.

6.11 Chapter summary

In summary, the sample can be said to showcase certain advantages and developments over much of the related research literature, especially with respect to the inclusion of both active and recovering substance users. This type of comparative research is essential to uncovering divisive themes underpinning either behaviour. Further, the representation in the sample of a range of psychoactive substances is invaluable for illustrating identity themes rather than substance use patterns as primary correlates, helping to further substantiate claims to the centrality of underlying psychological structures. The small sample size means that each

participant can be studied in detail, providing rich material and the likelihood of fresh insights, following other pioneering narrative research in substance misuse that has been substantiated by subsequent larger scale studies (e.g. Singer, 1997, 2001). The retention of all participants at follow-up suggests that the study tasks were uniquely apposite for engaging the population, offering support to conclusions. However, certain identified sampling limitations, including the small sample size, gender disparity, lack of ethnic diversity, and age group bias means that, reflecting this small-scale preliminary analysis, conclusions must be drawn tentatively, awaiting further, more substantive research with broader study samples.

Chapter 7. Research Design and Methodology

7.1 Data collection procedure

Data collection took place over two interviews. 'Interview 1' comprised three sections. Following introductions, the first section entailed the 'Life as a Film' (LAAF) task (Appendix 4). In the second part of the interview, participants provided demographic details and personal information pertaining to their substance use and intervention history (Appendix 3). In the third part of the interview, a recovery inventory was completed (Appendix 5). Finally, a debrief was given.

A follow-up interview was conducted six-months later, in which participants completed a repertory grid and a further recovery inventory.

7.2 Interview 1

7.2.1 'Life as a Film' task (LAAF)

Following introductions, participants were invited to imagine their 'life as a film' and the LAAF prompts were given. The LAAF is an adapted version of life story interviews McAdams' used to elicit life narratives in effective populations (McAdams, 1988, 1993). McAdams' original interviews asked participants to divide their life story into chapters, chronicling milestones and pivotal events (e.g. graduation, marriage), challenges and dominant plot themes (McAdams, 1995). Canter and Youngs (2015) argue that chaotic lives are ill-suited to proscribed, linear narrative formats, such as 'Life as a Book' favoured by McAdams. The LAAF represents an adjustment of McAdams' method, tailored for engaging marginalised and stigmatised populations with less coherent life stories, to facilitate in their narrating psychologically relevant personal narratives.

Canter and Youngs' (2015) research, as well as several subsequent studies, support the above propositions, illustrating that the technique combines the data-rich advantages of McAdams' method with a more distilled projection of intrinsic identity dynamics (Youngs et al., 2016; Tkazky, 2018; Rowlands et al., 2019a). The above criteria suggest that the LAAF will be a useful method for eliciting life stories in substance misuse populations, since they represent a stigmatised cohort, frequently inhabiting chaotic lives, and for whom normal expression is often difficult (Moore, 1983). The LAAF task entails a semi-structured interview in which participants are asked to describe their life as a film, following a sequence of prompts:

If your life were to be made into a film, what type of film would it be?

What would happen?

Who would the main characters be?

What would the main events be that might happen in the film?

How do you think it might end?

What happens in the most exciting scene in the film?

Where is it?

What is going on?

Who else is there?

What are they doing?

How are you acting?

How do you feel?

When does the film start?

What is going on?

What are you like then?

What sort of person are you?

Who you have good feelings about and why?

Who do you have bad feelings about and why?

What do other people think about you?

What mistakes do you make?

How do you change during the film?

The prompts serve to stimulate the imagination in narrating a rich and detailed account in a relatively short time frame (for a full description of the procedure, see Appendix 4). The result is a distilled version of the life story. It does not represent the life narrative in full, rather it captures critical characteristics of the story and prominent identity dynamics without the superfluity of stock life events and subordinate roles (Canter & Youngs, 2015). This sharply drawn synopsis highlights psychosocial issues that maybe hidden in the extensive material assembled using typical life narrative methods, offering parsimony from abundance (Youngs et al., 2016). The creative format means that important themes can be symbolised with broad strokes rather than intimate details, and the focus on a subjective interpretation of events elucidates personally relevant themes. The requirement of a conclusion to the story explores the participant's perceived trajectory and is instructive of their overall self-concept.

The LAAF offers clear advantages to phenomenological research in subverting matter of fact responses with a more psychodynamic elicitation technique (Canter & Youngs, 2015), and in appealing to the imagination, affords participants a broader scope for self-narration. Tkazky (2018) argues in this capacity the LAAF offers researchers a unique authority on narrative

identity. On the question of personal validity, Canter and Youngs (2015) stress that far from providing a 'flight of fancy', participants used the film account to communicate essential personal stories, focused on significant issues that characterised their lives.

7.2.2 Personal Information

A list of demographic and biographic questions was included in the interview protocol. The purpose was to elicit general background information from the participants. Each participant was asked to provide their age, gender, ethnicity, education, occupation, and family structure. The interview also contained open-ended questions concerning substance use and treatment history, including when substance use was initiated, how it developed, what substances were used, how the drugs were taken and at what doses, details of treatment history, periods of abstinence, and experiences of recovery. By determining each participant's substance use history, the information establishes parity in the sample, while also highlighting important individual differences in patterns of use. The questions give background to the substance use, the extent of the problem, and participants' efforts to resolve issues. Though self-reported, the information provides a historical context against which to compare LAAF accounts and recovery indicators.

7.2.3 Recovery Inventory (RI)

The third part of the interview entailed completion of the RI. A 12-item recovery inventory was designed from a literature review of substance misuse recovery indicators (Sampson & Laub, 1990; Hser, 2007; UK Drug Policy Commission, 2008; McIntosh, Bloor & Robertson, 2008; Home Office Research Report, 2009; Leamy et al., 2011; Best et al., 2012; Dingle et

al., 2015). As previously discussed, the concept of recovery adopted by this study is one that recognises multiple psychological and social indicators.

Although abstinence readings are an important factor (Gossop, Marsden, Stewart & Kidd, 2003; McLellan, 2009), there is a need for stronger measures of recovery capital (Groshkova et al., 2013). Substance misuse issues have broad psychosocial correlates and consequences; therefore, any meaningful concept and gauge of recovery should address resolution of these wider implicated issues. Research and measures reported earlier support this contention and more complex considerations of recovery across a range of internal and external indicators (Groshkova et al., 2013). For example, examining successful treatment outcomes, a study by McIntosh, Bloor and Robertson (2008) highlights the importance of paid employment, while Laub and Sampson's (1990) research has shown the correlation between desistance from offending and drug rehabilitation. This maybe be associated with changing social groups, and research demonstrates the impact of emotional (Leamy et al., 2011) and social support networks on improved quality of life, wellbeing, and recovery from substance use (Brown, O'Grady, Battjes, Katz, 2004; Laudet, Morgan & White, 2006; Litt et al., 2009; Best et al., 2016). However, other psychological indicators also appear to be important. A longitudinal study by Hser (2007) showed that reports of self-efficacy were the best predictor of long-term addiction recovery, and recent findings by Dingle et al. (2015) highlight the predictive impact of a recovery identity on successful treatment outcomes.

The above literature, and other similar indices of recovery used, validates the use of multiple indicators for the assessment of recovery against which to compare narrative and personal construct material. With these advances in mind, a recovery assessment was designed, compiling an inventory of evidential psychosocial indicators, specifically including self-assessments of: *current abstinence, abstinence for more than 12 months, desistance from offending, engagement in meaningful activity, a responsible role in society, emotional*

support, social support networks, stable relationships, and *self-efficacy.* Overall, the inventory items constitute a template for robust recovery from substance misuse, corresponding with personal and social assessments of positive change (Groshkova et al., 2013).

The RI provides a broad but efficient means for assessing recovery. It is designed for ease of reading and completion, as part of a longer interview process and proved accessible and useful for highlighting patterns in data. The scale marks '1' for the presence of an item and '0' for the absence of an item. Though the use of a binary scale may appear crude, it captures the primary signals of recovery - cessation of substance use, constructive and meaningful lifestyle, transformed roles and social integration – with the provision of an easily readable, quantifiable and valuable dataset. The inclusion of an array of distinct indicators protects against any loss of richness in the scale. The RI was valuable in revealing comparative relationships. Subsequent research can build on the basic template, capitalising on the practical benefits of assessing across a broad range of psychosocial factors, whilst perhaps incorporating a richer Likert type scale to pick up nuances in profile indicators. Likewise, future inventories may benefit from more long-term abstinence outcome measures (McLellan, 2009).

Cronbach's reliability test was run to assess internal consistency in the scale, producing an Alpha value of 0.91. This shows a high level of internal consistency and supports a quantitative interpretation of data (Skinner & Allen, 1982). The RI provided a source of external recovery data with which to compare the narrative material, to examine corresponding patterns.

7.3 Interview 2

Following agreement, a second interview was conducted with participants six-months after the LAAF interview. Participants were emailed repertory grid templates which they completed in real time over videocall. The method allowed for any uncertainties with the format to be summarily addressed. The repertory grid was used to assess participants evaluations of constructs on five different identity elements. Personal constructs offer another valuable way to explore how individuals self-organise (Kelly, 1955; Burrell, 1999). Kelly (1955) argued that certain ways of seeing oneself become schemas and reflect components of identity. These components are personal constructs. Constructs relate to bipolar systems of self-organisation, which individuals articulate as contrasts (A *strong* person versus a *weak* person, for example). In his important study, Ng (2002) showed that self-constructs could change during drug recovery, which was reflected in evaluations of different 'self' elements. Ng's research highlights the potential in repertory grids for illustrating perceived construct and identity changes that may be important in conceptualising recovery from addiction.

The identity elements used in composing the repertory grid build on those used by Ng (2002) and included: *Before Drugs Self, Drug-Using Self, Current Self, Real Self* and *Ideal Self.* Through such elements, it is possible to observe perceived changes or stasis among participants' self-constructs of past, present and desired identity modes, and compare those in recovery with those in non-recovery to identify self-constructs that are important. Differences in how participants construct their identity can be articulated and how this identity is construed as changing over time for those in recovery.

The constructs used to represent the construct system derived from a careful consideration of LAAF data, in conjunction with other indications from the relevant literature. Specifically, constructs of personal agency and communion were observed to be important in narrative

descriptions for differentiating the study population according to recovery and non-recovery outcomes. Mindful of this, bipolar construct statements that were exemplary of narrative elements were carefully compiled. Doing this involved a prudent consideration of the LAAF transcripts to see how language was used to capture self-constructs. This close reading elaborated on some of the themes highlighted by the LAAF content dictionary and enabled expansion on some of the constructs used in communicating agency and communion. Findings from Smallest Space Analysis (SSA) and related literature was used to inform two further constructs, one pertaining to the idea of *redemption* versus *contamination,* and the other pertaining to the idea of a *victim* and *survivor* identity construct.

Specifically, the following 10 bipolar construct dimensions were used:
Referring to agency constructs: *Escapes from problems* versus *Confronts problems*, *Cannot trust myself* versus *Can trust myself*, *Have confused feelings* versus *Have control of feelings*, *Powerless over outcomes* versus *Can determine desirable outcomes*. Referring to communion constructs: *Alone* versus *Connected to others*, *Don't trust people* versus *Trusts people*, *Cannot express my true self* versus *Can be myself with others.* The constructs: *A victim* versus *A survivor* was included to reflect discriminating identities in the LAAF data, and *Things get worse* versus *Things get better* was included to reflect the redemption versus contamination theme, which was also discriminating and prompted by repertory grids and related narrative studies.

Participants scored themselves on each of the 10 constructs for each of the five identity elements**:** *Before Drugs Self*, *Drug-Using Self*, *Current Self, Real Self,* and *Ideal Self*. A *Likert*-scale was used, in which scores of between 1-7 were given, where higher scores reflected the positive pole. The tool is an adaptation of Ng's (2002) repertory grid, adjusted for a mixed population and corresponds with the agency-communion modelling of identity transformation in recovery. The purpose of the grid was to explore the evaluation of changes

on each of the construct dimensions over separate identities to reveal the transformation process in recovered substance users, while highlighting a fixed personal construct system and identity in active substance users.

A pilot study with 10 participants indicated that the chosen constructs and identity elements were readable and relevant to processes of self-organisation and identity in the sample. The grid made sense to the participants and was comprehensible. No issues with the constructs being used as means through which to rate themselves across past, present and ideal identities were reported. Following this pilot, the template was unaltered and adopted for recording data for the rest of the study population.

While expanding on observations from the LAAF study, the repertory grid analysis was also employed for purposes of data triangulation. This is an important corroborative measure, since the study draws on material from a small sample and helps to strengthen findings. Following completion of the repertory grid, a further RI was completed to assess maintenance, progress or decline in recovery profile that may have occurred over the interim six-month period.

7.4 Data collection procedure

Each of the interviews was conducted via videocall. Videocall was preferred since it offered convenience and the comfort of a familiar location without interruption, a relaxed context which may be conducive to constructing a personally relevant narrative. Efforts were made to limit confounding effects by ensuring a standardised interview procedure, with attention to maintaining a neutral delivery style. As discussed earlier, conducting interviews via videocall from the author's private accommodation, while the participant was accommodated in their choice location, removes other potential interferences, such as the influence being in an unfamiliar location or background noise. No one else was present during the interview

process. All interviews were conducted by the author, further addressing influences due to variations in style. The interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim. Once material had been transcribed, the recordings were erased, and the transcribed material placed in a private and secure, locked location.

Presser (2010) argues that all narratives are social interactions in a social context. They are stories told with respect to a given audience, and whilst participants may be eager to express an essential inner truth (McAdams, 1993; Canter & Young, 2015), audience expectations, considerations of research context, and other factors of social desirability may influence a biased account. Therefore, it must be accepted that in the provision of narratives and other information participants responses may be guided by the interview context. Participants were aware that the research topic was substance misuse and thus, may have been minded to construct their narratives around that aspect of their lives. It should be emphasised, however, that since chronic substance misuse problems and the challenge of recovery constitute such overarchingly significant life experiences, orientation of life stories around those experiences is to be expected. Further, these experiences, and interpretations of their resolution, are the primary focus of this thesis. Mindful of thesis objectives, participants being implicitly navigated toward this emphasis was not considered a significantly confounding factor and may, indeed, represent an asset to the research aims. Nonetheless, tackling the issue of socially mediated flexibility in narrative construction, Canter and Youngs (2015) assert that in their analysis, offender populations used the LAAF exercise to communicate psychologically complex, thematically detailed narratives revealing of identity-orientating psychodynamics, parroting McAdams' (1993, 2001) and associates (e.g. Bauer et al., 2018) arguments for the acuity of life story telling. Subsequently, other studies support the validity of the LAAF, specifically, as a valuable life narrative elicitation device (Youngs et al., 2016; Kang et al., 2017; Tkazky, 2018; Rowlands et al., 2019a, 2019b).

Interviewees were informed that at any time during the interview they could voluntarily discontinue their involvement in the study without having to give a reason, and that following the interview they were permitted to withdraw their data from the research up to a deadline of three months. A consent form was signed formalising this agreement (Appendix 2). This protocol was reiterated at the close of the interview, and the deadline provided with the author's contact email.

The author has 15 years professional experience working in a clinical capacity in the substance misuse field and is aware of sensitivities around revelation of personal information. His considerable experience was used to ensure that a cordial setting, warm reception, and communication of trust and empathy was established prior to the disclosure of any personal material. Participants were informed of the author's professional background. During the interview, participants were given time to impart information they deemed appropriate. No effort was made in persuasion to disclose additional details of clearly sensitive events, allowing for a natural unfolding of personally agreeable material. Attention was paid to the interviewees comfort during the procedure. No time restrictions were placed upon the interview, enabling time for reflection, corrections, and consideration in the construction of narrative accounts. Following the formal interview procedure, a thorough debrief was given, offering participants opportunity to provide feedback on the interview process and communicate any arising issues. Signposting was given to local treatment services and support networks, where appropriate.

7.5 Ethical issues

Interviews involved the self-disclosure of potentially sensitive personal material. Attention was paid in providing an environment conducive to the disclosure of personally relevant

material, though participants were informed that they should not feel pressured to communicate information that made them uncomfortable. In the event of any visible or communicated distress, time out was taken to reflect and carefully assess continuance of the interview.

All data collection proceeded in compliance with research ethics regulations. Specifically, participants received a written explanation prior to the study informing of the subject matter, enabling them to make an informed decision about their taking part (Appendix 1). A confidentiality document was issued and signed detailing a protective agreement (Appendix 2). Additionally, participants needed to be informed of procedures for withdrawing their data from the study, and how the information they provided would be used and protected. These issues were clarified and documented before proceeding with interviews.

To ensure participants' confidentiality, all interviews were anonymised during transcription. Any personal information was removed from research documents, and each participant's material was identifiable only by a unique case number. Any formal documents containing personal details (e.g. consent form) were separated from research documents and kept in a secure, locked location. Each participant was asked whether they consented to their anonymised interview transcripts and personal information being stored and used for the study and further research purposes. Only the data of consenting participants was subsequently used in the study.

7.6 Epistemological and ontological assumptions

The following sections expand on discussions in Chapter 3 concerning the nature, knowledge base and uses of narrative material. Drawing on the framework of narrative criminologists such as Presser (2009) and Sandberg (2010), a recent narrative study of recovery from

substance misuse by Kougiali et al. (2017) adopted a constructionist approach with the position that narratives are constitutive of reality but not representative of it, proposing that experience is storied via personal interpretations constructed under the influence of social forces, language and culture. The position of Kougiali and colleagues is that narratives are not a factual record of events but rather an interpretation of experience. The ontological question following this is whether narratives therefore provide 'true' answers. To some extent this debate concerns conflict between stories and factual records; however, as Sarbin (1986) points out, historical truth itself is a construction of events according to available data sources and researchers' interpretations. Therefore, like personal narratives, history approximates reality and is a story. The important assumption for this research is that whilst narratives may not be a factual record, they reflect personal significance and thus a subjective 'truth'. This is psychologically meaningful and relevant as a statement of individual reality and therefore a useful means through which identity and intentions can be understood.

Where the present study departs from this constructionist position is in proposing that, as well as being constitutive of personal reality, narratives can be representative of reality, that is typical of a group or class. This theorisation follows the findings of narrative researchers in Personality (McAdams et al., 1996; Bauer & McAdams, 2004), Forensic Psychology (Youngs et al., 2016; Tkazky, 2018) and addiction studies (Singer, 1997; Hanninen & Koski-Jannes, 1999; Stone, 2016; Rowlands et al., 2019a) that while socially constructed devices, certain narratives can be representative, or typical, of specific groups or classes of individuals, sharing common ways of interpreting personal experiences. Reflecting more of a realist position, these findings are theoretically and practically useful (Singer et al., 2013; Youngs et al., 2016).

7.7 Realist versus interpretivist tensions

In this proposition, the author recognises a certain tension between realist and interpretivist approaches regarding epistemological and ontological positions on what narratives constitute. Though researchers take a wide variety of unique perspectives, put simply the ontological stance of realists is that narratives communicate a reality that can be known, whereas interpretivists emphasise that reality is multiple and relative and depends on systems of meaning, which makes it difficult to interpret narratives in terms of fixed realities (Smith & Sparks, 2006; Gergen & Gergen, 2010). Interpretivists therefore believe that narratives and knowledge are social constructed rather than objectively determined or true (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Neuman, 2000). With this understanding, they avoid rigid structural frameworks and adopt more flexible research structures receptive to capturing meanings in human interactions to make sense of what is 'perceived' as reality. Crucially, interpretivists believe the researcher and participants are interdependent and mutually interactive (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). Differences between realist and interpretivist assumptions can be simplified by saying that realists believe narratives give access to 'reality' whilst interpretivists assume no access to the real world. Epistemically, pure realists believe it is possible to obtain objective knowledge, thought being governed by theory, and interpretivists understand through 'perceived' knowledge and seek to understand the specific context of storytelling.

The epistemological position of ontological realists can be realist or constructionist. It is recognised here that narratives are modulated by context-specific functions relative to individuals and current situations, which means that whilst providing a powerful means of understanding a person, narratives are versatile to some degree and mutable depending on the audience. In keeping with interpretivist approaches, the author rejects the idea that narratives communicate an objective truth, rather it is contended that narratives communicate an essential subjective truth, and to this extent are meaningful phenomenological devices apt for

understanding real psychological processes. Understanding narrative as a biased, current personal interpretation, or construction, which carries experientially validity, but not objective truth, may be key to understanding dysfunctional and destructive psychological processes, *and* offset some of the tension between realist and interpretivist approaches.

This stance accords with that of other psychological ideas and research on narrative identity, such as McAdams (1993), Crossley (2000) and Maruna 2001) in assuming that humans continually story their lives as a means of achieving continuity and self-understanding, and that the stories they tell communicate an essential inner narrative that is meaningful, psychologically important and phenomenologically true. The purpose of this type of narrative research is to understand these functions and their relationships with other correlates and outcomes, not the veracity of the memories, rather the objective impacts that these subjective constructions have (Adler, Dunlop, Fivush, Lilgendahl, Lodi-Smith, McAdams et al., 2017). This is where realism meets social constructionism (Crossley, 2000).

Further, the author proposes that certain common ways of interpreting experience among specific groups may reveal underlying psychological structures that discriminate study populations and relate to specific behaviours, enabling individuals to be differentiated and grouped, and empirical models of behaviour constructed. The veracity of realist assumptions, of narratives, can be judged by their relation to objectively observable behaviours (Toch, 1993; Canter & Youngs, 2009). For example, Dunlop and Tracy's (2013) work showed that individual differences in narrative constructs were associated with abstinence among alcoholics and Adler's (2012) research showed that differences in narratives among psychotherapy clients preceded changes in mental health. If a discernible pattern among types of narratives is highlighted with specific objective outcomes, then validity to findings is established and a 'truth' to the meaningfulness of underlying themes suggested, as Stone (2014: 45) notes:

'… the generalisability of findings of narrative inquiries concerns not the subjective meaning of individuals, but the intersubjective meanings shared between individuals – in other words the generality of findings across many individuals within the sample. Intersubjective meanings are "constitutive of the social matrix in which individuals find themselves and act" (Taylor, 1987: 58). If individual's life narratives are considered interpretations of objective history according to dominant cultural themes or master narratives, then life narratives reveal "the relation between this instantiation (this particular life story) and the social world the narrator shares with others; the ways in which culture marks, shapes and/or constraints this narrative, and the ways in which this narrator makes use of cultural resources and struggles with cultural restraints" (Chase, 1995: 20). Thus, the external validity of evidence of intersubjective meanings depends on a demonstration of how widely these meanings are shared'

7.8 Qualitative and quantitative methodologies

Related to these different perspectives is the methods researchers use to study narratives. Participants unique voices and experiences can be examined through narrative studies adopting a qualitative or more quantitative approach. This study applies a quantitative analysis; that is, the quantifying of qualitative data to reveal underlying structures.

In discussing this it is important to consider researchers' interpretation of qualitative data. Qualitative data refers to sources of information that are non-numeric in origin, such as talk, text or video. However, the qualitative nature of data is independent of the way it is analysed. For example, a researcher could analyse how individuals overcome challenges using an interpretivist approach, describing themes in narratives, interpreting the content of narratives

by presenting the results as descriptions of the participants' narrative structures. With respect to addiction narratives, Dunlop & Tracy (2013) and Kougiali et al., (2017) adopt this approach, Dunlop and Tracy (2013) presenting descriptions of participants' narratives highlighting redemptive themes constructive to abstinence, and Kougiali and colleagues presenting descriptions of discontinuity in recovery trajectories. This approach is qualitative analysis of qualitative data.

Alternatively, a researcher could choose to code the narrative for content related to overcoming a challenge, convert these content codes into numbers (1 for presence, 0 for absence), and then use these numbers in statistical procedures. This latter approach constitutes quantitative analysis of qualitative data. Stone (2016) does this in coding narratives of pregnant drug users for redemption themes according to established coding protocols used by McAdams (2001). However, in presenting her findings she focuses on illustrative text descriptions. Coding in this way allows for data comparisons to examine patterns and differences among individuals.

Canter and Youngs (2009, 2011), in a more emphatically quantitative examination of offender narratives, applied thematic coding to qualitative accounts which was then transformed into an empirically verifiable model of offence roles using statistical procedures. However, importantly verbatim text descriptions were used to illustrate structural theme patterns (Youngs & Canter, 2012). This mixed presentation of data, with quantitative data substantiated through qualitative illustrations is adopted by the current thesis, since it enables underpinning structural patterns to be phenomenologically contextualised, adding a crucial, powerful personal dimension in representing findings.

Historically psychologists have been somewhat sceptical of qualitative analysis of qualitative data (Arnett, 2005; Lyons, 2009), whereas quantitative analysis of qualitative data has a more established history in psychological research (e.g. Marcia, Waterman, Matteson, Archer & Orlosky's, 1993; Main & Goldwyn, 1994). One area in which this form of analysis has been strongly represented is in narrative identity research (McAdams, 1993; McAdams et al., 1996; Pals & McAdams, 2004; McLean & Breen, 2009; Adler et al., 2015; Bauer et al., 2018 - see earlier chapters). However, patterns are now changing with more researchers adopting a stronger interpretivist stance with qualitative analysis of material. For these researchers, empirical methods do not validate a specific viewpoint, rather they invite a closed perspective on observing the world. From this position, methodological rigour is considered with suspicion, with focus given to developing forms of enquiry that facilitate in conveying a specific viewpoint rather than it being 'true' (Blazeley, 2013).

Addiction research on identity has broadly followed this qualitative trend (Hanninen & Koski-Jannes, 1999; McIntosh & McKeganey, 2002), even for those scholars adopting McAdams' identity model (e.g. Singer, 1997; Dunlop & Tracy, 2013). This research demonstrates that vital questions in the study of narrative identity can be answered using inductive, qualitative methods, revealing complexity and exploring new avenues. Such research makes an important contribution to the literature and can lay a foundation for subsequent quantitative studies.

Mindful of these given insights, the current work endeavours to provide a more detailed content analysis than previous substance misuse studies (e.g. Dunlop & Tracy, 2013; Stone, 2016) to provide a richer interpretation of data, whilst using verbatim quotes to illustrate how key themes are represented phenomenologically. Additionally, building on the qualitative literature, the author proposes to apply quantitative analysis of qualitative data to examine structural patterns in narratives among recovery and non-recovery groups, following valuable

insights from similar analysis in personality and forensic research (McAdams & Bowman, 2001; Youngs & Canter, 2012; Youngs et al., 2016; Bauer et al., 2018).

7.9 Coding narratives

It is important to be aware of the analytic approach adopted by researchers when considering coding of material and reliability, rather than the qualitative nature of the data, per se (Smith & Sparks, 2006). The approach adopted in the present study uses quantitative analysis of qualitative data, a method associated with the positivist tradition, whereas qualitative analysis of qualitative data is associated with the constructivist tradition. However, as is made evident with the rise of mixed methods, the alignment is imprecise, since analysts approach qualitative data in a wide variety of ways, particularly concerning the reliability process (Syed & Nelson). The very notion of establishing 'reliability' of content coding is a quantitative, positivistic assumption: defining consistency of a measure suggests that a given coding definition is 'true'. In the context of coding free-flowing text this reliability is referred to as interrater reliability- the extent to which content raters code the same material in the same way. The definition of reliability thus implies the notion of an inherent underlying truth that can be assessed. This perspective has been accepted by mainstream psychological research but is criticised by constructivist researchers, where emphasis is on subjectivity, interpretation and reflexivity. The idea of a generalisable truth accessible to researchers, even with a well-articulated coding protocol grounded in the literature, is anathema to constructivist purists (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Syed & Nelson, 2015). Indeed, for some, separating data from its subjective context at all is considered undesirable, 'uprooting' it from its source of reality. From such a perspective establishing 'reliability' may be less of a concern.

While accepting the subjectivity of narratives, this thesis stands apart from fundamental constructivists to address – beyond phenomenology - underpinning themes generalisable or distinguishing in the research sample, discernible through comparative narrative analysis, to establish realist conclusions. It posits that certain reliable underlying narrative themes relate to certain outcomes among participants. Mindful of earlier discussions, this proposes common subjective ways of interpreting experiences among the study population that play out in narrative accounts to reveal patterns of meaningful differences between groups with external behavioural correlates (Stone, 2016).

To be clear, the author believes that consistency is a marker of rigorous research regardless of the method used: one individual's analysis of qualitative data should be re-captured by another individual familiar with the coding procedure. This standpoint on consistency is biased toward the quantitative view, whilst appreciating the constructivist position.

7.10 Perspectives and impacts on coding

Frameworks for understanding the psychological and social world influence what questions researchers ask and therefore ideas about how and what content to code. For example, some researchers code only direct descriptions, others endeavour to articulate narrators' interpretations and constructs, while others examine their own interpretations of what their participants narrate. Likewise, researchers concerned with macro-level social issues, such as impacts of power differentials in society, will identify different features in content than those exploring intrinsic psychological structures. Distinct orientating vocabulary is used, and data is interpreted through a different lens. These frames of reference influence coding protocols. While attention to details in narratives will facilitate in our understanding of what the material

is communicating, it is important to exercise a reflexive awareness of how prior knowledge influences interpretation and the construction of knowledge (Blazeley, 2013).

7.11 Established coding systems

In the study of narrative identity, psychologists have developed coding systems that are readily available for operationalising themes within new datasets (McAdams, 1993; Canter & Youngs, 2015; Adler et al., 2017). The field of personality research on narrative identity has established dictionaries for the coding of life story narratives for agency, communion, redemption and contamination (McAdams et al., 2001; Adler et al., 2015). These themes have consistently been shown to be important to identity development and changes (McAdams, 1993; McAdams & Bowman, 2001; Pals & McAdams, 2004; McAdams & Pals, 2008; Lodi-Smith et al., 2009; Adler, 2012; Adler et al., 2015). Researchers in Investigative Psychology have expanded and adjusted these dictionaries for examination of richer narrative forms in their study of criminal populations (Canter & Youngs, 2015; Ioannou et al., 2107; Tkazky, 2018). See descriptions below.

Coding schemes are generally developed in one of two ways: using a deductive theory-driven top-down approach, or an inductive data-driven bottom-up approach (Chi, 1997). This latter stance is exemplified by Grounded Theory, which holds that researchers should observe and represent data with no prior expectation or guiding frame of reference, allowing the data to 'speak for itself' (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In principle this democratic method carries merit, especially in approaching a novel topic, or searching fresh insights in rich data; however, the assumption that a researcher of presumable erudition can arrive at a research question with no orientating knowledge, or is able to disregard this knowledge, while laudable, seems farfetched. Moreover, additional to the inevitable personal interpretation of the researcher is

the inevitable personal interpretation of the reader. Yet important principles can be taken from its position with respect to the rich central resource accorded from the phenomenological perspective, which are heeded in the present thesis. However, with the above cautions, a position grounded in an established empirical framework seems preferable. This represents a theory-driven approach and involves deconstructing an existing psychological theory into codes that can be applied to the data. The thesis adopts this top-down approach, observing the theoretical assumptions of McAdams' (1993) life story narrative identity theory, methodologies adjusted for marginal populations (Canter & Youngs, 2015), and coding protocols replicated in these studies (Youngs et al., 2016; Tkazky, 2018; Rowlands et al., 2019).

The next step in the process of developing a coding dictionary is becoming familiar with the data, which is accomplished through a close reading and rereading of the material collected (Adler et al., 2017). This was done by two independent coders, both of whom familiar with examining and coding narrative material. Following Syed & Nelson's (2015) guidelines, an exhaustive content dictionary was drawn upon for initial coding (see below - LAAF Coding Framework). As Syed and Nelson (2015) note, a theory-driven approach requires a refining of the coding dictionary based on observed data, thus development of coding formats is iterative. Described below in discussing the pilot study, this process revealed certain redundant, infrequent, and overlapping variables, with the coding dictionary being revised accordingly. The coding dictionary was adjusted in two stages. Firstly, redundant, overlapping or infrequent variables were eliminated. Later in the analytic process, a significantly truncated coding dictionary was adopted following key findings from original analyses. This is discussed in more detail with reference to reliability below.

Campbell and colleagues discuss advantages of having a large number of items in a coding dictionary, in that it allows for a greater richness to be captured and a fealty to the original

report (Campbell, Quincy, Osserman, & Pedersen, 2013). However, this comes at the cost of potentially reduced reliability, due to the complexity of the coded content. Thus, the process of developing a coding dictionary balances richness with parsimony.

In the current study, LAAF material was initially coded for the 129 variables used in the original coding framework (Canter & Youngs, 2015). This compilation draws on a broad psychological literature (expanded on elsewhere in the thesis). The author felt that initial analysis should take advantage of this to derive from the coding process a rich thematic analysis, mindful of losses to phenomenological context that limited coding can bring about, whilst being aware that adjustments to the dictionary could be made subsequently, with account taken of original findings, reliability, and usefulness of the data. This method was useful for highlighting important prevalent and discriminative themes, as well as those elements less representative or descriptive. Following this, agreement was met among coders for the coding dictionary adopted for descriptive analysis (Chapter 8), and the revision used for studies reported in subsequent chapters.

As Adler et al. (2017) relate, coding of narrative material is a process where agreement is established through discussion, since free flowing text leaves lots of room for interpretation, and it is important for coders to establish definitions of content. This was an ongoing process, where initial coding was discussed, with the coders reaching a mutual understanding of the content dictionary, making sense of any early differences in interpretation of coding definitions, which were resolved in consideration of future accounts.

In the coding of narratives, one coder serves as the master or main coder. The author was the main coder in this study, coding all 32 LAAF narratives. The second coder served as the reliability coder, coding a subset of the data. For establishing adequate reliability, commonly this subset is 20 percent of the total number of cases but varies depending on the size and

complexity of the data set (Lilgendahl & McAdams, 2011). Mindful of the small sample and complex data set, in collaboration with supervisors, the author decided that 50 percent was a more reliable proportion of cases, consequently 15 of 32 cases were reliability coded. However, in keeping with standard protocol, only the author's coding was used for subsequent analysis (Syed & Nelson, 2015).

7.12 Interrater reliability

Though percentage agreement between raters is the most straightforward way to establish reliability, as an uncorrected figure it does not account for chance or accidental agreement. If the researcher's epistemological stance emphasises interpretative bias as an inevitable condition of research then this method for assessing reliability may be deemed sufficient (Syed & Nelson, 2015). However, for quantitative research predicated on realist assumptions it is considered a limitation, since the combined prevalence of true agreement and chance agreement confounds reliability of results (Cohen, 1960).

Addressing this limitation, Cohen (1960) developed the kappa coefficient, a method for calculating reliability that accounts for chance agreement. This analysis affords a more robust indicator of interrater reliability. Cohens kappa was therefore adopted as a measure of interrater reliability for the present thesis. The procedure gives a reliability reading of between 0 and 1, 1 being perfect agreement. Fleiss (1981) argues that a kappa of: .40-.60 is fair, .60-75 is good and over .75 is excellent. However, some researchers contest these values. McHugh (2012) proposes a standard of .80, especially for clinical studies where findings may be used to promote changes in practice, while Bakeman and Gottman (1986) argue for a minimum score of .70. Syed and Nelson (2015) agree with this proposition, with the caveat that lower

values may be acceptable depending on the number of content categories, items, and difficulty of the coding system.

The initial coding of LAAF transcripts across 129 variables produced a kappa value of .58. This reading is deemed fair with reference to much of literature, though it is low considering some recent arguments (McHugh, 2012). Syed and Nelson's (2015) caveat with respect to the complexity of coding systems may offer some mitigation, along with the greater proportion of cases jointly coded. Nonetheless, the reading stimulated detailed discussions between coders who were able to make sense of many differences while developing further agreement on the definitions of the revised dataset of 48 dichotomous variables used in subsequent analyses. Interrater reliability testing of this data produced a kappa reading of .72, which the author felt was a more acceptable level of consistency, meeting with agreed values (Bakeman & Gottman, 1986; Syed & Nelson, 2015), especially with consideration of the complex material and coding framework. However, heeding McHugh's (2012) important point, whilst this level of agreement may be acceptable for an exploratory project, further studies and formal application of the LAAF model to clinical research, in which results may guide practice, should demand a still higher level of agreement.

7.13 Pilot study

Following Adler et al.'s (2015) statement that it is important to trial interview procedures and especially narrative prompts, a pilot study was conducted on 10 participants to trial the LAAF format with the study population. This allowed value assessment for the target cohort of the LAAF coding dictionary, previously used only in research with offenders. The study showed that participants engaged with and enjoyed the activity, and though some participants required more prompting, the accounts produced were rich and detailed. Importantly, participants seemed relaxed during the interaction, where they either used the film format to fictionalise

their storytelling, or explicitly narrated their story. The active participation of interviewees in recounting life stories through the exercise and rich material produced justified continuance of the method for subsequent study, and no adjustments were considered necessary to the interview protocol and prompts, with several identified minor adjustments to the initial coding dictionary.

Rationale for trialling the LAAF coding dictionary in its entirety was inclusion of a broad literature, including themes shown to be important in narratives of offender populations, 'effective' individuals, and those with mental health problems, as well as more general, related psychological literature, such as locus of control (Dekel, Benbenishty & Amram, 2004), cognitive distortions (Sykes & Matza, 1957), behavioural approaches and motivational incentives (Bandura, 1986), and emotional states (Russell, 1997). Accordingly, Canter and Youngs explicitly advocated wider use of the coding procedure (Canter & Youngs, 2015).

The process of coding pilot case variables revealed certain low frequency items. Discussion between coders and the supervisory team reasoned may measure different content, possibly content more specific to offender narratives, and were removed from the dictionary. Specific items removed following these discussions are highlighted later in this chapter. Further adjustments were made to the content dictionary following full descriptive analysis among 32 participants and are discussed in subsequent study reports.

7.14 LAAF methodology

The LAAF was chosen as a data collection tool on the strength of research literature exploring life narrative in related criminal populations (e.g. Tkazky, 2018). Findings in Investigative Psychology make a powerful case for the utility of the LAAF in marginalised populations, citing multiple advantages pertinent to substance misuse samples (Canter & Youngs, 2015).

Originally, the LAAF formed part of the Canter-Youngs Narrative Experience of Offending (CY-NEO) protocol, which was developed by the team of researchers from the International Research Centre for Investigative Psychology (Canter & Youngs, 2015). Only the LAAF part of their extended interview was used for the present study. Previous research by the team has demonstrated the reliability and validity of the procedure for extracting psychologically relevant rich personal material (Carthy, 2013; Canter & Youngs, 2015; Youngs et al., 2016).

Review of the narrative literature illustrates how central identity themes and cognitive interpretations can be revealed in the stories people construct about their lives (McAdams, 1988, 1993; McAdams & Bowman, 2001; McClean & McAdams, 2004; Bauer, McAdams & Pals, 2008). The recent focus on mental health (Adler, Skalina & McAdams, 2008; Adler, 2012; Adler et al., 2015) and criminal populations (Maruna, 2001; Presser, 2009; Youngs & Canter, 2011; Canter & Youngs, 2015) demonstrates the utility of a narrative identity approach in addressing non-conventional lives. The LAAF advances narrative research for populations with sensitive and less coherent lives in providing an accessible, relatable, non-threatening procedure that allows central psychological components to be examined together in the context of a narrative.

Presser (2010) explains that it is important to take account of the context in which a story is told when interpreting a narrative. With the LAAF, the context for the participant is one where there is freedom to describe their life as they would like it to be seen, or their chosen interpretation of reality, as compared to a valid record of reality (Canter & Youngs, 2015). While this may appear as a limitation on validity, critically, it is this biased version that is vital in revealing aspects of *personal* relevance (Canter & Youngs, 2015).

In developing the LAAF interpretation procedure, themes of interest were drawn from existing narrative theories, most notably McAdams (1985, 1993) life story model. Minor

adjustments were made for the current research population, since a pilot study showed certain coding content was poorly represented, or overlapped in the substance misuse sample, and therefore deemed more specific to research with offenders.

The content framework on which the thematic analysis is based rests with the assumption that in order generate meaning from narratives, themes of interest need to be identified (Presser, 2010). Though this approach to content analysis has a long and productive history in narrative research, it contrasts with the proposals of Grounded Theory which contends that data should be allowed to speak for itself (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). However, in the case of the current project, themes salient to life narratives have already been well established by a plethora of related research substantiating the research platform (McAdams, 1993, 2001; Maruna, 2001; Singer, 2001; Canter & Youngs, 2009; Adler et al., 2015; Canter & Youngs, 2015).

7.15 LAAF content coding dictionary

Content analysis of LAAF accounts was carried out following the coding dictionary compiled by Canter and Youngs (2015) in their research with offenders. The LAAF content dictionary is a thematic coding framework designed to be used as a procedure for analysing LAAF interview responses. Since its design is drawn from a breadth of narrative and related psychological research, it offers application with various study populations. The framework is divided into four thematic subgroups, derived from consideration of the roles narratives play in shaping human behaviour: Psychological Complexity, Implicit Psychological Content, Explicit Processes Used to Organise Content, and Nature of Agency in Relation to Others (Youngs et al., 2016) (see Appendix 7 for full LAAF content dictionary).

7.15.1 Psychological complexity

The first section of the coding procedure is Psychological Complexity, and refers to the formal aspects of the account, such as number of events, characters, ideas and certain structural elements. It represents an internal validation of the LAAF technique in quantifying the complexity of the responses, and thus illustrates the thought that participants are putting into constructing their story. Accounts are coded for: distinct beginning, middle and end sections' and the presence of contingent sequences. These structural elements denote narrative complexity. The presence of a beginning, middle and end constitutes important components encompassing a life story, and the presence of contingent sequences establishes the perception of a causative trajectory, which is central to plotline, character development and narrative coherence. Analysis of these elements is key in establishing whether the procedure elicits sufficiently complex material to satisfy the requirements of a life narrative, and therefore apt for broader inferences (Canter & Youngs, 2015).

Research using the procedure with offenders showed that LAAF responses demonstrated all components of life narrative, generating numerous distinct characters, events and psychological ideas within a concise narrative description (Canter & Youngs, 2015; Youngs et al., 2016; Tkazky, 2018). Interestingly, the narratives generated more ideas than characters, suggesting that the method was valuable in exploring self-substantiating cognitions (Canter & Youngs, 2015). Crucially, coding LAAF responses for elements of psychological complexity will enable us to assess the utility of the technique as a procedure for extracting life narratives in the target population.

7.14.2 Implicit psychological content

Section two interprets implicit psychological content, referring to descriptive content pertaining to plot, events, and the narrative message. Implicit content of the LAAF is reflected in the participant's identification of film genres (e.g. 'My life is a story of tragic consequences' or 'It's a full-on farce'). Specifically, the elicitation procedure asks participants to describe what type of film their life would be. Film genre was marked as present where the participant gives an explicit statement of genre ('The story is a tragedy, beginning to end'), or film genre is strongly indicated in their description ('It would be a rags to riches tale' (romance); 'A suspenseful portrayal of peril' (thriller). Otherwise, genre was unrecorded.

The expression of genre communicates an overall life theme, which can be observed as the story in a word. The format derives from Frye's narrative archetypes: *Romance, Tragedy, Comedy* and *Irony,* which McAdams (1988, 1993) and Canter and colleagues (Canter & Youngs, 2009; Youngs & Canter, 2012; Ioannou et al., 2016) have developed to encompass theme combinations within broader narrative forms. Canter and Youngs (2015) noted the way that offenders drew upon known genres of film to situate themselves within the narrative, revealing fundamental aspects of their personal stories.

The genres *Comedy, Romance, Tragedy* and *Thriller* were used to define film type in the present study. This is an adjustment from the original LAAF coding dictionary, which included additional *Crime* and *Action* genres. However, following a pilot study in which *Crime* and *Action* genres were poorly represented, it was considered that the above four genres encompassed different storylines, better reflecting the study population. Moreover, the format fits neatly with Frye's (1957) fundamental plots and Canter and Youngs (2012) narrative forms. Accordingly, it was reasoned that the coding adjustment facilitated a clearer examination of whether genres corresponded with dominant theme combinations (i.e.

Tragedy and low agency/communion; *Romance* and high agency/communion, etc) (McAdams, 1993).

It should be stated that Frye's myths do not perfectly represent modern day 'comedy' or 'romance' stories, though there is ample analogy. Essentially, Frye's *comedy* archetype reflected optimistic protagonists in the pursuit of joy and stability with others, sharing space with contemporary comedy plots, while his *romance* myth chronicles a successful quest through challenges to a desired end, finding parity with modern romance narratives. Frye described the *tragedy* mythoi with a pessimistic protagonist facing inescapable dangers and experiencing a steady decline, perfectly mirroring the perennial tragedy sequence.

Observing the above plotlines, it can be conjectured that individuals recounting narratives of recovery may invoke the romance genre, whilst those embroiled in persistent drug dependency draw on a tragic narrative thread. Genre coding may afford the research fundamental plots that contain within them clusters of associated themes, differentiating constituent narrative dynamics endemic to certain patterns of substance use and recovery pathways.

Events pertaining to *Relationship Problem* versus *Relationship Success* were also coded and deemed relevant to the study objectives, symbolising communal themes, while other descriptive content (e.g. *Doing Crime*) seemed less relevant for the purposes of the research and were therefore eliminated from the content analysis.

Again, drawing on Frye's (1957) work explicating literary forms, narratives were coded according to variations in tone. Tone was coded in terms of a *passive, proactive, negative* and *positive* voice, according to Canter and Youngs (2015) original formulation. This content was included as it may be revealing of discriminative broader narratives and perform an active role in promoting accepted self-concepts (i.e. *passive* and *negative* tone with low agency

identity). This could carry important practical implications, where highlighting negative and passive tone preferences in personal narratives could prove key in addressing them as facilitators of decline.

Story resolution was also coded. Hankiss (1981) distinguishes four narrative forms according to resolutions: *dynastic* (good past to good present), *antithetical* (bad past to good present), *compensatory* (good past to bad present), and *self-absolutory* (bad past to bad present). However, it can be argued that 'bad' to 'good' sequences are adequately identified through other coding categories (redemption, contamination), and therefore the LAAF content framework codes only for *Happy Ending* versus *Sad Ending*, to capture future orientation, a key component in healthful narrative identity (McAdams, 2001; McAdams & Pals, 2006).

7.15.3 Explicit processes used to organise content

Section three comprises LAAF categories describing psychologically active components that shape life narratives. These are themes pivotal to storylines and identity formation, deriving primarily from the extensive research of McAdams and colleagues (McAdams, 1993, 2001; McAdams et al., 1996; McAdams et al., 2001; McLean & McAdams, 2004). Themes of agency and communion are central to this category. As Wiggins (1991) states, the themes offer conceptual coordinates for understanding and measuring interpersonal behaviour. Canter and Youngs' (2015) LAAF framework includes the agency elements: *Self-Mastery*, *Status, Achievement* and *Empowerment*, and the communion elements: *Love/Friendship*, *Dialogue, Caring*, and *Unity* (Canter & Young, 2015). The themes are complemented by a further consideration of the form narratives can take. This section of the coding dictionary draws on offender roles' research (e.g. Youngs & Canter, 2012) and includes a list of classic narrative themes related to the roles: *Professional, Revenger, Hero* and *Victim,* including:

Overcoming Struggles, Wrong Done to Them, Hopelessness, Effectiveness, Victory, Revenge, Fate, Tangible Rewards, Bravery, Compulsion and *Fulfilment* (Youngs & Canter, 2013).

With respect to the present research, initial coding indicated overlap across certain variables (e.g. *Achievement, Tangible Rewards, Effectiveness*), while other items appeared to be addressing content not represented in the study population. To avoid offender-specific variables and a superfluity of items in an already complex dataset, prudence was exercised in truncating the list of items. The dictionary was adjusted to reflect coding distinct elements of agency:

Effectiveness - The protagonist develops skills, experiences achievement, gains rewards.

Empowerment - The protagonist is enlarged, enhanced, empowered or ennobled.

Self-Mastery - The protagonist strives to successfully master, control and perfect the self.

And communion:

Love/Friendship - The protagonist experiences an enhancement of love or friendship toward another person.

Caring - The individual reports that he or she provides care, assistance, nurturance, help, aid, support, or therapy for another.

Unity - The theme of *Unity/Togetherness* captures the communal idea of being part of a larger community.

It is posited that the three elements relate to different narrative attributes, and perhaps different levels of agency and communion, a proposition that will explored as part of the current investigation.

From the list of classic narrative themes above, only *Bravery* and *Compulsion* were included in the descriptive analysis, since they address content already indicated by research (Weegmann, 2010). Weegmann (2010) uses the example of a *bravado* theme to highlight a trend towards substantiating ongoing substance use with an attribution of personal agency, while *Compulsion* denotes the addiction/dependency element of intractable substance misuse stories.

McAdams (2001) identifies two other pivotal themes that characterise and distinguish life stories: redemption and contamination. Drawing on McAdams' (2001) findings with transitioning individuals and Maruna's (2001) identification of distinct scripts in the narratives of offenders and ex-offenders, the framework codes accounts for themes of redemption and contamination. The theme of redemption has already been implicated in recovery from substance misuse (Dunlop & Tracy, 2013; Stone, 2016), though research needs to examine the centrality of the theme to life narratives and explore contrasting contamination in narratives of substance users. LAAF narratives were therefore carefully coded for each theme:

Redemption - movement from a negative situation to a positive situation

Contamination – movement from a positive situation to a negative situation

Themes of redemption and contamination have been shown to distinguish prosocial and healthful narratives from problematic stories (Maruna, 2001; Harkness, 2011; Adler et al., 2015), and redemption themes have consistently been associated with positive life changes (McAdams, 2001; McAdams & Bowman, 2001; Dunlop & Tracy, 2013). The LAAF content dictionary also includes sub-themes highlighted by McAdams and colleagues research (McAdams et al., 2001). These include the redemption elements: *Enjoys a Special Advantage, Witnesses the Suffering of Others in Childhood, Develops a Sense of Moral Steadfastness*, and

Repeatedly Encounters Negative Events Being Transformed into Positive Results, and the contamination elements: *Victimisation, Betrayal, Loss of Significant Others, Failure, Illness, Disappointment, Disillusion* and *Humiliation*. McAdams found that these sub-themes were often significant mediators of redemption and contamination sequences in life stories. Their inclusion is therefore apt in deconstructing script patterns.

Canter and Youngs (2015) argue that the richness afforded life narratives through the combining of themes and forms (see genres above) illustrates the potential for future research, and demonstrates the ways in which the LAAF reveals underlying psychological components contextualised in fundamental stories. This is invaluable for advancing comprehensive narrative theories that capture the essence of underlying coherent narrative structures, and key to developing theories that encompass the complexity of substance misuse.

7.15.4 Nature of agency in relation to others

Section four refers to nature of agency with respect to others and the world. This subgroup of the LAAF interprets the various ways in which the individual approaches the world and interacts with others. It includes coding content that reveals imagoes, emotions, incentives and behavioural justifications. The section comprises 58 variables, 30 of which derive from McAdams (1993) list of 15 imagoes. McAdams presented the concept of the imago as personal myths in life stories that reveal some aspect of identity. The concept of the imago has its roots in Jungian archetypes but assumes more animus in life stories, where central characters are depicted through interactive roles. The 15 identified imagoes personify combinations of agency and communion themes, including highly agentic characterisations, such as the *Warrior*, *Arbiter*, or *Traveller*, where the embodiment of identity is self-assertive and egoic, or communal, such as *Caregiver* or *Lover*, where the embodiment of identity is

more giving and other-focussed. Other imagoes reflect a combined identity, animating both agency and communion in the role, such as *Teacher* or *Healer*, with expression of both personal potency and a communal nature. In contrast, imagoes can also reflect the absence of either agency or communion in the narrative identity. McAdams captures this persona in the *Escapist*, where a sense of impotence and alienation is reflected in recourse to diversion.

Understanding imagoes as personifications of dominant agency and communion themes makes them amenable to a narrative framework distinguishing stories according to shaping theme combinations. Reflecting this, characterisations of self within the life story may conform to broader themes, enriching the texture of narrative forms. The richer the tapestry of narrative forms, the more detailed our understanding of intra- and intersubjective processes, and nuanced can be our approach in formulating interventions.

Youngs and Canter (2012) highlight that some personal myths are prominent in certain study populations. They indicate six as relevant to offender populations. Though certain imagoes, such as *Escapist, Survivor* and *Healer* appear most relevant to the current population, others may capture narrative-distinguishing identities, providing more subtle challenges to positive change, such as highly agentic characters who push people away with ruthless self-determination (e.g. *Warrior)*, evincing a corresponding social isolation, or communal (*Caregiver*) characters, who care for other people at the expense of their own egoic satisfaction. Moreover, as McAdams (1993) states, multiple and competing identities may be reflected in the life story. Disunity of personal roles can create narrative incoherence and identity dissonance, which Larsson et al. (2013) and others cite as key to enduring substance misuse (Biernacki, 1986; Singer, 2001; Larsson et al., 2013). Youngs et al. (2016) observed similar trends in offender populations using the LAAF model. Elucidating the context that sustains destructive identities against more constructive background selves, or emerging roles, may be instructive for therapeutic interventions focused on identity change. To capture

nuances and competing identities, LAAF narratives were coded for each of the 15 imagoes. These analyses are invaluable in identifying the progressive versus regressive identity characteristics driving life stories.

Representation of imagoes in life narratives can refer to the roles of 'self' and 'others'. The roles we assign others may reflect our self-concept. Thus, it might be anticipated that the *Escapist* sees significant others primarily in a threatening or other highly agentic role, helping to explain their own adopted identity, while a *Warrior* protagonist could be expected to perceive other people as hostile, justifying their own attitude. Such appraisals assist in preserving the status quo and would highlight a focus for change in the case of compensatory substance misuse. The perception of significant others is therefore central to sustaining one's own identity and provides an important context for understanding interpersonal dynamics and personal problems. Therefore, the 15 imago categories were applied separately for the protagonist and others mentioned in the story.

The LAAF dictionary classifies accounts of emotions in terms of Russell's (1997) circumplex of emotions. Russell proposed that affect could be classified into *positive aroused* (elated) versus *positive non-aroused* (calm), and *negative aroused* (distressed) versus *negative non-aroused* (depressed), giving emotional quadrants. Research by Ioannou and colleagues shows that the circumplex model of affect maps onto the narrative forms revealed by earlier research in Investigative Psychology (Ioannou, Youngs & Canter, 2016). Specifically, the high agency *Professional* criminal was found to exhibit emotional calm, the *Revenger* exhibited distress, the *Victim* illustrated despair, and the *Hero*, elation. This work enriches a narrative forms model constructed around agency and communion themes and poses the question of whether the expanded framework could be applicable to other similar populations (Canter & Youngs, 2015).

As discussed in earlier chapters, the habitual use of substances frequently represents an adaptive response to untenable life circumstances, often entailing profound trauma (Bury, 1982; Brems & Namyniuk, 2002; Oshri et al., 2017). Use of psychoactive substances may provide an escape mechanism (Larsson et al., 2013; Howard et al., 2017). This translates to expediently controlling a chaotic emotional environment (Singer, 2001; Etherton & Don, 2007; Suh et al., 2008) by inducing sedation or elation, and provides a mechanism for regulating affect and achieving agency over unbearable circumstances (Singer, 2001; Suh et al., 2008;). The management of emotions is therefore a central concern in substance misuse stories and part of any recovery agenda (Cheetham et al., 2010). Hence, understanding how emotional states relate to key narrative themes in life stories is important to a full appreciation of the change, maintenance, or decline process.

It might be conjectured that individuals active in substance misuse, depicting low agency and limited relationships with others, find their only recourse for emotional regulation in sustained substance use (Singer, 2001; Garland et al., 2013), while making communal connections is crucial in offering emotional support and stability (Diamond, 2000; Best et al., 2012). Incentive towards interpersonal connections is especially important, since people with substance misuse issues often have trouble expressing emotions, perpetuating the destructive mechanism (Moore, 1983). Likewise, agentic growth themes, such as *self-mastery* and *achievement* may be important in promoting positive feelings. Exploring these dynamics in life narratives will offer important guiding insights. Though the LAAF coding for emotions is somewhat basic, Russell's (1997) circumplex model has been substantiated by related research (Ioannou et al., 2016) and accords with the current research methodology. Fundamentally, the model captures the essence of distinct emotional temperaments and offers a discriminating coding format.

The coding framework examines behavioural incentives. Bandura's (1986) findings on incentives classifies motives for actions according to four types: *material gain, power gain, social gain* and *sensory gain*. While these categories may not relate perfectly to theme combinations and narrative forms, it can be anticipated that a motive towards power or material gain will reflect a highly agentic narrative, while an incentive towards social gain should reflect a more communal story, since research links agency and communion value systems with motivation and behaviour (McLean & McAdams, 2004; Abele & Wojciszke, 2007; Buchanan & Bardi, 2015). Of interest in the current sample may be a proclivity towards sensory gain in substance-using individuals, the relationship to an escapist imago, and the reflection of low agency and communion with a tragic storyline. Incentives may be expected to change over the course to full recovery. Certainly, momentum towards social gain and away from sensory gain would indicate a process of positive change for the substance-using individual. However, a shift to the power gain incentive may offer an interesting comparison in relation to agency and communion themes, and further reflection in recovery pathways. Coding content relating to motivational states in the sample will help to illuminate the driving impetus of life stories.

Similarly, locus of control is quantified in the LAAF content dictionary by either of four behavioural approach styles: *proactive, reactive, avoidant*, or *confronting*. The inclusion of this coding criteria in the present study is justified by the proposition that the style will be distinguishing of underlying themes and further enrich the differentiation of life narratives. Since locus of agency represents an outward expression of self-concept or identity (Maruna & Copes, 2004), it is conjectured that narratives of active substance use will evince an avoidant style, while those depicting recovery will showcase a proactive style, and that this will be associated with dominant low agency/communion stories and high

agency/communion stories, respectively. Further, it is anticipated that the confrontational style may distinguish highly agentic narratives in the absence of a communion theme.

Finally, the subgroup Justifications of General Type, which derives from Sykes and Matza's (1957) neutralisation techniques and Bandura's (1990) work on justifications. The research is relevant to the life stories of offenders due to the violation of norms and moral disengagement endemic to a criminal lifestyle. Youngs and colleagues argue that to avoid dissonance people create coping strategies to justify behaviour in conflict with internal moral standards (Youngs et al., 2016). Sykes and Matza (1957) presented a list of neutralisation techniques that criminals used to circumvent self-repudiation. In related research, Bandura (1990) revealed scripts people deploy to allow them to disengage from their actions. The LAAF framework includes scripts from both Sykes and Matza neutralization theory and Bandura's model of moral disengagement. Reflecting the prominence of such devices, Youngs et al. (2016) found that behavioural justifications were a key area distinguishing offender from non-offender narratives. Retention of this measure is justified by the comparison in substance misuse stories. Since substance misuse represents a prohibited and stigmatised behaviour, it is expected that justifications for actions differentiate those narratives from narratives of recovery.

7.15.5 Dictionary summary

Overall, the LAAF content dictionary includes 129 variables. Aside from those pertaining to psychological complexity, all items follow a dichotomous coding format, where '0' represents the absence of an item and '1' the presence of an item in the narrative. Binary coding makes complex material amenable to quantitative analysis, which is important in simplifying a rich data set and revealing patterns important in theory formation. Case studies provide more

detailed material for illustrating how themes and patterns are contextualised in personal stories. Quantifying qualitative data does not supersede, undermine, or eliminate the explanatory potential of personal case studies; on the contrary, for the purposes of this project, it is seen to proffer an adjunctive method that may give form to sprawling narratives. Importantly, the present research draws on qualitative material and descriptions and quantitative data analysis to derive the advantages of both methods in understanding participants' behaviour.

The extended content dictionary enables us to explore elements of life narratives additional, though perhaps related to, dominant themes. This allows for the elaboration of identified narrative forms to better appreciate the many components of constructive or destructive stories. To date, the LAAF has been used only with offender and 'effective' populations. The current study is signal in using the LAAF to explore narrative in clinical populations, and to distinguish problem from resolution narratives.

Part III. Studies

Chapter 8. Study 1. Thematic Analysis of LAAF Narratives

8.1 Chapter in brief

Life story approaches to narrative identity in addiction recovery have given important insights about the role of redemptive agency (Dunlop & Tracy, 2013; Stone, 2016). Though these studies provide important advances in knowledge, when consideration is given to Singer's (1997) low agency and communion cases of chronic addiction, perhaps there is more to these stories than standard methods are revealing. Certainly, it seems likely that characteristic communal factors will be important to positive change processes, especially with the wealth of social identity research supporting shifts to communal self-concepts as being key to addiction recovery (Albery & Frings, 2015; Best et al., 2016; Bathish et al., 2017).

Some limitations to standard life story methods may account for this shortfall in data (Canter & Youngs, 2015). The LAAF procedure was designed to address limits identified with the collection of narrative material from socially deviant and stigmatised populations. The approach provided psychologically richer narratives than typical life story methods when adopted for studies of criminal narratives (Canter & Youngs, 2015; Youngs et al., 2016; Tkazky, 2018). Mindful of stigma and other psychological sensitivities in substance misuse populations (Moore, 1983; Boekel, Brouwers, Weeghel & Garretsen, 2013; Tally & Littlefield, 2014), this chapter aims to test the suitability of the LAAF approach for researching stories of substance misuse and recovery.

The purpose of the chapter is to display the richness of the data produced using the LAAF procedure and argue for its appropriateness for studying addiction and recovery. For this purpose, a detailed thematic analysis was carried out, drawing on a vast psychological literature, including but not limited to an examination of narrative themes shown to a play an important role in the formation, continuity, and transformation of identity, such as agency,

communion, redemption, contamination and imagoes (McAdams, 1993; McAdams et al., 2001; Maruna, 2001; Adler et al., 2015). In total, 123 dichotomous variables were coded. Aspects of psychological complexity were also measured, to assess the detail of descriptions and thought that participants were putting into their narratives.

There were three main findings. Firstly, data showed that the material produced by participants was psychologically complex and thematically rich, showcasing the value of the LAAF approach. Secondly, from the rich content, several themes common to most narratives were highlighted: 'interpersonal conflict', 'high emotionality', 'recourse to chemical self-regulation', and a 'survivor identity mode'. The data illustrates a typical story platform in the sample. Thirdly, more discriminating themes were revealed, which case studies suggested may distinguish recovery from non-recovery stories in important ways. These included narrative agency and communion elements such as *self-mastery* and *unity*, and redemption and contamination themes. This builds on previous research linking redemption with abstinence outcomes (Dunlop & Tracy, 2013).

Significantly, the study revealed that themes of contamination centred around ideas of *betrayal* and *victimisation*. In contrast, and developing extant literature, redemption scripts were shown to centre around *repeated reframing of negative events*, *development of moral steadfastness* and *prosocial goal setting*, suggesting that the typical story platform of conflict and chemical regulation can be positively and morally reconstructed. The data intimated that positive narrative reconstructions may relate to both agency *and* communion themes and provides a basis for studying in more depth themes discriminating LAAF narratives among the population.

8.2 Method

In this initial study, LAAF accounts of the 32 participants were subjected to thematic content analysis using the LAAF content framework detailed in Chapter 7. As discussed in detail, this application of the LAAF model follows repeated studies attesting to the suitability of the method with similar study populations (Youngs et al., 2016; Kang et al., 2017; Tkazky, 2018). Two independent coders applied the coding protocol on a sample of 15 interviews. Both coders were PhD students at the Centre for Investigative Psychology and practised in thematic coding of narrative accounts. As discussed above in detail, for content analysis to be considered reliable a certain level of agreement is required. Cohen's kappa was used to assess agreement between the two raters. A kappa coefficient of 0.58 was calculated. Fliess (1981) argues that this is a fair level of agreement, though others disagree (McHugh, 2012). With consideration of data complexity and the considerable room for interpretation in free-flowing text, this level of agreement was considered acceptable in the first instance (Syed & Nelson, 2015); however, it stimulated further discussion between coders of coding definitions and cases to ensure a more robust level of agreement for subsequent analyses (Adler et al., 2017).

8.3 Results

8.3.1 Psychological complexity

This section assesses the effectiveness of the LAAF procedure as a life narrative technique according to measures of narrative complexity (Canter & Youngs, 2015). For a procedure to satisfy the requirements of life narrative research, and for it to be comparable to standard life narrative techniques (McAdams, 1988), it must provide enough detail to capture the fundamental constituents of a life story. These include significant people, events and ideas, as well as other structural elements such as beginning, middle and end sections, coherent themes and contingent sequences (Canter and Youngs, 2015).

8.3.1.1 Characters

As Table 8.1 shows, participants produced LAAF responses with numerous distinct characters. The range was 2-14 people with an average of 7.5, many of whom given significant roles in individuals' lives. Only persons mentioned separately by name or distinct role are included in the analysis (brother, friend, colleague), not groups (friends, colleagues, family). The inclusion of central characters allows for an assessment of interpersonal dynamics and examination of how the participants relate to important figures in their life. Comparisons of interpersonal relationships across characters, across time are invaluable for exploring personal development processes important in recovery (Best et al., 2016)

8.3.1.2 Events

Participants' film descriptions typically included 10 or 11 separate events with a range of 3-25. Accounts of numerous experiences across the life story means that formative, pivotal and transformative events are captured, giving developmental texture to the descriptions. The number of distinct events in accounts allows for a deeper examination of patterns, offering more weight to conclusions. Further, the detail enables an analysis of themes across different situations at various points in time, clarifying central identity transformations or character obstacles to change. This is important in terms of identifying growth, decline, or fixed patterns over the life story, which is key to understanding the unfolding narrative, especially when making comparisons between individuals embroiled in substance misuse and those advancing to recovery.

8.3.1.3 Ideas

The task produced accounts richer in psychological ideas than either people or events. In this sample the number of psychological ideas ranged from 10-42! With an average of 20, representing a veritable psychoanalysis. A similar trend was found with offenders (Canter & Youngs, 2015), highlighting use of the LAAF in addressing internal cognitions that mediate behaviours. This latter point may also denote the 'here and now' of the methodology, compared with the chronicles of personal history that the 'Life as a Book' approach represents. Far from a shortcoming, this recall to prevailing mood represents an insignia of the manifested 'live issue' key to examining clinically significant presentations.

8.3.1.4 Psychological complexity and recovery

Generally, briefer accounts were collected from active substance users, perhaps since they tend to have fewer people in their lives and events become uniform around the habitual use of substances. Once insight is gained, support accessed, and changes fostered, individuals may attract people, have more of detail to report, and experience motivation to describe triumph over a life of adversity. To examine the significance of this difference, the number of characters, events and ideas were summed for each participant, giving total 'psychological complexity' scores. These scores were compared with scores on the RI using Spearman's correlation, producing a one-tailed coefficient of 0.61 ($p<0.01$). The results indicate that greater complexity in personal narratives is significantly related to recovery.
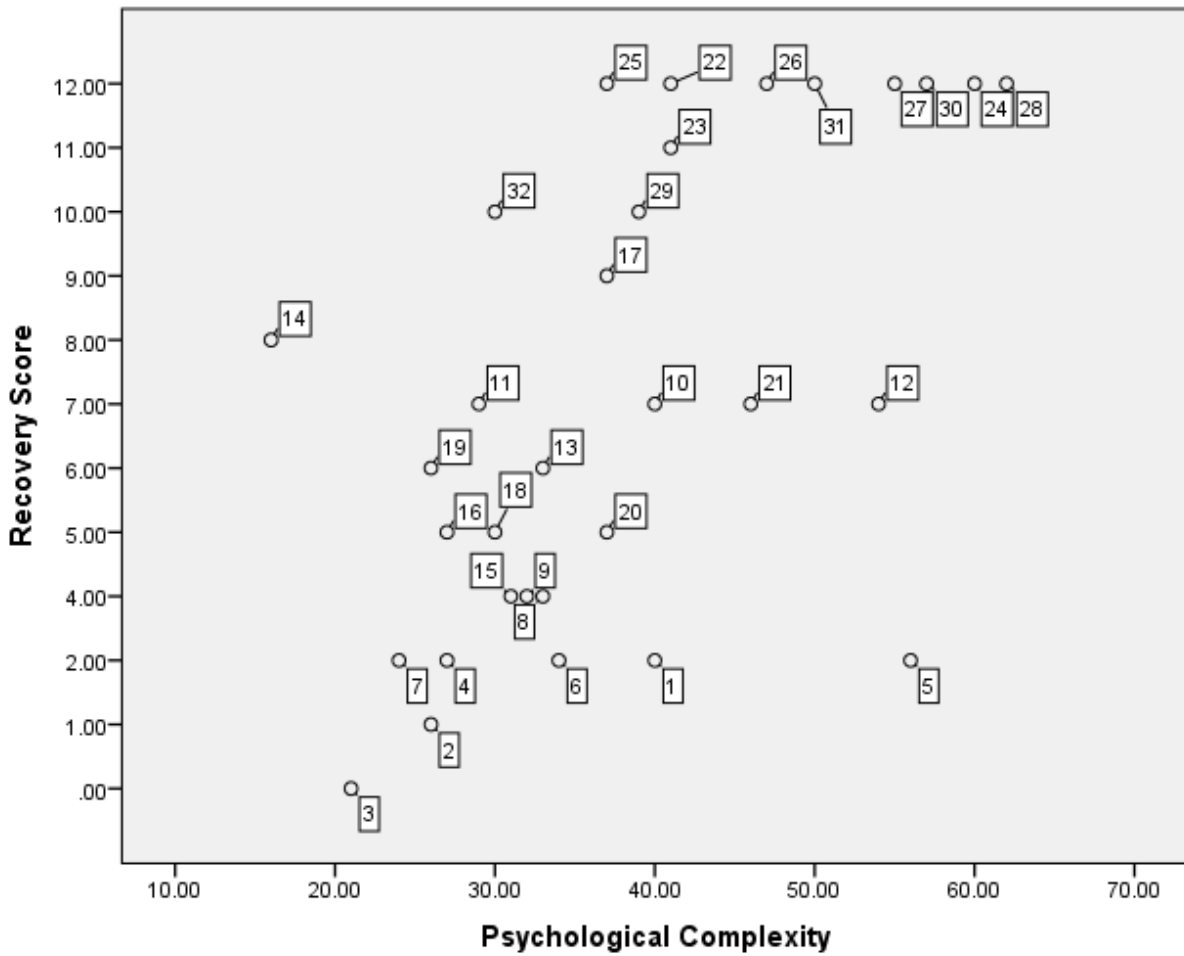
Figure 8.1. Scatterplot showing the relationship between Psychological Complexity scores in LAAF accounts and RI scores among 32 participants.

Figure 8.1 illustrates the relationship between indices of psychological complexity in participants LAAF accounts and scores on the RI. The scatterplot shows a trend towards greater narrative complexity - indicated by distinct characters, events and psychological ideas - for participants in recovery than those active in substance misuse lifestyles. However, certain outliers can be observed and should be examined. Case 5 provides a prominent example, and to a lesser extent, Case 1.

Interestingly, these participants have been actively involved in AA (Case 5) and NA (Case 1), an intervention fellowship in which members deliver life story accounts to other group members for, among other things, social identification purposes (O'Halloran, 2008). Such individuals are, therefore, practiced in organising and communicating a narrative self. Other low scoring participants, except for Case 7, do not have historical AA or NA involvement. This factor could explain the greater detail given by these participants, despite not showing the expected commensurate measure of recovery. Clearly, other factors, such as education, culture and intelligence, may be influential. Other supportive examples include Case 12, who has a history of 12-step fellowship involvement.

Figure 8.1 may also indicate a ceiling effect of the RI, where greater levels of psychological complexity are not able to be matched with more pronounced cases of recovery, the RI being limited in capturing further recovery advances. However, the levelling of narrative complexity with scores may equally suggest that psychological complexity beyond a certain point becomes a redundant indicator. That is, while advances in psychological complexity are related to and may be influential in recovery – signalling personal reflection, insight as to complex interplay of influences (ideas), significant others (distinct people), articulation of pivotal experiences in the life story (distinct events), and corresponding psychological integration – detail beyond a given level might prove superfluous to recovery capital. Further inquiry is needed to explore this conjecture.

The development and integration of narrative complexity in recovery indicated by the findings expands Singer's (1997, 2001) cases studies of incoherent addiction narratives to appreciate not only the fragmentation of narrative identity in substance misuse, but the limitations of scope in such life narratives. Another important factor is proposed by Moore's (1983) argument that individuals with substance use problems show difficulty with verbal expression, but beyond this, substance users may be less comfortable detailing their

proscribed experiences. On this point, however, it should be made clear that LAAF responses were thematically complex across the sample, and whilst accounts may have been more concise, other markers of complexity and psychological relevance were attained. Frequently, these distilled life stories were nonetheless rich but easier to content analyse. Importantly, LAAF responses provided each of the touchstones of life story accounts in succinct personal dramas.

As alluded to above, certain treatment paradigms facilitate the life story response. Those who used AA or NA fellowships were accustomed to giving verbal accounts of their life story, making for especially detailed, though sometimes matter-of-fact accounts, adhering to a typical life story descriptive pattern than a film analogue. This is not a failure of the film technique, the method simply offers choice to delineate a narrative fitting with preference, whether a creative vignette or a biographical account. Versatility within the elicitation procedure represents a methodological strength. Participants less familiar with personal material needed more prompting and time, though often provided more clearly explanatory accounts.

Using a life story approach, McAdams and colleagues have been able to illustrate agentic and communal growth themes, as well as redemption and contamination sequences key to development of narrative identity (McAdams et al., 2001; McLean & McAdams, 2004). The complexity of LAAF responses suggests that a rich subjective aetiology is observed through analysis of LAAF accounts. Moreover, the artistry of the film makes the technique preferable for those less comfortable 'rooting up' past events, who can concisely synopsise an essence of their life narrative with colourful portraiture.

8.3.1.5 Structure

Participants film narratives were well-organised, detailing all important structural elements of life stories. Twenty-four of the 32 cases (75%) provided distinct beginning, middle and end sections, communicating the notion of identity origins, shaping processes and a concluding resolution, components key to understanding the 'Who I was', 'Who I became', and 'Who I will be' of narrative identity (McAdams, 1988, 1993). Twenty-eight participants (87.5%) gave distinct roles to characters, expressing a clear conception of the important people in their lives and interpersonal dynamics in the role play of their interactions. This content is invaluable in examining agonistic and antagonistic figures and their roles in the life story. Contingent sequences were illustrated in all participants accounts, giving recognition of one event leading to another and offering insights into subjective understanding of behaviour causality. This access to personal intuition is not only key in illuminating etiological processes, but also in determining interventions focus (Kelly, 1955).

	Number of cases	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
No. of distinct people cited	32	2	14	7.5	2.8
No. of distinct events cited	32	3	25	10.8	5.9
No. of distinct psychological ideas cited	32	10	42	20	7.1

Table 8.1. Frequency of Psychological Complexity indicators

Structural Components	Percentage of cases
Presence of beginning, middle and end components	75%
Presence of coherent themes	100%
Presence of contingent sequences	100%
Presence of distinct roles for characters	87.5%

Table 8.2. Percentages of Psychological Complexity indicators

Overall, these findings support the psychological richness of LAAF responses, and reveal the film format to be a suitable technique for eliciting life narrative material in a substance misuse population. Indeed, the psychological complexity of narratives was greater than in previous studies with offenders (Canter & Youngs, 2015). The LAAF appears to provide a highly suitable narrative tool, addressing issues around articulation and expression of personal material in the target population.

8.3.2 Implicit psychological content

This section relates to certain descriptive elements within the transcripts, and includes film genres: *Comedy, Romance, Crime, Action, Tragedy, Thriller*. As discussed, this list was truncated to comprise *Comedy, Romance, Thriller* and *Tragedy*. Inclusion of narrative 'genre' is influenced by the work of Frye (1959), from whose writings on fundamental plots narrative forms in offenders have been observed which converge with combined expressions of agency and communion (Canter & Youngs, 2011, 2012, 2015). The four genres are anticipated to conceptually relate to dominant themes. The section also records aspects of narrative message, which previous research has found to be important in the stories of stigmatised individuals (Sandberg, 2009), as well as other items, including the presence of *Relationship Success* or *Relationship Problem,* which is a central intimacy indicator.

8.3.2.1 Genres

As can be seen from the table below, each of the four genres was reflected among the LAAF responses, validating the distinction of content according to basic plots suggestive of Canter and Youngs (2012) different narrative forms, though further examination is required to determine patterns between reference to a specific genre and other related story themes. It should be noted that some overlap was observed, where certain participants described their film as more than one genre. This may reflect different points in the narrative, as Frye (1957) states lives can be represented by different myths at different points in the story. Certain vagaries of description, for example, were indicated. One participant stated that her life was a 'hapless comedy', evoking images of comedic and tragic elements. Likewise, the description of a 'dark comedy' presented similar ambiguity. Care was taken in the coding to search out confirmatory statements from the text in such cases, in preference over applying two genres, or eliminating assignation of genre type altogether.

Case 21 provides an example:

'Ok, err ok, what sort of film, bit of gangster film, because I've been brought up on the wrong side of the tracks, shall we say…'

Clearly, this initial statement refers to a thriller plot, however….

'So, I was rejected and felt shit. I wanted to die through a lot of my childhood. I was left on my own, you see, so it's really a sad film. But suppose I got saved by meeting other fucked up people like me and getting into drugs and crime. And that changed me as a person. That gave me some cred and money, and then came the dark adventures.'

The statement *'… so it's really a sad film'* could be taken to indicate a tragic plot, however, the participant goes on to cite *'… meeting other fucked up people… drugs and crime…'* that changed him as a person, resolving the plot to a thriller story replete with dark adventures.

Importantly, each of the genres was reflected among the LAAF responses, validating inclusion of the categories in the content analyses, and giving impetus to examine what specific plots represent in terms of individual differences: if different plots are associated with specific narrative themes and whether genres of narrative relate to substance misuse and recovery outcomes.

Film Genre	Frequency	%
Comedy	7/32	22%
Romance	8/32	25%
Tragedy	7/32	22%
Thriller	10/32	29%

Table 8.3. Frequency of narrative genres

8.3.2.2 Relationships

Events pertaining to relationships were prevalent in the LAAF accounts. Most participants described a relationship problem (n=27- 85%). The expression of relationship problems takes various and often multiple forms in the film descriptions, from early experiences to adult expressions of conflict. In the case below, 'relationship problem' refers to early trauma and the comparison with the participant's sister, further highlighting the problematic interpersonal dynamic:

Case 8: '…. With one of my clearest but worst memory from childhood of being locked in a cupboard. My mum used to lock me in the kitchen cupboard and not feed me, so it would start in darkness…. I'm about 5 years old…. I'm getting locked away for something. I can't remember what. It used to happen a lot, but this time I was starving, and I think I had been smacked because my legs are stinging…. I'm crying but no one is listening. But I can hear my sisters playing.'

A later scene repeats the theme, albeit in the context of a 'romantic' pairing:

Case 8: 'My second boyfriend, my third boyfriend, ha-ha. That was when I was older, though. He used to tie me to the fireplace, like this metal bar, and had snakes he used to hiss at me and threaten to bite me.'

As a mother, the template of neglect plays out in a different but no less harrowing scene:

Case 8: 'An awful scene showing how the drugs got me at one point. We're in this right old shithole and M is downstairs playing with her dolls while me and B gouch on brown, but she was safe and everything, but…'

The above example illustrates the richness of responses and a format through which potentially sensitive information can be given with subjective justification, offering patterned material for understanding personal processes. The incidence of relationship problems is to be expected, since substance misuse is frequently associated with a traumatic interpersonal history, beginning with victimisation, which provides a template for future conflict (e.g.

Quinn et al., 2016). Importantly, the LAAF taps into this prevalent theme and juxtaposes 'Relationship Success', to examine whether resolution of interpersonal issues is distinctive of broader recovery narratives.

As far as the author is aware, narrative research is yet to examine intimate development in substance users. Emphasis has been on social networks in recovery (e.g. Koski-Jannes, 2002; Best et al., 2017), though likely the transition to successful intimate relationships epitomises communal growth themes. Crucially, the subtlety of the LAAF tool enables participants to express these important issues. Life narrative approaches enable the researcher and narrator to articulate intimacy issues in the context of the personal story, rather than decompartmentalised aspects of a person's life. Twenty-eight percent of participants described scenes of *Relationship Success* (n=10). Further analysis is needed to examine how this content relates to other exemplars of the communion theme, and whether the theme is related to substance misuse recovery.

8.3.2.3 Story conclusion

A *Happy Ending* was indicated in 18 LAAF narratives and a *Sad Ending* in eight stories, meaning that most stories gave some indication of resolution (n=26), and that most participants envisaged a happy ending to their story. Though it should be stated that some accounts declared stock, ironic, or Hollywood style happy endings, devoid of explanatory detail, such as this case:

Case 15: 'The dream. The dream is coming, my knight in shining armour to carry me away to paradise, ha-ha-ha.'

Other responses gave statements of uncertainty, with equivocation or deliberate mystique:

Case 13: 'I go back to my home planet but then I miss earth and decide to come back again in the sequel, ha-ha.'

Case 7: 'With the viewer left not knowing if it were to be a success story or not, because that bit is truly unwritten, and there is no way I can know, having failed so many times.'

Further analysis will investigate whether how tragic conclusions relate to ongoing substance misuse and whether happy endings reflect momentum towards recovery with optimism.

8.3.2.4 Tone

A *positive tone* was shown in 15 accounts, while a *negative tone* was found in 14 accounts, capturing two distinct narrative voices. Though a crude conjecture, extrapolating this roughly 50/50 split as reflective of momentum towards recovery, versus embroilment in substance misuse forecasts a neat finding. A further distinction is given with the illustration of a *passive voice* in five responses and a proactive voice in 25 participants, suggesting that most participants express themselves as active agents, while a few voices communicate passivity. Again, how this element differentiates the sample may offer insights. It might be the case that those most profoundly dependent on substances reflect this position with a message of impotent passivity.

8.3.3 Explicit processes used to organise content

The content in this section originates in the extensive research of McAdams, addressing central narrative themes (McAdams, 1988, 1993; McAdams, 2001; McLean & McAdams, 2004; McAdams & Pals, 2006). These themes are important in shaping identity and behaviour

and represent the predominant focus of this project in providing a framework on which to propose life narrative correlates of substance use or recovery.

8.3.3.1 Agency

Agency elements occur with some frequency in the sample, though it is anticipated that a theme of agency occurs with little prevalence in narratives of dependent substance users and is more a signifier of identity change in recovering users. Table 8.4 shows that the agency theme is characterised according to three elements: *Self-Mastery* (n=16), *Empowerment* (n=21), and *Effectiveness* (n=24). This is important, since agency has proven key to change processes in related populations (Adler, 2012; Dunlop & Tracy, 2013; Adler et al., 2015; Stone, 2016); however, the different manifestations of agency have not been explored. The LAAF content framework allows for such detailed analysis to be undertaken.

While overlap exists, where certain narratives showcase more than one presentation of agency (*Empowerment* and *Effectiveness*, for example), frequency data suggest that *Self-Mastery* (n=16) may reflect greater agency, whereas the attribution of *Effectiveness* (n=24) may be less exemplary, though still an important element in the agentic growth process. Further analyses will be conducted to address these questions. As an example, this passage from the LAAF of a heroin and crack dependent sex worker highlights personal effectiveness in achieving the expedient aim of accessing drugs:

Case 15 – '...stupid men, abusive men, but I can wrap them round my finger…. One event would be when my doctor turned up as a punter, ha-ha. Yeah, he pulled up in his 4x4 and then saw it was me and drove off. It was definitely him, ha-ha. I could get him to give me anything after that - benzos, amps, the lot.'

The effective acquisition of drugs is the principal concern for the dependent substance user. Unsurprisingly, this form of agency occurs most frequently in LAAF accounts. Ultimately, it

denotes effective self-regulation. Broadly, psychoactive substances provide a means of chemically assisted self-management (of emotional states, of behaviours). In other words, a vehicle for self-agency in the absence of intrinsic agency. *Effectiveness* refers to an active element; that is, a means through which a desired outcome is achieved. As an active agency motif, it need not connote any psychological insight, personal growth, or sense of intrinsic development in the narrative identity, simply referring to an adaptation allowing for the successful attainment of a desired end. This form of agency, therefore, may be present among actively dependent substance-using individuals who otherwise display no inner core of agentic self-control, only 'effectiveness' in obtaining substances. Substances provide a source of assisted agency (control of emotions, determine certain behaviours), a kind of 'false positive'.

The above represents an essential contrast with *empowerment*, where there is a theme of personal growth from a weaker position. *Empowerment* carries with it a sense of attaining internal control over some aspect of one's life and is therefore unlikely to occur in a narrative declaring dependent substance use, as illustrated in this description from a recovering cocaine user, where personal growth is cited in a process of self-empowerment. The trade-off, here, is a reduction in happiness:

Case 14: 'I grow, learn about people, what you can and can't expect. My ideas change as I see things clearer and it lowers my expectations of people. It gives me a sense of control, but also that effects my happiness in life.'

The individual raises herself up in relation to repudiated others, achieving empowerment in the recognition of their shortcomings, while failing to examine her own. A further distinction within the agency theme may be presented by the *Self-Mastery* element. Self-Mastery carries with it the connotation of personal insight bringing absolute self-governance. It is implausible that an individual embroiled in dependent substance use could attribute self-mastery. The two factors are contradictory. It is likely that this agency element taps into a

recognition and resolution of self-limitations, denoting significant progress towards recovery. Further analysis in subsequent sections will examine this proposition. The following narrative from a recovering heroin user communicates a sense of agency through personal knowledge and *self-mastery*, allowing her to make good judgements for herself and in trusting others:

Case 27: 'Erm, very different now to how I was. Now I would make better decisions. I know what it is to 'rough it', to have to do desperate things to get out of a mess, so I would say I value my life.... Erm, I can judge better and trust people more. I learned to face up to things. Not to be ashamed but also not to do things that make me ashamed. Be up front.'

Agency theme	*Number of cases*	*% of cases*
Self-Mastery	16/32	50%
Empowerment	21/32	66%
Effectiveness	24/32	77%

Table 8.4. Frequency of agency themes

8.3.3.1 Communion

As with agency, communion themes were prevalent in participants LAAF narratives. Again, it is anticipated that communion is stronger in life stories of recovery than active substance misuse, where isolation and alienation may be a more common context. A wealth of substance misuse research (Litt et al., 2009; Best et al., 2012; Beckwith et al., 2014; Best et al., 2017), though not so much wider mental health research, indicates communal growth processes as key to identity-transformation and recovery. With respect to communion themes, the current LAAF coding framework distinguishes three content categories: *Love/Friendship, Caring* and *Unity,* tapping into different aspects, and perhaps levels, of the communion theme in narrative accounts. Among the participants, each item is represented, with *Love/Friendship* being

described across most of the sample (n=20), *Caring* in about half of the sample (n=15), and *Unity* in 14 accounts.

Communion elements were reported less frequently than events pertaining to relationship problems, and probably distinguish narratives where momentum towards positive resolution of intimacy issues is achieved. The interesting analysis will be in determining how ways of connecting with others are related to different life stories, and whether a perception of wider belonging is the focal symbol of recovery. The LAAF framework facilitates a rich contextual exploration of these dynamic processes. The element of *caring* is illustrated in this brief excerpt from a chronic heroin use:

Case 8: 'I try and do what I can to help people. I try and be a good mum. Unfortunately, I am still a heroin addict. They think I'm a decent person, who helps out. Let herself go a bit. They know I would help them if they needed help.'

Whereas the following sequence depicts the protagonist as part of a greater whole and a theme of *unity*:

Case 30: 'It'd end with me telling my story, 12 months clean, in front of a conference of addicts and getting a standing ovation.'

Though less prevalent than the agency theme, by distinguishing three elements of communion, the framework allows us to quantify different manifestations of communal themes and explore contrasts among individuals at different stages in their substance use careers. Through such analyses, elements most relevant to recovery outcomes may be observed. Thematically, this affords a richness of analysis absent from current theoretical models (e.g. Best et al., 2016). The content of themes depicts behaviour-shaping processes, drivers and antecedents to interpersonal conflict and communal growth within an active film plot.

Communion theme	Number of cases	% of cases
Love	20/32	62%
Caring	15/32	47%
Unity	14/32	44%

Table 8.5. Frequency of Communion themes

8.3.3.3 Redemption and contamination

Table 8.6 shows frequencies among the sample of redemption and contamination themes. Redemption and contamination represent two further themes shown to be important in the construction and reconstruction of narrative identity. Findings in personality research (McAdams et al., 2001; McAdams & Bowman, 2006), mental health (Harkness, 2011; Adler et al., 2015) and research with offenders (Maruna, 2001) highlight the role of redemption and contamination scripts in shaping narrative identity. Studies show that, as with agency and communion, redemption and contamination are related to growth, health, wellbeing, and successful transitions (McAdams et al., 2001). Recently, these findings have been extended to substance misuse (Dunlop & Tracy, 2013; Stone, 2016). Thus, it is imperative that life narrative elicitation techniques assess these themes.

Prevalence of redemption sequences within LAAF responses attests to its facility in capturing the theme. Mirroring related research, redemption proved pivotal in change stories. The LAAF framework develops Dunlop and Tracy's (2013) work by examining different manifestations of redemption, assessing narratives for sub-content highlighted as mediatory

in McAdams (2001) research. Of the 16 cases illustrating a general redemption theme, 16 also described achieving a sense of moral steadfastness:

Case 30: 'I'm a bit of a psychopath, mate, but I've learned to channel it in a good, positive way, instead of how I used to be, and fucking people over. I'd want the film to show how I used it for good. the film could be a lesson to other people.'

Case 27: 'All those years faking it are hard to shift. I didn't know what was the real me, but now I can, it was all me, but the events allowed me to change into a woman I could be proud of being.'

Developing a moral code from a previously deviant identity seems hallmark to the redemption theme in the sample. As can be seen in Table 8.6, this comes hand in hand with setting forth prosocial goals and the repeated transformation of negative into positive events. The three elements conflate in the expression of a redemption theme. This discovery enriches McIntosh and McKeganey's (2002) and Ng's (2002) studies of ex-heroin users. Other redemption subcategories are less exemplary. For example, 'Enjoying a Special Advantage' is not so prevalent in stories of substance misuse, which, in contrast, often originate with a traumatic background.

Redemption themes	Number of cases	% of cases
General redemption	16/32	50%
Enjoys special advantage	9/32	28%
Witnesses suffering of others	8/32	25%
Develops sense of moral steadfastness	16/32	50%
Negative events are transformed into positive	13/32	41%
Sets pro-social goals	16/32	69%

Table 8.6. Frequency of Redemption themes

Table 8.7 shows the frequency of contamination themes. The *contamination* theme was expressed in 18 of the 32 cases. The data may reflect a rough split between recovery and non-recovery stories. The theme was demonstrated through depiction or communication of *victimisation*, which was narrated in all contamination cases (n=18), reflecting research literature showing early victimisation in the life stories of many individuals who experience substance misuse (e.g. Howard et al., 2017), and may be key to the early establishment of the contamination formula. Considering this biography, unsurprisingly, *betrayal* (n=15) is a theme prevalent in the stories, as is a sense of *failure* (n=18), *disappointment* (16) and *disillusion* (15). The latter three variables may be reflective of the frequent unsuccessful attempts at resolving substance use problems that are hallmark in substance misuse stories. Themes of *victimisation*, *disappointment* and *disillusionment* are portrayed with this vivid scene from a chronic polydrug user's LAAF. The formative relationship is observed to be reflected in a sequence of subsequent relationships with men:

Case 1: 'Various relationships that fucked me up with psychopaths and narcissists and autistic spectrum men…Like my stepdad, he was a psycho, used to beat my mum every day. I used to come home to blood on the walls, so that was nice for a child growing up.'

Accordingly, this plot synopsis expresses victimisation and betrayal in a narrative of spiralling contamination:

Case 15: 'Girl gets mistreated. Betrayal. Girl leaves home and moves in with dangerous guy at 15. Gets knocked about. Gets on drugs. Gets on the game.'

Contamination themes	Number of cases	% of cases
General contamination	18/32	56%
Victimisation	18/32	56%
Betrayal	15/32	47%
Failure	18/32	56%
Disappointment	16/32	50%
Disillusionment	15/32	47%

Table 8.7. Frequency of Contamination themes

Revealing salient sub-categories of *contamination* advances substance misuse and wider mental health literature. That *victimisation, betrayal* and *failure* are predominant manifestations of the *contamination* theme chimes with studies observing traumatic and abuse backgrounds in substance users (Quinn et al., 2016; Howard et al., 2017). The LAAF technique captured the mechanics of these psychological processes in disorientating events and spiralling decline. Whilst the population shares this common biographical disruption, contrasting redemptive narratives can illustrate the mechanisms through which the story is reworked, laying new emphasis to achieve positive resolution.

8.3.3.4 Classic themes

Many of the classic narrative themes indicated by Canter and colleagues' offender roles' research were removed from the content analysis following a pilot study on 10 participants indicating overlap or redundancy of items (see Chapter 7). The items *Bravery* and *Compulsion*, however, were retained in the dictionary, since they appeared to reflect important and distinctive content which has been highlighted by previous substance misuse cases (Weegmann, 2010). Weegmann (2010) observed the *compulsion* theme in stories of decline

and helplessness. The theme likely connotes a perception of impotent embroilment in substance use, whereas a curious theme of 'bravado' occurred in certain other cases seeking to rationalise ongoing substance use from a more agentic position. *Bravery* was coded in 11 LAAF accounts and was related to a certain identity type (*Warrior*) and manifestation of agency (*Empowerment*). *Bravery* may typify a defensive position and narrative identity that distinguishes an impotent from potent substance-using identity:

Case 16: '... would be when I bottled a drug dealer who was fucking me about, trying to rip me off. That's when I got to grips with what was necessary to get things done in this business and the power of reputation.'

Case 29: 'Cool as fuck. I would front it out. I can front it out and look cool as fuck, I'm telling you.'

The detail of the LAAF framework allows for nuanced differences to be articulated and examined with reference to other key life story elements, while contrasts in identity manifestations can be compared with external measures of recovery to advance more psychologically complex models of substance-using and recovery behaviour, heeding the imperatives of contemporary theorists (Singer, 2001; Weegmann, 2010; Larsson et al., 2013; Chen, 2018). A theme of *compulsion* was evident in 12 of the narratives and more typically captures the phenomena of helpless addiction found in many of the LAAF stories. The typical compulsion theme is depicted in this example of a heroin and crack cocaine user:

Case 5: 'So yeah, it would be an exciting success story, the first half of the film, and then things go a bit tits up, and I never manage to get them fully back on track... probably after my dad died... When he died, I suppose things fell through, I suppose. That's when my focus started to ebb. I was mortified by his death but couldn't show it.

This film sequence from an alcohol and heroin user depicts the developmental impact of his addiction:

Case 7: 'The party stops, fun ends, as I slowly develop a heroin, then alcohol addiction. I become a shadow of my former self as my drug use increases and I become unable to live a normal life. The drugs take over. I am lost. I become fearful, depressed and constantly terrified of everything, shaky, and put my family through major distress.'

8.3.4 Nature of agency in relation to others

This section examines behaviours described by interviewees in relation to 'self' and 'others', and includes Imagoes (McAdams, 1993), the Circumplex Model of Emotions (Russell, 1997), Locus of Control (Maruna & Copes, 2004), Justifications of Type and Cognitive Distortions (Sykes & Matza, 1957; Bandura, 1990), and Incentives (Bandura, 1986).

8.3.4.1 Imagoes

It can be observed from Table 8.8 that many different imagoes are reflected in narrative roles and identities among substance misuse life stories. Imagoes reflect the perceived identities of 'self' and 'other' (McAdams, 1993). The most prevalent imago is *Survivor* (n=23). This is not surprising, considering the literature on victimisation in individuals who later develop substance misuse issues (e.g. Taplin et al., 2014). The *Survivor* identity reflects survival from a disruptive biography. However, this identity can manifest in different imagoes. The second most frequent is the *Arbiter* (n=17), which characterises a high agency decision maker, an identity that may be pivotal in the first move towards recovery, as in this allegorical sequence:

Case 19: 'After that final dice with fate, he makes the crucial decision between right and wrong and follows that road alone. Weirdly, it's then he starts to remind himself of his dad's early judgements…. He becomes his own dad.'

The imago contrasts somewhat with the *Escapist* (n=12). The frequency of *Escapist* imagoes in accounts is to be expected. Theorists have conceptualised substance misuse as escape from unbearable angst or broken stories (Singer, 2001). Escape represents a survival mechanism from a chaotic life and provides one avenue for the Survivor persona:

Case 3: 'I learn to run away…. Harder to stay hopeful. When you're young it's easy to think you can sort it out when you grow up, but it's not like that. Sometimes avoiding everyone is best. That's why I like benzos, cos I'm out of it.'

The dual identities of *Survivor* and *Escapist* may present conflict in the life story, creating a dissonance that either fosters further escape (Larsson et al., 2013) or urges the individual towards true survival and recovery (Biernacki, 1986). The *Healer* (n=9) offers a more proactive expression of the *survivor* identity, one advancing to recovery.

Case 12: 'I admired the leader of the course because he could deal with his emotions. He told a story about his dog dying, and you could see that he could handle his emotions, whereas I was a very emotional person, and found that when any emotions arose, I was having real difficultly dealing with it…So I watched his emotions come and go and how he dealt with them, and thought that I could do that. I have more respect for that man than anyone. So, from that I managed to get clean.'

The *Healer* embodies agentic and communal qualities that Singer (2004) posits as an identity ideal, reflecting the transformed 'recovery identity'. The two imagoes, *Escapist* and *Healer*, may represent a critical life narrative distinction. Related to the prevalent low agency and communion personification is an opposing attribution in others: other people are rarely seen in the *escapist* role and are instead characterised in highly agentic roles, such as *Warrior* (n=11) or highly communal roles, like *Friend* (n=13). The LAAF transcripts reveal a diversity of imagoes applicable to the substance misuse sample, reflecting entrenched, competing, conflicting, coalescing and transformed identities. Most participants described at least two imagoes.

Thirteen of McAdams original 15 imagoes are included in the comparisons (McAdams, 1993). *Humanist* and *Ritualist* were excluded, since they were not represented among the sample. Interestingly, active substance users described fewer imagoes than those in recovery. This may reflect the more one-dimensional lives of substance users, where drug dependency means focus is often singularly related to that pursuit.

Since substance misuse has be defined as a disorder of identity (Biernacki, 1986; Ng, 2002; Young, 2011; Best et al., 2016), inclusion of a diverse range of character roles within the coding framework is key to understanding the integration or disintegration of roles in an individual's story. A case study by Singer (2001) illustrated irreconcilable identities as focal to a chronic heroin addict's substance use, while Biernacki (1986) posits conflicting identities in the substance user, where valued other identities rise to dominance in the advance to recovery. Larsson et al. (2013) concur with this notion, proposing that substance use offers an escape (*Escapist*) from such internal conflicts. This avoidance route prevents the identity issue from being confronted, while proffering expedient recourse and a surface agency (see above) in the absence of substrate agency, reinforcing its continuance in perpetuity (Singer, 2001). The LAAF model, in its rich analysis, appears to provides a means for examining this predicament.

Accordingly, integration of different characters into the narrative identity may be a key component of recovery, in expressing aspects of versatile agency and growing aptitude in diverse roles interacting with various others (the growth of a new agentic and communal identity in the redemptive narrative). Research shows that coherence of life narrative is associated with psychological health (McAdams, 1988; Singer, 2004) and incoherence with ill health (Singer, 2001; Inder et al., 2008). Further analysis of cases in later chapters examines narrative coherence and the incidence of conflicting identities in narratives related to substance misuse (Biernacki, 1986; Larsson et al., 2013; Best et al., 2017).

One limitation of the coding framework is an absence of antagonist imagoes. Only the *Warrior* imago can be conceived of as threatening, either as an imposing protagonist or an intimidating other. Crucially, the *Warrior* imago was significantly represented in the sample, co-occurring with other aggressive agency variables, suggesting the relevance of antagonists to certain substance misuse life stories.

McAdams (1993) describes these imagoes positively. For McAdams' analysis, the list of positive myths may not have presented an issue, since his research was conducted with 'effective', or 'ordinary', individuals. However, substance misuse stories are less typical. Individuals embroiled in substance misuse frequently act in morally questionable ways, such as offending, as part of a deviant lifestyle, or in the quest to obtain drugs. Addiction to drugs and alcohol is a selfish pursuit entailing nefarious pursuits and characters. The formative environments of those with substance use problems are often replete with antagonist characters. Future dictionaries seeking to examine LAAF narratives in greater detail should include more antagonist imagoes. Exploring the LAAF narratives, these may include *Villain, Predator, Parasite* and *Destroyer*. Such imagoes appear with regularity in both the self and other identity in LAAF responses.

Imago	Frequency: Self-characterisation	Frequency: Characterisation of other
Healer	9/32	6/32
Teacher	9/32	7/32
Counsellor	9/32	8/32
Arbiter	17/32	8/32
Warrior	10/32	11/32
Traveller	7/32	1/32
Sage	17/32	5/32
Maker	10/32	3/32
Lover	8/32	10/32
Caregiver	11/32	11/32
Friend	9/32	13/32
Escapist	12/32	2/32
Survivor	23/32	2/32

Table 8.8. Frequency of self and other imagoes

8.3.3.2 Emotions

Table 8.9 shows that the LAAF captures content related to emotional states in the sample. The accounts contain high emotional content, with 94% of participants showing themes of *Negative Arousal* and 75% themes of *Positive Arousal*. Of course, this represents a huge thematic overlap, perhaps connoting the highs, lows and emotional volatility of a substance-misusing lifestyle, as well, of course, as the emotional trauma and turbulence that often influences the development of substance misuse issues in the first place. Overall, the stories

express high emotional sensitivity and reactivity. Comparing the data on emotions with other prevalent themes, a generic picture is built up where a background of victimisation, betrayal and no means of escape creates high negative emotionality, from which relief is sought. The victim role presents a reverse power dynamic and little to no communal support. From this position of powerlessness and isolation, substance use provides an emotional regulatory mechanism, consoling against a need for human support. With the introduction of substances, a high positive arousal may be observed. The chemical control provides escape from the reality of a fraught life story and a means of survival (Singer, 2001; Garland et al., 2018).

This extrapolated sequence of events accounts for the broad presentation of both high negative and positive arousal states across the sample, reflecting the general process of becoming psychologically dependent on substances to achieve a sustainable narrative identity. Most of the LAAF responses evince high negative arousal, followed by high positive arousal with the introduction of psychoactive drugs. The homogenous plotline showcases the strength of the LAAF for embedding common narrative themes in the life story, enabling a general picture of purposeful experiences to emerge with a typical portrayal of developmental sequences. However, the frequency of affect states means that beyond identifying high emotional volatility in substance use narratives, the rudimentary format offers little further discriminating data.

This latter point identifies a limitation in coding protocol for substance misuse populations, since use of substances affords the user agency over their emotions, thus descriptions of states within life narratives may be unreflective of the underlying feelings motivating decisions and behaviours, making comparative thematic analysis difficult. A more detailed and contextualised examination of material is necessary if specious findings are to be avoided in the quantitative analysis of themes. For the present study, qualitative case analyses will shed

light on these deeper processes and may be valuable in elucidating patterns for more discriminating future research methodologies.

Affect	Number of cases	% of cases
Aroused positive	25/32	71%
Non-aroused positive	7/32	22%
Aroused negative	30/32	94%
Non-aroused negative	16/32	50%

Table 8.9. Frequency of affect themes

8.3.4.3 Incentives

The coding framework enables distinction in narratives of motivational states. This is crucial for capturing incentives driving stories, but also charting changes over time. There was a high incidence of the pursuit of *Sensory Gain* in narratives (n=23), as might be expected considering the above arguments. Accounts of *Power Gain* (n=10), *Material Gain* (n=10) and *Social Gain* (n=9) were more discriminative, and roughly equally represented among the sample, illustrating the salience of each category to the analysis, and may reflect different motivational pathways out of substance misuse. Further analysis will determine whether specific incentives relate to broader narrative structures. For example, it is anticipated that a power gain incentive will relate to agency dominant narratives, while social gain appeals to communion dominant narratives. This case of a recovered heroin user illustrates a high material gain incentive in a narrative of recovery:

Case 12: 'The film would end with me having a lot of money, and end with me with a good-looking girl, buying a really nice house.'

While the following heroin user, active in treatment, reflecting a different vision out of substance misuse, depicts motivation towards social gain:

Case 11: 'All he's ever wanted is a family, the rest is immaterial. It's the dream that torments his head when he's straight.'

8.3.4.4 Locus of control

LAAF content was coded according to four behaviour approach styles. Different approaches were reflected among the sample. A *proactive* (n=14) and *reactive* (n=14) style was most frequently observed. Eleven participants described a *confrontational* style and nine described an *avoidant* style. It will be interesting to see how the approaches correlate with other themes. Avoidant style is anticipated with low agency and communion, while a confrontational approach may associate with more agentic identity in the absence of communion.

8.3.4.5 Behavioural justifications

The final sub-section examines cognitive distortions and justifications of type. It is to be expected that, as was the case in offender populations, behavioural justifications are prevalent in the life narratives of substance users, since their behaviour relates to socially stigmatised, immoral, and sometimes shameful acts. As can be seen from the table below, these have a high frequency in substance misuse narratives. Only the five variables illustrated in the table were included, as content analysis highlighted that they subsumed other items. However, the five remaining variables appeared to relate to distinctive content. The *Appeal to higher loyalties* (n=12) is noteworthy in rationalising actions. *Assuming the role of victim* (n=11) was prevalent in addiction narratives, occasionally as a means of justifying ongoing substance use, but more frequently took the form of justifying a belligerent approach towards others. This

subsection of items was found predominantly, though not exclusively, in the LAAF accounts

of high agency offending drug users, and therefore may be a feature of the criminal aspect of

some substance misuse life stories.

This LAAF from an ex-amphetamine user with a history of violent offences showcases many

of the elements in this subset, such as *Assuming the Role of Victim*, *Condemnation of*

Condemners, and *Diffusion of Responsibility*:

Case 16: 'His mum is a twat, can't be trusted…. It would show the easier side of my life when
I visit them in Wales. That's where I have to see my son. It's all to do with a cock up in Social
Services, saying I'm a danger to him cos some of the things I've done in the past. I'd never put
him under threat…. You leave me alone and I'll leave you alone, you know. Everyone round
here thinks I'm a monster over a couple of things. If something needs sorting, I'll sort it, and
that's it. Where I come from people have got to know you're serious.'

Likewise, the narrative portrays *victimisation* and *denial of responsibility*:

Case 20: 'There would be a lot of violent scenes in it. Not saying it's me. I've been up for a lot
of crimes I didn't fuckin' do. … The film could show the other side of me, not the nasty
reputation. I've helped a lot of people out. You don't hear about it, though. So, the film could
show me more like that.'

Justification	Number of cases	% of cases
Denial of responsibility	9/32	28%
Condemnation	11/32	34%
Appeal to higher loyalties	12/32	38%
Diffusion of responsibility	10/32	31%
Assuming the role of victim for oneself	11/32	34%

Table 8.10. Frequency of cognitive distortions and justifications of type

8.3.5 Film preference: the unique suitability of the LAAF

8.3.5.1 These are my riches

The richness of the LAAF responses across each of the content domains attests to an overarching suitability in addressing life narrative in populations of individuals with a history of substance use problems. The procedure produced narrative accounts with greater psychological complexity, including more characters, events and psychological ideas than research using the LAAF with offenders (where the technique has been championed as a data-rich life narrative method) or control populations (Youngs et al., 2016). This highlights a level of engagement with the procedure and the thought participants put into their accounts, but also speaks to an underlying impetus to find self-expression. The notion makes sense considering the cognitive and emotional suppressive aspects of many psychoactive drugs. A dilemma for researchers is finding a method that stimulates the urge to tell personal stories from a position of choice and comfort, activating typically reticent communicators from dormancy.

The request to detail a chequered history using standard life narrative formats can prove daunting to individuals who have traversed traumatic, chaotic and prohibited lives (Canter & Young, 2015). However, participants related to the film format - according with other research using cinema concepts with substance users (e.g. Warren et al., 2010) - being able to conceptualise psychological issues and express their life story with rich detail. As with offenders, the projective framing seems to offer a conduit to disclose sensitive material with its recourse to creative choice. Films afford a relatable medium, through which more extreme narratives (such as addiction, crime, abuse stories) are often portrayed, and thus offer templates to orientate their telling. This facility provides an exciting stimulus for 'opening up', and an opportunity to showcase their own dramatic story.

The overwhelming majority of participants provided a clearly-structured story, comprising beginning, middle and end sections, delineating identity origins, shaping events, and anticipated conclusions, addressing the 'Who I was', 'Who I became' and 'Who I will be' of identity, reflecting McAdams' essence of narrative selfhood (McAdams, 1985). This process is especially important in stories of substance misuse, which is observed as a disorder of identity (Biernacki, 1986; Young, 2011), and where resolution is contingent on identity transformation (Koski-Jannes, 1999; Ng, 2002; Best et al., 2016). Relatedly, the transcripts of individuals in recovery were often very detailed, replete with self-reflective thought processes, explicating the journey to recovery. The LAAF provides a method of organising key experiences and processes into a meaningful and coherent story, which is useful for both the researcher and narrator in seeking to understanding personal change, stagnation or decline.

Importantly, all accounts described contingent sequences, depicting the self-developmental pathway through consequential experiences, providing a personal concept of etiological trajectory. Such rich personal insight is invaluable in understanding problematic behaviours and drawing a contrast with narratives of problem resolution. The LAAF offers a method

through which pivotal events and processes can be understood from the phenomenological perspective of the individual, reflecting Singer's (2001) contention that the life story comes closest to capturing the true experience of the person, and honouring Kelly's (1955) recognition of the subject as expert on their own drama. This advantage not only allows for an articulation of the experiential reality of a problem, but facilitates personal connection with the individual, a key component of therapeutic interventions (Roger, 1954; Laing, 1961). Most narratives also assigned distinct roles to characters within their film, enabling examination of significant agonist and antagonist figures and their part in the unfolding story.

The richness of the LAAF increases our confidence that the components of participants responses reflect significant aspects of their life story and narrative identity that are of value in understanding the processes underpinning substance-using and recovery processes.

8.3.5.2 The director's cut

Over other narrative methods, the film format offers the narrator choice of framing, through which application dominant emphases are produced (Canter & Youngs, 2015). Participants' film accounts fitted with four fundamental plots, supporting the edited LAAF framework: *Comedy, Romance, Tragedy* and *Thriller*. In Canter and colleagues research (Canter & Youngs, 2015; Youngs et al., 2016), offender narratives often revolved around a central crime plot; however, this was not the case in the current sample. Neither was the comparative scenario of an 'addiction plot' deemed necessary. The above mainstream genres seem to have provided an aptly discriminatory structural framework for the life stories, being roughly evenly distributed across the sample of participants, perhaps reflecting different positions on the substance-use-recovery journey.

The inclusion of genre description allowed for a succinct summary of the story theme. Comparisons of the four genres with Frye's (1957) myths and McAdams (1993) agency and communion life narrative model were prioritised in this formulation, with propositions made according to these plot-orientating themes. For example, it might be anticipated that a tragic plot reflects intractable substance use problems. Referring to clinical cases, Weegmann (2010) reports descriptions of tragic decline and stories of spiralling control redolent of the classic tragedy sequence with compromised agency and communion. Conversely, overcoming many obstacles during recovery to achieve hard-won freedom in a drug-free lifestyle delivers an epic romance script, likely replete with identity growth themes. It's difficult to imagine a positive resolution of the substance misuse challenge fitting an alternative narrative resolution. Certainly, this narrative form appears apt for fleshing out the agentic redemption theme elucidated in recent substance use research (Dunlop & Tracy, 2013; Stone, 2016). In many respects, the *Comedy* genre represents an optimistic perspective on repeated failure: the comedy myth posing scenes of hope stifled by mishap, and may be used to portray stories of momentum towards salvation not quite realised, indicating 'middle ground' sequences in relation to the 'finish line' mythos of the romance. The remaining stories assumed a thriller plotline, where threat still looms large but is overcome by the fighting spirit of the protagonist, personifying a fierce agency. Again, this somewhat darker narrative may present an embattled perspective on the throughway to self-liberation and recovery.

Essentially, the four genres capture personal perspectives on the life story among the sample, validating the coding framework, but more crucially, the piquancy of the film scenario in conceptualising problem and resolution narratives (Warren et al., 2010). The curious question is whether these fundamental plots reflect, as one might intuit, different milestones on the journey to recovery.

Much like the offender research (Youngs et al., 2016), data highlighted the common occurrence of relationship problems. Youngs et al. (2016) found that 23% of their offenders gave accounts of a relationship problem, compared to only 10% of controls, highlighting the greater prevalence of this theme in offender narratives, and/or, crucially, the greater suitability of the LAAF approach for the offender sample. Whereas Youngs et al. (2016) observed a relationship problem in 23% of offenders, 85% of the substance misuse sample described relationship problems in their LAAF accounts, uniting the population.

Identifying similarities in the population supports the validity of the LAAF in pinpointing central life themes, but also illustrates its 'fit for purpose' in facilitating key revelations. The generic presentation of interpersonal problems highlights a focal way in which people with substance misuse history define their self-identity: in relation to conflict with others. This common theme supports the central thesis of social identity models (Best et al., 2016), from the contrasting position of barriers to identity resolution confronted through interpersonal conflict. Enriching ideas of change processes, the preponderance of relationship problems among both offender and substance misuse populations supports the notion that interpersonal tensions form a basis for common identity issues and presents a fundamental opposition to communal growth which research relates to wellbeing (McLean & McAdams, 2004).

Expanding this argument, the dramatic conceptualisation of interpersonal conflict in the offender sample formed part of the stories' essentially negative tone. In Youngs et al. (2016) analysis, 37% of participants revealed a contamination theme, 50% of which assuming the role of victim, though only 3% of their sample cited betrayal. In the substance misuse sample, the contamination figure inflates to 56%, all of which assume the role of victim, and most of which feature betrayal (83%), firmly ensconcing the contamination theme with recall to victimisation, distrust, and interpersonal conflict. This common backstory depicts a tableau of despair from which it is easy to understand diminution of the communal incentive. The

finding is supported by a wealth of psychological literature observing victimisation and interpersonal trauma in the early lives of individuals with substance misuse issues (e.g. Quinn et al., 2016; Howard et al., 2017). LAAF accounts reflect this literature, and the coding framework is apt for finding the origins of contamination in the context of victimisation, playing out in perennial interpersonal unrest. While individuals may experience difficulties in communicating such personal information through direct solicitation of factual accounts, critically, the LAAF technique offers a format through which sensitive information can be disclosed with important embedding details, offering patterned material for understanding personal processes.

The theme of *Relationship Success* offers the comparative resolution theme, posing the question of whether interpersonal harmony is distinctive of broader positive change narratives. As far as the author is aware, narrative research is yet to examine intimacy resolution in substance misuse. The emphasis has been on social networks in recovery samples (e.g. Koski-Jannes, 2002; Best et al., 2017), though likely the transition to successful intimate relationships epitomises communal growth. Data finds some support for this notion, with 28% of participants describing scenes of *Relationship Success* (n=10), compared with Unity (n=14), indicating *Relationship Success* is the most intense presentation of the communal theme. Further analysis is needed to examine how this content relates to other exemplars of communion, and whether the theme is associated with recovery.

The LAAF approach gives the narrator, and researcher in receipt, facility to articulate intimacy issues in the context of the personal story, rather than decompartmentalised aspects of a person's life. The more in-depth analysis picks up content related to different communal growth themes, through which interpersonal issues may find resolve. The analysis showed that the most discriminating communion elements (aside from *Relationship Success*) are those of *Caring* and Unity, conceptualising a sense of empathy and belonging.

This finding accords with current models of support networks and research associating communal growth with social wellbeing (Best et al., 2012). Again, communal themes occurred with greater frequency in the substance misuse sample than the offender sample. A comparison reveals the *Love/Friendship* and *Caring* element in 25% and 13%, respectively, of the criminal sample, compared with 62% and 47% in the current sample. The figure was much lower with control participants: *Love/Friendship* 25%, *Caring* 3%, illustrating the greater suitability of the task for offenders and substance users compared to the general population. Though the current study sample is smaller than previous offender and non-offender research populations, the preponderance of communal elements among participants' LAAF responses indicates centrality of communion to life stories of substance misuse; moreover, that these emblems of narrative identity are abundantly accessible when using the LAAF approach.

Juxtaposing these values with the contaminating impact of betrayal and victimisation, and high incidence of interpersonal conflict across the sample, a theme of identity conflict is highlighted. This finding mirrors Youngs et al. (2016) discovery of unresolved dissonance in offenders' stories, where a focus on criminality and personal incentive towards material gain co-occurred with significant problematic relationships, resulting in a tone of negativity. Whereas in substance misuse it appears the communal incentive is stifled by victimisation, finding superficial relief with the remove to sensory gain (substance use).

An interrelated trend may be observed with respect to personal agency. Referring to the agency theme, in Youngs and colleagues' offender sample, *Self-Mastery* was most exemplary (23%) and an incentive towards material gain (26%), whereas in the current population agency was most frequently reflected by *Effectiveness* (75%) and an incentive toward sensory gain (72%). Again, these themes almost unite the sample. In the criminal sample, agency towards material gain through criminality is juxtaposed with relationship problems to reveal

unresolved dissonance and high negative arousal, while in substance misuse high negative arousal (85%) is conceived as a response to a backstory of traumatic victimisation that finds self-regulatory agency with recourse to substance use (sensory gain). Thus, high positive arousal (75%) is achieved and a reinforcing faux agency. Here, an emotional dissonance presents, where the 'real state' of high negative arousal is protected against with the assisted agency of psychoactive substances and the achievement of a (false) high positive arousal.

Reflecting this self-protective mechanism, the *Survivor* imago is revealed in 75% of LAAF accounts, completing the generic substance use life narrative sequence of: victimisation, high negative arousal, chemically assisted effectiveness, positive arousal and survival via escape. The *Escapist* identity is prevalent in both offender (12%) and substance misuse populations (38%), since, as Larsson et al. (2012) argue, it offers a means of avoiding internal conflict and dissonance. Psychoactive substances afford a powerful escape from reality, though the remove is only transitory and superficial, while the abiding conflicts rage beneath.

The above patterns illustrate interweaving influences of both agency and communion factors in fashioning the fabric of conflicted identities. The LAAF reveals themes central to stories of substance misuse via the undulating drama to the emergence of the prevailing narrative identity. This emerging commonality of themes attests to the technique's power in deriving psychological phenomena relevant to substance misuse.

8.3.5.3 The plot thickens

The *Survivor* identity can be realised through different characters, one of which is the *Escapist* figure, though other manifestations suggest more pronounced self-agency. In a percentage of the population the *Arbiter* role is manifested (n=17). This identity reflects a decision maker. In this guise empowerment to make choices is evoked, capturing a genuine inner sense of

agency. However, the notion of choice itself can take myriad forms. In the *Warrior* myth (n=11), a brave and confrontational approach towards power gain is captured, whereas the *Healer* (n=9) perhaps most vividly envisages the recovery identity. The LAAF content framework offers a range of identifiable personas through which protagonists' identity/roles can be marked, and a representation of multiple imagoes among the sample affords cross-sectional examination to identify roles commensurate with different behavioural traits and those reflective of transformative processes involved in recovery from substance misuse.

Positive momentum towards recovery is reflected in the *redemption* theme. Redemption themes are prevalent in LAAF accounts, depicted in the development of *moral steadfastness* (50%), *prosocial goals* (50%), and *negative events being transformed into positive events*. Redemption and contamination sequences roughly divide the LAAF responses, probably reflecting narrative structures at different stages in the substance misuse/recovery trajectory. The findings concur with those of early research exploring narratives of ex-offenders and drug users, in which redemption is conceived through the pursuit of prosocial lives, governed by a moral imperative (Maruna, 2001; McIntosh & McKeganey, 2002), as well Stone's (2016) recent findings with pregnant substance users, supporting the validity of McAdams (2001) sub-forms in encapsulating the movement from negative to positive events in narrative transitions. Where the LAAF departs from the substance misuse research literature is in discriminating narrative themes among the population, allowing us to conceive of distinct narratives. As highlighted, contamination and redemption themes split the sample, as do certain agency and communion themes, positive and negative tone, incentives, behavioural approaches, locus of control, imagoes, and genres. The narrative themes of bravery versus compulsion may offer a contrast in substance-using rationale versus helpless addiction.

Most models of substance misuse focus on recovery rather than substance use and apply a unilateral focus to recovery (e.g. Best et al., 2016). For example, narrative approaches to

substance misuse have examined redemption in recovery but have not contrasted this with an examination of contamination in active substance misuse. The LAAF framework provides a richer examination of contrasting and discriminating themes among a cross-section of participants at different phases of substance use and recovery. Related elements likely reflect distinct narratives, as has been found in research with offenders (e.g. Canter & Youngs, 2012). Considering the segregation of themes among the sample, it can be posited that certain narrative forms map onto behavioural presentations. In other words, theme combinations may predict substance use or recovery paths.

8.3.5.4 Identity in context

Following Hanninen and Koski-Jannes' (1999) argument, addressing identity in the context of the life story is key to understanding the mechanisms supporting behavioural manifestations. As Singer relates, the life story approach offers a precision means of accessing the phenomenology of individual experiences (Singer, 2001), and addresses the imperatives of enriching our understanding the complexity of substance misuse issues (Weegmann, 2010; Larsson et al., 2013). Above standard narrative methods, the LAAF offers a specific suitability to the substance misuse sample. Through an engaging format, the LAAF is found to derive the psychological essence of a person's story in a low-pressured, engaging interview environment. Characterising lives in a protagonist-focussed plot, the dramatic portrayal elucidates key identity issues not obvious using more standard techniques (Youngs et al., 2016).

Relatedly, Youngs et al. (2016) draw attention to a facility in the free-flowing accounts structured by the narrator to reveal the complex interplay of sometimes contradictory themes. Their research highlighted unresolved dissonance which had not been identified in offenders

using standard methods. However, it is this identity discord that is likely central to psychological issues, especially in substance misuse where identity-transformation is recognised as principal to recovery (e.g. Ng, 2002; Best et al., 2017). The present study observed a complex discord common to LAAF narratives in the sample, in which high negative arousal is given effective regulation (self-agency) with the recourse to psychoactive substances, belying the emotional reality of the underlying identity. This sequence plays out in a survivor persona, running parallel to an obscured victimised self in an act of chemically assisted agency, while the contamination sequence of victimisation and betrayal presents a conflicted interpersonal dynamic, despite communal incentives.

Youngs et al. (2016) highlight the rehabilitative potential in identifying and resolving such inner conflicts, and how framing the therapeutic intervention from a narrative perspective is less threatening than a direct confrontation of behaviour patterns. The latter point alludes to possible future therapeutic uses of the LAAF in elucidating central themes. This purpose may be of paramount importance to substance misuse. In the present sample, the contrasting narrative is exemplified by the redemption theme, most likely reflecting the wider recovery story, in which the obstacle of addiction is overcome with the growth of genuine agency, interpersonal harmony, and unity. Analysis of LAAF accounts enables us to appreciate the integration of these life themes.

While the LAAF is rightly championed as a pioneering technique for the elicitation of life narrative accounts in offender populations, its suitability for a substance misuse population may be even more striking. Specifically, the LAAF addresses acknowledged difficulty with explicit communicating in the substance misuse cohort (Moore, 1983) by offering a projective framework through which to express one's essential story, tapping into the facility for creative methods in the population (McGranahan & Lynskay, 2018).

8.4 Discussion

Findings show that the LAAF is a powerful technique for the collection of life narrative material in a substance misuse sample. LAAF responses were psychologically complex, accounting for numerous significant characters, events and psychological ideas among participants at all stages of substance misuse and recovery. However, a significant relationship was shown between levels of recovery from substance misuse and greater observed psychological complexity in LAAF accounts, indicating richer lives inclusive of more people, while recognising and integrating a complex interplay of experiences and influences. The shift may reflect gained insight facilitating an adaptation to the complexity of being, rather than negation of inscrutable, unbearable self-narratives with remove to chemical protection (Howard et al., 2017; Lewis, 2017). This pattern is redolent of the meaningful coherence Singer proposed as a contingency for healthful life narrative in his examination of fragmented addiction stories (Singer 1997, 2001).

Participants LAAF accounts were also structurally complex, supplying content relating to important life narrative themes, such as agency, communion, redemption and contamination. Illustration has been made of its high suitability for examining psychological issues in the current population, even in comparison with offender populations, where the LAAF method proved exemplary.

Overall, the analysis revealed a cohort with high emotionality and a history of interpersonal conflict. Generally, individuals identified as survivors. An incentive towards sensory gain was observed across most of the sample, perhaps on account of these prevalent themes. The prominence of these four themes – high emotionality, interpersonal conflict, sensory incentive, and survivor identity – is not surprising and accords with literature recording traumatic interpersonal lives in substance users, where consequent emotional chaos finds a

necessary relief in psychoactive substance use and becomes a mechanism of assisted agency (Choi et al., 2013; Howard et al., 2017). These high frequency variables contextualise common themes within life stories and illustrate the acuity of the LAAF in identifying dominant psychosocial dynamics.

The real strength of the approach, however, may lie with moderate and lower frequency items, since they allow us to conceptualise discriminating themes, or components of different narratives, within the broad dataset. For example, the broad *Survivor* identity may be represented in crucially different guises. *Escapist* or *Healer* identities are described in a third of cases, representing altogether different character resolutions within the *survivor* modality: one highly agentic and communal *(Healer)*, and the other neither agentic nor communal (*Escapist*). It is in these personal differences that we may anticipate finding distinction between narratives of ongoing substance misuse and those of recovery. Data reflects this with the frequency of agency and communion themes among the sample, indicating a discriminating influence of dominant themes in the LAAF narratives. As McAdams (1993) and other researchers argue (Bakan, 1966; Wiggins, 1991; Singer, 1997; Canter & Youngs, 2009; Adler et al., 2015), themes of agency and communion provide the shaping processes for narrative identity. Exploring LAAF responses, other themes, clearly significant to many individual stories, appear to be associated with certain agency and communion presentations, differentiating the population, as has been found in research with offenders (Canter & Youngs, 2009; Youngs & Canter, 2012). These include redemption and contamination, genres, incentives, locus of control and behavioural approaches, indicating distinct narrative structures. The relationships among these variables require greater consideration in subsequent studies.

Though the LAAF coding framework afforded a detailed exploration of life narrative themes, two key limitations were observed. Firstly, the list of imagoes refers primarily to agonist roles,

while stories of substance misuse often feature significant antagonistic characters. Future coding dictionaries would benefit from inclusion of more antagonist imagoes to enrich the analysis. Secondly, though Russell's (1997) circumplex of emotions provided indicators of high emotionality across the study sample, for coding purposes it was limited in articulating discriminatory detail. Considering the centrality to emotions (disruption, management and mismanagement) to substance misuse stories, future dictionaries should seek to enrich the coding protocol to include items that distinguish drug-induced states from genuine emotional regulation and control.

Caveats notwithstanding, the content analysis provides a strong case for use of the LAAF approach in studying life narrative with substance misuse populations. The analysis highlighted themes that are pervasive in narratives of substance misuse and those more discriminating. It is likely that these more discriminating themes allow us to conceive distinct narrative structures of interrelated story elements. According to thesis propositions, this is to be expected. The sample reflects a diverse group of participants at different phases of their substance misuse and recovery. It is proposed that various behavioural presentations are reflected in specific narratives. Therefore, the broad LAAF content is anticipated to represent several distinct narrative structures, or concepts, that gives form to individual differences.

8.5 Conclusions

In conclusion, this descriptive section serves to substantiate the value of the LAAF technique for researching substance misuse and recovery, presenting a richness of data not revealed in previous narrative studies. The method powerfully highlights prevalent and discriminating components of life stories. However, a more robust analysis is required to advance a substantive model differentiating life narratives among the sample. The identification of

underlying structures in the content analysis will be more revealing of distinct narratives and

is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 9. Study 2. The Inside Story: Structural Analysis of LAAF Narratives

9.1 Chapter in brief

Chapter 8 showed that while certain narrative content was prevalent in the study population (e.g. high emotionality, sensory gain incentive, survivor imago), other content differentiated LAAF accounts (e.g. redemption, contamination). To understand the structure of different narratives among the sample it is important to examine which variables occur together in participants LAAF stories. This allows us to clarify distinct underpinning self-concepts. The related psychological literature suggests that agency and communion themes underly and shape narrative identity (e.g. McAdams, 1993; Singer, 1997). It is therefore proposed that elements of agency and communion will differentiate narrative structures in the study population. The purpose of this chapter is to reveal these components to model different narrative types in the sample.

The chapter describes Smallest Space Analysis (SSA), a method used to reveal underlying structure in complex non-parametric data. SSA does this by comparing the relationships between all study variables and representing their coefficient readings geometrically, so that the closer together any two variables the greater their co-occurrence in LAAF accounts. In this way, regions of related narrative elements are displayed, representing the conceptual structure of the study data (LAAF content analysis), the validity of which can be explored through examination of case examples.

The findings reported in this chapter derive from this analysis, showing that the content analysis can be understood in terms of agency and communion theme combinations. That is, an underlying structure was revealed which could be meaningfully defined according to different agency and communion domains, or narrative concepts: *high agenc*y, *high communion*, *high agency and communion*, and *low agency and communion*. (Rowlands et al.,

2019a). Case studies are used to illustrate how each of the four domains are represented in participants' LAAF accounts and suggest that high agency and communion narratives relate to a recovery identity, while low agency and communion LAAFs relate to addiction identities. Intermediate narratives are suggested in the dominant agency and dominant communion narratives.

It is concluded that LAAF narratives can be usefully defined according to agency and communion concepts, and that presentation of themes in narratives may relate to different behaviours and outcomes. This builds on current narrative and social identity models that emphasise either agentic or communal processes and prompts further comparative analysis among individuals in subsequent chapters.

9.2. Methods

9.2.1 Materials and Participants

The same dataset used in Study 1, derived from the LAAF accounts of 32 participants with substance misuse history, was used for analyses presented in this chapter. Certain further adjustments were applied to the data and content analysis, which are discussed below. The Hebrew University Data Analysis Package (HUDAP) was used to analyse data in the and subsequent studies (Shye, 1998).

9.2.1 Facet Theory

The study uses a Facet Theory (FT) approach to explore interrelationships between narrative content. FT is a systematic approach to theory construction, research design, and data analysis for studies of complex behaviours (Guttman, 1954; Canter, 1985). FT is based on (1) a

conceptual framework for a content system (2) empirical structures of content within this framework, and (3) a search for correspondence between the conceptual framework and the structure of observations within the framework. FT is a systematic approach to complex behaviour and datasets that allows for multidimensional data analysis which is grounded in and guided by a theoretical framework (Shye, 1998).

Louis Guttman (1944) proposed that in order to conduct research on complex behavioural processes it is necessary to conceptualise and define what is being studied. This contention is analogous to Presser's (2010) 'themes of interest'. The process establishes what Guttman referred to as the content universe, or a content system. The content system refers to all the behavioural attributes of interest to an investigation - common content (Shye, 1998). In this case, content relevant to the life narratives of people with a history of substance misuse. Once the content of inquiry has been established, assessment tools can be designed, and data gathered and analysed. The process provides an informed theoretical platform through which to empirically test research propositions.

FT was born of Guttman's concern with clear definitions for behavioural constructs. The concepts 'facet', 'facet design' and 'facet theory' were proposed by Guttman as a clearer methodology for psychological and social research (Guttman, 1944). Facet design was presented as a 'semantic framework' within which to view sub-systems of behaviour (Guttman, 1954). That is, substructures of content within the representative content system (e.g. distinct narrative forms within the system of available life stories). FT helps design and analyse the structural part of the content system, conceiving of a multidimensional system.

'Facet' refers to a set of variables that together represent an underlying conceptual component within the content system (e.g. category facet and scale facet). Facets are proposed by the investigator and are comprised of different elements that describe mutually exclusive

variations within the facet, whereas different facets are conceptually distinct from one another. The proposed facet structure can be tested by comparing the conceptual structure of observations with the empirical structure of observations on that content system (i.e. the design/theory with the data) (Guttman & Greenbaum, 1998). For a more detailed description of Facet Theory see Guttman & Greenbaum (1998).

9.2.2 Smallest Space Analysis

The problem of how to analyse the structure of a correlation matrix based on such designs led to the development of non-parametric methods of analyses for multivariate data. Smallest Space Analysis (SSA) offers a method for revealing underlying structure in complex datasets, thus testing proposed facet designs. The current study introduces SSA to the substance misuse field, a method advanced by Canter and colleagues (Canter & Youngs, 2009; Youngs & Canter, 2012; Youngs & Canter, 2013) in revealing underlying structures in offender narratives. SSA is a nonparametric method of multidimensional scaling in which a data matrix of intercorrelations among a set of variables are represented in geometric space (Guttman, 1968). The SSA programme compares all the study variables with one another and computes intercorrelations to produce a visually representative diagram, or plot. The distances between points on the SSA plot correspond to the correlations among those variables. The contiguity of items distinguishes regions in space. The procedure differs from factor analytic approaches in making fewer assumptions about the underlying structure of components (Canter, 1985). Rather than assuming a dimensional structure, SSA allows the emergence of systemic models. That is, emerging geometric patterns reveal the components of the content system (Guttman & Greenbaum, 1998).

Specified facet structures can be examined in conjunction with the SSA diagram to see if they correspond to regions in space. Division into regions is accomplished by inserting partition lines according to facet definitions. There is no mathematically precise position for these lines because they are taken to indicate boundary conditions between defined regions. Thus, items nearer the boundary would be expected to share more with items of the adjacent region than those centrally placed with their defined region, distinguishing regions from the concept of 'clusters', which are subsets of data separated from other data by empty space (Canter & Youngs, 2011).

9.2.3. Radex models

The thematic content analysis of LAAF accounts represents the content system for this study. Life narrative research shows that certain themes represent dominant structures in life stories. Fundamentally, according to McAdams, personal narratives and identity develop around two dominant themes, agency and communion (McAdams, 1985). In Faceted SSA, interpretation of the content system is organised according to predefined facets. The present study proposes that the content system will be regionalised according to combinations of agency and communion in the film narratives (Polar Facet) and the dramatic intensity of the presentation (Modular Facet). The Polar Facet represents the 'theme' concept and is illustrated with segmentation of the SSA plot into pie-like regions, demarcating thematic distinctions. The Modular Facet represents the 'dramatic intensity' concept and is illustrated on the SSA plot with concentric rings, demarcating different regions around an origin. The proposition that LAAF content can be classified two ways (in terms of themes and dramatic intensity) proposes a radex model (Guttman, 1954). Guttman defined content systems encompassing two organisational concepts as radex models, as opposed to simplex and circumplex models. The

term 'radex' was coined by Guttman to refer to a radial expansion of complexity (Guttman, 1954).

SSA is a well-established multivariate procedure (Guttman & Lingoes, 1979) that has been used to identify structure in phenomena such as intelligence (Guttman & Levy, 1991), self-esteem (Dancer, 1985), and offence behaviour (Canter & Youngs, 2009, 2011). In Investigative Psychology, SSA and FT have been used to provide powerful radex models, where distinguishable narratives predict offence behaviour (Canter & Fritzon, 1998; Canter & Youngs, 2009, 2011, 2012). For a more detailed discussion of SSA: classifying facets, deciding on dimensionality and partitioning of space, see Shye, Elizur and Hoffman (1994). Their procedures are based on the Faceted SSA using HUDAP, as used to analyse data in this study.

9.2.4 Representing the content system

From the original dictionary of 123 dichotomous variables, very low frequency variables (<5) and items that were extreme on original SSA plots were removed. Items that appeared to measure different content were also removed. Those items deemed more specific to previous study populations were reviewed. For example, *behavioural justifications* appeared to relate more to offender profiles than to substance use. Items that seemed to measure similar content were amalgamated (e.g. *Achievement, Effectiveness*), to avoid superfluity and advance parsimony in a complex dataset. Considering the frequency data, sub-categories of redemption and contamination, for example, were subsumed under the general heading. That is, most redemption themes revolved around the same elements: *Transforming negative events into a positive, Development of moral steadfastness,* and *Pursuit of prosocial goals*, making sub-categories redundant. The same trend was identified with contamination, where general

contamination presents with descriptions of *Victimisation, Betrayal, Failure* and *Disillusionment* across the sample. Items occurring with high frequency (>25 – 80%) were likewise removed from SSA (e.g. *Relationship Problem, High Positive* and *Negative Arousal*), since the analysis seeks to discriminate narrative domains among the sample, rather than highlight similarities among LAAF stories, which was amply illustrated in Chapter 8.

Following a review of the content analysis and examination of original SSA plots, 48 items were chosen as representative of the content system. Discussion among coders explored agreement on the 48 coding definitions. A further test for interrater reliability between raters was run and a kappa coefficient of 0.72 was calculated, indicating a better and more broadly acceptable level of agreement (Syed & Nelson, 2015). Though the content editing process appears extensive, it is considered an important reduction in simplifying the dataset to better represent salient themes and discriminating factors in the population. The process is further supported by the greater reliability of coding.

9.3 Results

9.3.1 Exploratory SSA

Following these adjustments, an exploratory SSA was run to reveal the conceptual structure of the content analysis. Figure 9.1 shows the organisation of LAAF items on the SSA plot. The three-dimensional illustration of data was considered to better represent the pattern of relationships among variables than the two-dimensional illustration.

Guttman-Lingoes' coefficient of alienation (COA) refers to the fit between the SSA configuration and the co-occurrence of variables represented in the data matrix. A smaller COA indicates a better fit between the plot and the original matrix. Often a COA of 0.15 is cited as a good standard (Guttman, 1965). The above resolution gives a COA of 0.174;

however, the COA can be affected by the number of variables in a dataset, as well as other complicating factors. Ultimately, it might be concluded that the strength of the analysis lies with the explanatory power of the interpretation framework (Borg & Lingoes, 1987).

The structure revealed by SSA has good face validity. It makes sense conceptually, considering McAdams' (1988, 1993) life narrative model and Canter and colleagues organisation of offender narratives according to combinations of agency and communion (e.g. Canter & Youngs, 2009; Youngs & Canter, 2011). Regionalising content among a sample at different stages of substance use or recovery, it may embody Alder and others contention that dominant themes orientate narratives that distinguish different presentations of psychological functioning (Singer et al., 2013; Adler et al., 2015; Holms et al., 2018). The diagram encompasses other narrative and social identity concepts (Best et al., 2016; Stone, 2016) by revealing narrative structures suggestive of how key identity themes may combine or dominate stories, and expands on Hanninen and Koski-Jannes (1999) narratives types with illustration of interrelated theme patterns inhabiting different narrative structures. Considering this explanatory power, the COA (0.174) indicates an acceptable fit.
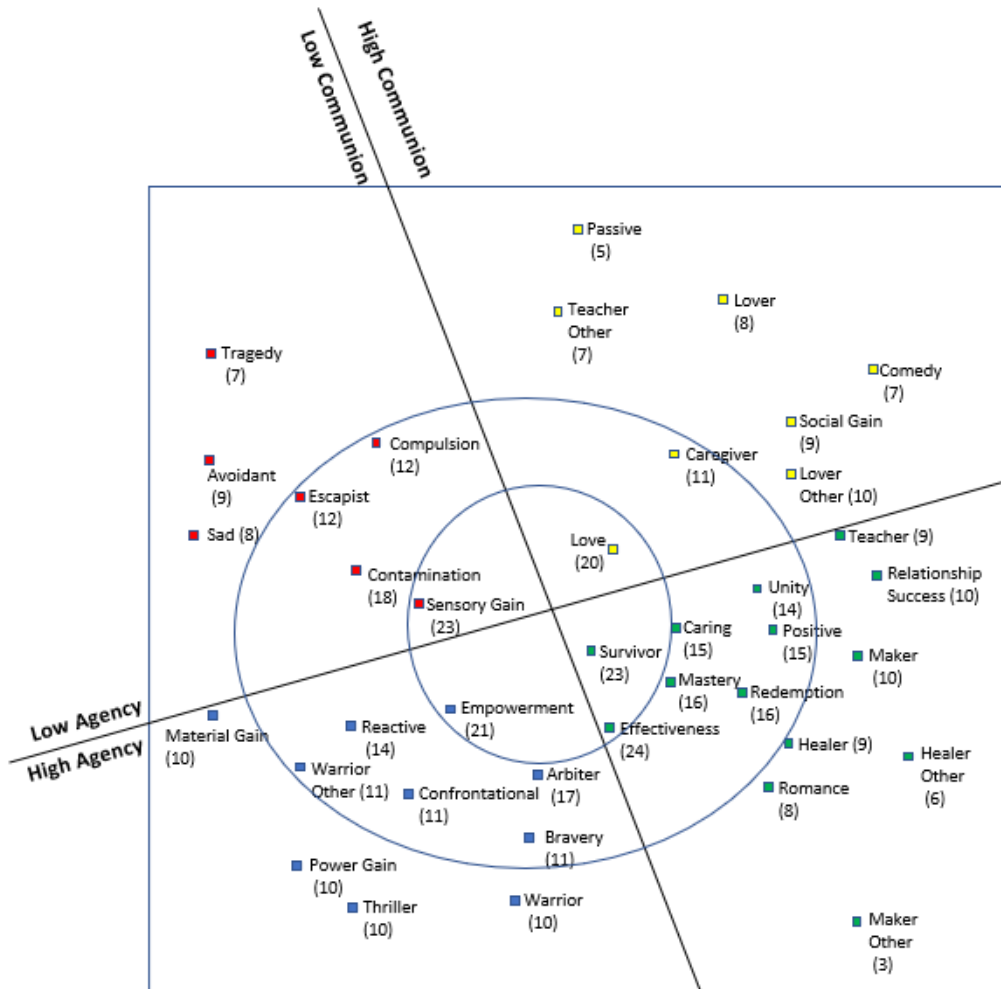
Figure 9.1. Three dimensional SSA diagram representing 48 LAAF variables across the 32 cases with modular and polar facet interpretation. COA 0.174.

9.3.2 Regional interpretation

Regions are demarcated on the SSA plot according to the contiguity of items. The SSA plot divides the modular facet into concentric rings, illustrating three regions of dramatic intensity around an origin, and the polar facet into four regions corresponding to agency and communion theme combinations. The modular facet represents the dramatic intensity of LAAF content in the narrative presentation. In Figure 9.1, the concept illustrates core/common elements (> n=20), moderate intensity (> n=10), and extreme presentation (<

10). Thus, the centre circle is descriptive of generic story elements (>63%) and the outer region depicts more dramatic narrative variables (<31%). For example, *Avoidant* behaviour represents a more extreme presentation of the low agency and communion theme than an *Escapist* imago, which is still more dramatic than *Sensory Gain*. An incentive towards sensory gain *is* conceived as a low agency and communion response, though, as a common trend it does not constitute a dramatically intense element. A contrasting example is shown with *Survivor, Redemption*, and *Healer*, conceptualising components of the facet structure in LAAF content towards more potent presentations of joint agency and communion constructs, *Healer* representing a more dramatic element than *Survivor*. *Love/Friendship, Caregiver, Passive* tone may be seen to reflect an increasingly dominant communion construct in the life drama, *Love/Friendship* being a common component, whereas *Caregiver* conceives of a more intense communal presentation. At the extreme, *Passive* tone denotes agency giving way to the dominant communion narrative. The reverse pattern is quantified by the illustration of *Empowerment* as a homogenous agency element and a specified incentive toward *Power Gain* as a more exclusive, dramatic exemplar.

The polar facet intersects the plot according to agency and communion themes. Elements within the partitions are conceived to be related but are unordered (*Warrior, Confrontational, Bravery*). Polar facets are common in examination of psychological data, as qualitative properties often clarify constructs, such as categories of different behaviour important in diagnosis (see, for example, Willmes et al., 1983). The above plot illustrates four distinct regions according to themes of agency and communion, reflecting four different narrative structures that can be interpreted further according to dramatic intensity (modular facet). Such radex structures have also provided powerful explanatory models of intelligence tests (Guttman, 1954), personal wellbeing (Levy, 1990), quality of life (Elizur & Shye, 1990) and

offender roles (Youngs |& Canter, 2013). Constructively, the four narrative domains can be distinguished as follows:

1. Dominance: (bottom right region of the plot). This domain is characterised by components of both agency and communion. The element *Self-Mastery* typifies the agency theme in the region, while *Unity* and *Relationship Success* communicate the communion theme. Prominent imagoes include the self as *Teacher* and *Healer*, which qualify as jointly agentic and communal roles (McAdams, 1993). At the extremes of this region other characters fulfil similar roles (*Maker* and *Healer*), recognising both qualities in significant people. The domain is exemplified by the *Romance* myth, where a sequence of struggle to meet challenges and eventual triumph is depicted. This movement from negative to positive resolution is highlighted by the *redemption* theme. Items *Relationship Success, Healer, Maker,* other as *Healer* and *Maker*, and the *Romance* genre illustrate a dramatic presentation of this narrative structure. The constellation of variables in the Dominance region suggest that the high agency, high communion structure most vividly captures identity-transformation and the recovery story.

2. Affiliation: (top right region of the plot). This domain is characterised by communion elements and depicts a high communion, low agency structure. The theme is expressed by *Love/Friendship* and a view of the protagonist and significant others in the *Lover* role. Significant others may also fill the agentic role of *Teacher.* Agency elements are absent from the region, although the *Caregiver* imago expresses some agentic properties, albeit in a communal capacity. At its most dramatic this narrative presents a position of passivity. Incentive towards social gain distinguishes the region. The *Comedy* genre exemplifies the concept space, where mishaps and pitfalls are framed with a positive orientation. Hope against adversity prevails in this myth.

3. Power: (bottom left region of the plot). This domain is characterised by agency elements. A theme of personal empowerment sums up the composition of the region. However, with no recourse to the communal drive, this may come at an expense to other people, especially with more dramatic presentations. The agency theme is typified by *Empowerment*, and manifests in a confrontational approach in pursuit of *power gain*. In the dominant Power presentation, the *Warrior* imago is evoked in the protagonist and antagonist role, pitting the self against others, rather than in communion. The domain is signified by the *Thriller* plot, where the embattled narrative identity engages in dark adventures and victory comes from personal *bravery*.

4. Avoidance: (top left region of the plot). The Avoidance domain is characterised by items denoting limited agency or communion. In contrast to communion, an *Escapist* identity is observed, which may foster an avoidant behavioural style. An incentive towards *sensory gain*, playing out in *compulsion* rather than self-determinism, exemplifies this contaminated narrative. At its most dramatic, the story proceeds to an inevitable sad conclusion, depicting the *Tragedy* mythos. The co-occurrence of these low agency and communion elements likely captures the perception of intractable substance misuse which is the hallmark of an addict identity.

The above domains allow us to conceptualise a framework of life narrative structures composed of constellations of related story elements, differentiated by film genre among the 32 participants (*Comedy* = 7, *Romance = 8*, *Thriller* = 10, *Tragedy* =7). Each content pattern will now be illustrated with verbatim LAAF case examples (marked in italics and indicated by case number) to highlight how the domains are reflected in individual LAAF accounts.

9.3.2.1 Dominance

The Dominance domain refers to a narrative theme of agency and communion and can be conceived as a story sequence in which the *Survivor* identity has achieved *self-mastery* and *unity* with others through a process of self-healing and help from healing others in a story of overarching *redemption*, or victory. The struggle to triumph reflected by this domain was conceived of by Frye in the *romance* myth, and this genre symbolises the region. In terms of extant theories, the region typifies the balance between agency and communion themes that McAdams (1993) and Singer (2004) propose as the identity ideal in western culture, and the narrative appears to reflect growth themes central to psychological health (McAdams et al., 1996; McAdams, 2001; McAdams & McLean, 2004; Adler, 2012; Dunlop & Tracy, 2013; Adler et al., 2015). Thus, the region may represent elements key to stories of successful recovery, combining several constructs important to identity transition and reconstruction (Ng, 2002). This argument reflects imperatives posited by Weegmann (2010) to uncover the complexity of recovery narratives and meets Chen's (2018) call for frameworks that recognise twin influences in substance misuse recovery stories.

The following case of a chronic amphetamine user, now nine years in recovery, illustrates agentic growth from a 'survivor' to 'self-healer' with the achievement of *self-mastery, emotional regulation, self-discovery,* and an associated redemption theme:

Case 24: 'I learned to grow as a human being and make decisions that were right for me. That was a big thing, really. And I learned to become a stronger character, really. Learned to say 'no' to people. But I went from being quite a selfish person to being the person I was meant to be… I think today I do the right thing for the right reasons… I think the changes that I made were growing emotionally and being able to say what I wanted, and also becoming more reliable.

'And also, talking about redemption, I learned that I don't have to do everything at once, and I don't have to, and I don't have to know the answer to everything, so I became more comfortable with myself in my own skin. Whereas at one time I was extremely insecure, always wanting the approval of people but kind of realising I'm never going to get that approval. So, it's a real self-discovery change.'

The narrative highlights conflicting identities in the drug user persona: *'…I went from being quite a selfish person to being the person I was meant to be…. I think today I do the right thing for the right reasons.'* This movement invokes the redemption theme but highlights pre-existing character dissonance theorised by Biernacki (1986) that can stimulate recovery or, as Larsson et al. (2013) argue, escape into substance use, and mirrors Dingle et al. (2015) finding on rediscovering the lost identity. However, expanding on social identity theories (Best et al., 2016), it illuminates the role of agentic processes to redemptive movement, parroting Stone's (2016) findings with pregnant drug users, as well as Maruna's (2001) earlier work with ex-offenders.

Importantly, the life narrative technique enables dominant themes to be contextualised in an evolving personal environment: *'I learned that I don't have to do everything at once, and I don't have to, and I don't have to know the answer to everything, so I became more comfortable with myself in my own skin. Whereas at one time I was extremely insecure, always wanting the approval of people but kind of realising I'm never going to get that approval. So, it's a real self-discovery change.'* The story also chronicles communal growth in repairing broken relationships and re-establishing familial unity. Again, this process is characterised by the participant as a redemptive sequence:

Case 24: 'I have good feelings about my children, my ex-wife. I err…erm, have good feelings about my parents. Well, it was a bit of a mixture, really, because it was good feelings at times and bad feelings, but I think, ultimately, in the end, it was good feelings, because it was, like I say, that level of redemption there. I was able to look at my relationships with these people and build them.'

Progression towards agency and communion within a redemptive plot is exemplified in this individual's enduring recovery from substance misuse. The case highlights the importance of both themes in the process and provides a clear example of how elements associated with the

Dominance narrative integrate in a life story. The above LAAF is fairly matter of fact and does not employ the creative potential of the film device. Statements are explicit. This individual, having achieved a profound insight into his substance use, evinces a fearless approach to confronting his past and explaining the processes of his recovery. Other participants use the film framing to typify their story. An ex-polydrug user relates his story to a familiar film plot to illustrate his redemption narrative:

Case 29: 'I have gone legit now and got myself a legit job, and made some new friends, so I guess the film ends with happiness and being successful, you know, showing the kids. The film would be like Ill Manors, showing kids that even if you've had a tough life, there is a way out. Cos, growing up my mum wasn't there, and my dad was always at work, so basically, I brought myself up. But even though I've done all that, my dad is there for me now. You know, the film could show that family relations can be improved, and you can go legit….

'Like my dad is quite a reputable citizen. We didn't speak for many years, but in that situation I was in quite a lot of trouble with the police, and my dad was in a role where he was working with the police, err, so like my dad, at the end of it all, he was the one who got me out of it all. He was my hero.'

By relating his story to a fictionalised portrayal, the participant succinctly articulates and legitimises the overarching narrative trajectory. It also appears to stimulate elaboration on his own life path. Redemption is highlighted with respect to prosocial goals and a generativity script, reflecting McAdams' (2001) findings in successful life transitions. Here, redemption, happiness and success are tied to communal themes, with the reliance on a heroic father figure, who in the reconciliation provides a role model for empowerment in a new prosocial lifestyle.

The story captures many components of the Dominance narrative, citing 'other' as *healer* and *maker*, and may highlight the benefit to recovery of perceiving significant others in both agentic and communal roles, and the power of such 'other' imagoes in role-modelling positive change. This is the central proposition of social identity models of addiction recovery (Best et al., 2016) and a key component in the success of 12-step programmes (Denzin, 1987), though with emphasis on recovery communities. The above narrative illustrates how different

pathways of social modelling can 'scaffold' for a self-agentic onward recovery. A positive tone is established in which the protagonist assumes the new role of 'teacher', his film imparting a message of optimism to youths experiencing a similar life story predicament. The film continues to chronicle character development in the choice of a new 'legitimate' lifestyle, where creative agency is conceived as a way of connecting with others. This illustrates how agency and communion themes intrinsically reinforce each other in the new identity:

Case 29: 'Better choice to just go legit and move to a different town. Life is more real… got to develop my more creative side of me, creating music, rapping about my life and things in society I want to get across.'

This twin process, rather than exclusive pathway, may better encapsulate the complexity of recovery journeys, where both human needs (the autonomous and the intimate) are nourished (Bakan, 1966). The above stories illustrate how multiple elements coalesce in change narratives and indicate that the Dominance domain fits wells with recovery stories, showcasing the confluence of agentic and communal themes in redemption sequences.

9.3.2.2 Affiliation

The Affiliation domain refers to a strong narrative theme of communion with low agency and can be conceived as a narrative focused on relationships with others, towards an extreme of social dependence. 'Self' and 'other' are personified in the 'lover' role and there is a motive towards social gain. At the reaches of dramatic intensity, this film structure affords others the dominant role, such as *Teacher* while assuming a passive identity. This narrative is curious for several reasons from a substance misuse perspective. Popular theories promote the social nexus as central to recovery identities, with little emphasis on personal agency (Beckwith et al., 2014; Best et al., 2016). Indeed, this notion parrots the 12-step dictum of the powerless addict, where the supportive community of recovering substance users provides a necessary

context for recovery. It will be interesting to examine cases typifying a dominant communion theme, since intuitively a position of compromised autonomy and dependence on support networks in substance-dependent individuals seems infirm grounds for full recovery. How often such one-sided identity structures play out in substance misuse stories poses a compelling question that needs examining. As mentioned, the combining of processes towards identity agency and communion, via whichever initial pathway, may prevail in such cases; however, research has yet to consider such identity transitions in detail. An example of the Affiliation narrative structure is provided with this case of a heroin and alcohol user:

Case 11: 'The central guy is a bit of a wimp, I suppose. Well, not a wimp but not your conventional movie tough guy. He has long blonde hair and baby blue eyes and is skinny. He likes poetry and doesn't fit in with his brothers: two older brothers, who are typical lads, and mates. They think he's weaker. He tries to fit in with them, tries everything. They're not bullies, just different. They wrestle him and he cries. They try to teach him football, and he falls over the ball, that sort of thing. It's funny and tragic. So eventually he strikes out on his own.'

The central protagonist assumes a weaker role in a sequence of tuition from his more able brothers and an effort to integrate. This background of failed intimacy and rejection plays out in subsequent incentive towards social gain, which often involves acquiescence to group demands:

Case 11: 'He's down on his luck again but gets accepted by a troupe of what you would call emos, I suppose. They're all a bit creepy and over the top, but the lead guy takes me under his wing. Long story short, they're all very into drugs and I end up going too far. When I'm high it's the only time I'm confident, so it's a vicious circle, and get rejected by them for getting off with one of the guys' girl's when I'm off my head. This event leads to my addiction because he's away from home and have no fall back…. He ends up in a mess and it takes his sister to drive up and lift him out of a crack den and his parents to put him in treatment.'

This LAAF showcases a theme of personal powerlessness and a reliance on others to 'scrape through'. The genre of dark comedy is invoked to encapsulate a motive towards belonging,

which is stymied by recourse to substance use for self-confidence. Thus, the sequence of decline and rescue is cycled:

Case 11: '*…. Eventually I get caught with this girl and thrown out and back to square one. Within a week he's dependent on gear again. This is the story of my life…*'

Here, the need for intimacy overpowers self-control and adherence to regulations of the treatment centre, and the individual is expelled. He chases the role of lover only to find himself alone; lacking the self-agency to maintain abstinence, the ill-fated hero falls back into dependent substance use. This Affiliation narrative highlights how a communal incentive and empowerment through support networks can be insufficient props in the absence of self-regulatory agency. The case is used to exemplar a dramatically intense Affiliation narrative and does not serve to undermine the centrality of communal themes to recovery stories, only provide an example positing the supportive impact of autonomous *and* interpersonal attributes: if motivation for independence was nourished, perhaps the story would have evolved differently.

The case example illustrates how key life themes can be highlighted in synopsis form using the LAAF technique. Thus, a rich and vivid but concise account is given, making for a more efficient examination of material. The film framework also provides the option of constructing the narrative at a distance, in the third person, a feature less compatible with standard life narrative techniques (McAdams, 1993). This remove may facilitate in revealing personally relevant material. The notion finds support when examining the above account, where a curious shift in the narrative voice from first to third person can be observed when describing difficult scenes, and a return to the first-person tense as the scene becomes more positive.

9.3.2.2 Power

The Power domain refers to narrative components coalescing around a high agency theme in the absence of communion elements. It may be conceived as a storyline of self-empowerment through a confrontational behavioural style and a brave warrior identity. In this narrative, the individual is the decision maker and is motivated towards personal power. Items pertaining to positive communion are absent from the region. Other people are kept at a distance. The context for this presentation can vary but may proceed from personal trust issues and the growth of an independent style that avoids the threat of others, who are also seen in a combative role, capturing the embattled dynamic. This perception may have its roots in a backstory of victimisation, a history common to stories of substance misuse (see, for example, Howard et al., 2017). A recovering heroin user deploys a fantasy plotline to portray her story of traumatic events, alienation, and supernatural agency:

Case 13: 'Someone very close to me would die on my home planet and that is why I have come to Earth, because it's rare that people die on my home planet. Then because I am a traveller of time and space and can travel through intra-cosmic time and space and avoid any type of space-time continuum, I decide to do that. Before, when I was on my home planet, I had no interest in intergalactic space travel because I was happy, but now someone has died on my home planet, I feel it easy and necessary to travel the cosmos, but this film would be about me being on earth…

'I am very advanced intellectually and I can outwit people without even trying. I can also read minds, and nobody understands me. I am an outcast. I really do feel like I am trying to get back to my home planet sometimes…'

The fictional framing allows catastrophic events to be symbolised in vivid images that are as meaningful as any factual account (see Murray, 1938; Rapaport, 1942; Bamberg, 2011), showcasing a unique strength of the LAAF approach over standard biographical methods (e.g. McAdams, 1993; Adler et al., 2015). A self-attribution of supernatural powers achieves coherence in a broken narrative, establishing control, and makes sense with reference to the early trauma and alienation: the requirement to self-power against adversity poses a

monumental task, calling for superhuman abilities and will. Through this medium, the film narrative encapsulates the protagonist identity. Power narratives take various sub-forms, though the same central themes can be identified. With different emphasis, many components of the Power domain are reflected in the LAAF response of this chronic polydrug user:

Case 20: 'I suppose you'd have some defining scenes, like in films. Like it's a biopic, so you'd have me getting up to mischief and fights. There'd be a lot of me being fuckin' out of it and not knowing what's going on, on drugs. Being done for robbery. Being done for rape. Prison. Getting involved in day-to-day menace. But people don't know me, they've just heard stuff, like S_____ pulled a fuckin' machete on him or threw a dog at him, when they haven't got a clue what really happened…. Honestly, if it was true to form it would be a fuckin' horror film. A very scary film from childhood - getting battered, fuckin' abused, sent to hospital, thrown in fuckin' ice baths, sent to prison.'

This participant is eager to establish a menacing persona in a thriller, or horror, type of film, built around a background of trauma. Observing the Power domain on the SSA plot, a reactionary behavioural style is closely associated with *Warrior* imagoes and a confrontational approach. The dynamic plays out in participants' film narratives. Thus, the aggressive identity is observed as a reaction to early experiences, where it is envisaged as a source of resilience and empowerment against ongoing threat. Asked how the film would conclude, the participant responded:

Case 20: '…With me finally dying. I've died a few times before but always fuckin' come back, but I've got hundreds of things wrong with me, and a lot of people want me fuckin' dead.'

His story exemplifies bravery and achieving empowerment through confrontation. The film features others only in an antagonistic role, to which the protagonist is forced to respond in kind, evincing aggressive agency:

Case 20: 'A good scene might be when I woke up with my ex-wife with a fuckin' needle in my arm loaded with 4grams of heroin and me having to pull a fuckin' gun on her…. I'd been fuckin' this other bird and she found out. She was up to the same, fuckin' other birds. I had a fuckin' gun under the pillow, and it was like: 'Fuckin' go on then!' It was always like that.'

And again:

Case 20: 'A lot of people have got it fuckin' in for me, for various reasons. A lot of it's rumour or blown out of proportion.'

These perceptions serve to legitimise the narrative identity and personal behavioural style.

Under such conditions, there is little imperative for change. Reflecting this position, the high

agency attribute can be conducive to ongoing substance use, as in this vivid case example:

Case 18: 'I don't know whether you've seen Ray Donavan but I'm like him, innit, like. Have you seen it? He's a 'fixer', like, so you got a problem you need rectifying, you go to Ray, but he gets paid bare, like, to, like, beat people who are causing problems up and sort things, or just scare people, like, you know. He's cool as fuck. I'm kind of like that round here….

'It would be me and just the local people and gangs I'm involved in. I work on my own, so it's like different contracts. You don't get trust in the business, bro, it's on your own, so you got be on it. Cos its para, like, I get paranoid about people, like I don't know them, innit, like who are they…. The film would follow that, innit…. I'm a good man underneath, innit, it's just circumstance. Like I would say, yeah, drugs, like crack and shit makes me into what I need to be.'

Again, the theme of *bravery* is highlighted and the need for a confrontational warrior persona

to approach similar others. From this perspective, and the professed underlying prosocial

identity, substance use is rationalised as necessary to 'get into character' and achieve results.

The Power region reflects narrative structures where relationships are pushed to the side in

preference for an agency-driven story, which is articulated in the context of an interpersonally

traumatic life narrative. In the case of substance misuse, this theme may be instrumental in

sustaining deviant and psychologically unhealthy lifestyles, as highlighted above. The

following case study shows the familiar theme of early victimisation and the embattled

reaction, enabling a warrior to emerge in a thriller narrative:

Case 21: 'I had a very traumatic childhood. I was brought up with some, been very difficult, where I suffered a depressing and traumatic childhood… I wanted to die through a lot of my childhood. I was left on my own, you see, so it's really a sad film… I got saved by meeting other fucked up people like me and getting into drugs and crime…. That gave me some cred and money, and then came the dark adventures. Always something mad happening. And the heroin hid the pain. So, my life of drugs and crime started there, and I thought it was cool as

fuck, you know….. Life of crime, which isn't good, but it was a way to success, and that's where drugs came in.

'Lot of people come in and out in the story, but I never got close. My friends were either druggies, who I was dealing to, or some who I used with, or were friends I did robberies with, or protection work, or other crimes, so I don't know about true friends, where you give a shit…. it would be wall to wall action. Some bad events, but I've been involved in some right scraps, I can tell you. Shit you wouldn't believe.

However, the story begins to change as addiction takes its toll:

Case 21: 'But it was falling apart, and I wanted to get off drugs, at least. The other shit runs in my blood. I come from a criminal family. It's hard to break your roots.'

Insight is achieved and the decision to change is made:

Case 21: 'I get into rehab and last a few weeks before I quit. It wasn't for me. But man, I was raw…. Shit nearly finished me…Then somehow got on a plastering course at college and became a plasterer, so found a straight life.'

Characteristic agency is depicted as key to steering the story towards a positive resolution. Interestingly, the narrative indicates a transition in approach style, where the protagonist exercises proactive determination to transform the bad events of failing rehab into positive change and a prosocial life, reflecting a more redemptive identity than a ruthless power motive. The LAAF charts the process of losing and then regaining agency with a new narrative identity. The early story illustrates how personal empowerment is achieved through drugs and crime. This becomes a successful strategy and the tragic story takes an eventful upturn. In fulfilling the *power gain* and material incentive, the protagonist breaks away from a tale of victimisation to esteemed notoriety. Through this sequence, the *warrior* persona emerges and, importantly, is legitimised. The protagonist's past relationships, nevertheless, set the stage for distrust and a propensity for 'going it alone'. Drug intoxication and criminality become intimately tied to personal agency and the achievement of power. However, the winning

formula falls through, and in a vulnerable predicament the hero accepts help. This fails, probably on account of his independent nature, though far from being beaten, the process is conceived as spearheading a self-propelled journey to recovery.

The above LAAF highlights how a high agency identity can foster personal growth in the absence of communion. Adler and colleagues have consistently found attributions of personal agency to be instrumental to therapeutic success, while their results show little support for communal growth (Adler, McAdams & Skalina, 2008; Adler, 2012; Adler et al., 2015). In contrast, research of addiction recovery has emphasised the centrality of communal processes (Litt et al., 2010; Beckwith et al., 2014; Best et al., 2017). This discrepancy, rather than highlighting population differences, may be the result of treatment paradigms, since Adler and colleagues were examining individuals in one-to-one psychotherapy, where the focus is on 'self-identity', while much of the substance use research has studied individuals in recovery communities, where focus is on 'group identity', or, in other words, the perception of a homogenous network. Hence, different outcomes mirror the approach.

Perhaps overcoming certain self-storying bias, the format enables dynamic processes driving narratives to be depicted in dramatic animations of personal reality, providing context and momentum to key events. The detailed thematic framework allows discriminating phenomena to be quantified with little sacrifice to psychological richness.

9.3.2.4 Avoidance

While Affiliation and Power domains show the constellation of elements around a dominant communion or agency theme, the Avoidance domain is exemplified by story elements denoting neither identity. This structure of related components may be seen to reflect the classic 'escape route' proposed by Larsson et al. (2013) and others (McAdams, 1993; Singer,

2001). In the absence of either self-propelling agency or supportive communion, the narrative depicts disillusionment and escape into compulsive substance use. In its most dramatic form, progressive contamination declines to a sad conclusion in a domain-defining tragedy sequence. Themes of escape, contamination, and tragic decline are encapsulated in this LAAF response from a chronic heroin user:

Case 6: 'It wouldn't be a feel-good movie; I can say that…. Err, it's hard to say. I'm thinking of films like my life… The Butterfly Effect… He's a proper smackhead, and he just goes downhill. I couldn't believe it. My mate said: 'watch it' and I cried for a week… Things get worse and worse than you could ever imagine. I was crying because it's me. I don't lose my arms, like, but you know…. I think about it all the time, that film. It's different cos it's a film…. You just want to run but all the doors are closing in, like walls…. I remember when I was a kid I was always falling in dreams. I know, everyone has it, it's that thing… but that's me.'

Again, the film prompt stimulates the search for a comparative narrative in motion picture, allowing a general sense of the participant's story to emerge, which orientates her self-reflection and more personally telling details are revealed. The participant relates her story to a tragic portrayal of substance misuse with no sight of redemption, that concludes with the protagonist's demise. The *escapist* identity is taken to the extreme in her life's vision with the image of a hopelessly plummeting central character, experiencing the same tragic destiny. This dark complexion reflects her view of substance use and gives form to her doomed future. Later in the account loneliness is described amid repeated scenes of contamination with no relief:

Case 6: 'Honestly? Erm, my life has been very... dysfunctional, so it would show that. Erm, honestly, a lot of domestic violence, a lot of loneliness. That's a big.... erm, various accidents: I've come off a bike twice, motorbike, broke both my legs. Erm, I had an eating disorder. I've always had a drug problem.'

And any motivation towards communion has been extinguished:

Case 6: 'My ex-boyfriend beating me up and putting me in hospital, and nearly killing me. I've made a lot of bad decisions with boyfriends and can't trust myself to get into another relationship.'

In this sequence, the participant communicates her lack of self-trust, past experiences undermining personal agency and redoubling the impact against finding meaningful communion. This highlights the negative effect personal failure in achieving communion can have on agency, and vice versa, feeding the overriding sense of powerlessness. The feedback loop facilitates recognition of impotence and isolation, and lonely recourse into substance use:

Case 7: '...My dad going from anger and rage to on his knees in his pyjamas, grey hair, age 65 crying and begging me to please stop using drugs: heroin. I'm age 30.... Perhaps we could have my mum in another room -cold, hardened but fighting the tears back. Similarly cut to my sister/ brother in different cities, all showing despair... as I slowly develop a heroin then alcohol addiction. I become a shadow of my former self, as my drug use increases, and I become unable to live a normal life. I become fearful, depressed and constantly terrified of everything, shaky...I go from being very sociable and popular until late 20s with a heroin addiction, and then anxiety-ridden with hardly any friends...'

Notice should also be given to the facility within the film technique for the narrator to chop together frames, giving a powerful illustration of narrative themes. Again, affording a unique advantage of the LAAF approach. The above imagery highlights how lost agency in substance dependency reflects a diminishing sense of self - *'I become a shadow of my former self as my drug use increases and I become unable to live a normal life'* - and limits the potential for relationships, fostering a deeper sense of powerlessness, social isolation and hopelessness amid the compulsion. These sequences fix the narrative identity in place, rendering the prospect of change untenable (McConnell & Snoek, 2018). The task of interventions is to address these self-confounding issues in seeking to transform tragic narratives into *romances*. In this endeavour, 'success stories' may offer a useful guide and source of inspiration (Diamond, 2002).

9.3.3 Shapeshifting: Comparative case analysis

A comparison within domains allows us to observe the way in which certain LAAF accounts capture extreme forms of the narrative categories, while others illustrate weaker forms, and may be suggestive of a process of narrative transition and re-structuring. This film narrative from an ex-cannabis user vividly illustrates the advance from co-dependency and a reliance on communal reinforcement to a more balanced narrative identity:

Case 22: 'Err okay .... It would show the life of a comedy performer who is a supply teacher and uses comedy to engage and communicate with teens, tough teens in inner city schools, and trying to build an acting career, and the light she shows in life on stage, filming, even when in schools when she teaches .... and setting up a company, which uses comedy to help young people gain confidence…. But then we see the stark difference behind closed doors, of the darkness in her addiction, in her sexless, co-dependent relationship. Then finding recovery – leaving the man, feeling the light. Followed by darkness like she has never experienced, through depression and anxiety, while still putting on the comedy face. And then into the light like she has never felt, as she starts to accept who she is and starts to make real change in her rituals in herself, understanding and showing herself compassion, and starts to love herself and her prince, in the form of an ex-heroin and ex-con with a beautiful soul joins her on this journey of self-discovery in recovery.'

Early in the sequence the protagonist's reliance on other people for sustenance can be observed. The dominant communion theme is highlighted in the isolated darkness of home life, where the boost of important others recedes, leaving a disempowered personal reality. However, insight is achieved, and effective action stimulates self-regulatory habits and self-discovery in recovery, establishing an agency theme to the unfolding story. The *comedy* myth begins to give way to a romantic vision in the attainment of *self-mastery* and *unity*, recalling Frye's (1957) sequences of mythos within the life cycle. This story is redolent of Hanninen and Koski-Jannes (1999) co-dependency narrative type, where, through insight, the recovering substance user achieves both personal agency and communion with capacity to self-determine and form genuine relationships. The LAAF vividly depicts a confluence of themes in the switch of narrative forms and advance to recovery.

While the above sequence suggests evolution from Affiliation to Dominance, the following LAAF indicates an ensconced Dominance construct, showcasing a more dramatic illustration of the narrative category:

Case 25: *'It would follow me through my life, my family life, my addiction, my recovery and how it is now. Now that I am working and earning a living and helping other people in addiction become clean. I have a lot to give, it was just finding a way to do it… So called friends would come and go, most of them criminals out for themselves, or other addicts out for what they can get, greedy, like I was, but then I get to see what real relationships are like. Another of the main characters would be my new girlfriend.'*

Here, the narrator reflects at distance on a troubled past and illustrates his present life with the many trophies of success: abstinence, employment, 'real relationships'. The LAAF strikes a more authoritative tone, not only in the recognition of relationship success, but also in self-attributing the *Maker* and *Healer* imago, providing benefit for himself and others, embodying agentic and communal qualities in the self-identity. By chronicling his travails in the retrospect, he firmly situates himself in the triumphant position, the narrative more dramatically portraying the *romance* genre with a powerful redemption theme. A more swingeing contrast is observed with this dramatically intense Power identity:

Case 19: *'The above character, me, would be central, obviously. It would basically be a man's quest at first to find some excitement. As a boy, I was different and didn't fit in…. he wasn't the same and only saw differences between him and others…. and expected a lot from a life that seemed to give too little…. but he had to find a way to become strong and be in control….It would be a story of a man finding ways to work the system, beat it, subvert authority…I got the sack on the first day after getting into a fight with my boss. I went right to the pub and got pissed…. I was bothered by authority, a rebel.*

In this LAAF relationships are negatively framed. Others are portrayed as adversaries. Personal empowerment at the expense of communion drives the story. Likewise, the power gain incentive swallows up any tone of personal redemption. The sequence illustrates a Power identity, highlighting the *warrior* persona and *power gain* incentive in a thriller plot. However,

the following narrative, while adhering to the high agency theme with its focus on self-empowerment, is less exemplary of the 'control of threat' thread defining the thriller genre:

Case 17: '…Arguments between family. Me having to leave home when my grandma is ill. Her dying and me drinking myself stupid. But eventually coming out of the other side stronger. The break allowed me to take control of my life and step up and show I'm not like my mum.'

An avoidant response is observed with recourse to alcohol abuse; however, tragic decline is subverted when the protagonist emerges stronger from the contaminating sequence, taking control and evoking the *Arbiter* imago with personal bravery to attain empowerment. The *empowerment* sequence sharply distinguishes the narrative from the Avoidance domain, though the story lacks the more extreme indicators of the dark thriller plot, such as protagonists' combative approach and an explicit power or material gain incentive. On the contrary, a mildly redemptive theme is displayed in her 'stepping up' and not emulating the repudiated mother. However, other elements that would transform her story into a Dominance narrative are absent, such as *Self-mastery, Unity* and *Caring*. The story also falls short of communicating a positive tone. This LAAF, as with the above inchoate Dominance case, may indicate an intermediate position in the transition between narrative forms, though following a different trajectory: agentic rather than communal propulsion towards Dominance. Crucially, it suggests a contamination pathway being circumvented through brave decision-making in confrontation rather than escape, evading decline into a tragic plotline. Conversely, in the Avoidance narrative, contamination takes hold and a sequence of compulsive diversion ensues:

Case 3: 'Hmmm, horror, a bad horror, or disaster film, err…It would be like Girl Interrupted where the main girl would suffer at the hands of her family and turn into someone full of anxiety and bad temper, violence…Err, don't know, don't care....err.... don't know, really. Maybe that I stay in a lot. I've got agoraphobia, really bad nerves... I need diazepam to get out. Don't care what anyone thinks, though, err…'

Here, the familiar themes of contamination, escape and sensory remove are highlighted. However, while recognising repeated contamination and a theme of compulsion, equivocation over the film's conclusion is communicated:

Case 3: 'Fuck knows, it hasn't ended. Maybe with me getting my own place and away from everyone but hasn't happened yet. Things just keep going bad, cos I get no help.'

Clearly, the contamination theme manifests in *victimisation* and *betrayal*, though hope is not entirely abandoned. Examining the LAAF, an aggressive rather than resigned position can be observed, as if the narrator is reaching for a Power thread which she cannot grasp on account of her *escapist* persona, perceived lack of agency, and unhelpful others. Identifying this inner conflict might prove useful in freeing that impetus towards empowerment. The nuances of narrative identity communicated through the LAAF may suggest its acuity as a psychological assessment tool.

While the above account expresses a vestige of hope, this more intensely tragic LAAF observes resignation in the central figure with a despairing vision:

Case 6: 'It sounds sad, but I find out you can't trust anyone, not even family or closest friends. How hard life is…. Should never smoked that first time, cos that's it. Erm, boyfriends who have been abusive. I'm staying single from now on…. There's nothing for me here, just bad memories. I just want to run away…'

The brutally contaminated narrative casts a lost character in a sad life replete with bad memories, where relationships and meaningful intimacy are totally abandoned for a state of desperate isolation, epitomising the 'tragedy' genre. This resignation to a lonely life contrasts sharply with the Affiliation narrative, where even in the presence of conflict optimism prevails:

Case 8: 'What do you mean, like horror or comedy...? Oh probably comedy, where everything goes wrong, and me running round trying to sort it out.....but causing another shambles, like when I thought I was doing the right thing when I met B___ and look where that's got me…It'd be like a slapstick sketch, but going on and on like that, like 'Unlucky Alf' always managing to mess things up…. I think it's running 'round trying to do everything for people, like our M or B. I think I've always done it. I'm hyperactive. I don't know what you'd call it, but I just can't stop, do you know what I mean…It'll end with me off this shit. Well, I'll be off this by the end of the year. I just want to get more settled down, stable in my life. Hopefully it'll end with some money in my pocket, instead of always being skint.'

While this example illustrates most elements of the Affiliation domain: *Caregiver* imago, theme of *Love/Friendship*, other as *Lover*, the comedy retains hope from a position of relentless, albeit attenuated, sense of agency, rather than assuming the passive role. The agency element falls short of *effectiveness, empowerment* or *self-mastery*, rather it is something hoped. The protagonist is cast in an active capacity, where a succession of mishaps is nonetheless framed optimistically, distinguishing it from similar sequences used to exemplar contamination. A close presence of significant others appears key to this perspective, since these characters serve as figures of reference throughout the narrative. Interestingly, this participant has achieved periods of abstinence, though ultimately relapsed following loss of contact with support services, highlighting the importance of supportive others to her identity.

A more dramatic reflection of the Affiliation narrative is depicted in this portrayal of a powerless central figure, forever one slip away from tragedy where significant others assume the dominant role, on whom the passive subject reports being entirely reliant in sobriety:

Case 11: 'Well, as long as I stay connected, I'll be okay. Just keep leaning on my support and not trying to go it alone…. Keep listening in to those who've been there and not failed… I change in seeing my weakness over this thing and that there is no shame in getting help.'

The above stories compare extreme examples with less intense reflections of the narrative categories and, of course, reflect unique personal narratives; however, as discussed, they may

also be suggestive of how growth themes mediate positive or negative transitions, or mechanisms through which certain narratives can become ensconced. The illustration of dynamic processes raises questions central to understanding recovery through narrative themes. In observing case examples of narrative forms, the proposition of distinct groups reflective of the structures can be proposed. The suggestion of transformative processes in individual cases intimates that narrative forms may be reflective not only of individual differences in identity, but specific positions on the substance use-recovery trajectory. In the following chapters focus turns to an examination of these individual differences.

9.4 Discussion

SSA revealed four distinct regions from the content analysis, conceptualising different narrative structures. This organisation of variables had good face validity, considering related research literature. The LAAF narratives can be construed in terms of dominant themes of agency and communion, which accords with a wealth of personality research (e.g. McAdams, 1988, 1993; McLean & McAdams, 2004) and work in Investigative Psychology (Canter, 1994; Canter & Youngs, 2009; Youngs & Canter, 2012). Constellations of related story elements were shown to group around these thematic expressions, enriching a framework of life narrative forms. Considering directives within the substance misuse literature, the study confronts some of the limitations of existing theories (Best et al., 2016; Stone, 2016) by exploring a twin-mechanism (agency and communion) model of identity and identity transformation, and begins to address the complexity of substance misuse and recovery stories with an empirically verifiable framework.

The illustration of four regional domains offers a means of conceiving different personal narratives in the population: Dominance, Affiliation, Power, Avoidance (DAPA), which

subsequent studies can compare with recovery outcomes to assess the relevance of the narrative categorising. Case study material provides impetus for this endeavour, suggesting that specific narrative domains and intensity may relate to different positions on the substance misuse - recovery spectrum, or transitional narrative (identity) forms, where high agency and communion (Dominance) narratives depict strong recovery and low agency and communion stories (Avoidance) depict entrenched substance misuse. Reflecting a twin-themed model, LAAF accounts expressing either but not both dominant themes may portray intermediate stories, through narratives of Affiliation or Power, where momentum away from substance misuse lifestyles is highlighted.

This exploratory analysis begins to articulate contemporary theorists' call for the recognition of multiple influences in addiction recovery models (Singer, 2001; Weegmann, 2010; Larsson et al., 2013; Chen, 2018), indicating a framework of combined mechanisms observed through the verisimilitude of the life narrative (Singer, 2001). The conceptual structure revealed by the SSA affords us a discriminatory model from which to conduct more in-depth quantitative analyses examining different narratives among individuals and how they relate to external measures of recovery.

9.5 Conclusions

SSA revealed that themes of agency and communion distinguished four fundamental narrative structures: Dominance, Affiliation, Power, and Avoidance. The proposed DAPA model gives momentum to substance misuse literature seeking to advance integrated identity models of substance misuse and recovery. Inclusion of individuals at all stages of substance misuse and recovery affords the research power to discriminate narratives which may be indicative of each phase of the life story. Case study examples were useful in illustrating how components

of the different narrative structures manifested in life stories. The SSA structure and case examples provides a purposeful model for conducting further analyses to examine narratives patterns among participants, and how these relate to recovery pathways and outcomes.

Chapter 10. Study 3. LAAF Themes and Pathways to Recovery

10.1 Chapter in brief

Chapter 9 revealed a model of narrative identity in terms of agency and communion themes (the DAPA structure). This chapter reports on a study aiming to test the power of that model for: (1) explaining differences among individuals and, building on this (2) explaining differences in recovery outcomes. The purpose is to show that themes of agency and communion in LAAF narratives are each related to recovery, more dramatic presentations of which corresponding with better outcomes.

Drawing on the structural analysis in Chapter 9, six representative theme elements were chosen to reflect agency (*Effectiveness, Empowerment, Self-Mastery*) and communion (*Love/Friendship, Caring, Unity*). Partially Ordered Scalogram Analysis of Coordinates (POSAC) was run comparing presence or absence of each of the narrative elements among the participants' LAAF narratives. POSAC is a non-parametric method used for revealing differences on attributes among individuals.

The main findings were that cumulative presence of agency and communion elements in LAAF accounts related to higher scores on the RI, while diminishing illustration of theme elements related to progressively poorer RI scores. Further, data revealed both agency and communion growth paths: agency succeeding from *Effectiveness* through *Empowerment* to *Self-Mastery*, and communion succeeding from *Love/Friendship*, through *Caring* to *Unity*. That is, LAAF narratives describing *self-mastery* and *unity* related to the best recovery outcomes. This finding expands on current models of substance misuse recovery (e.g. Dunlop & Tracy, 2013; Best et al., 2016) to appreciate a two-dimensional growth process which may advance separately or in duality. It also elucidates certain key identity change patterns indicative of processes in addiction recovery.

10.2 Method

10.2.1 Resources

The LAAF material from interviews with 32 participants reporting substance misuse or substance misuse history was again used for this study. Further analysis using the HUDAP software was run on data from the adjusted content analysis (Chapter 9). The RI (Appendix 5) was used to assess recovery indicators.

10.2.2 Partially Ordered Scalogram Analysis of Coordinates (POSAC)

Modern FT shows that two kinds of factors are at work in behavioural systems: facets of the concept space for evaluating variables (SSA) and scales of the measurement space for evaluating individuals (POSAC). POSAC provides measurement scales for assessing differences between individuals (Shye, 1998). It is a non-parametric statistical procedure where numerical profiles are created for individuals based on scores on different variables. Profiles are represented geometrically in space, so that the more similar two individuals are the closer together their profiles. Scores making up a profile are scaled to produce a total. Cases are then ranked, which represents the level of the behaviour being scored (in this case elements of agency and communion). Cases with the highest scores appear in the top right corner of the plot, and those scoring lowest appear in the bottom left corner, so the line running from the bottom left corner to the top right corner represents the quantitative difference among profiles (the 'J' or Joint axis). Profiles can have the same scores along the J axis (same theme total) but differ on individual item scores (e.g. elements of communion and agency), demonstrating a qualitatively different personal narrative, despite being quantitively the same. These differences are depicted along the lateral axis, running top left to bottom right corner.

Each profile is plotted as a point in space. POSAC provides a main plot of all the cases (individuals) being compared, along with a series of item diagrams representing each of the variables making up the profile on which individuals are being compared. The item diagrams maintain the same configuration of points, but in each instance show how the plot is divided according to regions of space containing those whose scores are the same for that variable. These regions are formed by partitioning along one of the different axes that make up the space. A composite diagram is given in which all variables being examined are displayed, partitioned in the plot, showing the relationship between each of the variables being studied and the profiles (Porter & Alison, 2005). Partitions along the X axis are qualitatively different from those on the Y axis: different in terms of meaning, or concept (such as physical or psychological influences of stress). If several variables partition differently along the same axis, this represents a scale of behaviour (e.g. *Love/Friendship, Caring, Unity*).

Several studies have used POSAC to reveal the structural components of complex behaviour systems. In a study of criminal network structures, Canter (2004) used POSAC in identifying types of criminal group according to the dimensions of 'size' and 'differentiation', concluding that understanding the structural components of different criminal organisations has important implications for police investigations aimed at disrupting them. Similarly, in a study examining influence strategies in criminal gangs, Porter and Alison (2005) revealed variation in the degree (quantitative) and type (qualitative) of strategy used by gang leaders to influence behaviour, highlighting two main strategies: 'decision and order', and 'decision an action'. The studies illustrate the power of POSAC in examining multi-facets of behaviour and indicate important practical applications. POSAC has also been used to predict outcome patterns in crisis negotiations (Taylor, 2002) and modelling determinants of home ownership in immigrants (Rebhun, 2009). For more detailed descriptions of POSAC, see Dancer (1990) and Guttmann & Greenbaum (1995).

Whereas in SSA an array of variables enriches the conceptual analysis, for POSAC key items are chosen that best represent the content system under investigation. In keeping with our fundamental markers of agency and communion, the following elements were chosen to reflect themes:

Agency

Effectiveness - The protagonist develops skills, experiences achievement, gains rewards.

Empowerment - The protagonist is enlarged, enhanced, empowered or ennobled.

Self-Mastery - The protagonist strives to successfully master, control, and perfect the self.

Communion

Love/Friendship - The protagonist experiences an enhancement of love or friendship toward another person.

Caring - The individual reports that he or she provides care, assistance, nurturance, help, aid, support, or therapy for another.

Unity - The theme of Unity/Togetherness captures the communal idea of being part of a larger community.

Following examination of case material in Chapters 8 and 9, agency in LAAF accounts appeared to be presented at three levels. *Effectiveness* proposed the first level and was depicted in most accounts (75%). *Effectiveness* occurred with illustration of a skills-to-reward sequence that was reasoned did not necessitate psychological growth. This form of agency could, for example, be cited in the effective obtaining of substances, or the chemically assisted management of feelings, rather than requiring an intrinsic sense of agency. *Empowerment* was reported in 66% of accounts and appeared to depict a greater level of agency in illustrating a more psychologically embedded theme of self-enlargement or enhancement, reflecting a

genuine sense of inner agency. However, as illustrated in Chapter 9, the theme often emerged from a position of threat and distrust wrought of past victimisation, which was weaponised through a confrontational approach to achieve personal gain. Frequently, self-empowerment in this guise enabled a justification for destructive behaviours. However, with the theme of *Self-Mastery* an idea of personal insight was noted, where a more positive self-regulation, prosocial approach, and clear judgement of others facilitated the emergence of a recovery identity.

The levels of agency posited appear to represent degrees of theme intensity (see Chapter 9). These case observations suggest an agency scale, where *Self-Mastery* represents the highest attainment. A similar pattern was observed with examination of the communion theme, in which *Love/Friendship* was common within the sample, while *Caring* and *Unity* were more discerning, occurring in LAAF accounts depicting some resolve over substance use issues. Recognition of this curious pattern supports use of the elements in POSAC, where assessment can be made of the proposed quantitative scaling. Identifying twin growth scales integral to positive identity changes is useful in understanding pathways to recovery in terms of narrative identity.

Theme elements were coded as either present = 2 or absent = 1 in each of the LAAF narratives. Internal consistency of scales was tested using Cronbach's, producing an Alpha value of 0.77 for the communion elements and 0.82 for agency elements. This shows a high level of internal consistency and supports a quantitative interpretation (Skinner & Allen 1982).

10.3 Results

10.3.1 Narrative themes and dramatic intensity

The POSAC partitions profiles with a high value from those with a lower value on a given variable. Figure 10.1 shows the partitioning of elements with the depiction of: (1) a qualitative distinction between the agency theme (*Effectiveness, Empowerment, Self-Mastery*) and the communion theme (*Love/Friendship, Caring, Unity*), illustrated by the partitioning along different geometric plains. This result demonstrates that agency and communion themes represent different concepts in LAAF narratives, supporting a theoretical model that distinguishes theme presentations; and (2) a quantitative (or growth) scale, where the element *Self-Mastery* represents the strongest agency theme, succeeding *Empowerment* and *Effectiveness*, and *Unity* indicates the strongest communion theme, succeeding *Caring* and *Friendship/Love*. In this way, cumulative scores indicate the strength of narrative themes in individual cases, supporting the validity of a further interpretation according the intensity of dramatic presentation in LAAF accounts.

Self-Mastery is indicated as the most potent form of narrative agency, subsuming *Empowerment* and *Effectiveness.* In other words, cases illustrating a theme of *Self-Mastery* also exhibited *Empowerment* and *Effectiveness*. Likewise, the advance to *Unity* develops *Friendship* and *Caring* to a higher level of connection and belonging. Thus, the scale of agency and communion themes runs from the bottom left corner of the plot (weakest) to the top right corner (strongest). On the plot, this is represented in 11 profiles among the sample, where profile '1' refers to the most dramatic presentation of agency and communion themes, illustrating *Self-Mastery* and *Unity*, and profile '11' depicts the weakest presentation of agency and communion, portraying none of the theme elements. All other element combinations (profiles) are given in the intervening regions of the POSAC diagram.
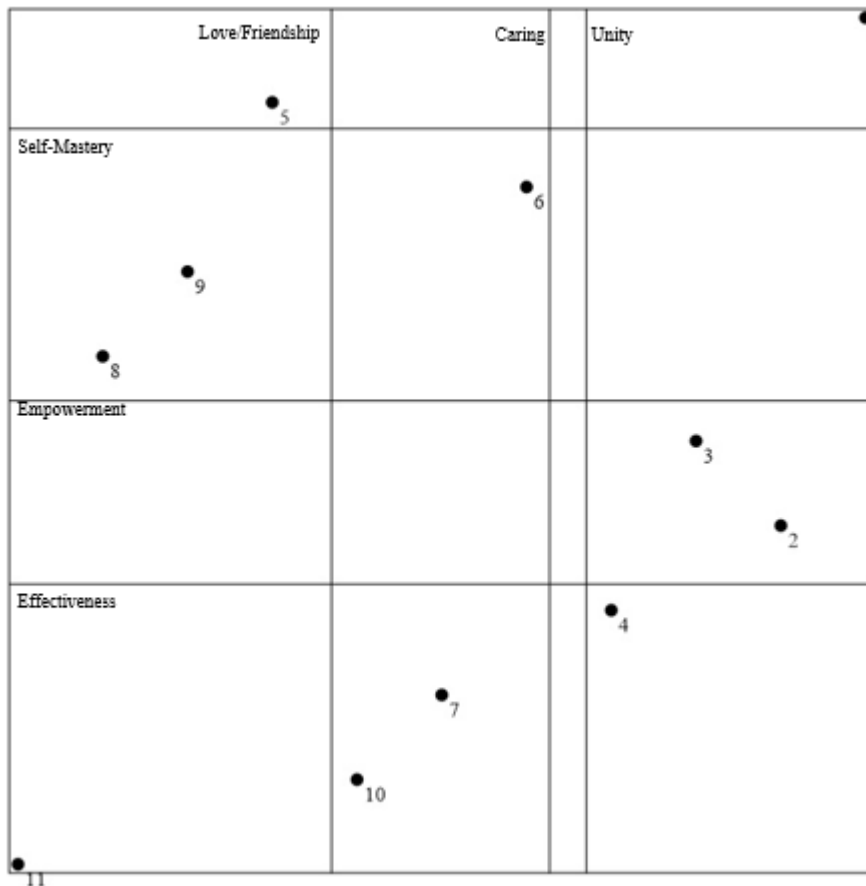
Figure 10.1 Composite item diagram showing partitioning of elements of agency and communion across 11 different profiles among the 32 participants, revealing cumulative scales of agency and communion themes in the LAAF narratives.

10.3.2 Narrative groups

The differentiation of narrative groups is important in advancing a pragmatic theoretical model. That is, by clarifying individual differences according to dominant theme expressions, agency and communion are shown to be defining features of LAAF narratives in the sample, and therefore apt for interpreting behaviours. Figure 10.2 shows that the plot separates into four regions. The bottom right region depicts cases showing the weakest agency and communion. Contrasting, the top right region depicts cases showing the strongest agency

(*Self-Mastery*) and communion (*Unity*). The top left region of the plot depicts cases showing a strong agency but weak communion theme, and the bottom right region depicts cases showing strong communion (*Unity*) with a low agency theme. These analyses show inherent relationships within the material, revealing four distinct groups of individuals according to emerging plot regions. The results suggest that the conceptual narrative categories illustrated in the SSA relate to corresponding groups of individuals:

1. Top right - Dominance (high agency/communion theme).

2. Bottom right - Affiliation (low agency, high communion theme)

3. Top left - Power (high agency, low Communion theme)

4. Bottom left - Avoidance (low agency/communion theme)

Accordingly, 90% percent of Dominance cases show the most dramatic presentation of agency (*Self-Mastery*) and communion (*Unity*), 50% of Power cases show the most dramatic presentation of agency, and 100% of Affiliation cases show the most dramatic presentation of communion, clearly illustrating the combinations of dominant narrative themes differentiating participants' LAAF accounts. No Avoidance cases show dramatic theme elements, substantiating the proposed DAPA model of narrative identity in the population.
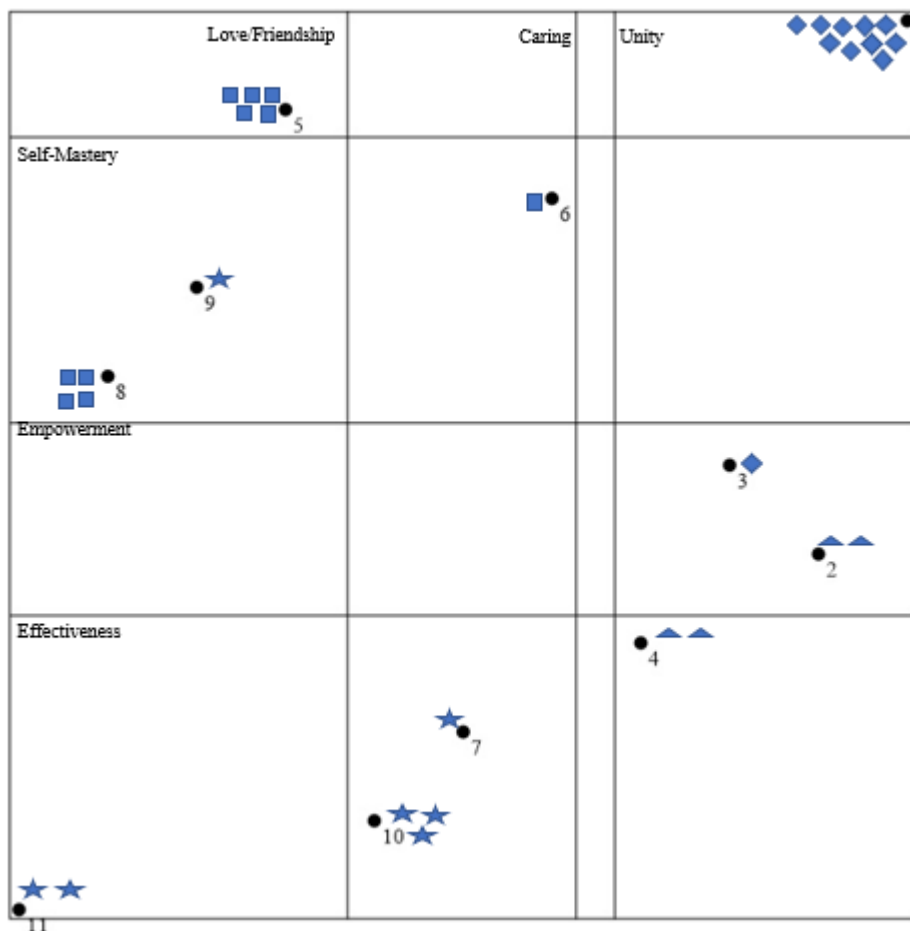
= Avoidance Cases (Participants 1-7)

= Affiliation Cases (8-11)

= Power Cases (12-21)

= Dominance Cases (22-32)

Figure 10.2 Composite item diagram showing geometric representation of narrative theme profiles among the 32 participants, illustrating that cases occupy regions in space according to dominant agency and communion theme combinations in their LAAF narratives.

The results show that the structural model revealed by SSA relates to individual differences in LAAF narratives, supporting the thesis that narratives of substance misuse and recovery

can be understood in terms of agency and communion themes, following general narrative identity models (McAdams, 1988, 1993) and those differentiating offender narratives (Youngs & Canter, 2012). However, to assess the true potential of the model for substance misuse research it is necessary to examine how themes of agency and communion in LAAF narratives relate to external indicators of recovery. The expectation is that strong agency and communion themes will be associated with successful outcomes and weak themes associated with active substance misuse.

10.3.3 Comparing RI scores between LAAF groups

Table 10.1 below shows that cumulative agency and communion elements in LAAF narratives is associated with higher RI scores. In the Avoidance Group, a weak presentation of themes in LAAF narratives is reflected with poor scores, while the dominant agency or communion theme in the Power and Affiliation groups is matched with better outcomes. As expected, the strongest recovery profiles are shown in the Dominance Group. A correlational analysis by Rowlands et al (2019b) corroborates this relationship, showing a strong positive correlation between combined agency and communion in LAAF narratives and RI scores.

Participant	Group	Theme Score			Recovery Score
		Agency Elements	Communion Elements	Total	
1	Avoidance	0	0	0	2
2		0	0	0	1
3		0	1	1	0
4		1	0	1	2
5		0	1	1	2
6		0	1	1	2
7		1	1	2	2
8	Affiliation	0	3	3	4
9		1	3	4	4
10		0	3	3	7
11		1	3	4	7
12	Power	3	0	3	9
13		2	1	3	6
14		3	0	3	8
15		2	1	3	5
16		3	0	3	5
17		2	1	3	6
18		2	1	3	5
19		2	1	3	6
20		3	1	4	5
21		3	1	4	7
22	Dominance	2	2	4	11
23		3	3	6	12
24		3	3	6	12
25		3	3	6	12
26		3	3	6	12
27		3	3	6	12
28		3	3	6	12
29		3	3	6	10
30		3	3	6	12
31		3	3	6	12
32		3	3	6	11

Table 10.1 Showing theme scores and Recovery Inventory scores among the 32 participants (four groups).

Illustrating this result, Figure 10.3 shows that RI scores among the 32 participants correspond with the configuration of theme profiles, occupying the same regions in space. This highlights a strong relationship between dramatic theme presentations in LAAF responses and recovery outcomes. The bottom left region depicts Avoidance cases, with few elements of agency and communion and corresponding low recovery scores, and the top right region depicts Dominance cases, with dramatic agency and communion themes and commensurate high recovery scores. The Power (top left) and Affiliation (bottom right) cases show moderate recovery outcomes, suggesting that the imbalance in their narrative identity (dominant agency or communion) is reflected in a limited recovery profile.
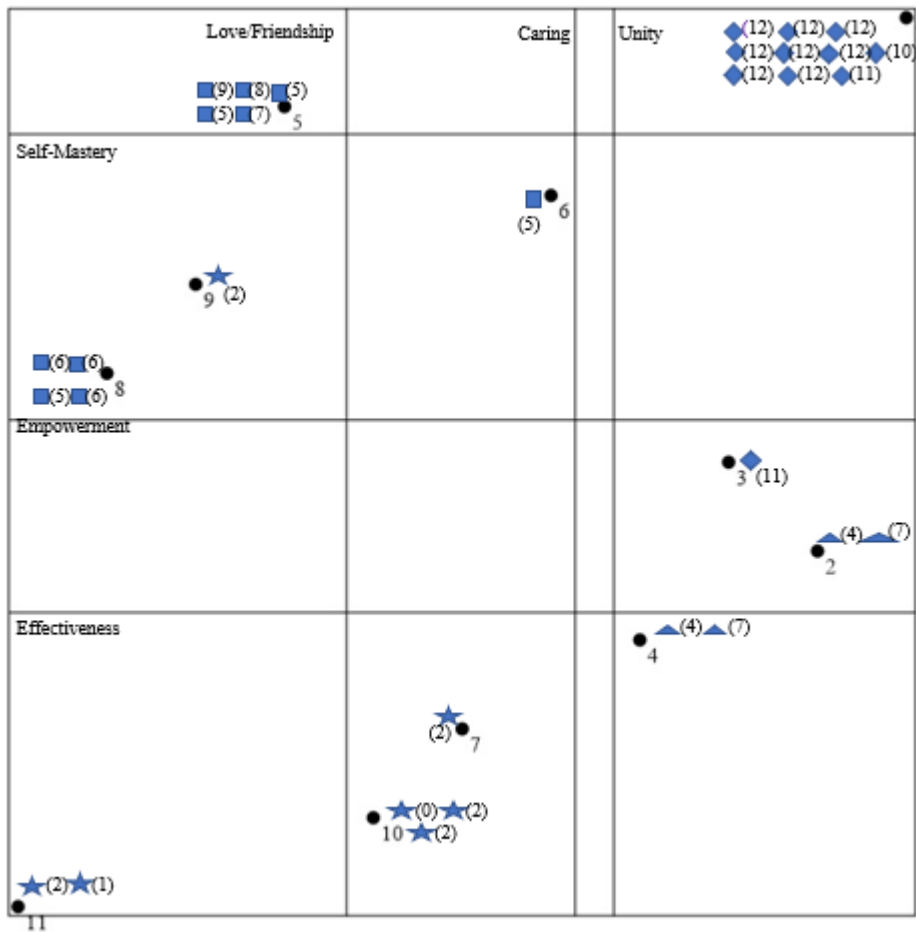
Figure 10.3 Composite item diagram illustrating the relationship between RI scores (in parentheses) and theme profiles among the 32 participants.

Examining Figure 10.3 in detail, it can be observed that the Dominance cases show the most consistent pattern, clustered in the top righthand corner, showcasing a uniformity of dramatic theme presentations with maximum recovery scores. There can be no question, in this sample, participants illustrating a strong agency and communion theme in their LAAF accounts show a robust recovery from substance misuse. Avoidance cases also illustrate a consistent pattern, where a weak portrayal of agency and communion in the narrative identity relates to low scores on the inventory. More variance is depicted among Power cases, though this is largely on account of the distinction between *Empowerment* and *Self-Mastery* in LAAF narratives.

The advance to *Self-Mastery* is associated with better recovery outcomes, fitting with the two-dimensional model. The low sample of Affiliation cases (n=4) makes any robust conclusions difficult; however, the cases all occupy the same region. Differences in theme profiles occur between the illustration of *Effectiveness* in film accounts versus no observed agency element, though it should be noted the distinction has no impact on RI scores. This may reflect the weakness of the *Effectiveness* element as an agency indicator. Crucially for the proposed model, spatial representation of cases relates agency and communion themes in LAAF narratives to specific outcomes, supporting the LAAF model for distinguishing key patterns and differences in identity as they relate to recovery and non-recovery from substance misuse.

10.3.4 Recovery indicators

The strength of the DAPA model can be further assessed with an examination of recovery items. It is proposed that agency and communion themes will relate to distinct recovery pathways. Thus, the thesis posits that the Power Group will score on external measures indicative of a personal growth pathway, whilst Affiliation cases will score on measures indicative of an interpersonal growth pathway. Following this contention, the Dominance Group will exhibit indicators of both pathways, highlighting a more comprehensive recovery, and Avoidance cases will exhibit neither pathway.

	Meaningful activity	Social Networks	Offending Desistance	Responsible Role	Employment	Self- Efficacy	Psychological Wellbeing	Recovery Identity	Abstinence	Abstinence 12 months	Emotional Support	Successful Relationships
	Percentage of cases achieving item											
Avoidance	29%	10%	57%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	57%	0%
Affiliation	100%	75%	75%	25%	75%	25%	0%	0%	25%	0%	100%	50%
Power	90%	60%	70%	50%	80%	90%	80%	40%	10%	10%	30%	20%
Dominance	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	91%	82%	100%	91%

Table 10.2 showing attainment of recovery indicators among narrative groups.

Table 10.2 shows the percentage of cases scoring on RI items among narrative groups. As predicted, Affiliation cases score on indicators that illustrate an interpersonal growth pathway, such as *Emotional Support* and *Successful Relationships*, while Power cases report indicators that seem to communicate more autonomy, like *Employment* and *Abstinence*. Dominance cases show the full spectrum of recovery indicators, highlighting a robust recovery, exemplified by attainment of the strongest outcome behaviours: *Abstinence at 12 months* and *Successful Relationships* (see Figure 10.4).

Figure 10.4 shows the partitioning of each RI indicator. A qualitative distinction is observed between items pertaining to personal and interpersonal measures, with indicators of personal growth partitioning along the vertical axis and indicators of interpersonal growth partitioning along the horizontal axis. The results suggest presence of two different recovery pathways. A cumulative recovery scale is also observed on each pathway, demonstrated by the separation of items along their plains, depicting a progressive framework of factors encompassing a robust recovery along the J axis. An anomaly is noted with the item *Social Networks*.

Belonging to social networks is clearly an interpersonal indicator and was included in the inventory to denote the fundamental presence or absence of others in participants lives. Also, a wealth of research substantiates the centrality of social networks to recovery from substance use (e.g. Best et al., 2017), undermining its position on the item diagram as a weak indicator of recovery. The key to this finding may lie in the framing of the question, since individuals embroiled in substance use can belong to supportive social networks – i.e. substance use-supportive networks. The question should perhaps have specified 'recovery-supportive social networks', as this is highlighted by the literature (e.g. Litt et al., 2010; Dingle et al., 2015; Bathish et al., 2017). Belonging to supportive social networks alone may be a weak reflector of recovery, though in conjunction with close support and genuine intimacy represents a more robust dynamic. Indicators of these more discerning measures were included in the assessment. Stronger measures of the interpersonal growth pathway are shown in access to *Emotional Support* and report of *Successful Relationships*.

= Avoidance Cases

= Affiliation Cases

= Power Cases

= Dominance Cases

Figure 10.4 Composite item diagram illustrating how recovery profiles relate to the four narrative groups.

The cases occupy similar geometric regions to the theme plot, although the mapping is less dramatic. Most significantly, Dominance cases occupy the top right corner, uniformly showing the strongest indicators of recovery in *Abstinence At 12 Months* and *Successful*

Relationships, and Avoidance cases cluster in the bottom left region, showing few and weaker indicators. Affiliation cases occupy space towards the bottom right, showing indicators of interpersonal growth, such as *Social Networks* and *Emotional Support*, falling short of the strongest indicators of recovery, most notably those pertaining to self-agency, such as *Employment* and *Abstinence*. Occupying space towards the top left of the plot, Power cases score on indicators of personal growth but few indicators of interpersonal growth. There are notable exceptions. Observing Figure 10.4, Profile 8 (Case 11) illustrates an Affiliation case scoring on strong indicators of personal growth (*Employment, Abstinence*). This perhaps suggests a more advanced recovery than other Affiliation cases, especially since the participant is the only group member to be presently abstinent from substances, suggesting momentum towards a fuller recovery:

Case 11: *'The film would just freeze with a picture of him in a puddle of piss, helpless and a total stranger helping him up. It's the turning point. The man realises he's helpless on his own so reaches out for help…. like this man who helped him build back his life…. In a later scene he is there joining hands with other ex-addicts and feeling grateful.'*

The above LAAF describes a protagonist who has observed a means of achieving positive change and presents a lasting image of this success. The greatest dispersal of profiles is among the Power Group. Since the group population (n=10) is higher than that of the Affiliation Group (n=4), it is perhaps likely to illustrate more variance in recovery profiles, suggesting individuals at different intermediate stages on the path to recovery. Of important note is Profile 4 (Case 12), showing a robust recovery via an almost exclusively personal growth pathway. Case 12 depicted a strong theme of *self-mastery* in his LAAF, demonstrating insight and determination to succeed. The dramatic theme of personal agency is clearly illustrated in this opening gambit:

Case 12: 'Okay, so if my life were to be made into a film…. I would say I'm now very ambitious, and that I have wasted time and talent by getting caught up, for a very long period, in drug

use. Underneath, and uncovered, is someone who is very driven to be successful. I'm a bit like the guy out of Wolf of Wall Street, but I am more philanthropic than that. If it was to be made into a film, it would be a story of transformation and triumph out of a mess.'

The theme of self-determined change is laid bare, and there is no mistaking the message of personal triumph. Other characters are accorded relative insignificance, even those closest to the participant:

Case 12: 'Basically, the main character would be me. Like I say, I've had a few girlfriends, but they don't really feature that heavily…. Mainly about me, but a few cameo roles, but it's mainly about my life.'

The centrality of *self-mastery* in shaping the story is exposed when the individual is prompted to delineate what happens in the most exciting scene in the film:

Case 12: 'I think I've covered it, but it would probably for me be the transformation I went through at the Project…being able to reveal myself to myself after all this time.'

Above all high-octane escapades in his previous lifestyle the participant chooses the exhilaration and significance of self-revelation in rehab to be most prominent in his LAAF narrative. While generally the results indicate that a strong recovery from substance misuse is contingent on a balanced narrative identity, the above case illustrates that perhaps a robust recovery can be achieved via an exclusive personal growth pathway. Related research in psychotherapy shows a similar pattern (Adler, 2012).

Of course, it should be recognised that the LAAF only represents the emphasis of a life story, from which certain details may be omitted, thus presenting an incomplete picture. Its strength lies in its replica of the 'self' perspective. This is key in addressing individual realities. The outcome measures offer a significant reflection of these crucial narratives.

10.4 Discussion

Building on the content analysis and SSA model, POSAC was useful in distinguishing central differences among participants LAAF narratives according to agency and communion themes, supporting the DAPA model with four main findings:

1. Agency and communion represent distinct aspects of LAAF narratives, from which four groups according to theme combinations can be distinguished:

    *   Dominance (high agency/communion)

    *   Affiliation (low agency, high communion)

    *   Power (high agency, low communion)

    *   Avoidance (low agency/communion)

2. The strength of agency and communion themes in LAAF narratives is related to external recovery indicators i.e., cumulative total of theme elements in LAAF narratives related to a stronger recovery, with Dominance cases showing the best recovery profiles, Avoidance cases the weakest, and Affiliation and Power cases moderate outcomes.

3. Agency and communion scales were observed, where an agentic identity growth theme was indicated, expanding from *Effectiveness, Empowerment* to *Self-Mastery*, and communal growth scale expanding from *Friendship, Caring* to *Unity*. Significantly, theme scales corresponded with recovery outcomes.

4. The breakdown of recovery items indicates two separate recovery pathways, according to themes of either agency or communion, where Affiliation cases correspond with external indicators of interpersonal growth and Power cases correspond with indicators of personal growth. Dominance cases measure high on both indices and Avoidance cases score poorly across the inventory.

The study develops the literature by proposing a substantive model of substance misuse and recovery that incorporates both agentic and communal processes, expanding on narrative identity transformation models (McIntosh & McKeganey, 2002), and elaborating on the recovery stories indicated by Hanninen & Koski-Jannes' (1999) study by encompassing narratives of ongoing substance misuse. Agency and communion theme combinations revealed regionality on the POSAC plot corresponding with the proposition of four distinct narrative groups: Dominance, Affiliation, Power, and Avoidance, supporting the DAPA model. In this, McAdams' (1988) framework of narrative identity offers a powerful model for identity transformation supporting recovery and allows us to differentiate 'problem' from 'resolution' narratives.

The study begins to address questions posed by Singer (2001) and Weegmann's (2010) case studies, moving towards more experientially valid and comprehensive theories of addiction. Accordingly, the qualitative distinction between agency and communion themes highlighted by the POSAC supports a separate consideration of these psychological coordinates (Bakan, 1966; McAdams, 1993; McAdams et al., 1996; Abele & Wojciszke, 2007), especially since their expression in narratives was found to map different recovery pathways.

Furthermore, within this conceptual framework, a scaling index was observed, where certain dramatic elements within the LAAF accounts reflected the intensity of 'theme growth': *Self-Mastery* was revealed to be the most potent agency element. A similar phenomenon was observed with respect to themes of communion, where *Unity* denoted the strongest thematic expression. The illustration of *Self-Mastery* encompassed narration of *Effectiveness* and *Empowerment,* and the illustration of *Unity* encompassed the narration of *Friendship* and *Caring*. Thus, narratives of *Self-Mastery* and *Unity* appear to be primarily related to substance misuse recovery. The identification of progressive growth scales within the narrative identity framework represents a signal theoretical advance which is instructive in delineating the

identity-transformation trajectory as it corresponds to recovery outcomes. In producing the same regionality on the POSAC plot, the study may suggest that Dominance, Affiliation, Power, Avoidance narratives corresponded with specific positions on the addiction-recovery spectrum. This is a neat result, aligning the specifics of a theoretical framework with external measures of behaviour, supporting the validity of the LAAF model.

Developing these findings, POSAC of recovery indicators revealed a qualitative distinction between a recovery path aligned to personal growth and a path aligned to interpersonal growth, suggesting the aptness of examining recovery trajectories in terms of two potential pathways, which can combine or initiate separately, following the agency and communion distinction. Again, POSAC revealed a scale of measures along each index, where weaker and stronger indicators of each pathway could be observed. Enduring abstinence denoted the most significant measure of the first pathway (personal growth), with *Employment* and *Desistance* from offending indicating important but weaker recovery indicators, while a perception of *successful relationships* denoted the strongest measure of the second pathway.

Recovery profiles mapped onto narrative theme groups, illustrating correspondence between narrative identity and recovery behaviours. The mapping was most clear in Dominance and Avoidance groups, though less exact with respect to the Affiliation and Power groups, where certain cases illustrated significantly stronger recovery profiles than other group members. This appeared to be at least in part explicable with reference to stronger theme profiles, as illustrated by case examples.

Of course, items on the RI do not reflect perfectly demarcated personal or interpersonal recovery paths. Certain behavioural indicators may be seen to invoke some combination of both factors. For example, sustaining employment may emphasise self-agency but also involves interpersonal elements by degrees, according to various aspects of workforce

practice. The weight of either factor may reflect other variables, such as employment type. Likewise, whilst abstinence suggests self-discipline and personal triumph, the reasons for abstinence may implicate relationships. This ambiguity may confound the data, especially in terms of its ability to explain intermediate narratives, whilst Dominance and Avoidance LAAFs more clearly reflect either all or few recovery indicators. However, the results are suggestive of exemplary pathways, though future research needs to examine these proposed patterns more rigorously.

Nonetheless, illustration of correspondence between thematic expressions of agency and communion in LAAF narratives and external recovery indices begins to address limitations of current models that emphasise social mechanisms of recovery (e.g. Frings & Albery, 2015; Best et al., 2016), and marries the perspective with recent research showing the importance of personal agency to lifestyles of recovery (Stone, 2016). This is not to undermine the SIMOR, since the model explains processes key to most recovery stories; however, the author argues that a life narrative model provides a richer portrait of stories' trajectory (McAdams, 1993; Singer, 2001). The LAAF model recognises the interplay of central themes in identity transitions, likely forming a framework for all personal change processes. As a disorder of identity, the model offers a more comprehensive consideration of factors integral to transformation from substance misuse to recovery. In this, the LAAF appears to provide a highly applicable narrative elicitation method for the population. Specifically, the framework used in this study provides a scalable coding dictionary, suggestive of mapping prospective growth from 'addiction identity' to 'recovery identity' with key behavioural indicators, elucidating components of a two-dimensional growth process. This guides research briefs away from singularly focused theories.

The DAPA framework may make for an easier assessment of individual intervention needs: in cases of a strong agency theme, focus should be on developing interpersonal connections

and emotional support networks, such as referrals to AA/NA fellowships, assigning mentors, group interventions, relationships therapy, interpersonal skills training, and counselling around trust. Strong communion narratives highlight a personal growth need: skills development, confidence and competence building through key interests and aptitudes, and phenomenological therapies focused on achieving personal insight. Where neither theme is illustrated, a combined focus is necessary.

Crucially, by conducting research on a mixed population of substance users, those with momentum towards recovery, and those in recovery a detailed cross-section of identity presentations and behavioural manifestations is made possible. Identification of these relationships supports the validity of the LAAF method for substance misuse populations, expanding the work of Canter and colleagues (Canter & Young, 2015; Youngs et al., 2016) with offenders. The author recognises that themes other than agency and communion are important in substance misuse and recovery; however, the findings provide a sound basis for examining elements related to agency and communion in the SSA structure to see if they enrich distinction of detailed narrative forms among participants, as has been shown in offender research (Youngs & Canter, 2012). These patterns will be examined in a subsequent chapter.

The study introduces powerful new MDS methods to the field of substance misuse that have been validated in other research areas, providing robust models of behaviour (Porter & Alison; Canter & Youngs, 2012, 2015). It is important to highlight the power of the POSAC result in the current study, revealing clear patterns in such a small sample. Four distinct groups have been found, showing themes of personal narratives that relate to aspects of recovery. Despite the impediments of a small study sample, such clear findings and practical implications serve to justify the efforts of future research with larger populations.

10.5 Conclusions

Developing the conceptual framework given by SSA, the study finds support for the DAPA model by distinguishing four narrative groups according to dominant themes of agency and communion which relate to recovery and non-recovery from substance misuse. Combined narrative agency and communion related to a strong recovery, narrative agency *or* communion related to more moderate outcomes, and limited agency and communion related to non-recovery. Further, expansion to *self-mastery* and *unity* from less agentic and communal narrative themes reflected the strongest recovery outcomes, suggesting a two-dimensional growth arc towards a recovery identity. These results indicate that the recovery process involves the re-storying of life narratives towards more dramatic presentations of agency and communion.

Chapter 11. Study 4. Dominant Themes and Stories of Recovery

11.1 Chapter in brief

The LAAF model has been useful for revealing the way in which agency and communion themes differentiate narratives and how these differences are reflected in recovery and non-recovery outcomes. Chapter 10 suggested that agency and communion themes in participants LAAF narratives provide indicators by which recovery from substance misuse can be gauged, supporting the DAPA model. This chapter reports on a subsequent study using the same content analysis to build on the POSAC and correlation studies (Rowlands et al., 2019b), by testing the significance of theme group differences in RI scores. The purpose of this study is to show the importance of combined narrative agency and communion to recovery over agency or communion-specific narrative identities.

Participants were divided into one of four groups according to agency and communion theme presentations in LAAF narratives. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was run to test differences in RI scores between groups. Data revealed significant differences between the Power (agency theme) and Avoidance group (low agency and communion theme), and between the Affiliation (communion theme) and Avoidance group. No significant differences were found between the Power and Affiliation group. However, significant differences were shown between the Dominance (combined agency and communion theme) and Power and Affiliation groups.

The results suggest that dominant agency *or* communion themed narratives correspond to equal recovery outcomes while supporting better outcomes than narratives depicting neither theme, whereas combined agency and communion related to significantly better recovery outcomes than the three other narrative groups. The findings link narrative agency and communion with robust recovery outcomes, corroborating the POSAC study and more clearly

supporting differentiation of LAAF narratives according to the DAPA recovery model. They suggest that changes to identity most demonstrative of recovery involve both agency and communion narrative themes, whereas the stories of active substance misusers reflect fixed low agency and communion constructs. Practical implications are discussed in terms of presenting identity issues that may help identify specific interventions needs.

11.2 Method

The study used the same dataset as previous studies, derived from interviews with 32 participants completing the LAAF task and RI. RI data was used to compare theme data with recovery outcomes. For this analysis, agency and communion theme totals were aggregated for each participant's LAAF account. The same elements were used as in the POSAC study: *Effectiveness, Empowerment, Self-Mastery* (agency), *Love/Friendship, Caring, and Unity* (communion). The Cohen's kappa coefficient of 0.72 from previous studies informed of coding reliability.

A score of '1' was given for each element present, so that a score of 0-3 was possible for each theme and a total aggregate (agency and communion) score of six. A cumulative score of 2/3 was chosen to reflect a dominant narrative theme. For example, a LAAF scoring only on the elements *Effectiveness* and *Empowerment* would denote a high agency, low communion narrative, whereas a LAAF describing *Effectiveness, Empowerment*, *Friendship and Caring* would denote a high agency, high communion narrative. In contrast, describing fewer than two elements on both themes denoted a low agency, low communion narrative.

Reliability of scales was tested using Cronbach's, producing an Alpha value of 0.77 for communion elements and 0.82 for agency elements. This suggests a high level of internal consistency, supporting a quantitative interpretation (Skinner & Allen 1982).

Table 11.1 shows agency and communion scores, total theme scores, and scores on the RI for each of the participants. The data illustrates four LAAF groups according to total scores on agency and communion themes: Dominance - where agency and communion themes are observed, Affiliation - where a communion theme is observed, Power - where an agency theme is observed, and Avoidance - where neither theme is observed. The data highlights a relationship between agency and communion themes in LAAF narratives and scores on the RI.

Participant	Agency Theme Total	Communion Theme Total	Combined Theme Total	Recovery Inventory Total
1	0	0	0	2
2	0	0	0	1
3	0	1	1	0
4	1	0	1	2
5	0	1	1	2
6	0	1	1	2
7	1	1	2	2
8	0	3	3	4
9	1	3	4	4
10	0	3	3	7
11	1	3	4	7
12	3	0	3	9
13	2	1	3	6
14	3	0	3	8
15	2	1	3	5
16	3	0	3	5
17	2	1	3	6
18	2	1	3	5
19	2	1	3	6
20	3	1	4	5
21	3	1	4	7
22	2	2	4	11
23	3	3	6	12
24	3	3	6	12
25	3	3	6	12
26	3	3	6	12
27	3	3	6	12
28	3	3	6	12
29	3	3	6	10
30	3	3	6	12
31	3	3	6	12
32	3	3	6	11

Table 11.1 showing agency/communion themes and RI scores among 32 participants.

11.3 Results

11.3.1 Descriptive statistics

From Table 11.2 it can be observed that there is a higher standard deviation (SD) in the Affiliation and Power groups, highlighting greater variance in RI scores. This suggests more complex data patterns, with more distinctions among individual recovery profiles (see Chapter 10). This variation accords with the idea that Affiliation and Power narratives reflect a broad spectrum of intermediate positions in terms of substance use patterns and behaviours linked to recovery trajectories, compared with the less varied presentation suggested in Dominance and Avoidance groups, their narratives more distinctly representing recovery or non-recovery outcomes.

		Recovery Scores	
Narrative Group	*Number of cases*	*Mean*	*Std. Deviation*
Avoidance	7	1.57	0.79
Affiliation	4	5.5	1.73
Power	10	6.20	1.55
Dominance	11	11.55	0.82

Table 11.2 showing mean recovery scores and standard deviations between groups.

11.3.2 *ANOVA*

The groups satisfied Levene's Homogeneity of variance (p<0.05), and in common with similar measures (e.g. Beck's Depression Inventory - Beck et al., 1961), the RI was considered to satisfy the assumptions of interval level data. To test for differences in RI scores between groups, a one-way ANOVA was run. As can be observed in Table 11.3 below, a statistically significant difference between groups was determined: (F (3,28) = 102.07, p<0.01

Recovery Score	*Sum of Squares*	*Df*	*Mean Square*	*F Value*	*Significance*
Between Groups	448.83	3	149.61	102.07	0.000
Within Groups	41.04	28			
Total	489.88	31			

Table 11.3. ANOVA table showing significant differences between groups.

Tukey's post hoc test was run to determine which groups differed from each other. Tukey's post hoc is generally the preferred analysis on a one-way ANOVA. The test revealed that RI scores were:

- Significantly higher in the Affiliation Group *(p<0.01)* and the Power Group *(p<0.01)* than the Avoidance Group, demonstrating that the presence of either an agency or communion theme in LAAF narratives was associated with better recovery outcomes than low agency, low communion narratives.

- Significantly higher in the Dominance Group than in either the Affiliation Group *(p<0.01)* or Power Group *(p<0.01)*, demonstrating that the presence of both agency and communion themes in LAAF narratives was associated with better recovery outcomes than the presence of either theme alone.

- Statistically insignificant differences between the Affiliation Group and the Power Group *(p=.76),* demonstrating that the presence of either narrative theme is associated with similar recovery outcomes.

The results show an association between the presence of agency and communion themes in participants' LAAF descriptions and recovery outcomes. Narratives with strong themes of both agency and communion show a robust recovery, whereas narratives low in both agency and communion show non-recovery. These latter participants all remain active in lifestyles of substance misuse. Participants whose narratives depicted either strong agency or communion themes showed outcomes suggesting some momentum towards recovery, falling short of the more robust recovery demonstrated by Dominance cases. The findings support the POSAC results in suggesting that stronger recovery is reflected in LAAF narratives depicting high agency and communion, weaker recovery profiles where there is a dominant agency *or*

communion theme, and little indication of momentum towards recovery where neither theme is present.

11.3.3 Case studies

It is important to note that the relationship between LAAF themes and recovery outcomes does not illustrate process. However, case studies can help to elucidate developmental trajectories and perceived etiological pathways. Further, case examples show how similar themes are represented and contextualised in individual stories. Attention now turns to illustrative LAAF descriptions. In the first example, a recovering polysubstance misuser narrates his trajectory from powerless addiction to connection, insight and empowerment:

Case 30: 'Addiction took over, cos I could just have one, I can't stop. Once I pick up, that's it, I get obliviated. I'm an addict. I've had to accept that reality a long time ago. I'm coming up to 5 years clean and sober, though, this August. That's not touching anything, one day at a time. If I pick up, I'm busted. But getting off smack and crack would be an event, the events. It's massive. It's massive, ask any addict. December 2011 I'd hit rock bottom, living on the streets of Birkenhead, after I got chucked out of my mate's for shagging his wife. That was a mistake. I was drinking 4 litres of cider a day and wanted to end it. This bloke dragged me to a meeting. He's one of my best mates now. First off, I thought 'Fuck this', but he kept dragging me back, and one day it clicked. And I've learning about… questioning myself through others since. Now its second nature and I'm the helper.'

The narrative depicts a pivotal scene: *'This bloke dragged me to a meeting. He's one of my best mates now. First off, I thought 'Fuck this', but he kept dragging me back and one day it clicked. And I've learning about… questioning myself through others since. Now its second nature and I'm the helper.'*. This sequence represents a communal breakthrough in the life story, steering the narrative from compulsive hopelessness to a vision of recovery. However, as can be observed in the except below, the LAAF also illustrates discontinuity of progress, a phenomenon highlighted in a recent study by Kougiali et al. (2017):

Case 30: 'It wasn't as easy as that. Anyone tells you it is talking bollocks. I had to go through rehab. That nearly killed me. It made me realise everything I did was driven by my ego. Rehab stripped that away and made face up to feelings and talk, which was bloody hard when you've been numb on smack for 25 years. I just tried to make a joke out of everything. Then I started using women as a substitute addiction. Then I just ran away from everything again and relapsed.'

It is important to appreciate that recovery stories represent significant life challenges, often involving stunted progress with multiple relapses; nonetheless, in recovery stories, key growth themes thread through the narrative. In this case, the participant is quick to depict agentic and communal expansion as key to recovery momentum, establishing behavioural change, and helping others with addiction problems:

Case 30: 'But A gave me chance after chance, and one day it just stuck, and I burst out crying in front of everyone. That was my breakthrough moment. Thinking about it, that was when I began dragging myself along. Before long, I was the one the dragging others along. That's how recovery has to work. It's a team effort. A team of fuck ups, yeah, ha-ha-ha.'

The following passage, similarly, illustrates self-determination and a growing sense of agency in the narrative, and how this was important to the participant's recovery.

Case 25: 'A character always had mates but the wrong mates…. trying to escape the nonsense with drugs. It'd show me failing over again and people giving up on me, but how I kept going and gradually got the guts and will to crack on…… By the end, you see me happy, just passed my driving test and got a job. Then it'd end with a mad party round my gaff. No drugs, ha-ha.'

This extract from the same participant illustrates how the theme of communion is also central to his conceptualisation of recovery:

Case 25: '…But you'll see me contemplating using and the screen will split to ten phone calls to mates telling me don't do it and me just falling asleep in front of the TV with my bird instead.'

The above examples depict how ideas of agency and communion facilitate recovery from substance misuse, suggesting the instrumentality of narrative identity to positive behavioural change, supporting other researchers' arguments that narratives serve as prompts for behaviour (Bruner, 1987; Crossley, 2000; Maruna, 2001; Presser, 2009; Youngs & Canter, 2012; Singer et al., 2013), and that values, motives and actions highly correlate (McLean & McAdams, 2004; Buchanan & Bardi, 2015). In contrast, the case below highlights the reverse theme, with diminished self-determination and growing isolation reinforcing substance misuse:

Case 2: 'I just fall further into the trap. Just a number of predicaments and not being able to grasp why.... It would be a film about someone who started off having a laugh with his mates and trying things out, but then falling into a predicament and getting confused... You know, I had a lot of big ideas growing up and then suddenly they were all gone, and I was on my own, drinking.'

The excerpt communicates an identity of powerlessness and growing alienation, and how this can facilitate substance use, while the passage below from a recovering heroin user illustrates the high agency, or Power narrative:

Case 21: 'Then there's a powerful scene where all the shit from the last 10 years rushes into his head and he breaks down in front of the mirror, and then smashes it, smashing his tears to pieces and just gets strong from there. Err, dunno, just uses that desperation to power him forward.... Stops smashing drugs. Get control of his life. You see him looking smart preening in front of the mirror the next day, ha-ha. New mirror. Final scene shows him standing proud in a house he's just done up.'

The LAAF describes a welling of inner strength upon reflection and a transforming sense of agency. This participant interprets his shift from a perceived 'rock bottom' in terms of personal determination. Whether this narrative is accurate or not, of course, is uncertain; however, the attribution of personal agency itself confers a positive forward momentum, evidenced by his continuing recovery. Conversely, the following account captures the

importance of 'belonging' in breaking free from drug dependency, highlighting a dominant communion narrative:

Case 10: 'Losing most everything and being a washed up drunk, isolating, to finding recovery and connecting with that higher power, of the addict collective, being a valuable sober member of AA with a great life, lots of money, and a beautiful girlfriend that loved me, as I her, going on travels and adventures all over the world. Then she left me and it's back to square one….. for me the most exciting part of the film would be when I first meet my ex Suzy and I get 6 months of sober time and we fall in love and travel the world. She showed me that the thrill is still alive in sobriety, and more real, if more raw. The tragedy is its over for good, she's left, and I'm scrabbling to pick up the pieces.'

The LAAF observes a personal 'rock bottom', reflecting Chen's (2018) proposition that nadir experiences stimulate decisive change, though here the protagonist relies on helping others to reconstruct his life. This participant continues to struggle maintaining abstinence, which may highlight an overreliance on social support and an understanding that, alone, he is powerless over addiction. As signalled in the LAAF, relapse occurs following interpersonal fallout or subsequent to his withdrawing from recovery groups, supporting Best and others' arguments (Best et al., 2016); although the case highlights fragility in a purely communal concept of recovery identities, especially where individuals are vulnerable to withdrawal from interpersonal support. The presentation is typical of Affiliation narratives in this sample, where there is either a fixed low self-agency attribution or a diminished agency attribution.

The above descriptions show how agency and communion themes in film descriptions reflect a process of identity transition that has an important impact on recovery. Illustration has been made of agentic and communal narrative/recovery trajectories. Though earlier narrative research highlights multiple pathways (Hanninen & Koski-Jannes, 1999), and social identity theorists emphasise communal processes (e.g. Bathish et al., 2017), full recovery from substance misuse likely involves a combination of both agentic and communal processes, corresponding with more comprehensive identity theories (McAdams, 1988, 1993). The LAAF tool is useful for capturing this twin dynamic.

11.4 Discussion

Findings support those from previous chapters, highlighting the relationship between agency and communion themes in life narratives and recovery from substance misuse, while illustrating the reverse pattern of low agency and communion (powerlessness and isolation) with active substance misuse. In revealing two additional narratives (agency and communion) relating to weaker recovery profiles, a model of four narrative groups is proposed. This DAPA model enables an interpretation of recovery identity pathways according to life narrative themes.

Limitations of current models begin to be redressed in applying this more detailed framework. Using standard quantitative analysis, narrative groups were shown to be related to recovery outcomes, supporting the POSAC findings. Differences in recovery scores between the Affiliation Group and the Avoidance Group were shown to be strongly significant, showing that communion concepts in LAAF narratives related to better outcomes and less pronounced substance use issues than when the theme was absent. Significant differences were also found between Power and Avoidance groups, demonstrating that agentic identities also support recovery processes, building on Stone's (2016) and others (Dunlop & Tracy, 2013) narrative findings.

Again, the study suggests a distinction between agency and communion paths to identity change, rather than a sole emphasis on communal processes (Frings & Albery, 2015; Best et al. 2016). Specifically, there was no significant difference in recovery outcomes between the Affiliation and Power groups, intimating that, in this sample at least, both agentic and communal identity themes impose equally on recovery potential. Crucially, a strongly significant difference was found in RI scores between the Dominance Group and both Affiliation and Power groups on RI scores, showing that presence of both agency and communion themes in narratives reflects a more robust recovery than either theme alone,

expanding social identity and extant narrative frameworks (e.g. Stone, 2016). This finding supports a model of identity transformation that recognises twin agency and communion processes that are written into recovery stories (McAdams et al, 1996; Chen, 2018).

Developing this point, Dominance narratives appear to relate to stronger recovery, whereas it can be argued that Affiliation and Power LAAFs reflect incomplete, or still progressing, recovery courses, with cases frequently falling short on several recovery indicators in correspondence with life story presentation. The notion of narrative transitions was raised in Chapter 9, where it was considered whether each 'narrative type' might be conceived of as a position on identity transformation/recovery paths, within which further sub-divisions/transitional phases could be observed. This notion proposes that throughways to recovery are snapped in suspended animation with the LAAF report, from which select presentations could map entire courses of identity change and reconstructed stories. If this idea holds true, LAAF accounts could offer individual reports reflective of 'issues for resolution'. However, while LAAF data is suggestive, firm propositions require longitudinal studies examining LAAF accounts over the course of active substance misuse through to recovery.

The low agency and communion presentation of Avoidance cases highlights the contrasting powerless and isolated narrative identity that has been missing from research focussed on recovering rather than active users, and matches this life narrative to non-recovery, suggesting requirement for a two-dimensional change process. Singer's (1997) case studies raised this question, but the idea has not been adequately examined prior to this thesis. Accordingly, the study is signal in proposing problematic and reconstructed narratives, highlighting key focus points for interventions seeking to shift the pivot of life trajectories. Understanding how narratives identify obstacles to recovery carries important implications for treatment models.

While quantitative analysis revealed a strong relationship between themes of agency and communion and successful outcomes, use of ANOVA on such a small sample is unusual, especially considering that certain groups comprised only several individuals. Future small scale LAAF research may seek to reinforce findings using correlational analysis; however, since a fundamental purpose of this study was corroboration of patterns observed through POSAC, this may be less of a concern.

Additionally, the quantitative analysis does not illustrate contextual factors or developmental sequence. Case studies were helpful in elucidating how developing themes of agency and communion facilitated the recovery process; however, these reflective accounts, while certainly suggestive, may suffer from attribution bias (Newman & Davies, 2007), and subsequent longitudinal research should look to more rigorously examine this relationship.

A limitation of the study is a focus on just two narrative themes. The author recognises that identity transformation involves the interaction of numerous narrative threads, including redemption sequences not examined in the current study (McAdams, 2001; Pals & McAdams, 2006; Alder et al., 2015; Stone, 2016). Also, the content chosen to signify agency and communion is necessarily interpretative and did not address related elements, such as approach styles, narrative resolution (Hankiss, 1981) and imagoes (McAdams, 1993) that have been explored in similar research (Youngs et al., 2016). Future investigations should explore how these elements relate to the narratives illustrated in this study, in an endeavour to extend the DAPA framework to a richer model of narrative forms.

On the issue of phenomenological context, any thematic coding reduces rich responses to quantifiable items. In this process, nuances of personal experiences and storylines can be lost whilst scoring pre-conceived content. Research methodology of the study rests on the assumption that to derive meaning from narratives themes of interest need to be generated

(Presser, 2010), as opposed to the proposals of Grounded Theory that data should be allowed to speak for itself (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Efforts were made to eliminate bias by: (1) selecting themes previously shown to be important to narrative identity, both in substance misuse and more broadly (2) providing case study examples of narratives processes being studied to embed thematic data in the context of personal stories. However, appreciating these arguments, later chapters endeavour to expand on the richness of narrative illustrations by broadening the content of LAAF analysis and providing more qualitative descriptions.

11.5 Conclusions

In conclusion, it can be stated that LAAF narratives with themes of agency and communion are associated with recovery from substance misuse, and narratives lacking the themes are associated with non-recovery from substance misuse. This suggests that identity transformations marking recovery involve both growth themes. Case studies helped to elucidate developmental pathways, providing context to findings and suggesting how evolving themes of agency and communion in the narrative identity may be influential in recovery. These findings help widen the lens of existing models, indicating that personal narratives embody multiple themes important to recovery. However, further analysis is needed to examine related narrative themes, enriching the pattern of elements that distinguish recovery from non-recovery, as well as further addressing the notion of growth dimensions.

Chapter 12. Study 5. Personal Reconstruction Systems

12.1 Chapter in brief

This chapter explores fixed and changing identities among participants by examining personal construct systems. Preceding chapters indicate a relationship between accounts of agency and communion in LAAF narratives and recovery from substance misuse. The argument being that part of the recovery process is reconstruction of personal narrative, and thus identity, with greater thematic agency and communion. These storied self-changes suggest identity growth themes – agency and communion (McAdams et al., 1996; Adler, 2012; Adler et al., 2015). As proposed by POSAC in Chapter 10, this process may reflect two dimensions of identity change.

Developing the proposition, this chapter reports on a study of participants' personal constructs. Bipolar statements were composed that characterised high and low evaluations on agency and communion constructs. These constructs were self-scored on a repertory grid by participants across past, present and ideal identities using a Likert scale. The aim of the study was to reveal self-attributed changes to agency and communion constructs between 'substance-using' and 'recovery' identities. The purpose of this is to demonstrate differences in the way non-recovered substance misusers and recovered substance misusers construct their identities, highlighting a transformation in recovery.

The main finding was that individuals in recovery constructed more agentic and communal identities than active users. Moreover, and crucial to the study propositions, recovered users constructed low agency and communion past 'substance-using' identities, invoking a process of agentic and communal growth in recovery. In contrast, non-recovered substance misusers constructed low agency and communion identities enduring through past and present self-constructs, invoking a fixed agency and communion-deficient identity (Rowlands et al.,

2020). Interestingly, Power cases constructed agency-specific identity changes - their low communion constructs corresponding with a previous 'substance-using' identity - while Affiliation cases constructed communion-specific changes - their low agency constructs reflecting a previous 'substance-using' identity (Rowlands et al., 2020). Considering moderate RI scores among these cases, the presentations are suggestive of intermediate recovery positions, supporting potency of the two-dimensional identity transformation model and recovery process indicated in previous chapters.

The findings suggest that agency and communion constructs reflect growth dimensions, perceived expansion, or 'reconstruction', toward agentic and communal attributes being associated with recovery from substance misuse. This study expands application of the DAPA model in observing not only constructed agency and communion in recovered users, but articulating a transformative (reconstructive) trajectory, invoking a two-dimensional identity transformation process in recovery, contrasting with a fixed low agency and communion identity construction in chronic substance misuse.

12.2 Methods

12.2.1 Materials

Analysis in this study derives from follow-up interviews conducted six-months subsequent to the initial LAAF interviews. As discussed in Chapter 6, all 32 participants were retained. The interview involved completion of a repertory grid composed of 10 bipolar construct dimensions. To recap, the constructs: 'Escapes from problems' vs 'Confronts problems', 'Cannot trust myself' vs 'Can trust myself', 'Have confused feelings' vs 'Have control of feelings', 'Powerless over outcomes' vs 'Can determine desirable outcomes', and 'Life in chaos' vs 'In control', were used to evaluate components of agency, and the constructs:

'Alone' vs 'Connected to others', 'Don't trust people' vs 'Trusts people', and 'Cannot express my true self' vs 'Can be myself with others', were used evaluate components of communion. The construct 'A victim' vs 'A survivor' was included since it reflected discriminating identities in the LAAF material, and 'Things get worse' vs 'Things change for the better' was included to reflect redemption versus contamination constructs, which was also discriminating of LAAF narratives.

Developing the format used in Ng's (2002) study, participants scored themselves on each construct for five identity elements: *Before Drugs Self, Drug-Using Self, Current Self, Real Self,* and *Ideal Self.* Including a 'before substance use' identity gives a baseline measure and enables assessment of the perceived 'substance use effect' on constructs. Ng's *Actual Self* element was differentiated into the *Current Self* and *Real Self.* This distinction follows from research indicating competing identities, with an 'authentic self' underlying the substance-using identity (e.g. Biernacki, 1986; Dingle et al., 2015), assessing rating differences on these key elements. The *Ideal Self* is included to provide indication of the value system and illustrates how closely each reflective 'self' is to the desired identity.

A Likert-scale, scoring from 1-7, was used, in which higher scores referred to the emergent (positive) pole. See Appendix 6 for a repertory grid template and Chapter 6 for detailed discussion of grid design and other methodological considerations.

12.2.2 Analysis

The IDIOGRID software developed by Grice (2004) was used to collate grid data and to create idiographic diagrams of each participant's repertory grid. The output represents scores for each of the identity elements as points in geometric space, so that the proximity of each identity (e.g. *Drug-Using, Current, Ideal*) can be observed in relation to each of the constructs,

and comparisons among elements made. In this way, components of perceived identity change over time can be observed. IDIOGRID also enables data from multiple grids to be merged by collating average scores among elements for a group of repertory grids, producing a group graph that illustrates patterns among a set of related grids. This facility is important for the current undertaking, enabling comparison of construct systems between groups and observation of distinct patterns. For this analysis, participants were assigned to the groups emerging from the LAAF studies according to agency and communion themes in their narratives: Dominance, Affiliation, Power, and Avoidance (see Chapter 10). Single Value Decomposition (SVD) was used to preserve the original scale ratings, so that data and diagrams were centred around the scale middle (Grice, 2004).

12.3 Results

In this section, personal construct patterns among the four theme groups will be examined and then illustration of how the specified construct systems are reflected in individual grids will be made using case examples.

12.3.1 Avoidance Group (Low agency-communion)

Figure 12.1 shows the SVD output of converged Avoidance Group data. As predicted, the *Current Self* is proximate to the *Drug-Using* and *Before Drugs Self*, positioned towards the centre of the left-hand pole of the graph, illustrating a fixed identity with a pervasive low agency and communion construct system. Avoidance individuals report little agentic or communal growth over time, existing in an identity mire with corresponding substance use. All participants in this group remain active substance users. Specifically, the *Before Drugs Self, Drug-Using Self* and *Current Self* are aligned with a construct of a 'Life in chaos' and 'Powerlessness over outcomes', illustrating an intractable agency deficit, which is supported by seeing oneself as an isolated (Alone) victim. The contamination construct 'Things change for the worse' is also closely linked to the *Before Drugs, Drug-Using* and *Current Self*, though it is more pronounced in the *Drug-Using Self*. The key low agency/communion components of isolation and powerlessness combine in this personal construct system, from which positive momentum is difficult to achieve.

It should be noted that while certainly maintaining low scores, the *Current, Before Drugs* and *Real Self* rate higher on several constructs than the *Drug-Using Self*, indicating a perception of identity above the nadir of self-evaluation. This is interesting, since all participants in the group are active substance users. The trend, in the *Current Self* and *Real Self,* to rate marginally higher on constructs such as 'Can determine desirable outcomes', than a retrospective *Drug-Using Self* may simply reflect a common reluctance to admit lack of progress, or could point to an identity underlying the substance use that is conceived as potentially more powerful than the *Drug-Using* identity. The pattern is redolent of Biernacki's (1986) and Larsson et al.'s. (2013) concept of conflicted identities, but also recalls Dingle et al.'s. (2015) hidden past identities that can re-emerge in recovery. It is most evident in observation of the *Before Drugs* and *Real Self*, whose positioning is somewhat closer to the

centre region on certain constructs (e.g. 'Confronts problems', 'Things change for the better'). Though only small differences, revealing this identity contrast could be key in giving momentum for change (see Smedslund et al., 2011), and indicates an avenue for further study.

Unsurprisingly, the *Ideal Self* scores high on agentic constructs: 'Confronts problems' and 'Can trust myself.' This represents a value system that could be translated into aspirations through the pivot of hope. The concern lies with the lower scores accorded the *Ideal Self* on communal constructs: 'Trusts people' and 'Connected to others'. The two constructs naturally follow, suspicion towards others impeding potentially supportive connections. The task for interventions would be to recognise this shortfall and seek to change the value system by nourishing therapeutic bonds, while stimulating the '*Real Self'* to make steps towards recovery.

Figure 12.1. SVD graph showing the relationship between identity elements and personal constructs in the Avoidance Group.

12.3.2 Affiliation Group (Low agency-high communion)

Figure 12.2 illustrates converged data for the Affiliation Group. Here a more complex pattern emerges; however, overall the *Current Self* is positioned at the centre of the poles, equidistant from the *Ideal Self* and the *Drug-Using Self* (which typically occupies the central far-left low agency and communion region), depicting a significant identity change. Observing more closely the positioning of the *Current* and *Real* identities, change is specific to certain key constructs - those occupying the top righthand region, relating to communion. Specifically, the *Current Self* and *Real Self* rate higher on: 'Connected to others', 'Can be myself with others', 'Trusts People', where they are disassociated from the *Drug-Using Self*, illustrating a

perceived progression towards the 'ideal' and a valued identity transition. This contrasts with findings from the Avoidance group, who showed no pronounced shift. However, lower ratings are observed on agentic constructs, such as 'Have control of feelings', 'Can determine desirable outcomes', 'Confronts problems' and 'In control', in the bottom left region, where alignment is evident with the low agency pole: 'Have confused feelings', 'Powerless over outcomes', common to previous identity modes. Crucially, however, agentic constructs are valued, illustrated by the positioning of the *Ideal Self*, offering a clear vision for intervention focus. Both *Current* and *Real Self* are positioned equidistant between 'Things get worse' and 'Things change for the better', whereas the previous *Drug-Using Self* is closely linked to the contamination construct. This illustrates momentum towards a redemption construct. The Affiliation construct system is associated with moderate recovery outcomes (see Chapters 10 and 11), suggesting that the current low agency attribution presents a barrier to full recovery. While the data shows a trend towards evolving communion, some control wrested over a 'life in chaos' and commensurate growth into a 'survivor' identity is observed, suggesting focus needs to be applied to self-regulation and determinism attributes in cultivation of a more robust identity transformation.
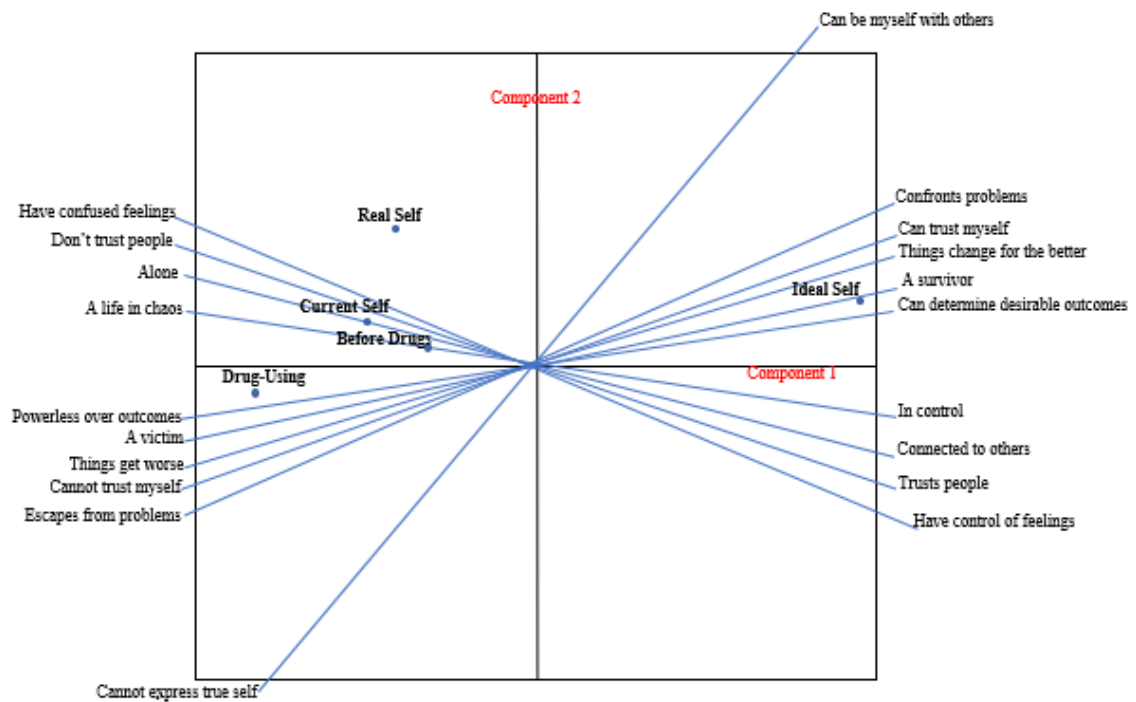
Figure 12.2. SVD graph showing the relationship between identity elements and personal constructs in the Affiliation Group.

12.3.3 Power Group (High agency-low communion)

Figure 12.3 shows the converged Power Group data. As with the Affiliation Group, the *Current* and *Real Self* are positioned somewhat equidistant between the *Drug-Using* and *Ideal Self,* illustrating a progressive identity shift. The *Current* identity has advanced towards the centre of the construct poles, though this expansion is specific to certain constructs. The Power Group illustrates a contrasting shift, highlighting momentum towards an *Ideal Self* in the bottom left-hand, or agentic region of the graph. Change is observed on agentic constructs: 'Confronts problems', 'Can trust myself', 'Can determine desirable outcomes' and 'Have

control of feelings', setting this group apart from both the Avoidance and Affiliation Group. The *Current Self* constructs' chart a comprehensive agentic growth process; however, contrasting with the Affiliation Group, constructs pertaining to communion are rated lower, occupying the opposing region of the graph. Significantly, the combination of 'Don't trust people' and 'Alone' is observed in the *current* identity, in common with the *Drug-Using* and *Before Drug Use Self* and mirroring the Avoidance Group ratings, indicating no perceived communal expansion. Crucially, these positions are maintained even with consideration of the *Ideal Self.* In other words, trusting and connecting with people is not seen as desirable. This may highlight an obstacle to further positive change.

Participants identify less as victims and have more control over outcomes than their previous personas, though they identify the need for greater control over emotions and more control generally for the attainment of their *Ideal Self*. Clearly, the focus moving forwards for this group is continued agentic growth, with little requirement identified for supportive others. In this respect, the midpoint position on the graph of the *Current Self* between the *Drug-Using* and *Ideal Self* suggests evaluation as halfway through a transformation process. Correspondingly, similar moderate RI scores are observed as with the Affiliation Group, suggesting equal but contrasting impediments to full recovery. The *Current* and *Real Self* show a closer approximation to the redemptive construct 'Things get better' than the *Before Drugs* and *Drug-Using Self*, though this construct is less pronounced than in the Affiliation Group, perhaps signifying a generally less positive outlook.
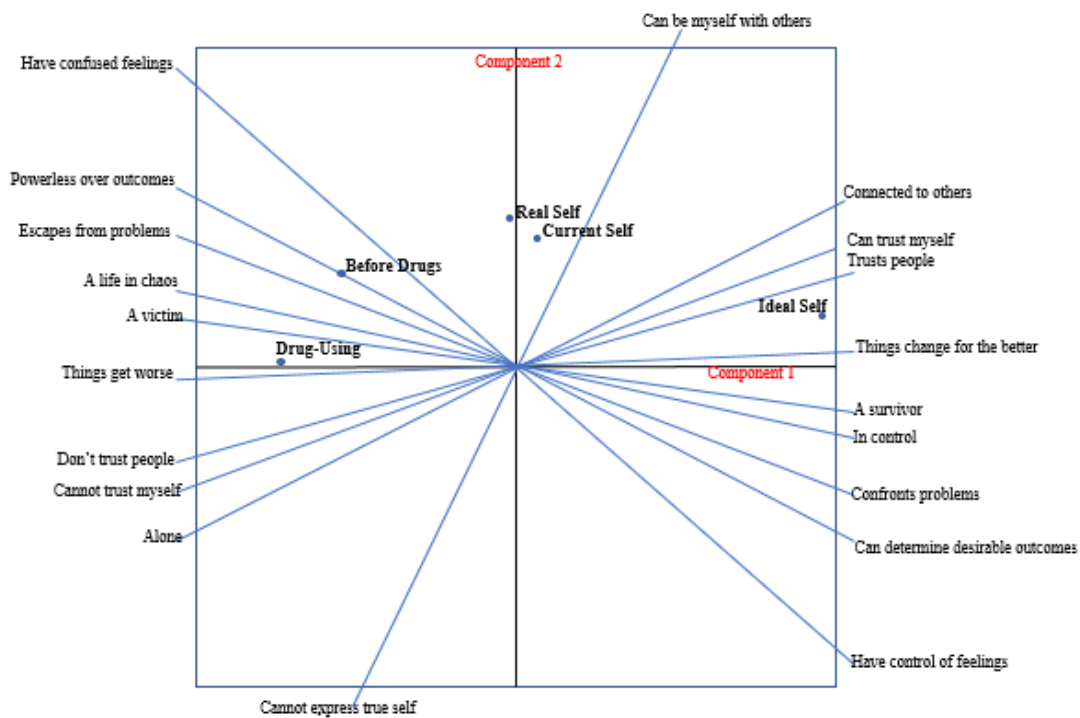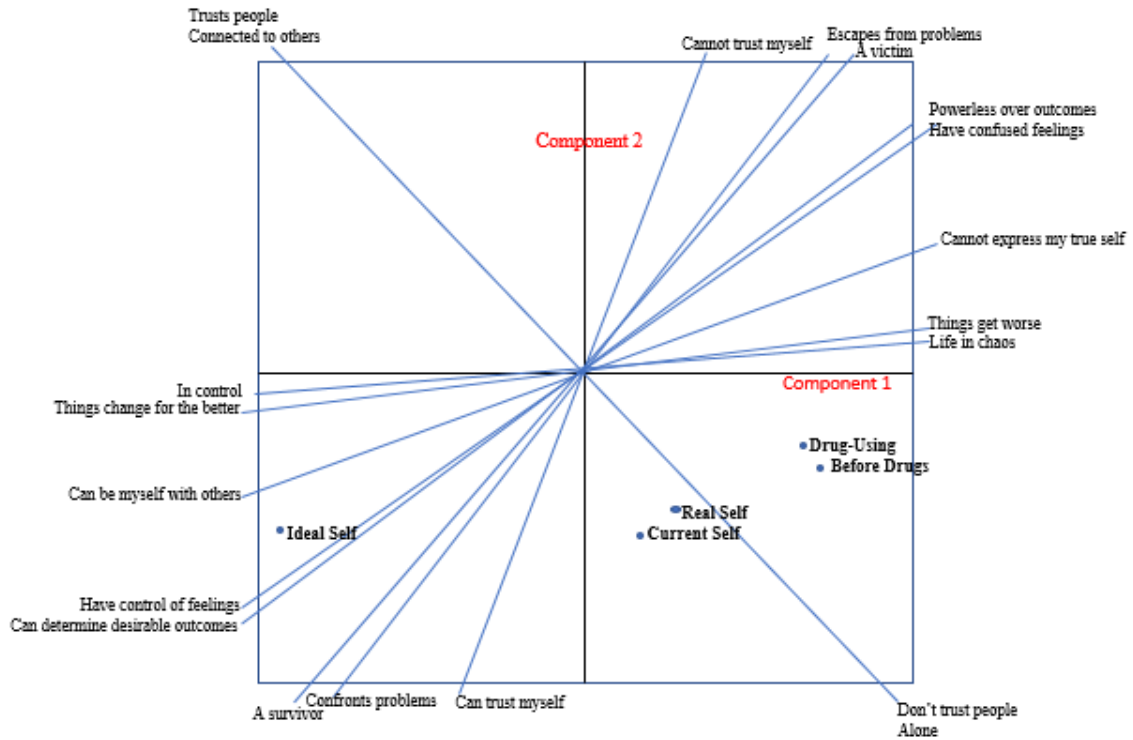
Figure 12.3. SVD graph showing the relationship between identity elements and personal constructs in the Power Group.

12.3.4 Dominance Group (high agency-high communion)

Figure 12.4 shows converged data for the Dominance Group. The graph illustrates a clearer picture of identity transition, in which the *Current* and *Real Self* are disassociated from the *Drug-Using* and *Before Drugs Self*, occupying distinct regions, and are positioned towards the centre right-hand pole and the *Ideal Self* on both agentic and communal constructs. The *Before Drugs Self* and *Drug-Using Self* occupy similar central left-hand positions, reflecting low agency and communion constructs. This contrasted positioning is suggestive of a two-dimensional identity transformation, depicting expansion on each of the construct dimensions that is matched with high RI scores (see Chapters 9 and 10).

Interestingly, this group affords the *Drug-Using Self* a higher retrospective agency than the other groups. In this graph, the *Drug-Using Self* is viewed as less powerless and more trustworthy from the vantagepoint of recovery. This may reflect an attribution bias based on current knowledge that 'they did have power' and 'could trust themselves', or it could represent a pre-existing difference in personal constructs, which may have facilitated positive change. However, crucially, all constructs are expanded towards the positive pole in the *Current Self*, illustrating a transformed construct system with the new identity, supporting study propositions.
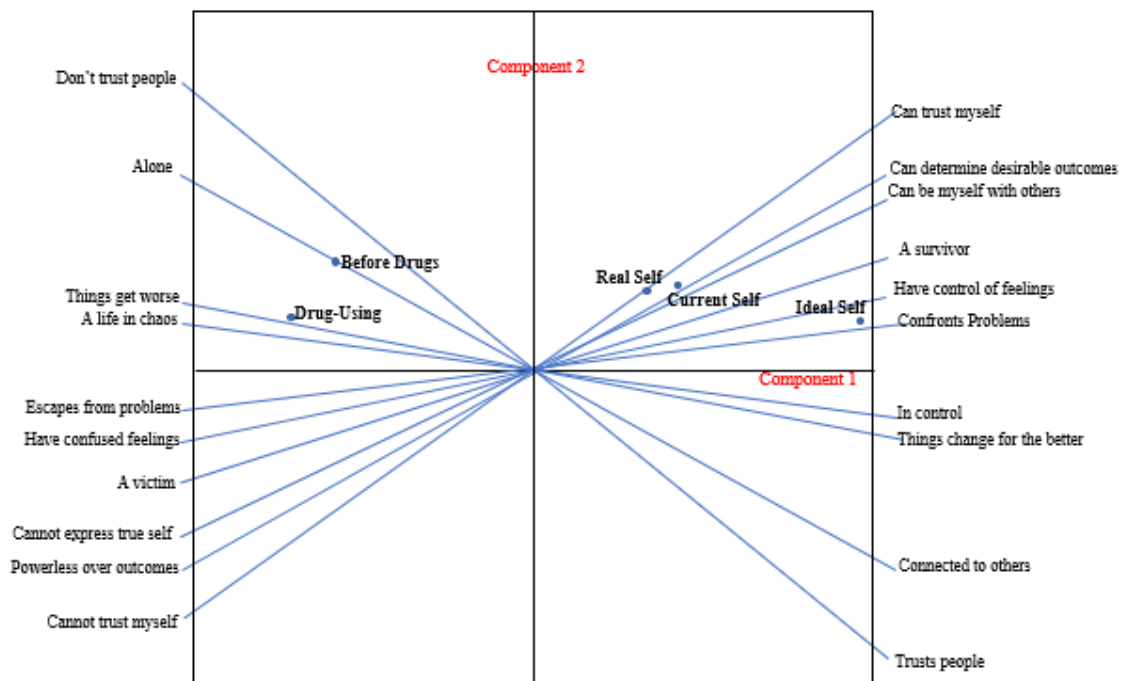
Figure 12.4. SVD graph showing the relationship between identity elements and personal constructs in the Dominance Group.

12.3.5 Summary of group differences

The findings illustrate numerous agentic and communal components to identity change, supporting a model that recognises personal expansion and interpersonal growth in recovery. They draw attention to the detail of self-organisational changes, where a recognition of different sub-components of agency and communion are articulated as points for identity change focus. The claim of four distinct groups is supported, related to reported agentic and communal identity constructs that accord with recovery, and may be important in guiding interventions (Rowlands et al. 2020). Chiming with other studies in Mental Health (Dunlop & Tracy, 2013; Adler et al., 2015), redemption constructs were shown to be important in the identity change process, being more pronounced in the Dominance Group, with contamination constructs typifying the Avoidance Group.

12.3.6 Case studies

12.3.6.1 Non-agentic and communal construct System

Attention now turns to case study examples illustrating how each type of construct system is reflected in individual cases. The first case is a dependent heroin and alcohol user who has been in treatment and prescribed methadone for 11 years. The participant shows no sign of recovery and reports a low agency/communion construct system.

Repertory Grid: Case 2

Constructs		Elements				
Left Pole	*Right Pole*	*Before Drugs Self*	*Drug-Using Self*	*Current Self*	*Real Self*	*Ideal Self*
A victim	*A survivor*	4	2	2	4	7
Things get worse	*Things change for the better*	3	2	1	4	7
Powerless over outcomes	*Can determine desirable outcomes*	3	2	2	3	6
A life in chaos	*In control*	2	1	1	3	6
Escapes from problems	*Confronts problems*	3	1	1	3	6
Cannot trust myself	*Can trust myself*	4	1	1	3	7
Alone	*Connected to others*	6	2	1	2	7
Don't trust people	*Trusts people*	5	1	1	1	5
Cannot express my true self	*Can be myself with others*	4	1	1	3	7
Have confused feelings	*Have control of feelings*	3	4	3	2	7

Table 12.1 showing repertory grid data for Case 2.

Rating System: Left pole: 1=Very much, 2=Quiet a lot, 3=A little, 4=Mid-point; right pole: 5=A little, 6=Quite a lot; 7=Very much.

An example: If you felt like 'A victim' in your 'Before Drugs Self', then you would rate between 1-3. If you felt like 'A Survivor', then you would rate between 5-7. If you felt neither one way nor the other, then the rate would be a 4.

The above grid provides an exemplary Avoidance case, reflecting the proposed self-organisational processes of a chronic substance misuser, rating his current identity low across the spectrum of constructs. In this, the participant articulates a low agency, communion and

contaminated personal identity. Grid ratings illustrate that the individual considers himself to be a victim, an observation that has been consolidated over time. There is also a progressive *contamination* construct, where he evaluates his current situation as worse than either his *Drug-Using* or *Before Drugs Self.* Aligned with this is a progressive decline in power and control over events, a greater propensity for escape, distrusting himself, and feeling more alone. In contrast with this position, previously he was socially connected, but has lost trust in other people and cannot be himself, forging a position of isolation. Some control over his emotions is observed, though, in the absence of other agency constructs, this is probably on account of substance use (see Chapter 8 for discussion of chemically assisted self-regulation).

The *Ideal Self* rates high on every construct, highlighting the desirability of agency and communion, but a perceived powerlessness over attaining such an identity compounds the disparity between what he wants and his tragic position. The deficit in agency and communion is underlined by the fact that he recognises a potentially more robust identity, which is lost (*Before Drugs Self*) or 'hidden' (*Real Self*). The task of interventions may be to focus on building trusting bonds and nourish the identified self-agency of the underlying identity to gather momentum towards positive change. This example suggests how repertory grids may provide a valuable tool for assessing identity constructs focal to the maintenance of ongoing substance use and personal decline, but also elucidates focus points for intervention, such as recognition of a more agentic 'real self', which has been lost to the current substance misuse predicament.

12.3.6.2 Communal construct system: connecting to reconstruct

Case 8's repertory grid, below, provides an example of progress towards a highly communal construct system from a previous low agency and communion *Drug-Using* identity. Highlighting communal growth typical of the Affiliation Group, a move away from the isolated *Drug-Using Self* towards a self that is connected to others can be observed. This is supported by developing trusting relationships, in which the participant can be herself. These communion constructs almost converge with the *Ideal Self*, separated entirely from the previous *Drug-Using Self,* and illustrating a sense of transformation. The participant recognises her previous 'selves' as victims, a persona that peaked with the *Drug-Using* identity. Currently, she feels less of a victim, though not quite a survivor. In fact, she reports that her *Real Self* is still a victim, suggesting that a survival 'front' is emerging. While in her drug user identity she escaped from problems, this is becoming less apparent, and the participant desires to fully confront challenges. These inchoate constructs reflect a low agency self-evaluation, sharing commonality with her *Drug-Using Self*: where the *Drug-Using Self* is 'a little powerless over outcomes', now she is neither powerless nor self-deterministic. Similarly, the life 'mildly in chaos' of the *Drug-Using Self* is now rated as a 'little less chaotic' in the *Current Self.* Accordingly, though the participant has achieved periods of drug-abstinence following community support, she ultimately relapsed on heroin following a relationship break-up.

The process of stunted progress may be typical of communion-specific growth processes. Nonetheless, the participant remains hopeful in her endeavours, evidenced by her move to a redemption construct (Things change for the better), and has a clear vision of the identity she wishes to attain in this respect, reflected by an *Ideal Self* rating high on each of the constructs. Perhaps for sustainable progress, the fractional improvements in self-agency need to be re-focused using the attributes of the *Ideal Self* as an iconic vision.

Repertory Grid: Case 8

Constructs		Elements				
Left Pole	*Right Pole*	*Before Drugs Self*	*Drug-Using Self*	*Current Self*	*Real Self*	*Ideal Self*
A victim	*A survivor*	2	1	4	3	7
Things get worse	*Things change for the better*	3	1	5	5	7
Powerless over outcomes	*Can determine desirable outcomes*	1	3	4	4	6
A life in chaos	*In control*	1	2	3	3	7
Escapes from problems	*Confronts problems*	4	1	3	3	7
Cannot trust myself	*Can trust myself*	4	2	3	3	6
Alone	*Connected to others*	3	2	6	5	7
Don't trust people	*Trusts people*	1	1	5	5	7
Cannot express my true self	*Can be myself with others*	2	2	7	6	7
Have confused feelings	*Have control of feelings*	1	3	3	3	6

Table 12.2 showing repertory grid data for Case 8.

12.3.6.3 Agentic construct system: self-determined transition

Individuals in the Power Group show identity transformation specific to highly agentic constructs, while communal constructs continue to share commonality with previous drug-using identities and Avoidance Group constructs. An ex-heroin user who reports having control over occasional stimulant use provides an example of a high agency identity transition.

Constructs		Elements				
Left Pole	*Right Pole*	*Before Drugs Self*	*Drug-Using Self*	*Current Self*	*Real Self*	*Ideal Self*
A victim	*A survivor*	4	6	7	7	7
Things get worse	*Things change for the better*	3	2	4	4	7
Powerless over outcomes	*Can determine desirable outcomes*	6	6	6	6	7
A life in chaos	*In control*	2	2	3	3	7
Escapes from problems	*Confronts problems*	5	2	6	6	7
Cannot trust myself	*Can trust myself*	7	5	7	6	7
Alone	*Connected to others*	2	1	2	2	3
Don't trust people	*Trusts people*	1	1	1	1	1
Cannot express my true self	*Can be myself with others*	6	3	7	7	7
Have confused feelings	*Have control of feelings*	6	3	6	6	6

Table 12.3 showing repertory grid data for Case 16.

Observing the above grid, the participant reflects on a moderately agentic *Before Drug-Using Self*. The grid reports that the transition from a lower agency *Drug-Using* identity to a highly agentic *Current Self* has built on a pre-existing sense of personal determinism. The individual reports that he was never a victim but has attained a robust survivor identity in the *Current Self*, in convergence with the *Ideal Self*. He reports always being able to determine desirable

outcomes, though in the *current* identity he confronts rather than escapes from problems and can control his feelings, again in convergence with the conceived *ideal*. This combination facilitates a new sense of personal trust, which is beginning to show in his achieving greater control over a chaotic lifestyle, though his grid suggests more progress is required to attain the ideal on this construct. The constructs represent pivotal changes from the *Drug-Using* to the *Current Self*, showcasing a progressive agency, perhaps analogous to the move from *Effectiveness* to *Empowerment* in the previous studies, with the desired agency represented in the *Ideal Self* signifying overarching *self-mastery*. Aligned with this self-appraisal is an emerging redemption construct (Things get better).

When consideration is given to communal constructs, a different picture emerges. Despite reports of being 'himself with others', the participant has always been alone and seems to prefer this over interpersonal connection, since he has never trusted people and does not wish to, making the position clear in his reflection on an 'ideal self'. Clearly, this case provides an exemplar of a forward focus on agentic growth with no concession to communion, illustrating an exclusively agentic pathway to identity transformation.

12.3.6.4 High agency and communion construct system: identity overhaul

In contrast to the unilateral identity transformation illustrated in the previous two examples, the next case reveals progress from a low agency and communion construct system to a construct system high on every dimension of positive change. Unsurprisingly, this high-agency and communion report corresponds with a robust recovery.

Repertory Grid: Case 31

Constructs		Elements				
Left Pole	*Right Pole*	*Before Drugs Self*	*Drug-Using Self*	*Current Self*	*Real Self*	*Ideal Self*
A victim	*A survivor*	4	2	7	7	7
Things get worse	*Things change for the better*	1	2	6	6	7
Powerless over outcomes	*Can determine desirable outcomes*	4	2	7	7	7
A life in chaos	*In control*	4	4	6	6	7
Escapes from problems	*Confronts problems*	5	2	5	6	6
Cannot trust myself	*Can trust myself*	4	4	6	6	6
Alone	*Connected to others*	1	3	6	6	6
Don't trust people	*Trusts people*	2	3	5	5	6
Cannot express my true self	*Can be myself with others*	3	4	6	6	6
Have confused feelings	*Have control of feelings*	2	4	6	6	6

Table 12.4 showing repertory grid data for Case 31

The above grid powerfully illustrates a comprehensive identity transformation in a recovered drug user. This participant has been substance-free for 15 years. The transition is epitomised by the convergence of the *Current* and *Real* selves with the *Ideal Self*, indicating the attainment of contentment with the agentic and communal self-report. The participant has grown into a strong survivor identity from her previous role as a victim when active in

substance misuse, and a redemption construct has been established from a previous contaminated vision. Agentic growth is attributed, transforming the powerless substance abuser into a self-determined individual with control over her emotions and her life in recovery. The old escape tactic has been supplanted by a confrontational approach to problems, which is assured by new self-trust and trust in others, with whom she can now express her true self. The participant provides a powerful example of a transformed personal construct system, highlighting how progress towards greater self-agency and communion with others promotes a 'recovery identity' and recovery from substance use problems.

12.4 Discussion

The study examined bi-polar construct dimensions between groups and among case examples to identify four construct systems corresponding with different reports of agency and communion in the current identity. The Avoidance Group showed fixed low agency and communion self-constructs across *Before Drugs, Drug-Using* and *Current* identities, illustrating a relationship between perceived, enduring agency and communion deficits and non-recovery from substance misuse. The Affiliation Group showed distinction between the *Drug-Using Self* and *Current* and *Real Self* on communal constructs, illustrating perception of a communion-specific identity change, while the Power Group illustrated an agency-specific transformation, both presentations suggestive of a partial identity transformation process matched by moderate recovery outcomes. Significantly, the Dominance Group showed greater parity of agency and communion construct ratings between the *Current, Real* and *Ideal Self*, distinct from both the *Before Drugs* and *Drug-Using Self*, which scored lower on each construct, suggesting two-dimensional identity transformation in recovery, supporting the DAPA model.

278

While revealing differences among groups is valuable for conceptualising broad structural patterns and explaining key change processes, important individual differences can be lost when collating averages. It is important to support general findings with case examples, especially when material draws on individual interpretations. Expanding on Rowlands et al. (2020), case studies were used to illustrate construct processes and elaborate on findings from between groups analysis, with discussion of value in showing how self-organisational constructs facilitate behaviours and indicate ways in which repertory grids may be useful for highlighting specific identity issues. Examples emerging from this exploration that may be useful in animating change included individuals invoking 'hidden' more agentic identities and different, perhaps pivotal, self-constructs that pre-dated substance misuse. Subsequent studies may want to focus on further phenomenological analysis to expand on these insights.

The research meets objectives to develop the LAAF studies, suggesting that identity transformation occurs as progress along key bipolar construct dimensions. Specifically, the study illustrates a perception among recovering substance users that positive identity change involves: the advance to a survivor self-concept from a victim persona, transition from a contaminated vision (Things get worse) to a redemptive vision (Things change for the better), fostering agency through self-trust from self-distrust, changing from an escapist to a confrontational approach to problems, envisioning a life under control from one in chaos, attributing self-determinism following a sense of powerlessness, and cultivating communion through a move from isolation to connection, from distrust of other people to trusting relationships, and breaking free from self-suppression to self-expression.

Examining the data more closely, certain findings may be useful in formulating recovery models. In particular, the fixed sense of powerlessness and isolation was shown to support a terminal decline in the Avoidance Group; however, a curious pattern was observed in which participants attributed marginally greater agency in the *Current* and *Real Self* than their

reflection on a *Drug-Using Self*, despite still being active in substance misuse. While this may reflect a propensity to understate their current plight or overstate their progress (perhaps in an effort towards social desirability), it may equally allude to a hidden identity that can be called upon to stimulate positive change. The observation is redolent of Biernacki's (1986) conflicting identities, the underlying of which can be stimulated into action through a reframing of values, and may offer a pivot for hope and recovery, especially since Avoidance participants generally valued personal agency (rated in the *Ideal Self*).

On the above point, agentic constructs were found to be desirable across the sample, though communal constructs (trust and connect) were undervalued in both the Avoidance and Power groups. This may indicate a more pronounced motivation towards isolation in people with substance use problems/history (perhaps reflected by the lower Affiliation sample size) and a more forcible drive for personal empowerment, highlighting an imperative for nourishing trusted and supportive bonds in treatment. Admittedly, illustrating the power of such collectivity has been the mainstay of social identity research (e.g. Bathish et al., 2017).

In the Affiliation Group, equidistance of the *Current Self* between the *Drug-Using* and *Ideal Self,* while highlighting a mid-point transition in theory, pinpointed an agency deficit, since the group scored low on control of feelings, self-determinism and confronting problems. However, since agency constructs were valued across the sample, observed in conceptions of an *ideal self,* hope and impetus for change is apparent. In contrast, the midpoint position of the Power Group suggests less momentum, since participants in this group, whilst motivated by greater agency and showing comparable RI scores to the Affiliation Group (see Chapters 10 and 11), undervalued communal growth. This shortfall could limit further transformative growth. Treatment interventions need to focus on forging trusted bonds, identifying with others through group work or recovery communities, and harnessing the valued emotional control in such individuals to spearhead meaningful self-expression.

Another curious discussion point is higher agency ratings for the *Before Drugs Self* in the Dominance group. This may simply reflect an attribution bias from the vantagepoint of recovery, or it could highlight a genuine greater sense of pre-existing agency which may facilitated the recovery process. Future research needs to examine this, since it could highlight a stronger platform for recovery in the original identity.

A further finding is the shift towards a positive construal of events with identity transformation and recovery. Transitions to high agency and communion construct systems were related to a switch from 'Things get worse' to 'Things change for the better'. Progress towards the positive frame was observed in Affiliation and Power cases, though it was most pronounced in Dominance cases, and reflects a redemption construct. Avoidance cases rated more closely to 'Things get worse', representing a contamination construct. This result mirrors findings illustrating redemption as key to positive transitions (McAdams, 1997; McAdams et al., 2001; McAdams & Bowman, 2006) and being linked to agency in fostering therapeutic progress (Adler et al., 2015), alcohol abstinence (Dunlop & Tracy, 2013), and desistance from offending (Maruna, 2001), whereas contamination has been shown to relate to poorer mental health (Harkness, 2011).

Evolution from a victim to a survivor characteristic was also shown in recovery identities, illustrating the ways in which certain changes are characterised in personas. From these interrelated threads, it appears that constellations of personal constructs or themes distinguish identities in the population, which relate to but extend beyond agency and communion. In Chapter 9 a conceptual framework was revealed, indicating that story plots, significant characters and key sequences may prove useful in enriching our understanding of identity and substance misuse, suggesting further lines of enquiry.

Caution should be exercised in interpreting data, since, as highlighted above, the study relies on retrospective self-report. Factors such as social desirability may confound results, as well as memory deficits. Individuals may suffer from an attribution bias in their reflections on past identity elements (Newman & Davies, 2007), such that those mired in substance misuse may benefit psychologically from a preferable interpretation of the current identity in comparison with past identities. Likewise, individuals who have advanced to recovery may attribute greater agency to past selves from their triumphant vantagepoint. For the purposes of desirability, people may wish to present significant positive change. However, as a counterpoint, clear and distinctive patterns have been observed from a cross-section of participants suggesting, at the very least, four different patterns of self-interpretation. Participants appeared to use the grid to report genuine processes rather than serve a specific ego desire. Furthermore, data from the POSAC and ANOVA studies triangulate findings, while case studies helped to illustrate the instrumentality of identity changes on behaviour.

Recognising that the list of constructs used is limited, and that transformative processes involve a wider spectrum of internal processes, some of which person-specific, the study does highlight common intersubjective means of self-organisation and interpretation, expansion of which seems to play a role in supporting recovery. As previously noted, with the recognition of specific dimensions of change, treatment focus becomes much easier. In this, the DAPA model may have practical applicability. Reflecting the research (Ng, 2002) and clinical utility of repertory grids (Kelly, 1955), the study indicates a tool to complement the LAAF technique in elucidating certain identity issues that may reflect intervention needs, offer personal insights, and guidelines for treatment.

Overall, repertory grids offered a powerful method for examining how key constructs differentiate identities and can change throughout the recovery process. The study makes a valuable contribution to our understanding the role of identity in substance misuse and those

components which may be influential in nourishing positive change and recovery. It builds on Ng's (2002) work, illustrating components of two paths to identity change, while intimating the greater strength of a combined process. Reflecting findings from the LAAF studies and supporting the proposed DAPA model, the study suggests that constructs of agency and communion are important to identity transformation and recovery from substance misuse, while also indicating value in a richer analysis of the LAAF material.

12.5 Conclusions

In conclusion, the study suggests that identity transformation and recovery involve expansion of agentic and communal self-constructs, while non-recovery is illustrated with a fixed, enduring low agency and communion personal construct system and identity. The results support an agency-communion interpretation of identity transformation in recovery from substance misuse.

Chapter 13. Study 6. Victory and Defeat: Narratives of Recovery Versus Non-Recovery

13.1 Chapter in brief

This chapter builds on the DAPA concept of recovery, reporting a study that elucidates two detailed contrasting LAAF (life) narratives - one indicative of recovery and the other of non-recovery from substance misuse. The aim was to expand scope of the agency and communion framework to encompass other story elements distinguishing recovery from non-recovery. This endeavour involves a reorganisation of substance misuse literature through a life narrative lens with the purpose of revealing key contrasts that serve to enrich articulation of psychological constructs and processes underpinning recovery and chronic substance misuse. Naturally, meeting these objectives carries practical value for interventions.

The study draws on the LAAF transcripts and content analysis to examine agency and communion in participants narratives alongside redemption and contamination themes, key imagoes, story genre, and future orientation. SSA and Cronbach's test of internal consistency were used to determined co-occurrence of elements in LAAF accounts, and then correlational analysis was run to reveal the relationships between theme constellations and RI scores.

Data revealed that themes of *Self-Mastery, Unity, Redemption, Healer*, and *Happy Ending* co-occurred in the LAAF narratives of participants with high RI scores, representing a Victory narrative, whereas contrasting themes of *Compulsion, Avoidance, Contamination, Escapist* and *Sad Ending* co-occurred in LAAF narratives of participants with low RI scores, representing a Defeat narrative. A strong linear relationship was observed, with limitations to theme profiles reflected in RI scores. Case studies were used to illustrate how Victory and Defeat themes were contextualised in individual LAAF accounts, and whilst inconclusive in demonstrating a causal link, the findings are suggestive that certain themes support recovery from substance misuse, whilst other themes serve to maintain substance misuse.

The LAAF is shown to provide a powerful method for revealing two contrasting life narratives, one of which relates to recovery and the other to non-recovery, the study pioneering use of the LAAF model to distinguish problem from resolution life narratives. This is an important development, since by observing the contrasts in fixed and transformed stories, pathways to recovery in terms of narrative identity may be articulated.

13.2 Method

13.2.1 Materials and data collection

As with studies reported in the preceding chapters, content analysis of LAAF narratives given by 32 participants either active in substance misuse or with history of substance misuse was used to provide thematic data for the present study. RI data was used to compare LAAF themes with recovery.

13.2.2 Coding of themes

Themes of interest emergent from the findings of previous studies and other salient literature were used in the analysis. Specifically, *Self-Mastery, Unity* and *Relationship Success* were used in the analysis following the POSAC results, and *Redemption* and *Contamination* following repertory grid indications and findings in related Mental Health and offender research (Maruna, 2001; Harkness, 2011; Adler et al., 2015). This choice also reflects a requirement to develop literature revealing a positive role for *redemption* sequencing in addressing addiction issues (Dunlop & Tracy, 2013; Stone, 2016) with exploration of the role of *contamination* themes in substance misuse stories.

Following support in broader literature that individual outlook may play a role in ameliorating substance misuse (Krech & Rock, 2002; Carvajal et al., 1998), narrative literature highlighting

happy endings to recovery stories (Hanninen & Koski-Jannes, 1999), and observance of an underlying theme of 'hopelessness' in chronic addiction (Weegmann, 2010; Krank et al., 2011), themes of *Happy* or *Sad Ending* in LAAF accounts were also used in the analysis.

McAdams (1993) concept of protagonist roles (imagoes) was used to propose identity modes reflective of recovery versus non-recovery, after the concept of a victim-survivor dimension emerged from the repertory grid data. Further, this identity nexus accords with literature reporting a high prevalence of victimisation in the background of substance misusers, who find various mechanisms for 'survival' (Ullman et al., 2013; Garland et al., 2013).

Finally, widening the dramatic scope and heeding Frye's (1957) myths, genre categories *Tragedy* and *Romance* were included in the analysis: *tragedy's* failure over struggle and *romance's* triumph over struggle providing the basis for the proposed narrative distinction. This formula also appreciates Canter and Youngs (2011) argument that broader narrative forms may capture the essence of personal stories. Specifically, the following coding dictionary was applied:

1. Theme of *Self-Mastery - the protagonist strives to successfully master, control, and perfect the self* (McAdams, 1993). Coding for *Self-Mastery* was used since it emerged as the strongest indicator of agency and recovery in the POSAC study (see Chapter 10).

2. Theme of *Compulsion – the protagonist has an irresistible urge to behave a certain way.* This theme follows the Oxford English Dictionary definition and derives from the original LAAF Content Dictionary used by Canter and Youngs (2015). The theme *proposes* a contrast to *Self-Mastery*, where mastery and control over compulsive behaviour is attained. The *Self-Mastery* and *Compulsion* themes are proposed to epitomise agency versus non-agency in the sample. The theme was selected following

examination of the SSA structure in Chapter 9, indicating that *Compulsion* was related low agency concepts, and case study examination of LAAF accounts.

3. Theme of *Unity - the idea of being part of a larger community. Unity* was chosen for the analysis since it emerged as the strongest indicator of communion and recovery in the POSAC study.

4. *Relationship Success – description of relationship success event.* The theme refers to mention of relationship success in LAAF accounts and derives from Canter and Youngs' (2015) LAAF Coding Dictionary. It was included following examination of the SSA structure, showing contiguity with high agency and communion themes, and case study examination of LAAF accounts, suggesting an exemplary recovery theme (see Chapter 9).

5. Theme of *Avoidance - the protagonist avoids other people*. This item derives from the original LAAF framework, reflecting the obverse of the communion theme. The theme was selected following examination of the SSA structure in Chapter 9, indicating that the *Avoidance* theme related to low agency and communion concepts, and case study examination of LAAF accounts.

6. Theme of *Redemption - sequences of negative events being transformed into positive outcomes*. The coding protocol derives from McAdams (2001) and Maruna's (2001) definitions and is in keeping with the original LAAF framework.

7. Theme of Contamination - *sequences of positive events transforming into negative outcomes.* Contamination provides the contrasting narrative theme to redemption, following Maruna's (2001) findings and indications from the earlier personal constructs study (Chapter 12).

8. *Healer* imago: *the character concentrates on cures, health and well-being.* McAdams (1993) used the concept of imagoes to highlight characterisations of identity by

narrators in central protagonists. That is, how one's identity takes form in the personal narrative. According to McAdams, different imagoes represent personifications of dominant agency and communion themes in personal narratives. Examples include highly agentic personas, such *Warrior*, highly communal (*Caregiver)*, both agentic and communal (Healer, Teacher), or neither communal nor agentic characters (*Escapist*). The use of such personal myths seems especially apposite for examining self-identity using a film framework. Drawing on examination of case study examples and reference to the SSA structure revealed in Chapter 9, two imagoes were selected as exemplary of substance misuse stories and apt for elucidating clear identity distinctions between narratives: the *Healer* highlighting a high agency/communion identity, and the *Escapist* imago highlighting low agency/communion characterisation.

9. *Escapist* imago – *the protagonist focuses on diversion from engagement with others or personal responsibility.* Canter and Youngs (2009) explain how the *Escapist* imago, in the move to alienation, characterises the obverse of communion; however, as McAdams (1993) relates, it is also suggestive of a low agency identity.

10. *Happy Ending - describes a happy ending.*

11. *Sad Ending – describes a sad ending.* The latter two items derive from a study by Sandberg (2009) on narrative discourse and were used in follow-up LAAF research (see Tkazky, 2018).

12. *Romance* genre – The genre was marked as present if explicitly stated ('My life would be a romance'), or where it was clearly indicated in the description ('My life would be a 'rags to riches tale', or where reference was made to a known romance film ('It would be like Pretty Women'). If no clear indication was given, then no genre was marked.

13. *Tragedy* genre – As above.

To recap, in the content analysis LAAF transcripts were binary-coded (1=presence, 0=absence) by two independent coders. An inter-rater reliability test revealed a Cohen's kappa of .72, which indicates an acceptable level of agreement between coders (Syed & Nelson, 2015).

13.3 Results

13.3.1 SSA

An exploratory SSA was run to compare relationships between each of the 13 theme variables to determine the underlying structure of narrative content. The analysis produced a COA of 0.61, which represents an acceptable degree of fit between the correlation coefficients and the spatial representation on the SSA plot. The two-dimensional resolution of the diagram was considered to better represent the data than the three-dimensional resolution.
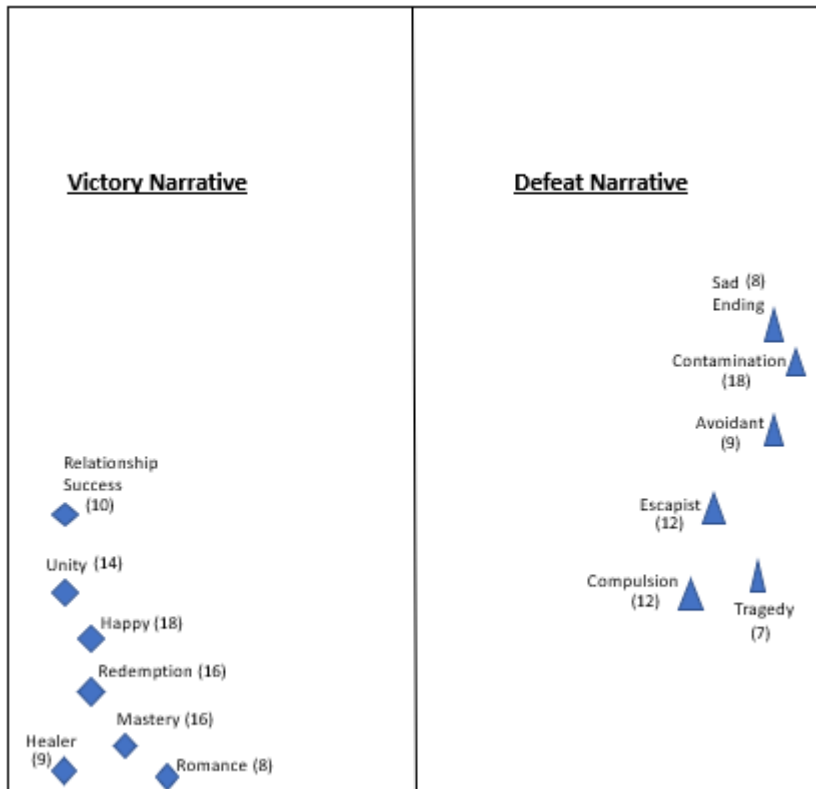
Figure 13.1. Two-dimensional resolution of SSA diagram, showing 13 LAAF variables among 32 cases with polar facet interpretation, reflecting two different narrative structures (COA 0.61).

The SSA plot shows interrelationships between themes of interest to the study. The diagram reveals two clearly demarcated regions, reflecting conceptually distinct narrative structures. The constellation of co-occurring themes on the right of the diagram can be interpreted to represent the concept of a Victory narrative, where the contiguous items envision a narrative of dramatic agency and communion illustrated by the central protagonist's *self-mastery, relationship success* and *unity* with others, assuming a *healer* role, driving the *redemption* plot towards a *happy ending*. In contrast, the constellation of co-occurring themes in the right-hand region of the diagram conceives of a Defeat narrative, envisioning a story where a low agency and communion protagonist demonstrates *avoidance* of others and a *compulsive*

behaviour pattern. This theme is embodied in the *escapist* role, following a *contamination* script to a *sad* conclusion.

13.3.2 Internal consistency

The SSA models a clear regional distinction between two contiguous groups of items, reflecting separate narrative concepts, or forms, providing a basis for examining if the narratives structures relate to differences among participants. The proposed constellation of Victory themes (*Self-Mastery, Unity, Relationship Success, Redemption, Healer, Romance* and *Happy Ending*) produced a high level of internal consistency, giving a Cronbach's Alpha of .867, reinforcing the SSA result, showing that the themes co-occurred in LAAF accounts; that is, participants who show one theme are likely to show the other related themes, indicating that the above themes coalesce in life stories, reflecting a life narrative group. Similarly, the constellation of themes proposing a Defeat narrative (*Compulsion, Avoidance, Contamination, Escapist, Tragedy* and *Sad Ending*) produced a Cronbach's Alpha of .78, indicating that these themes coalesce in life stories, reflecting another narrative category. Data indicate two distinct life narratives.

13.3.3 Correlational analysis

To assess each narrative's value relative to recovery outcomes, the extent to which Victory and Defeat LAAF narratives related to RI scores needed to be examined. Total Victory and Defeat profiles for each participant were summed, scoring '1' for each of the seven Victory themes and '1' for each of the six Defeat themes coded in the LAAF accounts. This meant a score of 0-7 was possible for Victory themes and 0-6 for Defeat themes, for each of the

participants. In this way, profiles of Victory or Defeat emerged for each participant, enabling a comparison to be made with RI scores, and the relationship between LAAF narratives and recovery outcomes observed.

Spearman's correlation compared Victory scores with RI scores among the 32 participants. The results revealed that scores on the RI correlated strongly with Victory themes, producing a one-tailed Spearman's coefficient of 0.79 (p<0.01) (see Figure 13.2), showing that recovery from substance misuse was associated with LAAF narratives illustrating the Victory constellation. Spearman's correlation was then run comparing Defeat scores with RI scores among the 32 participants, showing the contrasting pattern - that RI correlated negatively with Defeat themes (one-tailed Spearman's Coefficient = -0.78: p<0.01), illustrating a relationship between the presence of Defeat themes in LAAF accounts and non-recovery (see Figure 13.3).
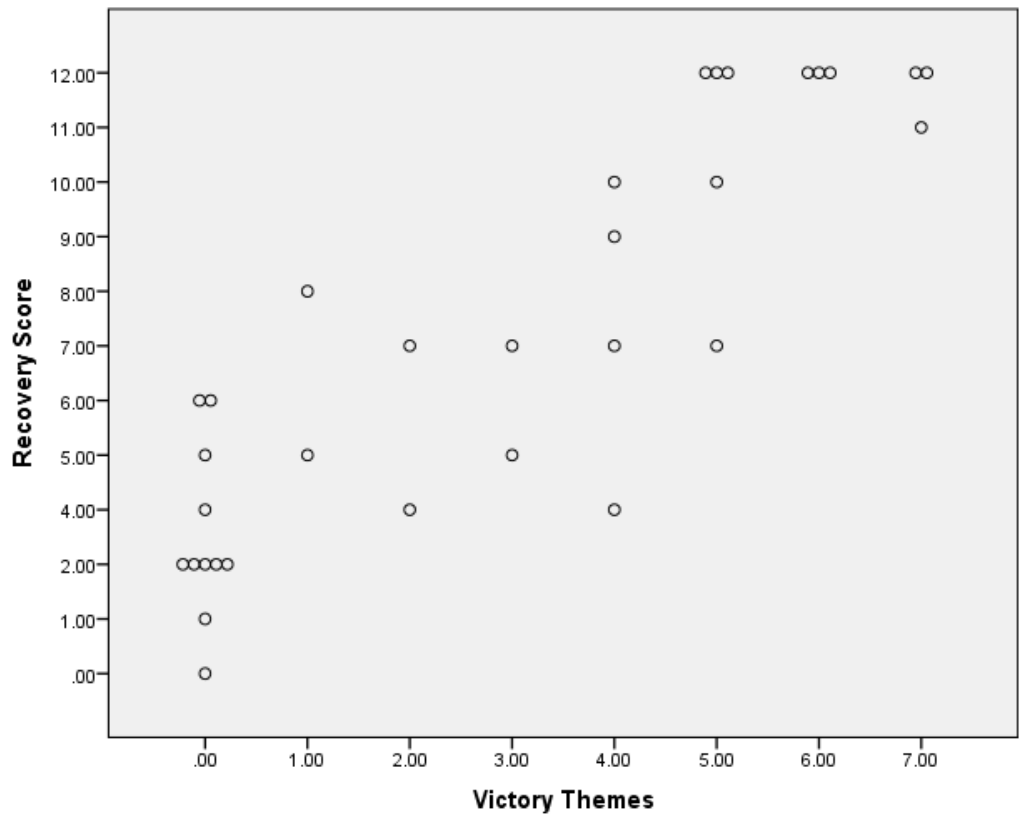
Figure 13.2. Scatterplot showing the relationship between RI scores and Victory themes in LAAF narratives among 32 participants.
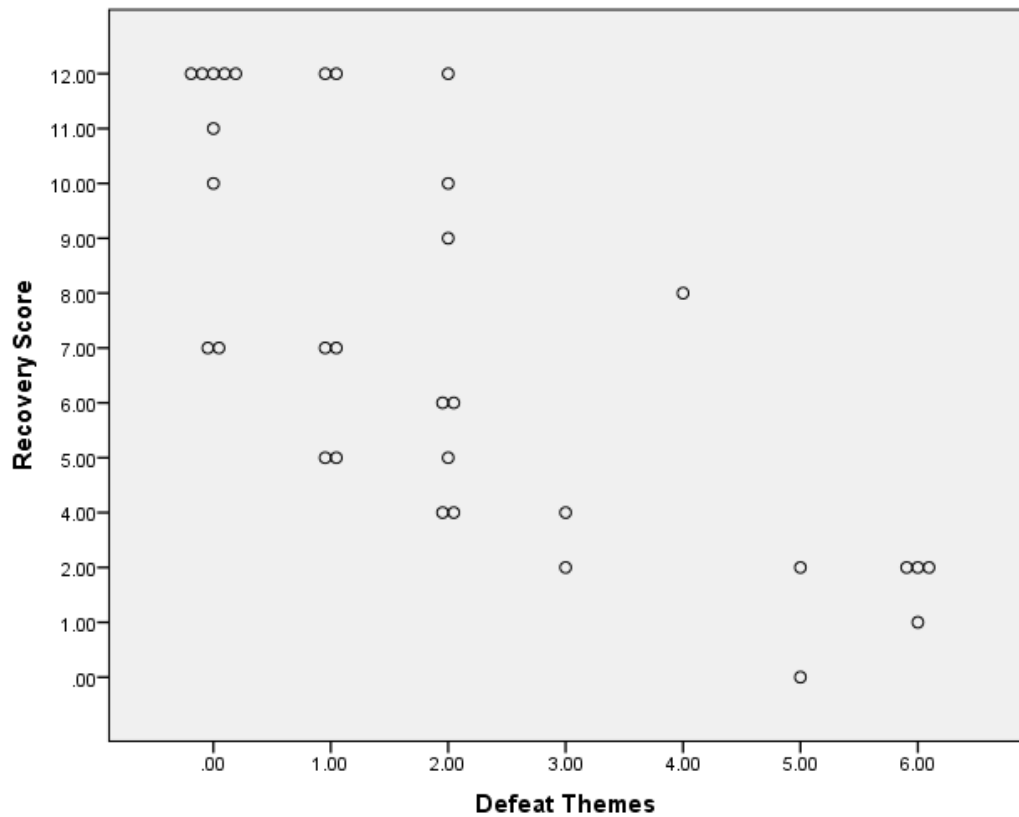
Figure 13.3. Scatterplot showing the relationship between RI scores and Defeat themes in LAAF narratives among 32 participants.

Figure 13.2 shows the relationship between number of Victory themes recorded in LAAF narratives and RI scores. As can be observed, presence of Victory themes corresponds with better recovery outcomes. In contrast, Figure 13.3 illustrates the relationship between the number of Defeat themes in LAAF narratives and RI scores, showing that a presence of Defeat themes corresponds with progressively poorer recovery outcomes. Results support the idea of two life narratives: Victory, composed of *Self-Mastery, Unity, Relationship Success, Redemption, a Healer* identity*, Romance* plot, and *Happy Ending* associated with a strong recovery, and Defeat, composed of *Compulsion, Avoidance, Contamination*, an *Escapist* identity, *tragic* plot, and *Sad Ending*, associated with non-recovery.

The findings are suggestive of a polarity of narrative forms, where Victory LAAF narratives reflect strong recovery and Defeat LAAF narratives reflect non-recovery, while intermediate life narrative patterns may reflect corresponding positions on the substance misuse-recovery trajectory – i.e. broadly, it is suggested that Defeat themes impose negatively on recovery outcomes and Victory themes positively. That is to propose Victory and Defeat narratives may refer to constellations of opposing themes, each experiencing a transformation in the progression to recovery. For example, that *self-mastery* frees the substance user from *compulsion;* achieving *unity* and *relationship success* undermines the *avoidance* strategy; identifying as a *healer* confronts the personal dilemma rather than seeking to *escape*, reframing towards *redemption* and hope rescripts *contamination,* and a *romance* emerges from *tragedy* towards a new *happy ending*.

The extent to which participants LAAF accounts matched either life narrative corresponded with their RI score, meaning that LAAF narratives demonstrated value in explaining differences between participants. This result is valuable in suggesting narrative processes important to behavioural change and providing a vision for change in the narrative identity. At six-month follow-up interviews, RI scores were maintained across all 32 participants, indicating robustness in the relationship between narrative themes and recovery indicators.

12.4.4 Case studies

Though correlational analysis showed a strong relationship between LAAF narratives and recovery outcomes, it does not reveal etiological pathways. The analysis also abstracts themes from the context of personal experiences. Case studies are helpful in elucidating life course trajectories, placing shaping themes within the texture of unique narratives. In this, life story accounts provide a rich resource for illustrating the coalescence of themes in storied experiences, revealing certain common narrative threads woven together to reinforce specific plotlines that may guide action towards substance misuse or recovery. The LAAF below provides an example of a Victory narrative. As a previous dependent drug user, the participant now describes herself as a prosperous career woman in a happy relationship. It wasn't always that way:

Case 31: 'Terrified, thin and lonely. I have very few friends because I don't have toys for them to play with and I am not allowed to have anyone come to the house. My clothes are tatty and don't fit. My clothes were hand me downs from my sister and were always too big, which is why I was bullied and laughed at so much in school…. The film moves onto me being at school and being bullied on the way home by a couple of girls. A young man sees me crying and shouts at the girls to leave me alone. He takes me by the hand and leads me to a park. We talk and talk and then it goes black and the story jumps again... Myself and the young man are sat in a dingy flat. I am sat on the sofa high on temazepam and feeling the effects of the zopiclone sedating me.'

The journey from alienation to substance misuse is captured in these scenes, where victimisation and loneliness is depicted. Later the LAAF reflects on home life:

Case 31: 'Life of the little girl, aged 8, struggling with an alcoholic father who beat her mother…. Living in a battered wives' home and having to cope with an abusive older brother who became the reason for a childhood of nightmares and fear...... Having to steal food from friends' houses and always being hungry because there was never enough food to eat.... So much that sucking on oxo cubes was a treat. Then at 15 being relentlessly bullied because of being the poor kid…. Then meeting a terribly controlling man who beat her when he couldn't get a fix, making her try and get money from people by lying to them about needing things, giving her pills to 'help take the pain away'…. In the end beating her so bad because she would not shoplift for him, she ended up in hospital with a body full of bruises and broken ribs dependant on temazepam.

The narrative is riddled with sequences of hardship as the plot is driven towards substance misuse. These difficult scenes can be chopped in the fast-paced film format. Early victimisation leads to the use of drugs to 'take the pain away.' However, the next frame sees a pivotal scene in which the script changes:

Case 31: 'The film again jumps, and a man is by my hospital bed, he is a policeman and he is my hero, he takes me away from my old life and helps me wean off the prescription drugs… This is where she met a policeman who would change her life forever. Then at 21 joining the Army. Gaining true friends and acceptance. Gaining more life experience and pride than most people could ever wish for. Serving in Afghanistan and Iraq, but mainly having the ability to engage and talk to anyone.'

Support provided by a policeman is depicted in the LAAF as changing the protagonist's life forever. This communal experience is given focal prominence in the story, from which a continuing theme of unity unfolds with her joining the army, where 'true friends and acceptance' are gained. This sequence marks an important identity shift. The participant is no longer a powerless victim but belongs to a positively reinforcing group. Moreover, the army experience gives the protagonist self-driven purpose, personal pride and, ultimately, redemption from a disrupted past. The LAAF communicates a duality of agency and communion themes: social support facilitating a decision to join the army, which nourishes a unifying communal identity but also a pathway to self-determination, autonomy, and competence. This combination of growth themes transforms trauma into salvation. Having embodied requirements for agency and communion, a redemptive narrative becomes more credible and the hopeless escape from reality into substance use becomes unnecessary. From the vantagepoint of a healing self, past victimhood and old wounds are interpreted as triggers for transformation. The LAAF provides a canvass through which to emphasise dominant forces propelling the personal story forwards. More pointedly, observe the recognition of growth to self-mastery in the following response:

Case 31: '. I have somewhere new to live and I have a job in a nursing home. I am fending for myself. Another jump and I am in the Army Careers office, swearing my Oath of Allegiance to the Queen, I have put on weight and my hair is shiny…. In Afghanistan during a six-month tour of duty. Stationed at a multinational camp in Kabul…. A suicide bomber is in a car speeding towards her and her comrades, who are returning from a patrol through the centre of Kabul after fixing a Telecommunications system in the British embassy…. Everyone is screaming and shouting at the car to stop... The guards have cocked their rifles ready to shoot. There is confusion everywhere and my section are heading towards the gate into the camp which is about 50 metres away. There are big, heavy gates and huge thick walls into safety. I'm in charge of a team of 12 men. Strangely, I feel composed. I've come a long way, ha-ha... I am running as fast as I can to get to the checkpoint. I am sweating from all the protective equipment I am wearing, but I also have a sense of calm within.'

The participant describes a romance genre typical of the Victory form, envisioning a fairy-tale happy ending from a horror at outset, where a battle against hardship ultimately pays off with a personally attained 'incredible grown woman.'

Case 31: 'It would be a 'rags to riches' kind of film. A scared lonely girl from a poor family would battle through the horrors life threw at her to become and incredible grown woman… Then in the closing scenes I am home, I am a civilian now, I have a great job and my own house. I am living. My prince charming pulls me up onto a beautiful black horse, I put my arms around his waist, and we ride away into the sunset.'

In the example below, the participant distances himself from previous characteristics, framing his past as following the wrong path due to his disease, explaining that he is now wise to these influences and able to recover with the help of close friends, an understanding wife, and a focus on bonding with his son. The *healer* role is invoked in this context of social belonging. The LAAF establishes a theme of identity morality in its choice of framing a deviant path in terms of external determinants which have since been addressed, establishing a redemption script:

Case 26: 'Err, good, I suppose, but I got thrown from pillar to post growing up, so I made some dodgy calls and went down the wrong path. I'm an addict, see. It's a disease, and I have to work with that and know where it takes me, down dark paths. Err, first and foremost, I'm a recovering addict and knowing that keeps me wise to it. Err, well I have things in place now to address it: friends who've been through addiction and know what it can do to you. My wife

is understanding, too. I'd say, though, boy, J has become my focus and boxing, like I said, err, which helps. So, it's a different set up.'

The narrative proceeds to describe emotional regulation, self-discipline and determinism, illustrating *self-mastery* in relation to recovery, but also depicts communal elements, such as talking about emotions and attending group meetings, and their importance to the process. The participant dovetails these themes in describing a transformed life story and happy ending:

Case 26: 'When I got clean, I took up boxing again and got back into it. I'm still kind of angry underneath and like stressed, but it's under control now, as long as I look after myself, err, take care, you know, because of my life, but I can channel anger and negativity into boxing and make it work for me doing something I love…. I've become very different, able to handle my emotions okay, even talk about them, and have become more disciplined in my life. I put a lot of this down to boxing, well and meetings and the steps, but what I'm saying is what I've learned through training and everything, err, hard to put it into words... Ends with me working for a living, beautiful kid and wife. Working in recovery. Err, taken up boxing again. My life now, that is. A very different life.'

Similarly, this ex-polysubstance user provides a rich description of narrative contrasts between the old and new thread:

Case 32: 'Don't know, it's like a tale of two cities. Probably I would emphasize where I am rather than where I was. I mean in the beginning with nothing and then in the end with everything. Well not everything, but you know what I'm saying. Maybe start off with me scared to go to school and end up with me commanding a room of strangers and making a real connection, you know. That was something the first guy would never dream of. Maybe have the first part as the nightmare the second guy has and the second part a dream that the first guy has. That about sums it up.'

This excerpt describes the avoidant character becoming more engaging with the realisation that the adult version of himself is more powerful than the fearful child he used to be, serving as a healing process:

Case 32: 'The guy who no one loves becomes the one everyone loves. He just wanted to be a stranger, locked away getting high, but now he's realised not everyone is like that and he's a

grown up now, anyway. He's the life and soul and loves it that way. Taking charge and becoming that guy had a beneficial effect.'

In the above examples, pivotal sequences mediate positive change in which a realisation of self-agency or supportive connections provides nourishment, enabling the story to be re-shaped. Opportunity for change is seized and hope supersedes despair, enabling tragic lives to transform into romances, or victories. The LAAF enables the character transformations to be vividly revealed. These growth trajectories appear to involve coalescence of self-agency, communion, a healer identity, a redemptive framing of life events and optimistic outlook, in a dynamic of facilitatory themes. In contrast, Defeat narratives observe no hope. Contrast the above LAAFs with the following narrative from a chronic heroin, crack, benzodiazepine and alcohol user:

Case 4: 'A story of excess and ruin.... some small redemption and then more ruin and collapse.'

The inevitable decline of tragic drama is illustrated, where the idea of redemption is immediately quashed:

Case 4: 'I'd get left a tonne of money and blow it on crack and prostitutes in Amsterdam. Inheriting 200k and a house off my granddad, doing a disappearing act to get away from a lot of problems. I head to Amsterdam and living the life of extreme excess for six months. Hotel room parties, high class prostitutes, debauchery, thousands of pounds of crack, heroin, champagne, everything…. The shit had hit the fan. Everything got out of hand, becoming a disaster, one thing after another. I lost my job as a lumberjack, because I was addicted. Well I tested positive for heroin. I was addicted to heroin. I pissed off my family and had people after me. My head was a shed. I couldn't cope. The inheritance was my ticket away from it all.'

A cycle of substance use and personal decline is observed, with recourse to further chemical intoxication. Powerful themes of avoidance and escape with compulsive drug use feature in this contaminated narrative:

Case 4: 'Meant to be to get off drugs and clear my head but it didn't quite turn out that way…I was very depressed before all that. I'd got into using heroin and got addicted to cope with everything or block it out of my head. I was on my own. I'd had alienated all my friends and

was basically living a giant lie. Telling lies to everyone. I'd lost my job. Got sacked for being intoxicated, so it was pretty bad and I was thinking there was no way out, but getting my hands on all that money, I was manic. Suddenly, I thought 'Yes!' I could do anything. It was as if God was looking down at me saying 'Give him a break'. Getting off that plane in Amsterdam and the weight falling from my shoulders. I felt free. I went wild, but at that minute I was free. In the end it was the worst decision of my life. Well, one of them. I was actually totally out of control.'

A lack of personal insight and self-control leads to repeated mistakes. The loss of potential support networks with escape leaves the protagonist isolated and impotent, with further diversion his only recourse. Consequently, the contamination theme repeats throughout each sequence, showcasing the growing sense of defeat:

Case 4: 'I've got the best intentions, but it goes totally wrong and I lose it. My plans always turn out to be hair-brain looking back but make perfect sense at the time. Amsterdam set me back. It took me two years to recover from that. Then getting addicted to heroin again. That was ridiculous when you look at it, but I honestly didn't see it coming before it was too late, which I feel stupid about, and ashamed.'

The LAAF elicits an essence of the life narrative. The story is orientated around the most personally relevant, dramatic, and identity-informing scenes. Narrators depict a context of central themes' facilitatory role in establishing other interpretations that can spiral stories into despair. As McConnell and Snoek (2018) observe, plotlines can become self-perpetuating. Reflecting the above account, the following narrative from a chronic opiate and crack cocaine user illustrates how an *escapist* identity is positioned as the only way out of a vividly depicted, hopelessly spiralling storyline in which the protagonist feels devoid of all agency:

Case 1. 'Just when she thinks she has it licked, like has her shit together, something massive happens, like an earthquake that just tears everything good apart and the best efforts are obliterated. The only option is self-annihilation, you know disappear into the hole – the heroin hole.'

301

The following excerpt highlights repeated defeat in establishing relationships and *unity*, and the habitual avoidance response in substance intoxication. Again, the participant communicates a sense of powerlessness in the face of overwhelming addiction:

Case 1: 'It starts with me hauled up in some filthy crack den, manic and rambling on all this shit, just mad buzz like, like laughing and talking but you get the sense that I'm mentally fucked up. Living on my wits, disconnected. I only connected through drugs. A runaway type of person. This was at the height of my addiction, where scoring drugs and using drugs was all there was. No job, no prospects, just a very irresponsible person and existence, no self-respect. Err, so yeah, it would start like that, then flip back to how I got to that point, and then develop the film into the horror with J and reaching a new low where I couldn't even leave the flat and was just hauled up with a crack pipe again, really really alone, like disconnecting, but back where I had been before I had done rehab 10 years before. But then show me coming through that in finding P. But then the doubts and darker side of that as well, and whether this is just another bubble to be burst and drown in, ha-ha-ha-ha.'

Each sequence gets contaminated: '*It starts with me hauled up in some filthy crack den, manic and rambling on all this shit, just mad buzz like, like laughing and talking **but you get the sense that I'm mentally fucked up'** – 'But then show me coming through that in finding P. **But then the doubts and darker side of that as well, and whether this is just another bubble to be burst and drown in** ha-ha-ha-ha',* until the tragedy is undeniable. The protagonist's disillusionment with other people is palpable: *'Living on my wits, disconnected. I only connected through drugs. A runaway type of person.'* Drugs are the answer to everything, offering a consolation for failed relationships in this *Escapist*, or *'runaway',* character:

Case 1: 'Don't know, ha-ha-ha. Err, over the film I get wiser to events in the world, like politically, but, like, I suppose I just amass scars, ha-ha-ha and become more suspicious. Yeah, suspicious is a good word. But yeah, change, God, yeah, that's a big one. Well I still get fucked.'

The protagonist observes little change when questioned, admitting only negative consequences of her perspective. This example highlights the acuity of the LAAF as a self-reflective tool. Insight can provide a useful pivot for reconstructive therapy (Diamond, 2002). Skeffington and Browne (2014), for example, illustrate how the use of imagery expresses

underlying issues to confront therapeutic avoidance. This finding chimes with Youngs' et al.'s (2016) discovery of unresolved dissonance in the film accounts of prisoners. Since avoidance is a key characteristic of individuals with substance use problems, creative techniques such as the LAAF may provide a method for recognising such obstacles. In this case, an intervention might involve testing the narrated assumption that self-regulation and connection is served by substance use. This method is redolent of Kelly's (1955) 'construct-testing and reconstruction' therapeutic model.

The case examples are useful for illustrating how themes are woven together in unique stories that share important similarities: the resolve to heal with the support of others fostering a redemption theme in the Victory narrative, contrasting with the avoidant and compulsive protagonist of the Defeat narrative, lacking the personal perspective to seize control of a spiralling plot, envisaging only tragic consequences. The vivid material gives a context to narrative themes and animates identity. Elucidating these dynamics helps in understanding interrelated obstacles to transformation and recovery, and how similar patterns manifest in experientially different stories.

13.4 Discussion

Building on findings reported in previous chapters, the study suggests that contrasting LAAF narratives distinguished cases of recovery from non-recovery among participants. Specifically, a strong positive relationship was shown between narrative accounts of *self-mastery, unity, relationship success*, *healer, redemption, romance, happy ending* and scores on the RI, reflecting a Victory narrative. Contrasting with this presentation was an association between narratives of *compulsion, avoidance, escapist, contamination, tragedy, sad ending* and non-recovery outcomes, reflecting a Defeat narrative. The results suggest that certain

theme constellations pattern life narratives of recovery whilst other constellations pattern life narratives of non-recovery. The strong linear relationship between aggregate LAAF themes and RI scores is suggestive of intermediate recovery narratives contingent on thematic limitations. This is to contend that through a self-storying lens, the detail of narrative identity may explain a share of the variance in recovery outcomes. Such articulation of the data supports interpretation of substance misuse recovery in terms of life narratives, intimating a means of exploring and addressing behaviour as narrative identity. Though it is impossible to extrapolate practical uses for the LAAF model, this facility may highlight clinical implications which can be explored in subsequent studies. Certainly, application of narrative theory and therapy has been a useful intervention for cases of chronic addiction (Diamond, 2002; Singer et al., 2013).

In this study, the Dominance and Avoidance narratives emerging from previous chapters are expanded into broader Victory and Defeat narratives with the inclusion of other related story themes. This analysis affords a richer articulation of narrative threads involved in identity transformation and recovery. Developing ideas arising from repertory grid analysis, emergent contrasts in narrative structures may speak to theme dimensions, expansion of each towards the positive attribute serving to resolve troubled elements of the narrative identity and impediments to recovery. For example, POSAC (Chapter 10), revealed a two-dimensional growth arc epitomised by LAAF themes of *self-mastery* and *unity* which related to recovery outcomes. Developing this proposition, the present study indicates opposing themes of *compulsion* and *avoidance* in substance misuse, denoting a plot platform from which growth and re-storying may initiate. The suggestion being that narrative identity is reconstructed as part of the recovery process, attributing an expanding agency and communion theme, along with other recovery-related symbols of re-storying (contamination reframed into redemption, escapist to healer, tragedy to romance).

Case descriptions were useful in elucidating aspects of this transformative processes and how coalescence of Victory themes thickened threads and plotlines towards recovery identities, while fixed Defeat themes seemed to support ongoing substance misuse. The proposition of interrelated narrative themes is not to undermine the phenomenology of personal stories, rather to highlight aspects of narrative interpretations that are shared among groups and therefore give explanatory form to key group differences.

Of course, specific stories offer a greater richness of detail, more in depth analysis of which may reveal distinct personal influences on behaviour. More richly constructivist analysis of LAAF material signals an avenue for future studies and would be especially indicated with assessment or therapy-focussed clinical studies. However, the primary objective of this thesis is to uncover dominant intersubjective narrative structures that relate to recovery or non-recovery, making a significant contribution.

Developing analysis from earlier reports, the study used McAdams' (1993) concept of imagoes to illustrate how agency and communion themes are embodied by central protagonists' inhabiting stories of substance misuse versus recovery. This analysis seems especially apposite for consideration of brief, dramatic life-storying, where narrative roles may be caricatured and crystallised. Building on ideas emerging from Chapter 12 suggesting identity transition from *victim* to *survivor,* the present study revealed a quintessential distinction between an *escapist* protagonist in cases of active substance misuse and a *healer* identity in recovery. The suggestion is that *escapist* self-characterisation emancipates to a healer identity as part of narrative restructuring and related recovery. This notion follows Larsson et al.'s (2013) theorisation of substance use as an escape mechanism that helps to nullify internal conflict, but also gives character form to Biernacki's (1986) idea of competitive identities growing in value and force as instruments of identity transformation. The shift to a *healer* imago, in which personal issues are not only confronted but embodied in

a persona wedded to proactive change, mirrors Singer's (2001, 2013) argument that identity coherence is necessary for recovery, and McIntosh and McKeganey's (2002) observation of reformulated personal identities achieving more satisfying ways of seeing themselves in the world. Likewise, the 'recovery identity' cited by social identity theorists, such as Best et al. (2016), is imbued with personal agency in the 'healer' guise. Social identity theorists contend that the transition to recovery occurs through supportive group membership, and registers the shift from escape and avoidance to group unity; however, the *healer* imago captures both personal and interpersonal elements of identity change: the victim who must escape to survive finds a new pathway with an active focus towards health and wellbeing, reflected through depictions of a self-motivated effort to heal, accepting help from others, and helping others to heal. This tripartite self-characterisation was prevalent in the LAAF narratives of recovering substance users. The latter point captures the benefit of framing prosocial goals in redemptive transformations from deviant lifestyles highlighted by the Good Lives Model (Ward, Gannon, & Mann, 2007; Ward, 2010; Purvis, Ward & Willis, 2013), and was noted in case studies explored in Chapter 8. In contrast, the *escapist* protagonist of Defeat narratives perceives a lack of personal and social resources, or constructive direction, perhaps finding sole recourse in substance misuse. Case examples highlighted dissonance in Defeat stories, though isolation and impotence appeared to overwhelm the protagonists, legitimising the status quo - escape into substance use, which continued to offset some inner tensions (Singer, 2001; Larsson et al., 2013). This fits in with an Attribution Theory interpretation of identity (Eiser, 1982; Newham & Davies, 2007) and presents the significant challenge for interventions.

Corresponding with Maruna's (2001) findings in offenders and ex-offenders, *contamination* plots were found in persistent substance users and *redemption* plots in recovering substance users. The positioning of opposing redemption and contamination themes expands repertory grid data (Chapter 12), where a trajectory to identity transformation was observed with

progress toward the construct 'Things change for the better' from 'Things get worse'. The revelation of two detailed life narratives, in which coalescing themes symbolise recovery or non-recovery, advances literature highlighting redemptive agency in the move to addiction recovery (Dunlop & Tracy, 2013; Stone, 2016).

As illustrated in Chapter 8, the *contamination* theme in this sample relates to early victimisation and betrayal. This plotline may serve to undermine personal agency and the communion drive whilst instilling a sense of powerlessness and isolation. Avoidant behaviour, escapism, and substance use can become important coping mechanisms – ways of achieving agency over emotional chaos, while alleviating the need for intimacy (Singer, 2001; Garland et al., 2013). These common underpinning themes may highlight important intervention needs.

A further contrast in self-storying is highlighted with narratives describing *happy* or *sad* endings. Previous research has shown a relationship between future orientation and cessation of substance use (Krech & Rock, 2002), and Hanninen and Koski-Jannes' (1999) study observed that all recovery stories given by their participants proposed happy endings. These findings are borne out by the present study, embedding the resolution in a narrative of other focal themes, and drawing a contrast with sad endings prevalent in non-recovery.

Frye's (1957) concept of literary myths was useful in proposing broader narrative forms. Observing Frye's taxonomy of plots, the Victory narrative reflected the *romance* myth, where life obstacles are overcome, while the Defeat narrative reflected *tragic* decline with elements of *irony* in the continuing chaos of existence. Of special relevance is Frye's observation that story forms can transit over the life cycle. It is important to understand that the two life narratives are suggestive of polar positions on substance misuse-recovery trajectories – the Victory form posed to reflect reconstruction and resolution of Defeat. In this, Frye's myths concept is useful. Tellingly, the transition from a tragic background to a victorious conclusion

was elucidated through case examples, with a commensurate metamorphosing identity. Accordingly, as mentioned, the sample cross-section reflects observation of life narratives at different phases in the substance use-recovery journey and related narrative reconstruction. This interpretation is supported by data correlating LAAF themes with RI scores.

It will be recalled that LAAF narratives associated with moderate recovery outcomes depicted a dominant agency (Power) or communion (Affiliation) theme. Following Frye's (1957) typology, the Affiliation narrative may relate to the *comedy* myth, in which hope has sprung and union with others sought, though unrealised. This idea was explored in Chapter 9 with examination of case studies in relation to the SSA plot configuration and was suggestive of a transition narrative. Similarly, Power narratives appeared to reflect a broader *thriller* form, or 'embattlement' theme, with exclusive agency elements shaping a dark adventure story, featuring a *warrior* protagonist wedded to a bravery self-concept in which others are perceived antagonistically. Repertory grid and case study analysis suggested that this narrative may also represent a midpoint in identity transformation, though via an opposing instigating theme structure (high agency as opposed to high communion).

This idea proposes that communal and agentic growth elements may 'break through' in the identity restructuring of dominant agency or communion narratives, and other key re-storying threads (e.g. *redemption, healer*), in facilitating recovery. This proposition supposes power in new narratives to reenvisage lives. On this point, whether embodying Victory or Defeat, LAAF material depicts sequences of perceived consequential events that help elucidate causative pathways. In this, narratives may offer insights as to the 'whys' of behaviour, serving as antecedents to action. This notion reflects arguments of other narrative theorists in the forensic field (Toch, 1993; Presser, 2009; Youngs & Canter, 2012).

The study integrates and expands the literature, providing a life narrative framework to interpret, understand and possibly predict behaviour. In this, a model of substance misuse

recovery is advanced, grounded in rich personal material, encompassing a greater complexity of substance misuse issues. It expands the scope of current models focussing on communal identity (e.g. Best et al., 2016) and redemptive agency (Stone, 2016) to propose a much richer life narrative theory of substance misuse recovery. This more detailed consideration of substance misuse stories offers insights on shared psychological underpins of addiction, signalling important considerations for treatment interventions.

Reflecting the proposition that agency and communion are the shaping influences on identity (e.g. Bakan, 1966; McAdams, 1988; Singer, 2004; Abele et al., 2008), through which healer roles and redemption stories may find greater orientating resolve, these findings may allude not only to substance misuse recovery, but rather begin to articulate an overall life narrative supportive of successful reactions to life challenges generally. Signally, this study suggests that the LAAF may offer a powerful method for studying and elucidating these narrative processes in vulnerable populations. Further longitudinal studies with larger, diverse clinical samples are needed to fully satisfy these questions.

As highlighted above, more in depth analysis is called for to explore motivational, cognitive, and emotional processes underlying behaviours. Specifically, more detailed analysis and interpretation of emotional themes is required, since use of substances often initiates from an emotional regulatory perspective and these deeper processes impact surface cognitions and conscious identity orientation (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000; Garland et al., 2013).

13.5 Conclusions

The LAAF model provided a powerful method for revealing two contrasting life narratives, one of which related to recovery and the other to non-recovery from substance misuse. A Victory narrative composed of thematic *self-mastery, unity, healer, redemption* and *happy ending* reflected a recovery identity and a Defeat narrative composed of thematic *compulsion,*

avoidance, escapist, contamination and *sad ending* reflected an addiction identity. The study builds on reports from previous chapters, prospecting a life narrative model of substance misuse and recovery, observing key thematic contrasts in fixed and transformative stories. These findings are suggestive of recovery trajectories in terms of narrative identity. In revealing detailed life narrative forms, the study expands current social and narrative identity models, and may begin to articulate overarching life narratives supportive of success or failure in confronting life challenges generally. These conclusions carry important practical implications.

PART IV

Chapter 14 - General Discussion

14.1 Framework

Framed within the remit of psychological research on identity, the thesis draws on literature from both social identity and narrative identity studies of addiction recovery. These perspectives agree that changes to identity are important to recovery from substance misuse. This argument represented an orientating tenet of the thesis.

From social identity research the importance of communal processes in identity change is emphasised (e.g. Best et al., 2016), while narrative studies identify redemptive agency as key to resolving substance misuse issues (e.g. Dunlop & Tracy, 2013). However, literature from personality psychology suggests that both agency and communion are important to identity processes (McAdams, 1993), referencing underpinning organismic needs for competence and union (Bakan, 1966), and twin cultural strivings for power and intimacy (Singer, 2004). The argument being that impediments to these biological and cultural incentives may underpin psychological issues. Credibility for this notion is provided by life story studies showing agency and communion issues in people with mental health issues (Holms et al., 2018) and chronically addicted males (Singer, 1997).

With this idea in mind, it was theorised that current identity models of recovery may inadequately explain the psychological dynamics of substance misuse recovery. Building on Singer's (1997, 2001) studies, the thesis proposed to examine the role of agency and communion growth themes, and other associated narrative elements, in relation to recovery from substance misuse.

Recognising the unique power of personal narratives in capturing human experience (Sarbin, 1986), and insights given through life narrative approaches to identity (e.g. McAdams et al.,

1996), the thesis adopted a methodology similar to McAdams' (1993) and Singer's (1997) life story technique, adapted to address certain proposed engagement and elicitation limitations with socially stigmatised populations. This decision followed narrative studies with offender populations identifying a greater suitability of the LAAF technique for collecting psychologically rich narrative material (Canter & Young, 2015), the author recognising similar elicitation impediments with substance misuse samples.

14.2 Contributions to the literature

14.2.1 Study 1

The first study reported on a detailed thematic content analysis of participants LAAF narratives. The analysis suggested a strong suitability of the LAAF model for eliciting psychologically complex and thematically rich narrative material in substance misuse populations. This application of the LAAF approach expands previous uses of the technique with offender samples to propose value for studying stories of substance misuse and recovery.

Contributions to the narrative literature were observed with several findings. Firstly, a constellation of prevalent LAAF themes, including 'interpersonal conflict', 'high emotionality', a *survivor* role, and 'chemically assisted agency'. This data is supported by the broader addiction literature on victimisation (e.g. Quinn et al., 2016) and emotional regulation (e.g. Garland et al., 2013), depicting common experiences and adaptive mechanisms among the sample. Data showcases the LAAF's facility for capturing focal intersubjective experiences and contextualising them in personal stories. This richness communicates commonality among subjective accounts, as well as specific individual contexts of consequential events, which express phenomenological aetiology important in conceptualising psychological issues and problem behaviours.

Secondly, data revealed themes discriminative of recovery and non-recovery, specifically *contamination* and *redemption*. This builds on narrative literature illustrating a role for redemptive scripting in addressing substance misuse (Stone, 2016) by contrasting it with an addiction-related *contamination* theme. It suggests a similar re-storying pattern to that observed with desisting offenders (Maruna, 2001), and may denote a fundamental thematic differentiation in socially problematic narratives versus prosocial re-storying.

Relatedly, more detailed analysis of *redemption* and *contamination* components revealed that, aside from framing negative experiences positively, *redemption* sequences described achievement of *moral steadfastness* and *prosocial goal setting*. Building on McIntosh and McKeganey's (2002) observations, this aspect of narrative restructuring affords individuals more meaningful and socially acceptable ways of being in the world, providing an identity in accordance with social desirability instead of deviance. Expanding ideas emerging from Youngs et al.'s (2016) LAAF research with offenders, these value changes may resolve identity dissonance corresponding with a narrative in opposition to the 'good life' (Ward, 2010).

Analysis of *contamination* components revealed descriptions of *victimisation*, *betrayal* and *failure* as representative. This plot reflects literature on childhood biographic disruption in addiction (Quinn et al., 2016), which Singer (2001) argues may stifle the intimacy drive, leaving individuals isolated and powerless. Such narrative tableaux set the scene for agency and communion deficits, resolution of which may be key to redemptive narrative restructuring. These findings represent the first use of the LAAF model for differentiating problem from resolution narratives, and hint at ways that recovery stories may call for agency *and* communion growth themes.

Finally, the study revealed a relationship between more psychologically complex LAAF narratives and recovery outcomes. That is, participants in recovery included more psychological ideas, characters and events than those still active in lifestyles of substance misuse. This finding may indicate pride in the recovery story and an eagerness to communicate triumph over challenge, but also may denote personal reflection, detailed insight into influences on life trajectories, and more nuanced ways of self-understanding that help to resolve inner conflicts.

Overall, these findings suggest that similar plot foundations among the population are reinterpreted positively in recovery narratives, some of which may be accounted for by more complex cognition, giving awareness of a greater representation of pivotal events and important characters. This latter characteristic chimes with the idea of a growing communion theme in recovery narratives. Data goes beyond the extant narrative and social identity literature, adding richness to current unilateral emphases and serves to support the value of the LAAF model for engaging substance misuse samples in providing rich personal narratives suitable for studying addiction and recovery stories.

14.2.2 Study 2

Building on ideas emerging from the descriptive analysis, Study 2 reported on structural analysis of LAAF content. The analysis contributes to the literature in revealing four distinct narrative structures corresponding with themes of agency and communion (Rowlands et al., 2019a). The model proposed four LAAF domains which could be further interpreted according to dramatic intensity of narrative themes. These were an agency domain, a communion domain, a combined agency and communion domain, and an agency and communion deficient domain.

Case examples were used to illustrate how the narrative domains were reflected in individuals' LAAF narratives, suggesting constellations of story themes indicative of individual differences which appeared to relate to different recovery behaviours. Narrative domains were framed in terms of Dominance, Affiliation, Power and Avoidance (DAPA). The analysis articulated narrative identity differences according to agency and communion themes, offering a framework for studying identity and recovery according to twin psychological processes. This expands the purview of current theories, addressing imperatives to examine personal and communal growth processes in identity change.

14.2.3 Studies 3 and 4

The DAPA structure revealed by SSA informed a proposition that agency and communion themes in LAAF accounts may distinguish narrative groups that relate to different recovery outcomes. ANOVA and POSAC revealed four narrative groups corresponding with different theme presentations, supporting the DAPA model. Expanding on previous analyses (Rowlands et al., 2019b; Rowlands et al., In Press), ANOVA showed that LAAF narratives illustrating agency *and* communion themes showed significantly better recovery outcomes than accounts illustrating either theme, which in turn showed significantly better outcomes than accounts narrating neither theme.

These results differentiate story types with associated recovery outcomes. This finding makes a significant contribution, expanding extant ideas of identity transformation in suggesting that combined narrative agency and communion relates to better recovery outcomes than agency or communion-specific identity processes.

Developing the argument, POSAC revealed agency and communion growth scales, with narrative agency progressing through descriptions of *effectiveness, empowerment* to *self-*

mastery, and communion progressing from *friendship/love, caring*, to *unity*. Participants positions on these scales related to RI scores, those depicting more potent presentations showing better recovery outcomes. Diminishing theme profiles (agency or communion specific narratives, or those denoting less dramatic elements) related to progressively lower RI scores.

The data shows a two-dimensional growth arc, in that narratives combining *self-mastery* and *unity* reflected the strongest recovery outcomes. Cross-sectional comparative data suggests that narratives are progressively re-storied toward greater attributes of agency and communion as part of identity transformation and recovery. This finding may also be suggestive of agency and communion working in duality, where each theme facilitates expansion in the other. Illustrative case studies were used in proposing this relationship. The mechanism may operate in any number of ways, several of which were considered earlier. Developing Social Identity concepts (Best et al., 2016), one way this relationship could work is proposed by the recovery group context, where recovering individuals not only receive support but provide support for other recovering individuals, demonstrating a weaving together of agency and communion themes. Likewise, hearing stories from recovering substance users may ignite a sense of agency for re-storying one's own orientating narratives. Similarly, a shift to self-agency through redemptive restructuring of past events may have a positive knock-on positive effect on construal of other people as worthy of trust or sources of support, developing the concept of amenable communion. Such self-reconfiguring may also stimulate the urge to help others address their issues, feeding agency and communion self-attributes. These are just some of the means through which narrative themes may grow in significance and facilitate the development of other identity themes and recovery.

Overall, the findings develop unilateral perspectives to incorporate agency and communion growth themes into models of identity change, suggesting that narratives of *self-mastery* and

unity are most indicative of recovery identities. Though a preliminary analysis, these ideas represent a significant advance on descriptive studies highlighting redemptive agency or communal concepts of recovery.

14.2.4 Study 5

Broadening the analysis and triangulating LAAF findings, analysis of repertory grid data reporting agency and communion constructs across past, present and ideal identity elements revealed constructs of agentic and communal growth from past agency and communion deficits in recovered users. Data indicates that agency and communion constructs are central to perceptions of identity transformation among recovering substance users. In contrast, chronically addicted participants reported fixed low agency and communion construct systems, enduring through past and present identities. The Power Group perceived agency-specific identity changes, communal constructs corresponding with past substance using identities, whereas the Affiliation Group perceived communion specific identity changes. The findings elaborate on the narrative studies, participants reporting shifts from low agency and communion constructs in addiction identities towards high agency and communion constructs in recovery identities. This suggests that identity transformation is constructed around expansion of agency and communion (Rowlands et al., 2020).

14.2.5 Study 6

Study 6 develops the idea of growth to *self-mastery* and *unity* in transformative recovery stories to contrast with a non-recovery narrative. Significantly, correlational analysis revealed a Victory narrative structured around thematic *self-mastery, unity, redemption, healer* and *happy ending* that related to recovery outcomes, and a Defeat narrative structured around thematic *compulsion, avoidance, contamination, escapist* and *sad ending* that related to non-

recovery outcomes. Differentiation of recovery from active substance misuse according to these life narrative forms enriched the Dominance and Avoidance concepts merging from previous reports, adding detail to the model and further support to a storied interpretation of addiction problems and resolution. Going beyond existing theories, the findings draw attention to the many related psychological facets of re-storying and identity transformation, offering insights that could be useful in addressing psychological issues in treatment.

14.2.6 Summary of key advances

Overall, the thesis showcases the usefulness of the LAAF approach for eliciting rich narrative material from the target population, results supporting interpretation of recovery and non-recovery from substance misuse through the lens of LAAF narratives. This builds on previous uses of the method by demonstrating a strength in discriminating problem from resolution stories and develops existing social identity and narrative identity models to appreciate a richer context of themes important to substance use issues and recovery.

Beyond other studies, fundamentally, the thesis illustrates agentic and communal identity growth paths, combination of which seems to relate to the best recovery outcomes. Ideas of *self-mastery* and *unity* appear to be key psychological indicators of recovery, while concepts of *compulsion* and *avoidance* hallmark active substance misuse, speaking to notions of powerlessness and isolation. The data suggest that these self-attributes are re-storied into a more agentic and communal narrative identity as part of the recovery process, themes that perhaps support other related positive self-storying elements such as healing, redemption and optimism.

The DAPA model, while not conclusive, is suggestive of narrative trajectories to recovery, highly agentic (Power) or highly communal (Affiliation) LAAF narratives corresponding with

moderate or limited recovery outcomes, indicative of intermediate positions of identity transformation between Avoidance and Dominance narratives. This moot issue awaits future longitudinal studies observing narrative identity changes over time and their predictive influence on recovery outcomes.

These results not only highlight the power and value of narrative approaches in studying addiction, but also elucidate a template for positive identity transformation in the form of the recovery narrative identity. Growth to *self-mastery* and *unity* appear to be part of a richer re-storying important to recovery, whilst addiction stories seem to uphold tactical substance use, serving avoidance and escape in the face of powerlessness and alienation. However, the positioning of contrasting Defeat and Victory stories poses a bigger question of re-storying attributes that lift individuals from defeatist avoidance to agency and connection that gives momentum to recovery processes.

Diamond (2002) and Singer et al. (2013) argue that narratives can be used therapeutically as a throughway to identity shifts and resolution of addiction problems. Observing how storied interpretations reinforce certain actions, Diamond (2002) argues that narratives reveal the dominant influences on peoples' lives, which can be deconstructed, offering insights on behavioural mediators and a basis for re-interpreting key events and assumptions that can beneficially re-write narratives. A case study of Singer and colleagues supports this process, illustrating how redemptive restructuring of contamination sequences with a chronic alcoholic helped foster abstinence (Singer et al., 2013). In this illustration, the question of making progress represents re-interpreting those experiences with a self-agentic impetus: restructuring one's life story through a redemptive lens self-constructs agency.

Narrative reprocessing may initiate in any number of ways, for example the redemptive pursuit of prosocial goals may enable more beneficial connections, thus enhancing communion,

imbuing a different driving animus and a radically altered perspective. Equally, observing reframed narratives through new peer connections proposes new kinds of stories for substance users, with the potential for increased agency. These ideas suggest means through which agency and communion may operate in duality, each growing attribute facilitating the other, reprocessing identity constructs supportive of recovery. Again, broader longitudinal studies on clinical populations will enable a more detailed examination of these processes.

14.3 Benefits for researchers

14.3.1 LAAF model

The LAAF technique may offer several key advantages over other narrative methods for studying substance misuse. Firstly, the task is engaging and accessible to the target population, where standard biographical accounts can be daunting, unrevealing, and inaccessible to individuals leading prohibited and chaotic lives (Canter & Youngs, 2015; Rowlands et al., 2019a). One of the mechanisms for this might be the projective framing, providing a less direct and threatening elicitation platform. Some scholars argue that indirect, projective techniques facilitate disclosure of more psychologically revealing stories (Murray, 1938; Rapaport, 1942; Bamberg, 2011; Skeffington & Browne, 2014; Youngs et al., 2016). Further, the LAAF task's engagement of the imagination may be more suitable for people with substance misuse issues, for whom explicit verbal self- expression is often difficult, whilst the population seems to show a greater amenability for creative exercises (Moore, 1983; Weegmann, 2010; McGranahan & Lynskay, 2018).

A further creative facility in the LAAF that may assist with self-expression is the prompting of film analogies, which have been shown to be useful for communicating where articulation is difficult (Kuriansky et al., 2010; Correia & Barbosa, 2018). Support for this is provided by

the current study, and previous LAAF studies with prison populations, where participants often compared their stories to popular fictionalised portrayals or used screen narratives to orientate telling their own stories (Tkazky, 2018).

As with all narrative methods, a subjective account is derived, which is important in understanding complex psychosocial issues, such as substance misuse; however, full authority in construction is afforded with the LAAF technique, showcasing personal emphases and a biased reality, revealing of inner states rather than external reality, key for understanding aberrant behaviour patterns (Presser, 2009; Canter & Youngs, 2015). Moreover, the account distils the life story down to meaningful events, providing more developmental coherence than extensive life narrative methods. This facility is crucial in populations who have experienced non-linear developmental trajectories and gives the researcher a more readable trajectory.

Relatedly, the LAAF provides efficiency over standard narrative techniques, producing an essential precis of the life narrative. In this, a richness of important themes is still narrated, however, they are often synopsised in dramatic sequences. As Youngs et al. (2016) argue, the dramatism of the account and brevity means that shaping elements are difficult to miss. This facilitates transcription, content analysis, coding, structural analysis, and interpretation.

Structurally, the technique provides benefits to narrative research, in demanding a conclusion to the story. This is important, as future orientation has been shown to have a mediatory effect on outcomes (Krech & Rock, 2002; Carvajal et al., 2009; Krank et al., 2011). Roles are also readily characterised in the dramatic form. Though the LAAF exercise opens-up the story format to the narrator, different aspects of the self can more easily be roleplayed in a fictionalised telling. Roles can be separated into figurative myths, useful for highlighting identity conflicts rife in substance misuse stories (Biernacki, 1986; Singer, 2001; Larsson et al., 2013; Bathish et al., 2017). This facility for uncovering subconscious psychological

conflicts was highlighted in Youngs' and colleagues LAAF study with offenders (Youngs et al., 2016).

The LAAF method makes good use of open-ended prompts, which facilitate in focusing on current states, important for consideration of presenting issues. If this were not the case, the commonality of pre-transition biographies in substance users (e.g. victimisation, trauma, emotional upheaval, self-management through substance use, escape) would potentially confound coding and quantitative analysis central to revealing contrasting theme structures. Specifically, the overall perspective prompted by the question: 'If your life were to be made into a film, what type of film would it be?', gives an immediate plot synopsis, capturing the general thrust of the narrative. Typically, participants give a genre description, or a popular culture comparison ('It would be like Reservoir Dogs'). The description tends to capture the current rather than past events, so in recovery cases, a participant was unlikely to draw heavily on the past and announce: 'It's a disaster movie'. More tellingly they declared: A 'rags to riches tale', 'A film about triumph against the odds'. These LAAFs contrasted with tragic references: 'Have you seen The Butterfly Effect?', 'It's a never-ending recurrent nightmare', in cases of active substance use.

Other prompts determine emphasis and pivotal events: 'What would happen?', 'Who would the main characters be?', 'What would the main events be that might happen in the film?', 'What happens in the most exciting scene in the film?' For recovering participants, central scenes and characters were reported as those that helped lift them out of substance misuse and other life problems; whereas in active users the central events and characters were those deemed to assist the problem. This current focus is important in presenting contrasting stories and understanding the effects of different narrative identities.

The method also emphasises reflective and change processes, key to discriminating accounts: 'How do you change during the film' taps into whether the individual has declined, stayed the same or recovered, a device key for distinguishing contrasting themes of redemption and contamination. Importantly, the florid film format and guiding prompts elicit an overall picture viewed from the present perspective. This highlights a key strength of the LAAF approach over more detailed life story interviews, where a wealth of biographical data could mean that important differences between individuals are lost.

With these elements, the LAAF model seems purpose-made for comparing problem with resolution stories. LAAF narratives appear to embody narrative identity and change processes key to substance misuse and recovery. On a related point, whilst always phenomenologically limiting, the coding dictionary draws on extensive narrative and broader psychological research which, in this analysis, demonstrated validity by revealing intersubjective theme contrasts key to external recovery indicators. This is important in generating evidence-based theories with practical utility. However, the rich material generated using the technique also lends itself to future studies applying a deeper, qualitative case study analysis of material.

14.3.2 Recovery Inventory

The 12-item RI offers researchers an efficient and convenient method for assessing key indicators of recovery. It benefits from a design derived from evidence-based indicators (Groshkova et al., 2013), and enables an external gauge for comparison with narrative accounts. The inventory pivots around a judgement of recovery by personal and social indicators, reflective of the individual lived experience (Deegan, 1988; White, 200; Valentine, 2011). It fits with the shift towards psychosocial approaches that address multiple personal and relational issues from the individual perspective. With this broad purview, the RI expands on measures of recovery used in other narrative studies, such as Kougiali et al.'s (2017)

participants' explicit statement of being 'in recovery', or Dunlop and Tracy's abstinence report, aligning with researchers using diverse measures addressing both self-concepts and external behavioural indicators (Groshkova et al., 2013; Best et al., 2016).

14.3.3 Multidimensional scaling

A key innovation of the project is use of MDS procedures and facet design to translate rich qualitative narrative material into quantifiable data (see Shye, 1998). Arguments for and against quantifying qualitative material are presented elsewhere in this thesis, though it should be stated that many of the fresh insights emerging from this work derive from use of these powerful analytic techniques. The techniques were developed by Louis Guttman (1954) to facilitate the construction of empirical models of complex behaviours, and the methods have been used to reveal the underlying structure of elaborate content systems, providing models of phenomena such as intelligence (Guttman & Lingoes, 1971) and self-esteem (Dancer, 1985). Modern pioneers of multidimensional scaling in Investigative Psychology have used the methods deployed in this project extensively, transforming complex offence data into quantifiable themes, which have been subjected to MDS procedures to reveal underlying structures of criminal narratives and provide multivariate models of criminal behaviour (Canter, 2004; Porter & Alison, 2005; Canter & Youngs, 2009; Youngs & Canter, 2012; Youngs et al., 2016; Ioannou et al., 2017).

In the present study, SSA and POSAC have been key to organising life narrative content, revealing underlying patterns and constructing empirically verifiable models of substance misuse and recovery. In particular, the use of POSAC provided a theoretical leap, elucidating: (1) qualitative distinctions between agency and communion themes and personal and relational recovery pathways, the narrative analogues corresponding with behavioural

measures (i.e. communion themes with relational pathways), (2) quantitative scales of agentic and communal growth and recovery indicators, and (3) the differentiation of individuals into four theme groups matched with recovery outcomes. Though a small-scale exploratory study, the neatness of this result cannot be overlooked, and provides impetus for further studies.

The relationship between LAAF narratives and recovery status suggests validity of the narrative identity model, along with practical utility of life narrative interpretations of substance use and recovery patterns. The methodology and findings offer a new dimension for future research, which can benefit from MDS procedures, giving form to rich qualitative material in constructing quantifiable, testable theoretical models with valuable practical application.

It should be repeated, however, that whilst these methods have enabled modelling of substance misuse and recovery, they serve not to undermine participants unique narrative descriptions, but rather formulate key elements and narrative processes. In translating detailed self-narratives, with careful thematic coding, into underlying structural components, the methods may offer our most proficient means of quantifying qualitative material with the least threat to data richness. Moreover, part of demonstrating relevance of this analysis is illustration of theme patterns in individual narrative quotes, which allows different contexts through which central story themes manifest to be observed. On this point, future studies applying a greater qualitative focus are to be welcomed, since analyses such as Singer's (1997, 2001) clinical case studies have provided insights that have been important in orientating the current thesis' research questions.

14.4 Implications for practice

The results carry implications for practitioners. Data collection benefits discussed with respect to research may carry over into engagement of clinical cases. These include a less imposing creative format and projective framing. The LAAF seems to provide an innovative, enjoyable, and accessible way to engage often alienated, disengaged individuals. This conclusion is supported by the psychologically rich material collected using the technique, but also the retention of all participants at follow up suggests that they found baseline interviews enjoyable.

Furthermore, assuming the centrality of identity to addiction and recovery, by revealing themes indicative of recovery versus non-recovery, LAAF narratives may offer insights on issues requiring resolution, or an 'identity report'. Expanding on ideas of the LAAF communicating an experiential positioning in the world, perhaps accounts can serve as a psychosocial assessment tool, highlighting key psychological impediments to recovery. Though the LAAF model reported in this thesis appears to efficiently elucidate these central themes, any application of the technique for assessment purposes may want to take a richer phenomenological approach to specifically pinpoint personal issues. The data certainly suggest a richness of material for these purposes.

Consideration of this application addresses practitioners' requirement to understand and treat substance use and related issues. The LAAF method may help to address a common aversion to self-disclosure (Moore, 1983) with recourse to film analogy, which can draw on symbolism and fictional portrayals to identify individual's' essential psychology, the task combining advantages of projective and life story techniques (Canter & Youngs, 2015; Tkazky, 2018). The result for the practitioner is a rich, person-centred report, contextualising behaviour

patterns in the subjective reality of the individual. This facility is crucial for accurately conceptualising problem issues (Kelly, 1955; Laing, 1961; Singer, 2001).

Diamond (2002) relates that the exercise of describing personal narratives occupies the client in the active practice of self-reflection and organisation, key processes for achieving insight and stimulating change. Diamond (2002) and others (Weegmann, 2010; Singer et al., 2013) argue that personal narratives offer rich material revealing of psychodynamics, examination of which can reveal central orienting themes. These scholars have shown how reflecting on storied accounts provides insights and a format for reconstructive narrative therapy.

This brings us onto a consideration of the possible therapeutic applications of the LAAF model, since the thesis illustrates data richness with comparability to standard life story methods, whilst being more efficient and accessible, and perhaps more revealing of conflicts. Benefits of such applications might include using Victory LAAFs in 1:1 sessions or group workshops as inspirational case studies of similar stories re-scripted for change. The invitation to construct personal biopics proposes an engaging task, which is also appropriate for group work, through which clients can compare productions. The activity may provide a bonding exercise, forging communion, inspiring positive change, and positioning agency in the re-storying. It should be stated, however, that no assessment or therapeutic implications can be drawn from the data, since the study did not test clinical applications of the LAAF. The discussion serves only to highlight potential uses. Any clear indications of value in this respect awaits subsequent clinical studies, and certainly prompts a promising avenue for future research.

14.5 Theoretical implications

As already discussed, the project advances ideas that both agency and communion are important to identity change and recovery from substance misuse. Both themes appear to expand in the reconstructed life stories of recovered substance users, whilst remaining deficient in addiction stories. The framework facilitated an enriched model of recovery and non-recovery reflected with other salient story elements constructed around these central theme dimensions and presented the bones of a LAAF narrative model of substance misuse recovery.

Along with the idea that appreciation of central thematic components may offer important insights in rewriting life stories through narrative work itself, these developments may offer guidelines for modelling more standard interventions according to ideas of agentic and communal deficits at the self-identity level, and addressing specific interventions relating to these psychosocial needs, such as a requirement for interventions developing self-efficacy where narrative agency is limited, or building trust and connections where narrative communion is compromised. As discussed, actions that promote confrontation of these psychological challenges may open-up ways of reconstructing experiences: engaging with recovery groups enhancing communion and exposing individuals to new possible narratives, and developing self-control and competencies fostering more agentic identity concepts and hopeful storying.

Additional to MDS, theoretical developments relied on recruitment and comparison of individuals active in substance misuse and those at different stages of recovery, whereas most recent identity research has focused on recovering populations, missing vital cross-sectional comparative data from active users. Therefore, the thesis supports a shift towards this richer

sampling criteria in subsequent studies with larger samples than the small study population of the present exploratory project.

14.6 Research limitations

14.6.1. Sampling

A key strength of the study is the inclusion of individuals at all stages of substance misuse and recovery. However, the project suffers from several sampling limitations. Principal among these is the small sample size. Only 32 participants took part in the study, which means that quantitative results, while indicative, may be of limited generalisability. Of those participating, only 9 were females, though it should be stated that this gender disparity reflects differences in those reporting substance misuse issues (Becker & Hu, 2008). Individuals under 30 were also unrepresented, meaning that findings cannot be generalised to younger populations, who may show unique life narrative and substance use patterns, on account of prevailing psychosocial experiences and cultural differences. For example, the growing use of 'novel psychoactive substances' has not been represented in the study sample, which is especially prevalent among younger substance users (Measham et al., 2011; Iacobucci, 2018; Rychert & Wilkins, 20180). Equally, the sample was largely Caucasian. The underrepresentation of other ethnic groups may be significant, since different cultures employ different story forms and identity ideals.

These sampling limitations need to be addressed in any future LAAF studies to give generalisable explanatory power to findings. In defence, it should be noted that despite sampling limitations, the preliminary studies have revealed clear relationships between LAAF narratives, personal construct systems and recovery outcomes that expand current theories

with important practical implications. Certainly, the findings justify future research with larger, more diverse study samples.

14.6.2 Limits to methodology

Prospective participants were informed that the research project concerned the personal narratives of individuals with substance misuse history. Despite the prompt to describe their 'life as a film', this prior information may have orientated the narrative description around substance use. With this caution, the question arises as to whether the LAAF procedure elicited a life narrative, or whether participants' understanding of their involvement in the study stimulated narratives of substance use and/or recovery. In defence of the methodology, content analysis revealed deeply textured, psychologically complex accounts, detailing numerous events, characters and ideas, as well as key structural elements indicative of broader life stories. This suggests that the responses were psychologically and structurally comparable to other life narrative methods. The frequency of central narrative themes in the LAAF accounts also attests to the broad context of the participants responses. Indeed, the narratives were richer and more detailed than those collected in previous offender studies, where the procedure was championed as a highly suitable research tool (Canter & Youngs, 2015; Youngs et al., 2016).

However, it should be noted that the LAAF approach is still very much in its infancy. Caution should be exercised in consideration of participants' accounts. Specifically, the question emerges when observing sometimes patently fictionalised accounts as to whether an essential truth may be lost in the dramatization, or the life story trivialised in a creative flight. As a counterpoint, Canter and Youngs (2015) reported that their participants, far from creating inflated legends of themselves, used the LAAF task to delineate important aspects of their lives. The author proposes that individuals participating in the current project, likewise,

expressed essential inner narratives. Key to this thesis is advantages of projective and creative tasks. With respect to the efficacy of such techniques, it is argued that imagination represents the subject (Murray, 1938; Rapaport, 1942; Holstrom et al., 2018). That is, elaborated expression carries with it an underlying personal significance and meaning, often tapping into hidden dynamics with subversion of conscious resistance (Bamberg, 2011). On this point, Youngs et al. (2016) revealed a hidden identity dissonance in offender narratives using the LAAF, and the current undertaking has revealed conflicts and contingencies obscured from previous research endeavours.

Considering substance misuse populations specifically, certain limitations of the current LAAF model can be observed. An understanding of traumatic lives, where victimisation, conflict and crime is prevalent, confers knowledge that antagonistic figures frequent such stories. For this reason, the content dictionary would benefit from inclusion of antagonistic imagoes. McAdams (1993) listed 15 mostly positive imagoes to characterise the self and others. Only the *Warrior* myth can be viewed as antagonistic. Examination of participants' narratives suggests that inclusion of such antagonist myths as 'Predator', 'Villain', 'Devil', 'Enemy', 'Attacker', and 'Exploiter' would enrich the content analysis, since such figures are common to stories of substance use and less so to recovery stories, where 'Healer', 'Teacher', 'Maker', 'Caregiver', 'Arbiter', etc, suffice. A simple tallying of imagoes would reveal significant contrasts and interpersonal representations that may be theoretically significant.

A further limitation emerged with examination of emotional content. Though Russell's (1997) circumplex of emotions has been useful for characterising offender narratives, offering emotional content to different narrative forms, a proclivity to deploy psychoactive substances as an agency regulating device in the current sample meant that the power of Russell's model in differentiating narratives was compromised. Considering the significance of emotional chaos, disruption and regulation to substance use and recovery, future coding frameworks

would benefit from a more in-depth thematic analysis. Perhaps as a starting point, building on contrasts between stories of recovery versus active substance use, themes of 'chaos', 'breakdown', 'out of control', 'scared', 'shameful' and 'angry' versus 'self-regulation' 'serenity', 'under control', 'calm', 'proud' seem apt additions.

Repertory grid analysis showed that the development of self-trust and emotional control was integral to identity transformation, highlighting aspects of agentic growth missing from the LAAF content framework. Other factors intrinsic to personal agency and therapeutic growth, such as 'insight', were, likewise, unrepresented in the coding dictionary. Repertory grid analysis also revealed 'trust of others', and 'self-expression' to be important mediators of identity change, accessing constructs instrumental to meaningful communion. Any future analysis of LAAF narratives in substance misuse samples should include these additional coding criteria to capture a greater richness of essential narrative material.

Further, the above additions could prove useful for identifying challenges and intervention needs, especially since both Power and Avoidance participants generally did not value 'trusting others' or 'connecting with others.' Interestingly, most participants valued agentic growth, suggesting that Affiliation cases may be more easily motivated towards change, whilst Power cases present a more significant challenge to engage with important communal support.

A broader methodological consideration, which has been discussed elsewhere but bears repeating, is the use of *a priori* thematic content coding, and the extent to which this impinges on the richness of data analysis. The author accepts that any attempt to put form on personal accounts divorces material from its phenomenological context and thus, to some extent, undermines subjective reality; however, it is argued that any sacrifice to richness is returned by the strength of a model illustrating intersubjective psychological components key to recovery processes. Further, efforts were made to ensure a rich original analysis from which

central components could be derived, a reliance on a broad supportive psychological literature, and illustration of key arguments with verbatim case descriptions. Nonetheless, the rich material afforded through the LAAF task certainly lends itself to a more grounded approach and future research exploring this avenue is to be welcomed.

14.6.3 Recovery indicators

RI content derived from a literature review compiling key recovery indicators. The inventory assumed the standpoint that recovery constitutes many different lifestyle indicators and sought to compile these in an easy to use tool. The tool provided an efficient means of eliciting fundamental behaviour patterns. It was designed for ease of reading and efficient analysis. For this purpose, it proved useful; however, binary scoring is limiting, and a richer, more explanatory Likert scale should perhaps be used in future research, following Groshkova et al.'s (2013). Groshkova et al.'s (2013) scale was validated through correlation with the World Health Organisation Quality of Life Questionnaire (WHOQOL) (WHO, 2004) and the Treatment Outcome Profile (TOP) (Marsden, Farrell, Bradbury et al., 2008). Subsequent studies may wish to adopt Groshkova et al.'s (2013) scale, or a new, more nuanced design validated through comparison with recognised outcomes scales.

14.6.4 Self-report

Study data relied on participants self-reports and therefore poses potential shortcomings inherent in such approaches, like social desirability and memory deficits, though aspects of social desirability may have been offset by use of the less threatening and more oblique LAAF task. Nonetheless, this caution is balanced by the benefits of self-report, such as the personal perspective afforded through narratives and repertory grids, aspects central to understanding

and addressing individual issues. However, future research should enlist further supportive measures, using substantiated personality scales to compare with narrative material. Examples of relevant scales include Ersche et al.'s (2013) Drug-Related Locus of Control to compare with agency themes and the Mattering Scale (Elliot, Kao, & Grant, 2004) to compare with communion themes.

14.7 Future directions

Several indications for future studies have been alluded to in the foregoing discussion. A primary future objective is replication with consideration of the above adjustments, using broader and more diverse study samples. Longitudinal studies need to be conducted, with control groups, for exploration of the etiological relationship between life narratives and recovery to be satisfactorily explored. This endeavour represents purpose in elucidating the instrumentality of narrative constructs on behaviour and is important in terms of supporting interventions at the narrative level.

Following on from these considerations, another avenue for future studies is clinical research assessing the accessibility of the LAAF for service user engagement and personal data collection. This serves the objective of practical uses as a person-centred and psychosocial assessment tool model for practitioners, as well as determining value of the LAAF exercise in a therapeutic reconstructive capacity. Guided by Singer's case study research showing tripartite deployment of life storying for data collection, identity modelling, and therapeutic reconstruction (Singer, 1997; Singer, 2001; Singer et al., 2013), narratives may be unique in this facility for matching method, theory and practice.

Whilst the present thesis illustrates several discriminative components in substance misuse and recovery stories, it serves more as a preliminary analysis which further studies adopting

the model can build on with more in-depth examination. The thesis suggests certain benefits of the LAAF approach, giving pause to consider an alternative to standard narrative methods, and opens-up a new line of narrative enquiry in researching addiction and recovery.

14.8 Conclusions

In conclusion, it can be stated that the LAAF approach offers a useful methodology for engaging individuals with substance misuse issues, revealing components of life narrative distinguishing of addiction and recovery stories. Specifically, studies revealed four narrative groups: Dominance, Affiliation, Power and Avoidance, reflecting combinations of agency and communion themes in LAAF accounts that related to specific recovery outcomes. This finding proposes the DAPA model, where Dominance and Avoidance narratives are suggestive of either pole of the substance misuse-recovery spectrum, and Affiliation and Power narratives are suggestive of intermediate positions, with unique identity limitations and intervention needs.

Robust recovery profiles were shown to correspond with agency and communion growth themes *self-mastery* and *unity,* whereas diminishing recovery profiles corresponded with less dramatic agency and communion themes. The results suggested that narratives are progressively re-storied as part of the recovery process, expanding towards more agentic and communal identities. These findings develop existing narrative and social identity ideas to appreciate a two-dimensional growth path in identity transformation and recovery.

Expanding the agency and communion model, a broader Victory LAAF narrative was illustrated that related to strong recovery outcomes. In these Victory LAAFs, thematic *self-mastery* and *unity* were found to coalesce with *redemption, healer* and *happy endings*, detailing a richer recovery story. This Victory narrative contrasted with a Defeat LAAF

composed of thematic *compulsion, avoidance, escapist* and *sad ending* in stories of non-recovery. The findings suggest that recovery from substance misuse can be articulated, understood, and perhaps addressed in terms of overarching life narratives, carrying important treatment implications.

The proposed LAAF narrative framework extends current social identity and narrative identity theories to an appreciation of the complex interplay of psychological factors involved in storying substance use and recovery, though research with larger samples is required to substantiate these exploratory propositions.

References

Abele, A.E. & Wojcizke, B. (2007). Agency and communion from the perspective of 'self' versus 'others', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 93(5): 751-763.

Abele, A. E., Uchronski, M., Suitner, C. & Wojciszke, B. (2008). Towards an operationalization of the fundamental dimensions of agency and communion: Trait content ratings in five countries considering valence and frequency of word occurrence. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 38: 1202-1217.

Adler, J. M. (2012). Living into the story: agency and coherence in a longitudinal study of narrative identity development and mental health over the course of psychotherapy*, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 102(20): 367-389.

Adler, J. M., McAdams, D. P. & Skalina, L. (2008). The narrative reconstruction of psychotherapy and psychological health, *Psychotherapy Research*, 18(6): 719-734.

Adler, J. M., Turner, A. F., Brookshier, K. M., Monahan, C., Walder-Biesanz, I., Harmeling, L, et al. (2015). Variations in Narrative Identity is Associated with Trajectories of Mental Health Over Several Years, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 108(3): 476-496.

Adler, J. M., Dunlop, W. L., Fivush, R., Lilgendahl, J. P., Lodi-Smith, J., McAdams, D. P., … Syed, M. (2017). Research Methods for Studying Narrative Identity: A Primer. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, *8*(5), 519–527.

Al'Absi, M. (2006). *Stress in Addiction: Biological and Psychological Mechanisms*. Amsterdam, Academic Press.

American Psychiatric Association (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (DSM-5) 5th ed*. Arlington, VA, American Psychiatric Publishing.

Arnett, J. J. (2005). The vitality criterion: A new standard of publication for journal of adolescent research. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 20, 3–7.

Arnett, J. J. (2005). The Developmental Context of Substance Use in Emerging Adulthood. *Journal of Drug Issues, 35*(2), 235–254.

Baines, L., Jones, A. & Christiansen, P. (2016). Hopelessness and alcohol use: the mediating role of drinking motives and outcomes expectancies, *Addictive Behavior Reports*, 4: 65-69.

Bakan, D. (1966). *The duality of human existence: An essay on psychology and religion*. Oxford, Rand McNally.

Baker, T. E., Stockwell, T., Barnes, G., Haesevoets, R. & Holroyd, C. B. (2016). Reward Sensitivity of ACC as an intermediate phenotype between DR4-521T and substance misuse, *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience*, 28(3): 460-471.

Bakeman, R. & Gottman, J. M. (1986). *Observing behavior: An introduction to sequential analysis.* Cambridge, England: Cambridge University.

Bamberg, M. (2011). Who am I? Narration and its contribution to self and identity, *Theory and Psychology*, 21(1): 3-24.

Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice-Hall.

Bandura, A. (1990). Mechanisms of moral disengagement, In A. Reich (Ed.), *Origins of terrorism; psychologies, ideologies, theologies, states of mind* (pp. 161–191). New York, Cambridge University Press.

Bannister, D. & Fransella, F. (1971). *Inquiring Man: The theory of personal constructs*. Oxford, Penguin.

Barros, F. C., Matijasevich, A., Santos, I. S., Horta, B. L., da Silva, B. G. C., Munhoz, T. N., Rohde, L. A. (2018). Social inequalities in mental disorders and substance misuse in young adults: a birth cohort study in Southern Brazil. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 53(7), 717-726.

Bathish, R.; Best, D., Savic, M., Beckwith, M., MacKenzie, J., & Lubman, D. I. (2017). 'Is it me or should my friends take the credit?' The role of social networks and social identity in recovery from addiction, *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 47: 35-46.

Bauer, J. J. & McAdams, D. P. (2004). Personal growth in adults' stories of life transitions, *Journal of Personality*, 72(3): 573-602.

Bauer, J. J., Graham, L. E., Lauber, E. A., & Lynch, B. P. (2018). What growth sounds like: redemption, self-improvement & eudaimonic growth across different life narratives in relation to wellbeing, *Journal of Personality,* 21:546-565.

Baumeister, R., Stillwell, A. M. & Heatherton, T. F. (2001). Interpersonal aspects of guilt: Evidence from narrative studies. In W. G. Parrot, *Emotions in Social Psychology*, (pp. 295-305). New York, Psychology Press.

Beck, A. T., Ward, C. H., Mendelson, M., Mock, J., & Erbaugh, J. (1961). An Inventory for Measuring Depression, *Archive of General Psychiatry,* 4(6):561–571.

Becker, J. B. & Hu, M. (2018). Sex differences in drug abuse, *Frontiers in Neuroendocrinology*, 29(10: 36-47.

Beckwith, M., Best, D., Dingle, G., Perryman, C., Lubman, D. (2015) Predictors of flexibility in social identity among people entering a Therapeutic Community for substance abuse, *Alcoholism Treatment Quarterly*, 33: 93–104.

Bennett, T. & Hollway, K. (2010) Is UK drug policy evidence-based? *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 21: 411-417.

Best, D. (2012) *Addiction Recovery: A Movement for Social Change and Personal Growth in the UK*. Pavilion Publishing.

Best, D., Beckwith, M., Haslam, C., Haslam, A., Jetten, J., Mawson, E., & Lubman, D. I. (2016) Overcoming alcohol and other drug addiction as a process of social identity transition: the social identity model of recovery (SIMOR), *Addiction Research & Theory*, 24(2): 111-123.

Best, D., Irving, J., & Albertson, K (2017). Recovery and desistence: what the emerging recovery movement in the alcohol and drug area can learn from models of desistence from offending, *Addiction Research and Theory,* 25(1): 1-10.

Best, D., Irving, J., Collinson, B., Andersson, C & Edwards, M. (2017). Recovery networks and community connections: identifying connection needs and community linkage opportunities in early recovery populations, *Alcohol Treatment Quarterly*, 35(1): 2-15.

Biernacki, P. (1986). *Pathways from heroin addiction: recovery without treatm*ent. Temple University Press.

Bierut, L. J., Dinwiddie, S. H., Begleiter, H., Crowe, R. R., Hesselbrock, V., Nurnberger, J. I., Jr., Reich, T. (1998). Familial transmission of substance dependence: Alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, and habitual smoking: A report from the collaborative study on the genetics of alcoholism, *Archives of General Psychiatry,* 55(11): 982-988.

Blackburn, R., Renwick, S. J. D., Donnelly, J. P., & Logan, C. (2004). Big Five or Big Two? Superordinate factors in the NEO Five Factor Inventory and the Antisocial Personality Questionnaire. *Personality and Individual Differences,* 37(5): 957-970.

Blazeley, P. (2013). *Qualitative Data Analysis*. London, Sage.

Boden, J.M., Fergusson, D.M., Horwood, J.L. (2013), Alcohol misuse and criminal offending: Findings from a 30-year longitudinal study, *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 128(1-2): 30-36.

Booker, C. (2004). *The Seven Basic Plots: Why We Tell Stories*. London, Continuum.

Borg, I. & Lingoes, J. (1987). *Multidimensional Similarity Structure Analysis.* New York, Springer-Verlag.

Botvin, G. J. (2000). Preventing drug abuse in schools: Social and competence enhancement approaches targeting individual-level etiological factors, *Addictive Behaviors*, 25: 887–897.

Botvin, G. J. & Griffin, K. W. (2014), Life skills training: Preventing substance misuse by enhancing individual and social competence, *New Directions for Youth Development:* 57-65.

Bowden, J. M., Olivia, L. J., Horwood, J., Grest, V., & McLoad, G. F. H. (2017). Modelling possible causality in associations between unemployment, cannabis use, and alcohol misuse, *Social Science & Medicine,*175: 127-134.

Bradley, E. H., Curry, L. A., & Devers, K. J. (2007). Qualitative data analysis for health services research: Developing taxonomy, themes, and theory. *Health Services Research*, 42, 1758–1772.

Brady, K. T., & Rajita, S. (2005). Co-occurring mental and substance use disorders: the neurobiological effects of chronic stress, *American Journal of Psychiatry.*

Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77–101.

Britt, J. P. & Bonci, A. (2013). An overview of the disease model for drug addiction and interventions used to address the current opioid epidemic, *Current Opinion in Neurobiology*, 23(4): 539-545.

Brox, B.W. & Ellenbroek, B.A. (2018). A genetic reduction in the serotonin transporter differentially influences MDMA and heroin induced behaviours, *Psychopharmacology,* 235(14): 1907-1914.

Bruce, A. (2008). *The Globalization of Addiction: A study in poverty of the spirit*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Bruner, J. (1987). Life as narrative, *Social Research*, 54(1): 11-32.

Buchanan, K. and Bardi, A. (2015). The Roles of Values, Behavior, and Value-Behavior Fit in the Relation of Agency and Communion to Well-Being, *Journal of Personality*, 83: 320-333.

Buckingham, S., Frings, D., & Albery, I. (2013). Group membership and social identity in addiction recovery, *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*, 27: 1132–1140.

Burrell, M. J. (1999). Personal meaning, drug use, and addiction: An Evolutionary Constructivist Perspective, *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, 12(1): 41-63.

Cain, C. (1991). Personal stories: Identity acquisition and self-understanding in Alcoholics Anonymous, *Ethos,* 19(2): 210-253.

Campbell, J. L., Quincy, C., Osserman, J., & Pedersen, O. K. (2013). Coding in-depth semi-structured interviews: Problems of unitization and intercoder reliability and agreement. *Sociological Methods & Research,* 42, 294–320.

Canter, D. V. (1985). *Facet Theory.* New York, Springer-Verlag.

Canter, D. V. (1994). *Criminal Shadows: Inside the mind of the serial killer*. London, Harper Collins.

Canter, D. V. (2004). A Partial Order Scalogram Analysis of criminal network structure, *Behaviour Metrika*, 31(2): 131-152.

Canter, D. V. & Youngs, D. E. (2009). *Investigative psychology: offender profiling and the analysis of criminal action*, Chichester, Wiley.

Canter, D. V. & Youngs, D. E. (2011). Narratives of criminal action and forensic psychology, *Legal & Criminological Psychology*, 17(2): 262-275.

Canter, D. V. & Youngs, D. E. (2015). The LAAF procedure for exploring offenders' narratives, *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, 54(3): 219-236.

Carthy, N. (2013) *Deconstructing Offenders' Narratives.* Doctoral thesis, University of Huddersfield Repository.

Carvajal, S. C., Evans, R. I. Nash, S. G. & Getz, J. G. (1998). Global Positive Expectancies of the Self and Adolescents' Substance Use Avoidance: Testing a Social Influence Mediational Model, *Journal of Personality,* 70(3): 421-442.

Caspers, K. M., Yucuis, R., McKirgan, L. O. Spinks, R., & Amdt, S. (2009). Lifetime Substance Misuse and 5-Year Incidence Rates of Emergent Health Problems Among Middle-Aged Adults, *Journal of Addictive Diseases*, 28(4):320-331.

Chase, S. E. (1995). Taking narrative seriously: consequences for method and theory in interviews studies. In R. Josselon & A. Lieblich (Eds.) *Interpreting experience: the narrative study of lives* (Vol. 3. pp. 1-26). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Chen, G. (2010). The meaning of suffering in drug addiction and recovery from the perspective of existentialism, Buddhism and the 12-Step program, *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs,* 42: 363–75.

Chen, G. (2018). Building Recovery Capital: The Role of "Hitting Bottom" in Desistance and Recovery from Substance Abuse and Crime, *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs,* 50(5): 420-429.

Chen, F., Zhu, S. & Bi, C. (2018), The Development of Self-Esteem and the Role of Agency and Communion: A Longitudinal Study Among Chinese, *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 27: 816-824.

Chi, M. T. H. (1997). Quantifying qualitative analyses of verbal data: A practical guide. *Journal of the Learning Sciences*, 6, 271–315.

Cobbina, J. E. & Bender, K. A. (2012) Predicting the Future: Incarcerated Women's Views of Re-entry Success, *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, 51(5): 275-294.

Cohen, J. (1960), A. coefficient of agreement for nominal scales, *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 20(1): 37-46.

Cohen, J. (1968). Weighted kappa: Nominal scale agreement with provision for scaled disagreement or partial credit, *Psychological Bulletin*, 70(4): 213-220.

Compton, W. M. & Volkow, N. D (2006). Abuse of prescription drugs and the risk of addiction, *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 83(1): 4-7.

Correia, A. F. & Barbosa, S. (2018). Cinema, aesthetics and narrative: Cinema as therapy in substance use disorders, *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 60: 63-71.

Crits-Christoph, P., Gibbons, M. C., Hamilton, J., Ring-Kurtz, S., & Gallup, R. (2011). The dependability of alliance assessments: The alliance–outcome correlation is larger than you might think, *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 79(3): 267–278.

Crossley, M. L. (2000). Narrative Psychology, Trauma and the Study of Self/Identity, *Theory & Psychology*, 10(4): 527-546.

Crossley, M. L. (2003). 'Let me explain': narrative emplotment and one patient's experience of oral cancer, *Social Science and Medicine*, 56(3): 439-448.

Cruwys, T., Dingle, G., Hornsey, M., Jetten, J., Oei, T., & Walter, T. (2014). Social isolation schema responds to positive social experiences: Longitudinal evidence from vulnerable populations, *British Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 53: 265–280.

Cunningham, J. A., Blomqvist, J.; Koski-Jannes, A.; Cordingley, J. (2005). Maturing out of drinking problems: perceptions of natural history as a function of severity, *Addiction Research & Theory,* 13(1): 79-84.

Cushman, P. (1990). Why the self is empty: Toward a historically situated psychology. *American Psychologist*, 45, 599-611.

Dancer, L. S. (1985) On the multidimensional structure of self-esteem: facet analysis of Rosenburg's self-esteem scale. in D.V. Canter (Ed), *Facet Theory: Approaches to social research*, (pp. 223-236). New York, Springer-Verlag.

Dancer, L. S. (1990). Introduction to facet theory and its applications, *Applied Psychology: An International Review,* 39(4): 365-377.

Dawson, D. A., Grant, B. F., Stinson, F. S. & Chou, P. S. (2006). Maturing out of alcohol dependence: the impact of transitional life events, *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, 97: 195-203.

Deegan, P. E. (1988). Recovery: The lived experience of rehabilitation, *Psychosocial Rehabilitation Journal,* 11: 11–19.

Dekel, R., Benbenishty, R., & Amram, Y. (2004). Therapeutic communities for drug addicts: Prediction of long-term outcomes, *Addictive Behaviors, 29*(9): 1833-1837.

DeMaeyer, J., Vanderplasschen, W., & Broekaert (2009). Exploratory Study on Drug Users' Perspectives on Quality of Life: More than Health-Related Quality of Life, *Social Indicators Research*, 90(1): 107-126.

DeMaeyer, J., Vanderplasschen, W., Lammertyn, J., Nieuwenhuizen, C.V., Sabbe, B., & Broekaert, E. (2011). Current quality of life and its determinants among opiate-dependent individuals five years after starting methadone treatment, *Quality of Life Research*, 20(1): 139-150.

Denzin, N. K. (1987). *The Alcoholic Self (Sociological Observations)*. London, Sage.

Diamond, J. (2002) *Narrative Means to Sober Ends: Treating Addiction and its Aftermath*. New York, Guilford Press.

DiChiara, G. (2002). Nucleus accumbens shell and core dopamine: differential role in behavior and addiction, *Behavior and Brain Research,* 137(1-2):75-114.

Dingle, G. A., Stark, C., Cruwys, T., & Best, D. (2015). Breaking good: Breaking ties with social groups may be good for recovery from substance misuse, *The British Journal of Social Psychology*, 52(2): 236-254.

Downey, L., Rosengren, D. B. & Donovan, D. M. (2000). To thine own self be true: Self-concept and motivation for abstinence among substance abusers, *Addictive Behaviors*, 25(5): 743-757.

Dunlop, W. L. & Tracy, J. L. (2013). Sobering Stories: Narratives of self-redemption predict behavioural change and improved health among recovering alcoholics, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,*104(30): 576-590.

Dunn, G. E., Ryan, J. J., Paolo, A. M. & Van Fleet, J. N. (1995). Comorbidity of dissociative disorders among patients with substance use disorders, *Psychiatric Services,* 46: 153-156.

Eakin, P. (1999). *How lives become stories: making selves*. Cornell University Press.

Edwards, A. C., Heron, J., Vladimirov, V., Wolen, A. R., Adkins, D. E., Aliev, F., Hickman, M. & Kendler, K. S. (2017), The Rate of Change in Alcohol Misuse Across Adolescence is Heritable, *Alcohol Clinical and Experimental Research*, 41: 57-64.

Eiser, J. R., (1982). Addiction as attribution: Cognitive processes in giving up smoking. In Eiser, J. R. (Ed*), Social psychology and behavioural medicine* (pp. 281-299). New York, Wiley.

Elderton, A., Clarke, S. Jones, C. & Stacey, J. (2014). Telling our story: a narrative therapy approach to helping lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people with learning disability identify and strengthen positive self-image, *British Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 42(4): 301-307.

Elliott, G. C., Kao, S., & Grant, A.M. (2004). Mattering: empirical validation of a social-psychological concept, *Self and Identity, 3*(4): 339-354.

Elliott, J. (2005). *Using narrative in social research*. London, Sage.

Emmons, R. A. (1989). The personal striving approach to personality. In L. A. Pervin (Ed.), *Goal Concepts in Personality and Social Psychology* (pp. 87-126). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Erikson, E. H. (1963). *Childhood and Society, 2nd Ed*. New York, W. W. Norton & Co.

Ermann, L., Lawson, G., & Burge, P. (2017). The Intersection of Narrative Therapy and AA Through the Eyes of Older Women, *The International Journal of Reminiscence and Life Review*, 4(1): 14-23.

Ersche, K. D., Turton, A. J., Pradhan, S., Bullmore, E. T., & Robbins, T. W. (2010). Drug addiction endophenotypes: Impulsive versus sensation-seeking personality traits, *Biological Psychiatry,* 68(8): 770-773.

Ersche, K. D. Turton, A. J. Croudace, T. & Štochl, J. (2012). Who Do You Think Is in Control in Addiction? A Pilot Study on Drug-related Locus of Control Beliefs, *Addictive Disorders & Their Treatment,* 11(4): 195-205.

Etherington, K. & Don, M. (2007), *Trauma, Drug Misuse and Transforming Identities: A Life Story Approach.* Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Ezzy, D. (1998). Theorizing narrative identity: symbolic interactionism and hermeneutics. *The Sociological Quarterly,* 39, 239-252.

Felton, A. & Stickley, T. (2018). Rethinking risk: A narrative approach, *Journal of Mental Health Training, Education and Practice*, 13(10): 54-62.

Fleetwood, J. (2016). Narrative habitus: Thinking through structure/agency in the narratives of offenders, *Crime, Media, Culture*, 12(2): 173–192.

Fleiss, J. L. (1981). *Statistical methods for rates and proportions (2nd ed.).* New York, John Wiley.

Formanowicz, M., Goldenberg, A., Saguy, T., Pietraszkiewicz, A., Walker, M. & Gross, J. J. (2018). Understanding dehumanization: The role of agency and communion, *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 77: 102-116.

Foster-Harris, T. (1959). *The Basic Patterns of Plot*. Norman, University of Oklahoma Press.

Fournier, M. A., & Moskowitz, D. S. (2000). The mitigation of interpersonal behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 79(5): 827-836.

Freud, S. (1953). *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. London, Hogarth Press.

Frimer, J. A., Walker, L. J., Dunlop, W. L., Lee, B. H. & Riches, A., (2011). The Integration of Agency and Communion in Moral Personality: Evidence of Enlightened Self-Interest, *Journal of personality and social psychology,* 101(1): 149-163.

Frings, D. & Albery, I. (2015) The social identity model of cessation maintenance: Formulation and initial evidence, *Addictive Behaviors,* 44: 35–42.

Frye, N. (1957). *Anatomy of criticism: Four essays.* Princeton University Press.

Garland, E.L., Pettus-Davis, C., & Howard, M.O. (2013). Self-medication among traumatised youth: structural equation modelling of pathways between trauma history, substance misuse, and psychological distress, *Journal of Behavioural Medicine*, 36(2): 175-185.

Garland, E. L., Bell, S., Atchley, R. & Froeliger, B. (2018). *Emotion Dysregulation in Addiction.* Oxford University Press.

Gergen, K. J. (1992). *The Saturated Self: Dilemmas of Identity in Modem Life*. New York: Basic.

Gergen, K. J. (2009). *Relational Being: Beyond Self and Community*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Gergen, K. J. & Gergen, M. M. (1983) Narratives of the self. In K. Scheibe & T. Sarbin (Eds.), *Studies in Social Identity* (pp. 254-273). New York: Praeger.

Gergen K. J. & Gergen, M. M. (1984). Social construction of narrative accounts. In K. Gergen & M. Gergen (Eds.), *Historical Social Psychology* (pp. 173-190). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Gergen K. J. & Gergen, M. M. (1986). Narrative form and the construction of psychological science. In T. R. Sarbin (Ed.) *Narrative Psychology: The Storied Nature of Human Conduct* (pp. 22-44). New York: Praeger.

Gergen, K. J. & Gergen, M. M. (2010). Scanning the Landscape of Narrative Inquiry. *Social and Personality Compass*, 4(5).

Gilani, F. (2015). 'Legal Highs': Novel psychoactive substances, *Sage Journals*, 8(10): 717-724.

Glaser, B. G. & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: strategies for qualitative research.* Chicago, Aldine.

Goldberg, L. R. (1993). The structure of phenotypic personality traits, *The American Psychologist,* 48(1): 26-34.

Gonçalves, M. M., Ribeiro, A. P., Silva, J. R., Mendes, I., & Sousa, I. (2016). Narrative innovations predict symptom improvement: Studying innovative moments in narrative therapy of depression, *Psychotherapy Research,* 26(4):425-35.

Gossop, M., Stewart, D. & Marden (2008) Attendance at Narcotics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, frequency of attendance and substance use outcomes after residential treatment for drug dependence: a 5-year follow-up study, *Addiction*, 103(1): 119-125.

Greenberg, G. (1994). *The Self on the Shelf. Recovery and the Good Life*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Greenough, W. T., Black, J. E. & Wallace, C. S. (1987). Experience and brain development, *Child Development*, 58: 539-559.

Griffin, E. A., Ledbetter, A., Sparks, G. G. (2015) *A First Look at Communication Theory* (9th Ed). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Groshokova, T., Best, D. & White, W. L. (2013). The Assessment of Recovery Capital: Properties and psychometrics of a measure of addiction recovery strengths, *Drug and Alcohol Review*, 32(2,0: 187-194.

Gutieeres, S. E. & Puymbroeck, C. V. (2006). Childhood and adult violence in the lives of women who misuse substances, *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 11: 497-513.

Guttman, L. (1954). A new approach to factor analysis: the Radex, In P.F Lazarfield (Ed.), *Mathematical Thinking in the Social Sciences* (pp. 258-348). New York, Free Press.

Guttman, L. (1968). A general nonmetric technique for finding the smallest coordinate space for a configuration of points, *Psychometrika, 33*(4): 469-506.

Guttman, L., & Levy, S. (1991), Two structural laws for intelligence tests, *Intelligence*, 15: 79-103.

Guttman, R. & Greenbaum, C. W. (1998). Facet Theory: Its development and current status, *European Psychologist*, 3: 13-36.

Habermas, T., & Bluck, S. (2000). Getting a life: The emergence of the life story in adolescence, *Psychological Bulletin,* 126(5): 748-769.

Hägele, C., Schlagenhauf, F., Rapp, M., Sterzer, P., Beck, A., Bermpohl, F., Stoy, M., Ströhle, A., Wittchen, H. U., Dolan, R. J., Heinz, A. (2015). Dimensional psychiatry: reward dysfunction and depressive mood across psychiatric disorders, *Psychopharmacology,* 232(2): 331-41.

Hankiss, A. (1981). Ontologies of the self: On the mythological rearranging of one's life history, in D Bertaux (Ed.), *Biography and Society: The life history approach in the social sciences* (pp. 203-209). Beverly Hills, CA, Sage.

Hanninen, V. & Koski-Jannes, A. (1999). Narratives of recovery from addictive behaviour, *Addiction*, 94(12): 1837-1848.

Hanninen, V. & Koski-Jannes (2004). Stories of attempts to recover from addiction, In Rosenqvist, P.; Koski-Jännes, A. and Ojesjo, L. (Eds), *Addiction and the Life Course* (pp. 231-246) Helsinki, NAD.

Harris, W. F. (1959). *The basic patterns of plot.* University of Oklahoma Press.

Hart, C. (2013). *High price: a neuroscientist's journey of self-discovery that challenges everything you know about drugs and society.* New York, Harper Collins.

Haynes, P. & Ayliffe, G. (1991). Locus of control of behaviour: Is high externality associated with substance misuse? *British Journal of Addiction*, 86(9): 1111-1117.

Helgeson, V. S. (1994). Relation of agency and communion to wellbeing: Evidence and potential explanations, *Psychological Bulletin*, 116(3): 412-428.

Hermans, H. (1996) Voicing the Self: From Information Processing to Dialogical Interchange, *Psychological Bulletin*, 119: 31-50.

Heyman, G. M. (2009). *Addiction: a disorder of choice*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press.

Heyman, G. M. (2013). Quitting drugs: quantitative and qualitative features, *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*, 9: 29-59.

Hogarth, L., & Chase, H. W. (2011). Parallel goal-directed and habitual control of human drug-seeking: Implications for dependence vulnerability, *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Animal Behavior Processes,* 37(3): 261-276.

Hollway, W. & Jefferson, T. (2000). *Doing qualitative research differently: free association, narrative and the interview method*. Sage.

Holms, T., Thomsen, D. K., Bliksted, V. (2018). Themes of unfulfilled agency and communion in life stories of patients with schizophrenia, *Psychiatry Research,* 269: 772-778.

Hong, J. S., Davis, J. P., Sterzing, P. R., Yoon, R., Choi, S., & Smith, D. C. (2014). A conceptual framework for understanding the association between school bullying victimisation and substance misuse, *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 84: 696-710.

Hooker, K., & McAdams, D. P. (2003). Personality Reconsidered: A New Agenda for Aging Research, *The Journal of Gerontology: Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences,* 58(6): 296-304

Horvath, A. O. (1981). An exploratory study of the working alliance: Its measurement and relationship to therapy outcome. *Retrieved from Proquest Digital Dissertations* (AAT NK55037).

Howard, R. (2007). Policy forum: The UK drug strategy, *Drugs and Alcohol Today*, 7: 5-13.

Howard, R., Karatzias, T., Power, K., & Mahony, A. (2017). Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms mediate the relationship between substance misuse and violent offending among female prisoners, *Social Psychiatry Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 52: 21-25.

Hser, Y., Longshore, D., Anglin, M.D. (2007). The Life Course Perspective on Drug Use: A Conceptual Framework for Understanding Drug Use Trajectories, *Evaluation Review*, 31(6): 515-547.

Hudson, L. A. & Ozanne, J. L. (1988) Alternative Ways of Seeking Knowledge in Consumer Research, *Journal of Consumer Research*, 14(4), 508–521.

Iacobucci, G. (2018). Ban on legal highs fails to curb use among children, *British Medical Journal*, 363.

Inder, M. L., Crowe, M. T., Moor, S., Luty, S. E., Carter, J. D. & Joyce, P. R. (2008). "I Actually Don't Know Who I Am": The Impact of Bipolar Disorder on the Development of Self, *Psychiatry: Interpersonal and Biological Processes*, 71(2): 123-133.

Ioannou, M., Canter, D.V., Youngs, D.E., Synott, J. (2015). Offender crime narratives across different types of crimes, *Journal of Forensic Psychology Practice,* 15(5): 383-400.

Jang, K.L., Livesley, W.J., Vernon, P.A. (1996). "Heritability of the big five personality dimensions and their facets: a twin study", *Journal of Personality*. 64(3): 577–91.

Jarman, M., Harkin, Q. A., Monaghan, L. (2017). *Barriers and Belonging: Personal Narratives of Disability*, Temple University Press.

Jetten, J., Haslam, C., Haslam, S. A., Dingle, G., & Jones, J. M. (2014). How groups affect our health and wellbeing: The path from theory to policy, *Social Issues and Policy Review*, 8(1): 103-130.

Jessor, R., & Jessor, S. L. (1977). *Problem behaviour and psychosocial development: A longitudinal study of youth*. New York, Academic Press.

Johnson, L. (1990). Creative therapies in treatment of addictions: The art of transforming shame, *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 17: 299-308.

Josselson, R. & Lieblich, A. (1993). *The Narrative Study of Lives*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Josselson, R., Lieblich, A. & McAdams., D. P. (Eds) (2007). *The Meaning of Others: Narrative Studies of Relationships*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Khan, S., Murray, R. M., & Barnes, G. E. (2002). A structural equation model of the effect of poverty and unemployment on alcohol abuse, *Addictive Behaviors*, 27(3), 405-423.

Kang, T., Kruttschnitt, C., & Goodman, P. (2017). Multi-Method Synergy: Using the Life History Calendar and Life as a Film for Retrospective Narratives, *The Howard Journal of Crime and Justice*, 56(4): 532-553.

Kaufling, J. & Aston-Jones, G. J. (2015). Persistent Adaptations in Afferents to Ventral Tegmental Dopamine Neurons after Opiate Withdrawal, *Neuroscience,* 35(28):10290-10303.

Kelly, G. A. (1955). *The Psychology of Personal Constructs: Volume 1 and 2*. New York, Norton.

Klion, R.E. & Pfenninger, D.T. (1997), Personal Construct Psychotherapy of Addictions, *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment*, Vol. 14(1): 37-43.

Kougiali, Z. G., Fasulo, A., Needs, A. & Van Laar, D. (2017). Planting the seeds of change: Directionality in the narrative construction of recovery from addiction, *Psychology & Health*, 32(6), 639-664.

Koski-Jannes, A. (2002). Social and personal identity projects in the recovery from addictive behaviour, *Addiction research and Theory*, 10(2): 183-202.

Krank, M., Stewart, S. H., O'Connor, R., Woicik, P. B., Wall, A., Conrod, P. J. (2011). Structural, concurrent, and predictive validity of the Substance Use Risk Profile Scale in early adolescence, *Addictive Behaviours*, 36(1): 37-46.

Krech, J. & Rock, P. (2002). Envisioning a healthy future: A re-becoming of Native American men, *Sociology and Social Welfare,* 29(1): 77-96.

Kuriansky, J., Vallarelli, A., DelBuono, J., & Ortman, J. (2010). Cinematherapy: Using movie metaphors to explore real relationships in counseling and coaching. In M. B. Gregerson (Ed.), *The cinematic mirror for psychology and life coaching* (pp. 89-122). New York, NY, US: Springer Science + Business Media.

Laing, R. D. (1961). *Self and Others*. London, Penguin.

Larsson, S., von Braun, T., & Lilja, J. (2013). A multi-dimensional model for narrative analysis of substance use related dependency, *Substance use & Misuse*, 48: 1306-1316.

Laub, J.H. & Sampson, R.J. (2013). Life-course desisters? Trajectories of crime among delinquent boy followed to age 70, *Criminology,* 41(3): 301-340.

Leamy, M., Bird, V., Le Boutillier, C., Williams, J., & Slade, M. (2011). Conceptual framework for the personal recovery in mental health: systematic review and narrative synthesis, *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 199: 445-452.

Levi, D. S. (2016). The power of powerlessness, *Philosophy Investigations*, 39(3): 237-253.

Lewis, M. (2017). Addiction and the Brain: Development, Not Disease, *Neuroethics*, 10(1): 7-18.

Lieblich, A., Tuval-Mashlach, R. & Zilber, T. (1998). *Narrative Research*. Sage.

Lilgendahl, J. P. & McAdams, D. P. (2011). Constructing stories of self-growth: How individual differences in patterns of autobiographical reasoning relate to well-being in midlife. *Journal of Personality*, 79, 391–428.

Lincoln, Y. & Guba, E. (2000). The qualitative researcher's companion. *Journal of Management*, 23, 409–473.

Litt, M. D., Kadden, R. M., Kabela-Cormier, E., Petry, N.M. (2009). Changing network support for drinking: Network Support Project 2-year follow-up, *Journal of Consulting Clinical Psychology*, 77: 229–242.

Lo, C. C., Kim, Y. S., Church, W. T. (2008). The effects of victimization on drug use: A multilevel analysis, *Substance Use and Misuse*, 43: 1340-1361.

Lodi-Smith, J., Geise, A. C., Roberts, B. W., & Robins, R. W. (2009). Narrating personality change, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 96(3): 679-689.

Longabaugh, R., Wirtz, P. W., Zywiak, W. H., & O'Malley, S. S. (2010). Network support as a prognostic indicator of drinking outcomes: the COMBINE study, *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, 71(6): 837-846.

Lopez-Quintero, C., Hason, D.S., De Los Cobos, J. P., Pines, A., Wang, S., Grant, B. F. & Blanco, C. 92011). Probability and predictors of remission from life-time nicotine, alcohol, cannabis or cocaine dependence: results from the National Epidemiologic Survey on alcohol and related conditions, *Addiction*, 106: 657-669.

Luk, J. W., Wang, J., Simons-Morton, B. G. (2010). Bullying, victimization and substance use among U.S. adolescents: Mediation by depression, *Prevention Science,* 11: 355-359.

Lyons, A. (2009). Is the American psychological association ready to accept a division for qualitative inquiry? *The Humanistic Psychologist*, 37, 101–107.

Lysaker, P. H., Davis, L. W., Eckert, G. J., Strasburger, A. M., Hunter, N. L., & Buck, K. D. (2005). Changes in narrative structure and content in schizophrenia in long term individual psychotherapy: A single case study, *Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy, 12*(5): 406-416.
Lysaker, P.H., Ringer, J., Maxwell, C., McGuire, A., Lecomte, T. (2010). Personal narratives and recovery from schizophrenia, *Schizophrenia Research*, 121(1): 271-276.

Lysaker, P. H. Kukla, M., Dubreucq, J., Gumley, A., McLeod, H., Vohs, J. L., Buck, J. D., Minor, K. S. et al. (2015). Metacognitive deficits predict future levels of negative symptoms in schizophrenia controlling for neurocognition, affect recognition, and self-expectation of goal attainment, *Schizophrenia Research*, 168(1-2): 267-272.

McAdams, D. P. (1985). The 'Imago': A key narrative component of identity, *Review of Personality and Social Psychology*, 6: 114-141.

McAdams, D. P. (1988). *Power, intimacy, and the life story: personological enquiries into identity.* New York, Guilford Press.

McAdams, D. P. (1993). *The stories we live by: Personal myths and the making of the self.* New York, William Morrow & Company.

McAdams, D. P. (1994). Can personality change? Levels of stability and growth in personality across the life span. In T. F. Heatherton & J. L. Weinberger (Eds.), *Can personality change?* (pp. 299-313). Washington, DC, American Psychological Association.

McAdams, D. P. (1995). What do we know when we know a person? *Journal of Personality,* 63(3): 365-396.

McAdams, D. P. (1997) *The stories we live by: personal myths and the making of the self,* London, Guilford Press.

McAdams, D. P. (2001). *Coding autobiographical episodes for themes of agency and communion.* North Western University Repository.

McAdams, D. P. (2006). *The Redemptive Self: Stories Americans live by.* New York, Oxford University Press.

McAdams, D.P. (2006) The Problem of Narrative Coherence, *Journal of Constructivist Psychology,* 19(2): 109-125.

McAdams, D. P. (2011). Narrative identity. In S. J. Schwartz, K. Luyckx, & V. L. Vignoles (Eds.), *Handbook of identity theory and research* (pp. 99-115). New York, US, Springer Science + Business Media

McAdams, D. P. (2018). Narrative Identity: What Is It? What Does It Do? How Do You Measure It? *Imagination, Cognition and Personality*, 37(3): 359-372.

McAdams, D. P., Bauer, J. J., Sakaeda, A. R., Anyidoho, N. A., Machado, M. A., Magrino-Failla, K. & Pals, J. L. (2006). Continuity and change in the life story: A longitudinal study of autobiographical memories in emerging adulthood, *Journal of Personality*, 74, 1371–1400.

McAdams, D. P. & Bowman, P. J. (2001). Narrating life's turning points: redemption and contamination, in D. P. McAdams, R. Josselson, & A Lieblich (Eds.), *Turns in the road: narrative studies of lives in transition* (pp. 3-34), Washington DC, American Psychological Association.

McAdams, D.P.; Hoffman, B.J.; Day, R. & Mansfield, E.D. (1996). Themes of Agency and Communion in significant autobiographical scenes, *Journal of Personality*, 64(2): 339-377.

McAdams, D. P. & McLean, K. A. (2013). Narrative identity, *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 22(3): 233-238.

McAdams, D. P. & Pals, J. L. (2008). Narrative identity and eudaimonic wellbeing, *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 9(1): 81-104.

McAdams, D. P., Reynolds, J., Lewis, M., Patten, A. H., & Bowman, P. J. (2001). When bad things turn good and good things turn bad: Sequences of redemption and contamination in life narrative and then-relation to psychosocial adaptation in midlife adults and in students, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 27(4): 474-485.

McConnell, D. (2016). Narrative self-constitution and recovery from addiction, *American Philosophy*,53(3), 307-322.

McConnell, D. & Snoek, A. (2012) Narrating Truths Worth Living: Addiction Narratives, *AJOB Neuroscience*, 3(4): 77-78.

McConnell, D. & Snoek, A. (2018). The Importance of Self-Narration in Recovery from Addiction, *Philosophy, Psychiatry & Psychology,* 25(3): 31-44.

McGlashan, T. H., & Carpenter, W. T. (1981). Does attitude toward psychosis relate to outcome? *The American Journal of Psychiatry, 138*(6*):* 797-801.

McGranahan, K. & Lynskey, M. T. (2018). Do creative arts therapies reduce substance misuse: A systematic review, *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 57: 50-58.

McHugh, M. L. (2012). Interrater reliability: the kappa statistic, *Biochemia Medica*, 22(3), 276-282.

McIntosh, J., Bloor, M., & Robertson, M. (2008), Drug treatment and the achievement of paid employment, *Addiction Research & Theory*, 16(1): 37-45.

McIntosh, J. & McKenaney, N. (2002). *Beating the Dragon: The Recovery from Dependent Drug Use.* London, Prentice Hall.

McLean, K. C. (2008). Stories of the young and the old: Personal continuity and narrative identity, *Developmental Psychology,* 44(1): 254-264.

McLean, K. C., & Breen, A. V. (2009). Processes and content of narrative identity development in adolescence: Gender and well-being, *Developmental Psychology, 45*(3): 702-710.

McLean, K. C., Pasupathi, M., & Pals, J. L. (2007). Selves Creating Stories Creating Selves: A Process Model of Self-Development, *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 11(3), 262–278.

McLean, K. C. & Pasupathi, M. (2011). Old, new, borrowed, blue: the retention of personal meaning in autobiographical storytelling, *Journal of Personality*, 79(1): 135-164.

Mahony, J. M. & Stasson, M. F. (2005). Interpersonal and personality dimensions of behaviour: FIRO-B and the Big Five, *North American Journal of Psychology*, 7: 205-216.

Main, M., & Goldwyn, R. (1994). *Adult attachment classification system*. Unpublished manuscript, University of California, Berkeley.

Mallicki, J. & Watts, M. (2007), Personal Construct Theory and constructivist drug education,

Drug and Alcohol Review, 26: 595-603.

Marcia, J. E., Waterman, A. S., Matteson, D. R., Archer, S. L., & Orlosky, J. L. (Eds.). (1993). *Ego Identity: A Handbook for Psychosocial Research*. New York, NY: Springer.

Marsden, J., Eastwood, B., Bradbury, C., Dale-Perera, A., Farrell, M., Hammond, P., Knight, J., Randhawa, K. & Wright, C. (2009). Effectiveness of community treatments for heroin and crack cocaine addiction in England: a prospective, in-treatment cohort study. Lancet (British edition), 374(9697):1262-1270.

Maruna, S. (2001). *Making Good: How ex-convicts reform and rebuild their lives.* Washington DC, American Psychological Association.

Maruna, S. & Copes, H. (2005). 'What Have We Learned in Five Decades of Neutralization Research?', *Crime and Justice*, 32: 221-320.

Maruna, S & Mann, R. E. (2006), A fundamental attribution error? Rethinking cognitive distortions, *Legal and Criminological Psychology*, 11(2):155-177.

Mason M., Mennis J., Light, J. et al. (2016). Parents, Peers, and Places: Young Urban Adolescents' Microsystems and Substance Use Involvement, *Journal of Child & Family Studies,* 25(5),1441–1450.

Measham, F., Wood, D.M., Dargen, P.I., & Moore, K. (2011). Legal highs in South London gay dance clubs, *Journal of Substance Use*, 16(4): 263-272.

Milkman, H. B. & Sunderwirth, S. G. (2010). *Craving for ecstasy and natural highs. A positive approach to mood alteration.* London, Sage.*,*

Miller, W. R., & Rose, G. S. (2009). Toward a theory of motivational interviewing, *American Psychologist,* 64(6): 527-537.

Mitchell, D.P., Betts, A., & Epling, M. (2002). Youth employment, mental health and substance misuse: a challenge to mental health services, *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing*, 9: 191-198.

Moe, A. M., & Docherty, N. M. (2014). Schizophrenia and the sense of self, *Schizophrenia Bulletin, 40*(1): 161-168.

Moore, R. W. (1983). Art therapy with substance abusers: A review of the literature, *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 10(4): 251-260.

Murphy, T. P. (2017). Review of 'From Fairy Tale to Screenplay: Working with Plot Genotypes' by Kylie Schroeder, *Marvels & Tales*, 31(1): 184-186.

Murray, H. A. (1938). Explorations in personality: a clinical and experimental study of fifty men of college age. Oxford, England: Oxford Univ. Press.

Nation M. & Heflinger, C. A. (2006). Risk factors for serious alcohol and drug use: the role of psychosocial variables in predicting the frequency of substance use among adolescents, *American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse,* 32(3): 415-33.

National Treatment Agency for Substance Misuse (2012). *Medications in Recovery: Re-orientating Drug Dependency Treatment*. National Treatment Agency for Substance Misuse, London.

Neuman, W.L. (2000) *Social research methods qualitative and quantitative approaches. 4th Edition.* Allyn & Bacon: Needham Heights.

Newham, R. & Davies, J. B. (2007) Attributions given by drug users from three different settings, *Addiction Research & Theory*, 15(3): 299-308.

Ng, H. (2002). Drug use and self-Organisation: A Personal Construct Study of Religious Conversion in Drug Rehabilitation, *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, 15(4): 263-278.

Nienhuis, J. B., Owen, J., Valentine, J. C. Black, S. W., Halford, T. C., Parazak, S. E., Budge, S. & Hilsenroth, M. (2018)Therapeutic alliance, empathy, and genuineness in individual adult psychotherapy: A meta-analytic review, *Psychotherapy Research*, 28(4): 593-605,

O'Connor B.P. (2002). "A quantitative review of the comprehensiveness of the five-factor model in relation to popular personality inventories", *Assessment*. 9(2): 188–203.

O'Halloran, S. (2008). *Talking Oneself Sober: The Discourse of Alcoholics Anonymous*. Cambria Press.

Oliver, M. (2009). Thoughts on the interaction of trauma, addiction and spirituality, *Journal of Addictions and Offender Counselling*, 30(1): 5-15.

ONS (2013). *Deaths Related to Drug Poisoning in England and Wales*. Office for National Statistics, London.

Orsolini, L., Francesconi, G., Papanti, D., Giorgetti, A. & Schifano, F. (2015), Profiling online recreational/prescription drugs' customers and overview of drug vending virtual marketplaces, *Human Psychopharmacology: Clinical and Experimental*, 30: 302–318.

Oshri, A., Carlson, M. W., Kwon, J. A., Zeichner, A. & Wickrama, K. K. A. S. (2017) Developmental growth trajectories of self-esteem in adolescence: Associations with child neglect and abuse in young adulthood, *Journal of Youth and Adolescence,* 46: 151-164.

Ottingen, G. (1996). Positive fantasy and motivation. In P. M. Gollwitzer & J. A. Bargh (Eds), *The Psychology of Action: Linking cognition and motivation in behaviour*, pp. 236-259. New York, Guilford.

Pals, J. & McAdams, D. P. (2004). The Transformed Self: A Narrative Understanding of Posttraumatic Growth, *Psychological Inquiry*,15(1): 65-69.

Pickard, H., Ahmed, S. H. & Bennett, F. (2015) *Introduction: alternative models of addiction.* Lausanne, Frontiers Media.

Piwowoz-Hjort, E. & Weegmann, M. (2005). AA and psychotherapy: Ingredients of a successful relationship? *Addiction Today.*

Porter, L. E. & Alison, L. J. (2005). The primacy of decision-action as an influence strategy of violent gang leaders, *Small Group Research*, 36(2): 188-207.

Presser, L. (2009). The Narratives of Offenders, *Theoretical Criminology*, 13(2): 177-200.

Presser, L. (2010). Collecting and analysing the stories of offenders, *Journal of Criminal Justice Education*, 21(4): 431-446.

Public Health England. (2014). *Alcohol Treatment in England 2013-2014.* Public Health England, London.

Public Health England (2017). Information and other resources to support commissioners, service providers and others providing alcohol and drug interventions, *Alcohol and drug misuse prevention and treatment guide.*

Pur, I. G. (2009). Cinematherapy for alcohol dependent patients, *Unpublished Master Thesis*, Middle East Technical University - etd.lib.metu.edu.tr.

Purvis, M., Ward, T., Willis, G. (2013). The good lives model in practice: Offence pathways and case management, *European Journal of Probation*, 3(2): 4-28.

Quinn, K., Boone, L., Scheidell, D., Mateu-Gelabert, P., McGorray, S. P. Behariec, N., Cottler, L. B., Khana, M. K. (2016). The relationships of childhood trauma and adulthood prescription pain reliever misuse and injection drug use, *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 169: 190-198.

Rapaport, D. (1942). Principles underlying projective techniques, *Character & Personality: A Quarterly for Psychodiagnostic & Allied Studies,* 10: 213-219.

Rebhun, U. (2009). Immigration, ethnicity, and housing—Success hierarchies in Israel, *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility*, 27(4): 219-243.

Riordan, R. J., & Walsh, L. (1994). Guidelines for professional referral to Alcoholics Anonymous and other twelve step groups, *Journal of Counselling & Development, 72*(4): 351-355.

Rowlands, D., Youngs, D. E., & Canter, D. V. (2019a). Exploring an agency-communion model of identity transformation in recovery from substance misuse, *Journal of Substance Use*, *24*(3): 265-272.

Rowlands, D. Youngs, D. E., & Canter, D. V. (2019b). Agency and Communion in the rehabilitation from substance misuse, *Drug and Alcohol Dependence, 205* https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2019.107*611*.

Rowlands, D., Youngs, D. E. & Canter, D. V. (2020). Agency and communion: modelling identity-transformation in recovery from substance misuse, *Journal of Substance Use*, DOI: 10.1080/14659891.2019.1672816

Rowlands, D. Canter, D. V. & Youngs, D. E. (In Press). *Mastery and Unity: Narrative indicators of recovery from substance misuse revealed through the 'Life as a Film'*.

Russell, J. (1997) How Shall an Emotion be Called? In R. Plutchik and H. R. Conte (Eds), *Circumplex Models of Personality and Emotions*. Washington DC, American Psychological Association.

Rychert, M. & Wilkins, C. (2018). "A critical analysis of the implementation of a legal regulated market for new psychoactive substances ("legal highs") in New Zealand", *International Journal of Drug Policy,* 55: 88-94.

Salvatore, G., Conti, L., Fiore, D., Carcione, A., Dimaggio, G., & Semariri, A. (2006). Disorganised narratives: Problems in treatment and therapist intervention hierarchy. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, 19, 191-208.

Sampson, R.J. & Laub, J.H. (1990). Crime and Deviance Over The Life Course: The Salience of Adult Social Bonds, *American Sociological Review*, 55(5): 609-627.

Sandberg, S. (2009). A narrative search for respect, *Deviant Behaviour*, 30(6): 487-510.

Sarbin, T. R. (1986). The narrative as a root metaphor for psychology, in T. R. Sarbin (Ed), *Narrative psychology: The storied approach to human conduct* (pp. 3-21), Westport, CT, US: Praeger Publishing/Greenwood Publishing Group.

Sarbin, T. R. (1995). Emotional life, roles, and rhetoric. *Journal of Narrative and Life History*, 5, 213-220.

Sarra, A., Fontenella, L., D'Egdigio, F., Frattone, P. (2014). The dimensional assessment of personality in drug addicts: a mixed effect Rasch model approach, *Quality & Quantity*, 48(6): 3025-3036.

Savage, J. E., Long, E. C., Kuo, S. I.-C., Cooke, M. E., Su, J., Barr, P. B., & Salvatore, J. E. (2017). Alcohol Misuse Across the Life Span: Insights from Developmental Studies in Behavior Genetics. *Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 4(2): 186–193.

Scheier, L. M. (Ed.). (2010). *Handbook of drug prevention*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Schiff, B. (2007). The promise (and challenge) of an innovative narrative psychology. In M. Bamberg (Ed). *Narrative – State of the Art* (pp. 27-36). Amsterdam, NL: John Benjamins.

Scior, K. & Lynggaard, H. (2006). New stories of intellectual disabilities: a narrative approach. In: Baum, S. & Lynggaard, H., (eds.) *Intellectual disabilities: a systemic approach*, pp. 100-119. Karnac, London.

Schutz, W. (1992). Beyond FIRO-B-3 new theory-derived measures- Element B: Behaviour, Element F: Feelings, Element S: Self, *Psychological Reports*, 70: 915-937.

Sheldon, K. M., & Cooper, M. L. (2008). Goal striving within agentic and communal roles: Separate but functionally similar pathways to enhanced well-being, *Journal of Personality,* 76(3): 415-447.

Shye, S. (1985). Nonmetric multivariate models for behavioural actions systems, In D. Canter (Ed.). *Facet Theory: Approaches to Social Research.* New York, Springer Verlag.

Shye, S. (1998), Modern facet theory: Content design and measurement in behavioural research, *European Journal of Psychological Assessment*, 14(2): 160-171.

Shye, S., Elizur, D., & Hoffman, M. (1994). *Applied social research methods series, Vol. 35. Introduction to facet theory: Content design and intrinsic data analysis in behavioral research.* California, Sage Publications, Inc.

Singer, J. A. (1996) To Integrate or Not to Integrate: A Dilemma for Modern Personality Theory, *Psychological Inquiry*, 7(4), 367-371.

Singer, J. A. (1997). *Message in a bottle: stories of men and addiction.* New York, Free Press.

Singer, J.A. (2001). Living in the amber cloud: A life story analysis of a heroin addict, *Qualitative Psychology*, 1(5): 33-48.

Singer, J. A. (2004). Narrative identity and meaning making across the adult lifespan: An introduction, *Journal of Personality*, 72(3): 437-459.

Singer, J. A. & Salovey, P. (1993). *The Remembered Self: Emotion and Memory in Personality*. London, The Free Press.

Singer, J. A. & Blagov, P. S. (2004). The Integrative Function of Narrative Processing: Autobiographical Memory, Self-Defining Memories, and the Life Story of Identity, In D. R. Beike, J. M. Lampinen, & D. A. Behrend (Eds.), *Studies in self and identity. The self and memory* (pp. 117-138). New York, Psychology Press.

Singer, J. A., Blagov, P., Berry, M., Oost, K. M. (2013) Self-defining memories, scripts, and the life story: narrative identity in personality and psychotherapy, *Journal of Personality*, 81(6): 569-582.

Singer, J. A. & Conway, M. A. (2011). Reconsidering therapeutic action: Loewald, cognitive neuroscience and the integration of memory's duality, *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 92(5): 1183-1207.

Singer, J.A., Blagov, P., Berry, M., Oost, K.M. (2013). Self-defining memories, scripts, and the life story: narrative identity in personality and psychotherapy, *Journal of Personality*, 81(6).

Singer, J. A. & Conway, M. A. (2014). The varieties of remembered experience: Moving memory beyond the bounded self, *Memory Studies*, 7(3): 383-392.

Singer, J. A., Singer, B. F. & Berry, M. (2013) A Meaning-Based Intervention for Addiction: Using Narrative Therapy to Treat Alcohol Abuse. In Hicks, J. A., & Routledge, C. (Eds.), *The experience of meaning in life: Classical perspectives, emerging themes, and controversies*. New York, Springer Science.

Skeffington, P. M. & Browne, M. (2014) Art therapy, trauma and substance misuse: Using imagery to explore a difficult past with a complex client, *International Journal of Art Therapy*, 19(3): 114-121.

Skinner, H. A. & Allen, B. A. (1982). Differential assessment of alcoholism: Evaluation of the Alcohol Use Inventory, *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, 44(5): 852-862.

Smedslund, G., Berg, R.C., Hammer, K.T., Steiro, A., Leiknes, K.A., Dahl, H.M., & Karlsen, K. (2013). *Motivational interviewing for substance misuse*.

Smith, J. (1993). *After the demise of empiricism: the problem of judging social and educational inquiry*. Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Smith, B. & Sparkes, A. C. (2006) Narrative inquiry in psychology: exploring the tensions within, *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(3), 169-192.

Spruin, E., Canter, D. V., Youngs, D. E. & Coulston, B. (2014). Criminal Narratives of Mentally Disordered Offenders: An Exploratory Study, *Journal of Forensic Psychology Practice*, 14(5): 438-455.

Stokoe, E. (2006). *Discourse and Identity*. Edinburgh University Press.

Stone, R. (2014). *A Narrative Inquiry of Women's Substance Use in Pregnancy and Motherhood*, PhD Dissertation, Michigan State university.

Stone, R. (2016). Desistance and Identity Repair: Redemption narratives as resistance to stigma, *The British Journal of Criminology*, 56(5): 956-975.

Stott, C., & Drury, J. (2017). Contemporary understanding of riots: Classical crowd psychology, ideology and the social identity approach, *Public Understanding of Science*, 26(1): 2–14.

Strong, P. & Lotter, G. (2015). Reel help for real life: Film therapy and beyond, *HTS Theological Studies*, 71(3).

Sword, R. M., Sword, R. K. M., Brunskill, S. R. & Zimbardo, P. G. (2014) Time Perspective Therapy: A New Time-Based Metaphor Therapy for PTSD, *Journal of Loss and Trauma,* 19(3): 197-201.

Syed, M. & Nelson, S. C. (2015). Guidelines for establishing reliability when coding narrative data, *Emerging Adulthood*, 1-15.

Sykes, G. & Matza, D. (1957). Techniques of neutralisation: A theory of delinquency, *American Sociological Review*, 22(6): 664-670.

Szalavitz, M. (2016. *Unbroken brain: a revolutionary new way of understanding addiction. New York, St. Martin's Press.*

Tajfel, H. (1979. Individuals and groups in social psychology, *British Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 18(2): 183-190.

Taplin, C., Saddichha, S., Li, K., & Krausz, M. R. (2014). Family history of alcohol and drug abuse, childhood trauma, and age of first drug injection, *Substance Use and Misuse*, 49: 1311-1316.

Tarvis, C. (1991). The mis-measure of woman: Paradoxes and perspectives in the study of gender. In J. D. Goodchilds (Ed.), *Psychological Perspectives on Human Diversity in America* (pp. 87-136). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Taylor, C. (1987). Interpretation and the science of man. In P Rainbow and W. M. Sullivan (Eds.) *The Interpretative Turn: A Second Look* (pp. 33-81). Berkley/Los Angeles, University of California Press.

Taylor, J. M., Gilligan, C., & Sullivan, A. M. (1996). Missing voices, changing meanings: Developing a voice-centred, relational method and creating an interpretative community. In S. Wilkinson (Ed.), *Feminist social psychologies: International perspectives* (pp. 233–257). Buckingham, England: Open University Press.

Taylor, P. J. (2002). A partial order scalogram analysis of communication behavior in crisis negotiation with the prediction of outcome, *International Journal of Conflict Management,* 13(1): 4-37.

Teichman, M. & Cohen, E. (2012) PTSD and Psychoactive Substance Use Among Israeli Veterans: The Phenomenon and Contributing Factors, *Journal of Social Work Practice in the Addictions*, 12(2): 163-177.

Tharp-Taylor, S. Haviland, A. & D'Amico, E. J. (2009). Victimization from mental and physical bullying and substance use in early adolescence, *Addictive Behaviors*, 34: 561-567.

Thune, C. E. (1977). Alcoholism and the archetypal past: A phenomenological perspective on Alcoholics Anonymous, *Journal of Studies on Alcohol, 38*(1): 75-88.

Tkazky, S. (2018). *Prisoners' 'Life as a Film'.* Doctoral thesis, University of Huddersfield Repository.

Toch, H. (1987). Supplementing the positivist approach. In M. Gottfredson & T. Hirschi (Eds.), *Positive Criminology* (pp. 138-153). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications ltd.

Toch, H. (1993). Good violence and bad violence: Self-presentations of aggressors through accounts and war stories, in R. B. Felson & J. T. Tedesci (Eds), *Aggression and Violence: Social Interactionist Perspectives*, pp. 193-206. Washington DC, American Psychological Association.

Tomkins, S. S. (1987). *Shame*. New York, Guildford Press.

Touchalla, I., Linden, I.A., Strehlau, V., Neilson, E.K., Kruasz, M. (2015). 'Like a lot's happened with my whole childhood': violence, trauma and addiction in pregnant and post-partum women from Vancouver's downtown Eastside, *Journal of Urban Health*, 12(1): 559-573.

Tupes, E.C., Christal, R.E. (1992). "Recurrent personality factors based on trait ratings", *Journal of Personality*, 60(2): 225-251.

Turner, J. M., Brookshier, A.F., Monahan, K.M., Walder-Biesanz, C., Harmeling, I., Albaugh, L.H., McAdams, D.P. & Oltmanns, T. F. (2015). Variation in narrative identity is associated with trajectories of mental health over several years, *Journal of personality and Social Psychology,* 108(3): 476-496.

Turton, W. (2014). An introduction to psychosocial interventions. In S. Walker (Ed), *Psychosocial Interventions in Mental Health Nursing* (pp. 5-21). Sage, London.

UK Drug Policy Commission. (2008). *The UK drug policy commission recovery consensus group: A vision of recovery*. London, UK Drug Policy Commission.

Ullman, S. E., Relyea, M., Peter-Hagene, L., Vasquez, A. L. (2013). Trauma histories, substance use coping, PTSD, and problem substance use among sexual assault victims, *Addictive Behaviors*, 38(6): 2219-2223.

Valentine, P. (2011). Peer-based recovery support services within a recovery community organization: The CCAR experience. In J.F. Kelly & W.L. White (Eds.), *Addiction recovery management* (pp. 259–279). New York, Humana Press.

Van Boekel, L. C. Brouwers, E. P.M. Brouwers, van Weeghel, J. & Garretsen, H. F. L. (2013). Stigma among health professionals towards patients with substance use disorders and its consequences for healthcare delivery: Systematic review, *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 131(1–2), 23-35.

Vasiliadis, S. & Thomas, A. (2018). Recovery agency and informal recovery pathways from gambling problems, *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, 16(4): 874-887.

Verhulst, B., Neale, M. C., Kendler, K. S. (2015). The heritability of alcohol use disorders: A meta-analysis of twin and adoptions studies, *Psychological Medicine*, 45: 1061-1072.

Volkow, N.D., Wang, G.J., Telang, F., Fowler, J.S., Logan, J., Childress, A.R., Jayne, M., Ma, Y., Wong, C. (2006). Cocaine cues and dopamine in dorsal striatum: mechanism of craving in cocaine addiction, *Journal of Neuroscience,* 26(24): 6583-6598.

Volkow, N.D., Tomasi, D., Wang, G.J., Logan, J., Alexoff, D.L., Jayne, M., Fowler, J.S., Wong, C., Yin, P., Du, C. (2014). Stimulant-induced dopamine increases are markedly blunted in active cocaine abusers, *Molecular Psychiatry*.19(9):1037-1043.

Volkow, N. D., Koob, G. F., McLellan, A. T. (2016) Neurobiologic Advances from the Brain Disease Model of Addiction, *New England Journal of Medicine*, 374(4): 363-371.

Vollmer, F. (2005). The Narrative Self, *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 35(2), 189-205.

Ward, T. (2010). The good lives model of offender rehabilitation: Basic assumptions, etiological commitments, and practical implications. In F. McNeil, P. Raynor, & C Trotter (Eds.), *Offender supervision: New directions in theory, research and practice* (pp. 41-64). Devon, Willan Publishing.

Ward, T., Mann, R. E., & Gannon, T. A. (2007). The good lives model of offender rehabilitation: Clinical implications, *Aggression and Violent Behaviour*, 12(1): 87-107.

Walters, G. D., Espelage, D. L. (2018). Exploring the victimization–early substance misuse relationship: In search of moderating and mediating effects, *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 81.
Walters, G. D. (2014). Does Substance Abuse Fall Exclusively Along the Externalizing Spectrum? *Substance Use & Misuse*, 49(6): 724-734.

Warren, J., Stech, M., Douglas, K. & Lambert, S. (2010) Enhancing Case Conceptualization Through Film: The Addiction Web, *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 5(3): 228-242.

Waters, S. (2015). Identity in the Empathic Community: Alcoholics Anonymous as a Model Community for Storytelling and Change, Pastoral Psychology, 64: 769-782.

Webster, L. R. (2018). The prescription drug abuse epidemic and emerging prescribing guidelines. In *Essentials of Pain Medicine (4th Ed): 389-394.*

Weegmann, M. (2010). Just a story: narrative approaches to addiction and recovery, *Drugs and Alcohol Today*, 10(30: 29-36.

Weegmann, M. & Piwowoz-Hjort, E. (2009) 'Naught but a story': Narratives of successful AA recovery, *Health Sociology Review*, 18(3): 273-283.

Weisz, C. (1996). Social identities and response to treatment for alcohol and cocaine abuse, *Addictive Behaviors,* 21: 445-458.

Welch, E., Caiels, J., Jones, K. et al., (2013). *Implementing Personal Health Budgets within Substance Misuse Services. Final Report*. Personal Social Services Research Unit, University of Kent.

White, M., & Epstone, D. (1990). *Narrative means to therapeutic ends*. London, Norton.

White, W. L. (2000). Addiction as a disease: Birth of a concept, *Counsellor,* 1(1): 46-51.

White, W. L. (2007). Addiction recovery: Its definition and conceptual boundaries, *Journal of SUD Treatment*, 33: 229–241.

Wiggins, J. S., Grove, W., & Ciccetti, D. (Eds.) (1991). Thinking clearly about psychology: *Essays in honor of Paul Everett Meehl.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Willmes, K., Poeck, K., Weniger, D., & Huber, W. (1983). Facet theory applied to the construction and validation of the Aachen Aphasia Test, *Brain and Language,* 18(2): 259-276.

Wills, T. A., Vaccaro, D., & McNamara, G. (1994). Novelty seeking, risk taking, and related constructs as predictors of adolescent substance use: An application of Cloninger's theory, *Journal of Substance Abuse, 6(1)*: 1-20.

Winstock, A. R., Eastwood, N., & Stevens, A. (2017). A new drugs strategy for the UK, *British Medical Journal*, 358.

Wise, R. A. (2008). Dopamine and reward: the anhedonia hypothesis 30 years on, *Neurotoxicity Research,* 14(2-3):169-83.

Wittgenstein, L. (1922) *Tractatus logico-Philosophicus*. London, Kegan Paul

World Health Organisation (2004). The World Health Organisation Quality of Life (WHOQOL) -BREF.

World Health Organisation (2017). Curbing prescription opioid dependency, *Bulletin of the World Health Organisation*, 95(5): 318-319.

Wulbert, R. P. (2018). *The use of storytelling in recovery for college students with substance use disorders.* Repositories.lib.utexas.edu.

Young, L. B. (2011). Hitting bottom: Help seeking among Alcoholics Anonymous members, *Journal of Social Work Practice in the Addictions,* 11(4): 321-335.

Youngs, D. E. & Canter, D. V. (2012). Narrative roles in criminal action: an integrative framework for differentiating offenders, *Legal & criminological Psychology,* 17(2): 233-249.

Youngs, D. E. & Canter, D. V. (2013). Offenders crime narratives as revealed by the narrative roles' questionnaire, *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology,* 57(3): 289-311.

Youngs, D. E., Canter, D. V., Carthy, N., (2016). The offender's narrative: unresolved dissonance in life as a film (LAAF) responses, *Legal & Criminological Psychology*, 21(2): 251-265.

Żemojtel-Piotrowska, M. A., Piotrowski, J. P. and Clinton, A. (2016), Agency, communion and entitlement, *International Journal of Psychology*, 51: 196-204.

Zheng, W., Surgevil, O. & Kark, R. (2018). Dancing on the razor's edge: How top-level women leaders manage the paradoxical tensions between agency and communion, *Sex Roles*, 79(11): 633-650.

<u>**Information Sheet**</u>

You are being invited to take part in a study about personal narrative and identity. Before you decide to take part, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it me if you wish. Please do not hesitate to ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

What is the study about?

The research is part of a Doctorate thesis (PhD) and is to do with identity and personal stories. It is particularly looking at how identity and personal stories are important in drug use and people who have had problems with drugs.

Why I have been approached?

You have been asked to participate because you have experienced drug use and may be able to provide valuable information to the research

Do I have to take part?

It is your decision whether or not you take part. If you decide to take part you will be asked to sign a consent form, and you will be free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason.

You can withdraw your information from the study up to three months after the interview, by contacting me. Three months following the interview will be the deadline for you to withdraw your information from the study. Should you wish to withdraw from the study, you must do it within this three-month time frame.

You can contact me to withdraw from the study using the email address provided below and quoting your unique ID number, which will be provided to you during the interview.

What will I need to do?

If you agree to take part in the research you will be asked to take part in an interview that will include providing some personal life event descriptions and filling in a couple of questionnaires. The information you provide will likely be significant events from your life. With this in mind, during the interview, please only provide information that you feel personally comfortable disclosing, as we do not want to cause you any stress or anxiety.

The process will take around one hour and be conducted via videocall (Whatsapp/Skype, etc). I will be in my house when the interviews take place, and I will be audio-recording the interview.

Will my identity be disclosed?

In terms of confidentiality, at the interview you will be given a unique identity number which will be used to identify your information following the interview.

The information you provide will be anonymised so that no information that could identify you, such as name or date of birth, will be published. Sections of the material you provide may be used to illustrate certain points in the written work but will not contain any personally identifiable information.

I must inform you, however, that if you report current possession of illegal drugs, or that you are going to get illegal drugs, I will have to report this to the police. Also, if you report a current or proposed other illegal activity, I will have to report this to the police. If you do report this information, also the interview will be discontinued. Additionally, if I have reason to believe that you are going to harm yourself or anyone else, I will have to report it to the police.

What will happen to the information?

All information collected from you during this research will be kept secure and any identifying material, such as names, will be removed in order to ensure anonymity. It is anticipated that the research may, at some point, be published in a journal or report, as mentioned above. However, to reiterate, should this happen, your anonymity will be ensured, although it may be necessary to use your words in the presentation of the findings and your permission for this is included in the consent form.

Appendix 2

Consent Form

It is important that you read, understand and sign the consent form. Your contribution to this research is entirely voluntary and you are not obliged in any way to participate, if you require any further details please contact your researcher.

I have been fully informed of the nature and aims of this research □

I consent to taking part in it □

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time □

without giving any reason. I understand I can withdraw from the research during the interview process and following the interview date up to three months after the interview has taken place, should I wish. I understand that after this three-month deadline I will be unable to withdraw from the study

I give permission for my words to be quoted (by use of pseudonym) □

I understand that the information collected will be kept in secure conditions, and will □

become part of the IRCIP archive for use by other bona fida researchers under the

supervision of Prof Canter and Dr Youngs, for a period of five years from completion

of the study at the University of Huddersfield

I understand that no person other than the researcher and supervisors □

as well as other researchers affiliated with the same centre will have

access to the information provided.

I understand that my identity will be protected by the use of pseudonym in the □

report and that no written information that could lead to my being identified will

be included in any report.

I understand that my full name and surname will not be asked, however, □

since there is more than one questionnaire that will be administered,

to be able to identify the questionnaires that are filled out by the same

participant only my initials and age will be asked, and I will be assigned a

participant identification number.

I understand that this research will result in a Doctorate thesis which ☐

can be presented at conferences and maybe published in professional and

academic journals.

I give permission for the interview to be recorded ☐

I understand that the researcher/interviewer has a duty to inform the authorities if I disclose any form of current or intent to commit illegal activity, such as possessing, obtaining or selling illegal substances or committing any other type of crime

I understand that the researcher/interview has a duty to inform the authorities if I disclose any intent to harm myself or others

I understand that should I disclose such information the interview will be discontinued

If you are satisfied that you understand the information and are happy to take part in this project, please put a tick in the box aligned to each sentence and print and sign below.

Signature of Participant:	Signature of Researcher:
Print:	Print:
Date:	Date:

(one copy to be retained by Participant / one copy to be retained by Researcher)

Appendix 3

Personal Information

Initials:
Date of birth:
Age:
Gender:
Ethnic group:
What is your occupation?
Can you tell me your family make up (e.g., mother, father, older brother, younger sister)?
What qualifications did you get in school?
Can you tell me anymore qualifications and training you have?
What age were you when you started using drugs?
What were/are your problem drugs?
How did you take drugs (e.g., inject, snort)?
What was/is your average daily usage/dosage?
If you are abstinent from drugs, how long have you been drug-abstinent?
Please could you briefly describe your drug use history, how it developed.
Please could you briefly describe your drug treatment history, what treatments or therapies have you been through.
Please could you briefly describe your experience of recovering from your drug-using lifestyle.

Debrief:
Well, I would like to thank you for taking part in this research, how was it for you?
Do you feel okay about it?
Did you have any issues with the interview?
Do you have any further questions?
What have you got on for the rest of the day?
Feel free to contact me if anything comes up. Here is my email address.
Would you like any information on services that maybe useful in addressing some of the thing you have talked about?
[Optional, depending on drug using status, etc.]

Remember, you can contact me to withdraw your information from the study anytime during the next three months, without having to give any reason.
Do you understand this?

Appendix 4

'Life as a Film' interview procedure

(Prior to commencing interview)

Firstly, thank you again for agreeing to take part in this interview. The research is part of a PhD and is to do with identity and personal stories. It is particularly looking at how this is involved in drug abuse and people who have had problems with drugs.

Do you have any questions about this?

The information you provide will be anonymised so that no information that could identify you, such as name or date of birth, will be published, though sections of the material you provide may be used in the written-up articles to illustrate points.

Do you understand this?

Do you have any questions about this?

In terms of confidentiality, I must inform you that if you report current possession of illegal drugs, or that you are going to get illegal drugs, I will have to report this to the police. Also, if you report a current or proposed other illegal activity, I will have to report this to the police. If you do report this information, also the interview will be discontinued. Additionally, if I have reason to believe that you are going to harm yourself or anyone else, I will have to report it to the police.

Do you understand this?

Do you have any questions about this?

Just to go over it again, remember from the information sheet I gave you are free to end the interview at any time, without having to provide a reason. Also, following the interview you can withdraw your information from the study, up to three months after the interview, by contacting me. I will provide these details at the end.

Do you understand this?

Do you have any questions about this?

Okay, shall we start?

LIFE IN GENERAL: Film narrative.

If your life were to be made into a film, what type of film would it be?

What would happen?

Who would the main characters be?

What would the main events that might happen in the film?

How do you think it might end?

The Main Scene of the Film
What happens in the most exciting scene in the film?

Where is it?

What is going on?

Who else is there?

What are they doing?

How are you acting?

How do you feel?

How the Film opens
When does the film start?

What is going on?

What are you like then?

Now tell us in as much detail as you can what happens between this Opening scene and the Main Scene

You in the film
What sort of person are you?

Who you have good feelings about and why?

Who do you have bad feelings about and why?

What do other people think about you?

What mistakes do you make?
How do you change during the film?

Appendix 5

Recovery Inventory

1. Abstinence from substances

2. Abstinence from substances for 12 months

3. In employment for 12 months

4. Desistence from offending for 12 months

5. Engages in meaningful activity

6. Has a responsible role in society

7. Reports emotional support networks

8. Reports social support networks

9. Reports of self-efficacy

10. Reports psychological wellbeing

11. Reports stable relationships

12. Reports a recovery identity

Score '1' for presence and '0' for absence on each of the items

Appendix 6

Repertory Grid

Constructs		Elements				
Left Pole	*Right Pole*	*Before Drugs Self*	*Drug-Using Self*	*Current Self*	*Real Self*	*Ideal Self*
A victim	*A survivor*					
Things get worse	*Things change for the better*					
Powerless over outcomes	*Can determine desirable outcomes*					
A life in chaos	*In control*					
Escapes from problems	*Confronts problems*					
Cannot trust myself	*Can trust myself*					
Alone	*Connected to others*					
Don't trust people	*Trusts people*					
Cannot express my true self	*Can be myself with others*					
Have confused feelings	*Have control of feelings*					

Rating System: Left pole: 1=Very much, 2=Quiet a lot, 3=A little, 4=Mid-point; right pole: 5=A little, 6=Quite a lot; 7=Very much.

An example: If you felt like 'A victim' in your 'Before Drugs Self', then you would rate between 1-3. If you felt like 'A Survivor', then you would rate between 5-7. If you felt neither one way nor the other, then the rate would be a 4.

Appendix 7

"Life as a Film" Content Framework: Version 2 (Substance Use Edition)

All subgroups are in accordance with the list in the original publication by Canter and Youngs (2015). Following pilot study, certain theme categories within subgroups were omitted since they appeared to overlap with other coding definitions or address content specific to offender populations (see main text for details). All the definitions were created by the current researcher for the purpose of this study (Rowlands, 2019) based on the original publication and the sources to which it referred.

Psychological Complexity

- Number of people cited - number of people mentioned in the response. Only distinct mentions should be counted (e.g. "My brother, my girlfriend, my friend"), not the groups (e.g. "My mates").

- Presence of distinct roles for characters - characters in the response are given distinct roles/functions (e.g. "My father is my saviour") (Yes/No).

- Number of distinct events cited - number of clear separate events described or even mentioned in the response (e.g. "My wedding, the death of my mother" – two distinct events; "Everything that went on" – 0 events).

- Number of distinct psychological ideas - number of clear separate ideas, such as thoughts, beliefs, emotions.

- Presence/number of contingent sequences - sequence of events where 2nd (or 3rd) event happened because of 1st (Yes/No).

- Presence of distinct beginning, middle and end components to the story - the response has distinct beginning, middle and end components (Yes/No).

- Presence of coherent themes - the coherent, consistent theme is raised in the response (Yes/No).

Implicit Psychological Content

All the categories are dichotomous, only the presence of each item in the response is registered.

Genres:

Any genre should be marked as present only if clearly stated in the narrative (e.g. "It would be a total comedy", "My film is a tragedy"), strongly indicated (e.g. "A 'rags to riches' tale" – 'Romance', "An out and out disaster movie" – 'Tragedy'), or if the participant mentions the name of an existing film (e.g. "It would be like 'Reservoir Dogs'" - 'Thriller', "My life is a 'Laurel and Hardy' film" - Comedy). Items include:

- Comedy
- Romance
- Tragedy
- Thriller

Events:

Marked as present only if mentioned in the narrative. E.g. "I have the support of my girlfriend" – 'Relationship Success'. I had a breakdown of my marriage and I ended up on drugs" – 'Relationship Problem'.

- Relationship problem (event)
- Relationship success (event)

Message

- Happy ending – the ending described in the response is a happy ending

- Sad ending – the ending of the "Life as a Film" response is a sad ending

- Positive tone – in general the tone of the response is positive.

- Negative tone - in general the tone of the response is negative.

- Passive – the protagonist in the response accepts what is happening to him/her without resistance.

- Pro-active – the protagonist in the response takes the initiative.

Explicit Processes Used to Organise the Content

All the categories are dichotomous, only the presence of each item in the response is registered.

Agency Themes

All the categories in this subgroup are based on the studies by McAdams (1988, 1993, 1996, 2012).

- Self-Mastery - the protagonist strives to successfully master, control and perfect the self. Here the narrator describes how he/she attained new and important insights into him/herself. The insight may be a new level of self-awareness, understanding, or enhanced control over destiny.

- Empowerment - the protagonist is enlarged, enhanced, empowered or ennobled. The protagonist makes a strong impression and has an impact on other people or events in the story. This impact may even be aggressive (physically or verbally). The protagonist exerts his/her own will to change things.

- Effectiveness - the protagonist develops skills, experiences achievement, gains rewards.

Communion Themes

- Love/Friendship - the protagonist experiences an enhancement of love or friendship toward another person. A relationship between people becomes warmer or closer.

- Caring - the narrator reports that he or she provides care, assistance, nurturance, help, aid, support, or therapy for another. Receiving such care from others also qualifies for this category.

- Unity - the theme of Unity/Togetherness captures the communal idea of being part of a larger community. The narrator describes a sense of unity, harmony and/or solidarity with others.

Redemption Themes

All the categories in this subgroup are based on the studies by McAdams' and colleagues (1993, 1997, 2001).

- General redemption – sequences of negative events being transformed into positive outcomes - something good emerges out of bad.

- Advantage – the narrator describes that he/she enjoyed some special advantage.

- Suffering – the protagonist witnesses suffering or injustice in the lives of others.

- Development – the narrator describes how he/she developed the sense of moral steadfastness

- Repeated negative – the protagonist repeatedly encounters negative events that are transformed into redemption.

- Prosocial – the narrator sets forth pro-social goals.

Contamination Themes

All the categories in this subgroup are based on the studies by McAdams (1993, 1995, 1996, 2012).

- General contamination – sequences of positive events turning into negative outcomes.

- Victimisation – the protagonist suffers from abuse (physical or verbal), becomes a victim of crime, cruelty, fate.

- Betrayal – the narrator describes how he/she was betrayed (e.g. caregiver, unfaithful partner, etc).

- Loss of significant others – this category includes both the loss of a significant person (e.g. death of the partner, friend or parent) and significant quality/property. According to McAdams (1996), in this narrative category the loss of a job, money, property, self-respect, respect for another should be included.

- Failure – the narrator describes his/her failure (e.g. in sports, job, education. courtship).

- Physical or psychological illness or injury – the narrator describes how he/she suffers from physical/psychological illness or injury.

- Disappointment – in the story things do not turn out as expected by the narrator, things go wrong.

- Disillusionment – the protagonist loses his/her positive illusions about the world, corrects his/her previous positive misperception about the world as whole.

- Sex guilt, humiliation – the narrator tells how enjoyment turned to guilt and/or humiliation.

Classic Narrative Themes

Presence of the following ideas:

- Masculinity/Bravery – the protagonist describes a sense of bravery, courage or bravado.

- Compulsion - the protagonist has an irresistible urge to behave a certain way.

Agency in Relation to Others and the World

All the categories are dichotomous, only the presence of each item in the response is registered.

Behaviours described by the interviewee:

- Proactive - behaviours of gaining control by taking initiative.

- Reactive - actions in response to something.

- Avoidance of others - the protagonist avoids other people.

- Confronting others – the protagonist confronts other people.

Imagoes

All the imago categories should be applied separately to the protagonist and the other characters in the story (Self-Imago versus Imagoes of Others). The definitions of the roles remain the same. All the categories based on the study by McAdams (1993).

- Healer – the character concentrates on cures, health and well-being.

- Teacher – the character is focused on passing on knowledge and skills to younger or less experienced.

- Counsellor – the character guides others, solve problems for them.

- Arbiter – the character makes crucial decisions about right and wrong.

- Warrior – the character forcefully engages other, attains power over them.

- Traveller – the character progresses over terrain as explorer.

- Sage – the character is engaged in efforts to learn, to understand the world or to conquer the environment.

- Maker – the character focused on achievement rather than power.

- Lover – love as a main focus of the character's life.

- Caregiver - the character cares for others, sacrifices self for others.

- Friend – loyal, trustworthy, with main focus on the life-long friends and friendship.

- Escapist – the protagonist focuses on diversion from engagement with others or personal responsibility.

- Survivor – the character survives harsh environment, injury, illness, tough circumstances.

Emotions

All the categories in this subgroup are based on the studies by Russell (1997) and Canter and Youngs (2011).

- Emotions from aroused–positive quadrant – excitement.

- Emotions from aroused–negative quadrant – stress, anxiety.

- Emotions from non-aroused-positive quadrant – calm.

- Emotions from non-aroused-negative quadrant – displeasure.

Justifications

All the categories in this subgroup are based on the studies by Sykes and Matza (1956) and Bandura (1990).

- Denial of responsibility – the narrator explains his inhumane conduct or harmful actions by circumstances completely beyond his/her control.

- Condemnation of the condemners – the narrator claims that those who condemn him/her have no right to do so and are only trying to shift the blame from themselves.

- Appeal to higher loyalties - some inhumane conduct is described as serving a higher social or moral purpose.

- Diffusion of responsibility – the participant explains that he/she is not the only person to blame for his/her mistakes.

- Assuming the role of victim for oneself – the narrator declares him/herself the main or even the only victim in the situation.

Incentives

All the categories in this subgroup are based on the study by Bandura (1986).

Behaviours conducted by the protagonist in the story were for:

- For material\financial gain.

- For sensory gain - pleasure gain, sensation, stimulation, boredom avoidance.

- For power\status gain.

- For social (approval\advancement) gain.