

SYSTEMS OF RECOVERY

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DRUGS, CRIME AND RECOVERY

- Current models are linear, deterministic, individualised, and linear in terms of causality, treatment and change
- Tend to assume that recovery means slow progression from drug use to recovery. Any relapse is lack of progress.
- Focus in on intra personal qualities as the primary driver of change.

PROCESS PHILOSOPHY AND ECOLOGICAL PSYCHOLOGY

- Process ontology
 - Whitehead, Deleuze, DeLanda: Quantum vs Newtonian. Ontology of process, energy and events
 - "doing, becoming, and eventing"
- Ecological Psychology
 - It is because organisms are immersed in such force fields that they are alive. To cut the spider from its web would be like cutting the bird from the air or the fish from water: removed from these currents they would be dead (Ingold, 2011: 65)
 - Life-space (Lewin, 1936, Brown & Reavey, 2015)
 - Materiality (Latour and Massey)
 - Ecological niches
 - People as indivisible from the environment, social and material.

EMPIRICAL APPROACH

- 21 life stories of active and former drug users.
- Re-analysed from an ecological and nonlinear dynamics perspective.
- Whole systems approach: people, spaces, time, relationships.
- Epistemology: post-modern criminology argues that pre-modern discourses fail to capture human interaction-disconnected view of subjects and causal explanation
- Use of **narratives** in order to conceptualize processes between subjects, lived experience and the world/context (Arrigo, 1995; Arrigo & Young, 1998)

NARRATIVES OF DRUG USE

- Unstable and chaotic early lives
- Stories of unresolved trauma
- Drug use as providing stability: affective and relational anchors in response to unstable and intensive childhoods.
- I developed some very like obsessive- I got ocd as a child and I use to rearrange my bedroom every weekend because I got so bored I used to rearrange the furniture and have everything in alphabetical order and stuff started to do strange things like turn the lights off in a certain amount of times and doing funny little things to stop me from getting hurt-Stop harm from coming to me (Patrick, 28, heroin user in early recovery)
- Plus I think I never dealt with the hurt that I had inside With my °fa:ther with my bloo- with everything With the hurt cause I still have a lot of anger inside me? Cause I bottle things up and then I take drugs The minute I get a fee:ling I get drugs to get rid of that fee:ling (Tina, 32, heroin user in early recovery)

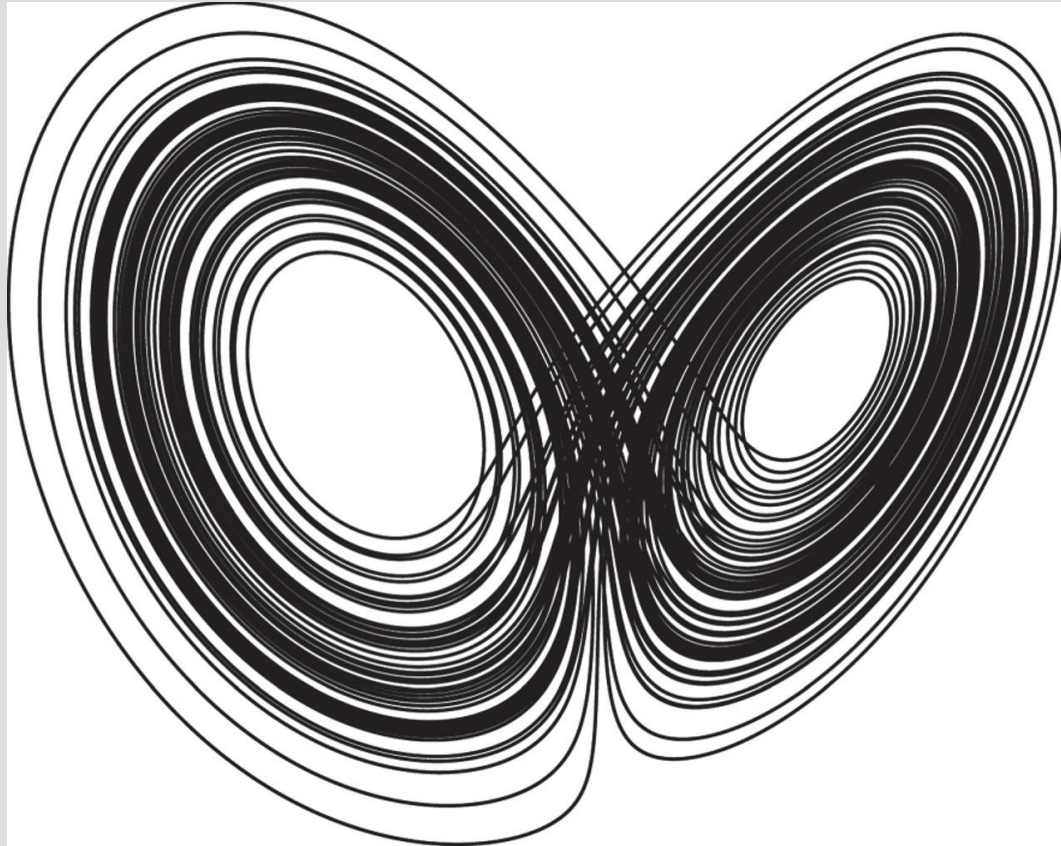
DRUG USE AND EARLY RECOVERY

Drug niche

Set and stable
pattern:

Drugs – crime –
drugs – crime.

Ecological niche:
whole life
organised by
drugs.



Recovery niche

Wholly different
ecological niche

Home, job, relationships,
family

Striving for stability
with replacement of
drug using activities

Recovery characterised by oscillation between the two states

DRUG USING NICHE



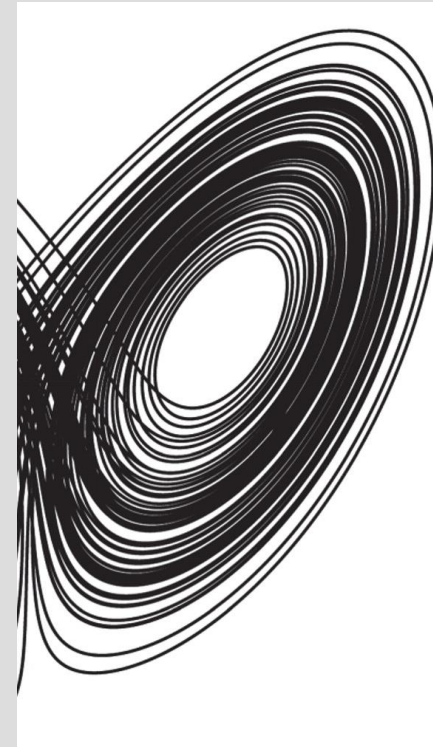
- **Stable system characterised by self similarity**
- **Contracted life-space**
- Frank, alcohol user in early recovery: and I'd been forcing it down to make me feel better and I'd go to bed for a couple or three hours and then get up and do the same again, three cans four cans maybe, back to bed for a couple or three hours, 24/7, I didn't know whether it was six at night or six in the morning
- John, 43, polydrug user in sustained recovery: By the time I was 17 or 18 my day consisted in that I had to get up, I had to go out, steal something to sell it, get the money and go and find the drugs, get the drugs, use the drugs and then do it all again the next day and if I was lucky I wouldn't get caught by the police

EARLY RECOVERY NICHE

- **Ecological, system level transformation.**
- **Gradually expanding life space**

Emma, 38, heroin user in early recovery: and got support and carried on going to the meetings, so doing step work got myself on to a little creative, going on a computer course which I've completed now, started doing a parenting group as well obviously doing my meetings, sticking around decent people really, kind of doing other little things as well to kind of build myself up

- 'Each sober day was as long as seven drinking days. Time seemed perverse, sinister.' (Johnstone, 2011:111).

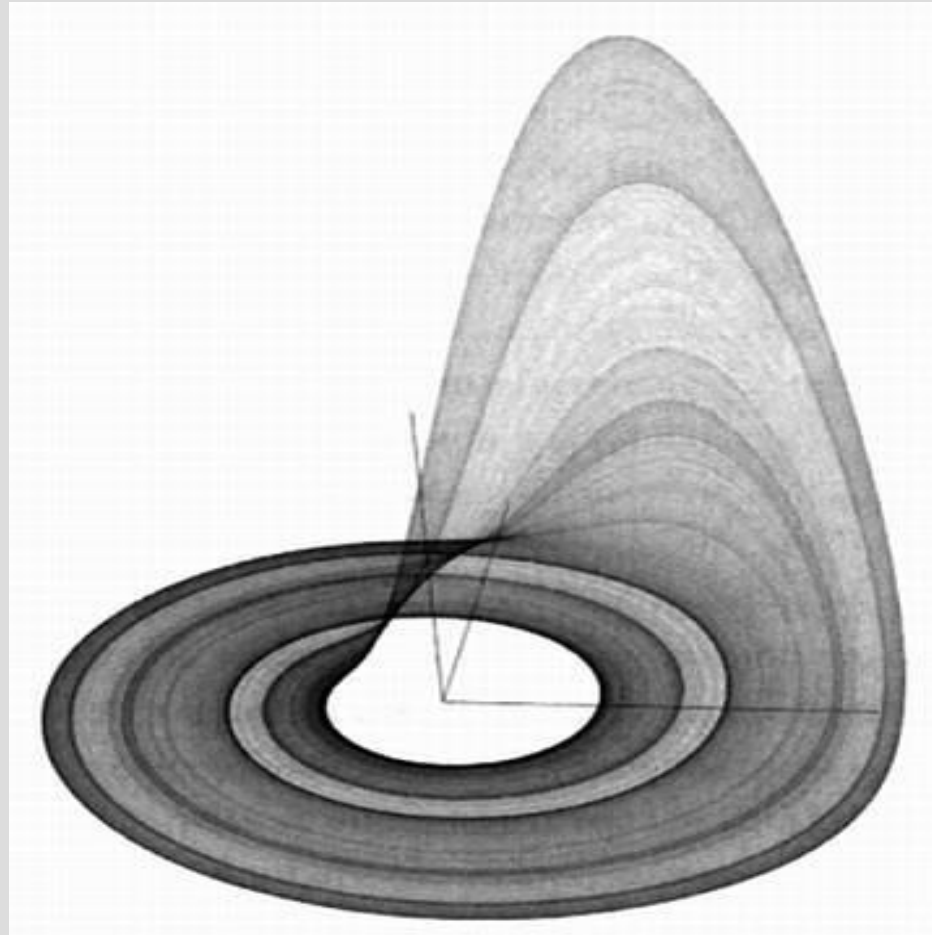


BIFURCATIONS AND OSCILLATIONS

- **Intrapersonal,**
 - Unresolved, re-emerging trauma
- **Interpersonal**
 - Relationships from drug taking life
- **Material**
 - Prison, losing house, moving home...
- Tina, 32, heroin user in early recovery: I relapsed. Got back on the crack. Got back on the gear. Got back to jail. I've done-I got 12 months I've done 6 months. I got back on the gear. And then throughout like the next 5 years I tried to get clean load and loads of times on subutex. I think I maintained staying abstinent but just on subutex. For about 8 months. And then got back on the gear (...) I'm not- gonna give up. It's solike – I don't know the gear is fucking mad. It's fuckin' mad. As while as you're doing it it's good as everything. Is-it-it steals sort of-it's got ya. It's gonna get me for the rest of my life. It might get easier but it's always going to be there. And it's such a fine line between being on it and being of it. It's mad isn't it?

STABLE RECOVERY NICHE

- Defined by both drug using and early recovery tori but separate system
- Replacement narratives, positioning, roles and identity
- Alison, 58, alcohol user in stable recovery: We always have to be careful with people with alcohol because if they say they're going to stop straight away, we can't have that because that's a killer isn't it? (...) I see a lot of loneliness as well. Loneliness because they've lost their own world, the life that they knew (...) and the same story for so many. They think 'no I haven't got an alcohol problem I can drink'.



CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Recovery and drug use are both part of an ecological non linear system, characterized by oscillation, not a linear intrapersonal process.
 - Emerges out of uncertainty, instability. Self regulatory system which is inherently uncertain and in constant reorganisation.
 - Recovery niche contains the possibility of flipping back to the drug taking niche. But not because of internal pathology ('always an addict'), but because it remains within your life space. Also not inevitable.
- Focus of services/support needs to be on securing and buffering the recovery niche: an ecological concern.
- More specific research - this was an exploratory analysis of narratives collected for a different research question.