Rehabilitation Work and Cultures

DR HANNAH GRAHAM, 18TH NOV. 2016, DUBROVNIK, CROATIA.

VALUING PRACTITIONER PERSPECTIVES

Overview

- Introduction;

- Rehabilitation Work book and research;

The aim of this presentation is not to talk a lot about research methods or to learn a lot about how things are done in Australia. The research is a vehicle to help talk about topics, issues and ideas which may be relevant to Europe.

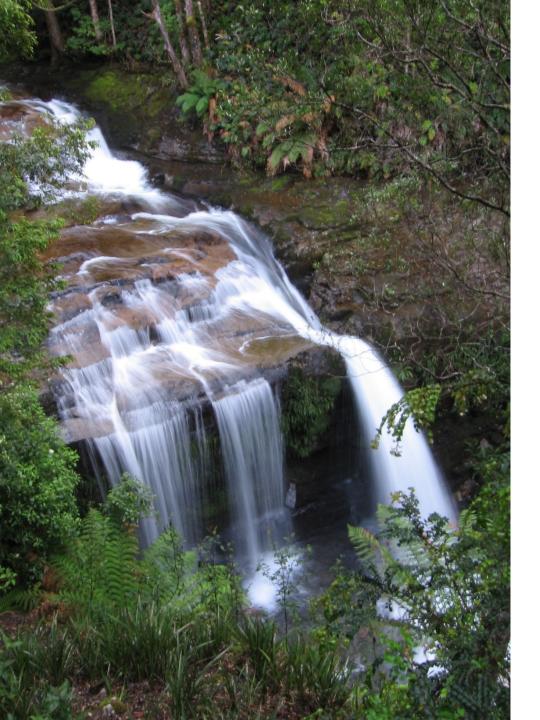- Professionalism and valuing practitioners;

Tasmania,
Australia

Research Questions:

1. What are the perspectives, experiences and cultures of practitioners working in the Tasmanian criminal justice field and alcohol and other drugs field?

2. How and why do these things shape rehabilitative processes of working with people with complex needs to support their desistance and recovery?

Research Design

- A six year (part-time) study at the University of Tasmania.

- 30 semi-structured practitioner interviews (13 men, 17 women).

- Interdisciplinary, detailed literature review.

- Secondary data analysis (workforce surveys, reports, policy documents).

- Standpoint of an 'embedded' researcher working in and with the two fields of interest.

- Rehabilitation: from paradigms (risk, desistance, recovery) to purposes and processes;

- Tools and approaches in rehabilitation work;

- The study: analysis of two fields of rehabilitation work;

- Allies and adversaries: complexity and collaboration;

- Theorising rehabilitation work and the helping professions;

- Changing rehabilitation cultures.

REHABILITATION WORK

Supporting desistance and recovery
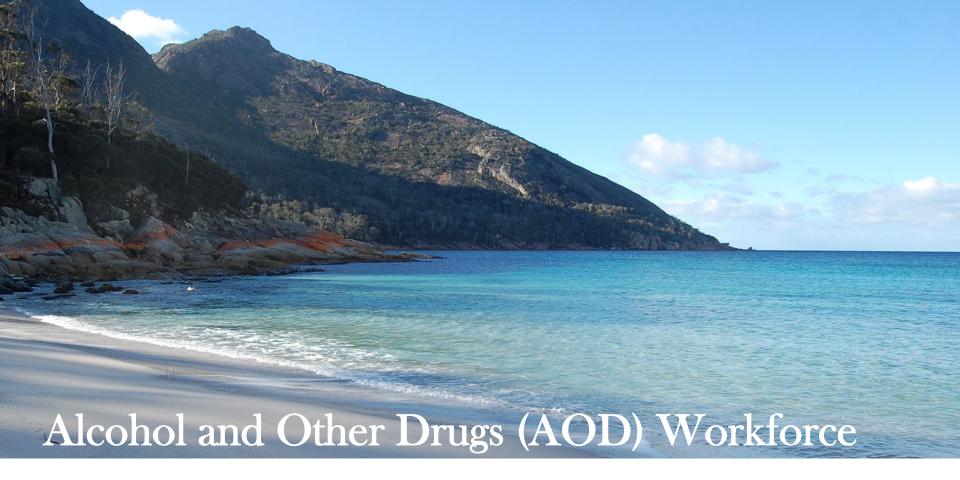
HANNAH GRAHAM

ISODR

This study: empirical and theoretical reflections about two local fields involved in doing rehabilitation work.

Why are so many practitioners *leaving* the alcohol and other drugs field? Why are a disproportionate number of criminal justice practitioners *on leave*? Yet, why do many practitioners stay and do good work and innovate in the same conditions?

Tasmanian Criminal Justice Workforce

In 2013, the Department of Justice initiated a workforce 'absence management strategy' across corrective services.

Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) Workforce

This study reflected on findings of Alcohol, Tobacco & other Drugs Council of Tasmania Workforce Surveys:

- A total of 209 respondents in 2012, and 229 in 2014.

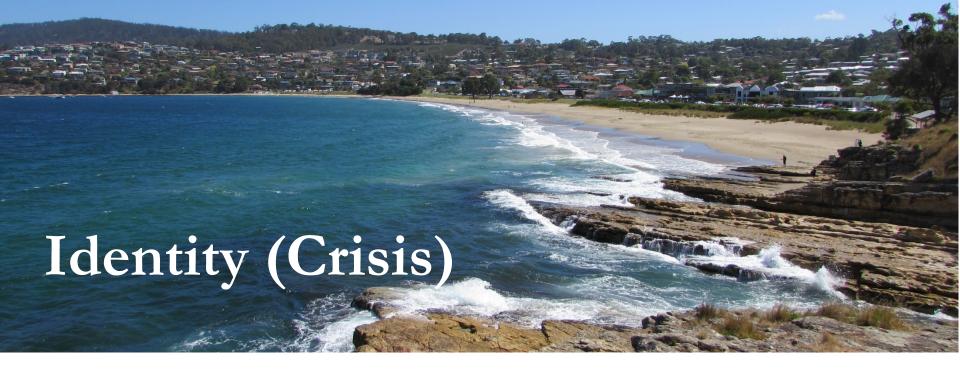- 23 alcohol & drug rehabilitation organisations in 2014.

- Most common types of work positions = helping professionals;

- Feminisation of AOD workforce: 67% practitioners are women.

- Ageing workforce: 52% of workforce are aged 45 years or older, and a fifth (21%) are aged 55 years or over in 2014.

- Half of the workforce were employed with (short) fixed term contracts, and nearly two thirds (63%) were employed full time.

- In 2010, 75% of practitioners surveyed said they did not intend to stay with their current employer beyond the next five years.

- In 2012, 50% of practitioners surveyed indicated that they planned to leave their current job within two years.

- In 2012, 37% of those surveyed cited the need for better pay, and a significant number raised qualitative concerns about insecurity in funding cycles and not being supported or valued as factors which would affect their decision to leave their job and/or the sector.

- Issues in the Workforce surveys are evident in my study.

Identity (Crisis)

- When did rehabilitation become a 'dirty word'? (Ward & Maruna, 2007)

- Do some practitioners in these fields feel like they are 'good people doing dirty work'? (Hughes, 1962; Mawby & Worrall, 2013)

- Technicians? Helping professionals? Identity crises may reflect status anxiety and issues/inequalities of professional dominance, responsibilisation to control clients, and punitive professionalisation – i.e. the stratification of their field of work.

Rehabilitation Work in Criminal Justice:
Official discourses and what practitioners *actually* do in practice

- Using the Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) Model of offender assessment and rehabilitation, including the LS/CMI tool in prison and probation.

- Using the Good Lives Model (GLM) of rehabilitation with some people.

- Pioneering the use of desistance-oriented approaches to sentence management to prioritise supporting desistance and reintegration;

- Contributing to therapeutic jurisprudence problem-solving court projects, e.g., a drug court overseen by Probation/Community Corrections.

Probation:

Infusing welfarism and supporting desistance into the Risk-Need-Responsivity Model

'Look, I think one of the things for me, is that, you know, following someone's basic needs. If you haven't got your basic needs met, if your children are hungry, if you've got not where to live, if you can't read and write, then I think trying to focus on the bigger stuff around criminogenic needs is total waste of time… We talk a lot about making sure the triaging of the offender is right. So if someone comes in and they haven't got high literacy skills, and they haven't got anywhere to live, and they've got lots and lots of things in their life that is happening, we need to help them get that under control, or refer them to agencies that can help them get that under control first before you sit down and go "well I know you've got an anger management problem here, and let's address that"' (Senior practitioner, probation in Graham, 2016: pg 126)

Probation:
Leadership, power and communication

'We actually went to the magistrates and said 'what you're asking for is one option. But instead of doing that, how about we change and the look of the pre-sentence report, and we shorten it so that you get what you need and we get what we need'" (Senior practitioner, probation in Graham, 2016: pg 128)

What makes Probation

An honourable profession?

(see Worrall and Mawby, 2013, 2014)

Organisational Professionalism	Occupational Professionalism
• Discourse as control used increasingly by managers in work organisations about practitioners.	• Discourse constructed within professional groups about themselves.
• Rational-legal forms of authority.	• Collegial authority.
• Standardised procedures, rules.	• Professional discretion respected, occupational control of the work.
• Hierarchical structures of authority and decision-making.	• Practitioners trusted and valued by both service users and employers.
• Managerialism, efficiency logic.	• Controls and rules operationalised by practitioners, leadership from within.
• Accountability and externalised forms of regulation, target-setting and performance review.	• Professional ethics monitored by institutions, oversight associations.
• Linked to Weberian models of bureaucratic organisation.	• Located in Durkheim's model of occupations as moral communities.

Reference: adapted from Evetts (2013: 788)

PROFESSIONALISM FROM WITHIN

Professionalism *from within* affords practitioners greater autonomy and professional judgment, as well as input from the requisite competencies and best practices associated with their expertise and service work. This fits with Durkheim's notion of occupational professionalism.

Graham (2016: pg. 160)

PROFESSIONALISM FROM ABOVE

Professionalism *from above* often takes the form of workforce development & training and the standardisation of service work through psychometric tools, pro-formas, routinised interventions and programmes. This fits with Weber's notion of organisational professionalism.

Graham (2016: pg. 160)

Challenges

- **Workload, lack of choice, too much 'top down' change;**

- **Issues of professionalisation 'from above' and responsibilisation:** the 'dirty work' of social control and being controlled, having some control over their own labour, but not control in the labour process (Svensson and Akström, 2013; Evetts, 2013).

- **Consequences of 'technician' identity: de-skilling and dehumanising helping professionals in criminal justice work.**

Rehabilitation Work:

Understanding how practitioners in both fields navigate difficult work and working conditions well.

Professional resilience, humour, fun and irony:

- Food, banter and camaraderie;

- Fancy dress and spontaneous surprises;

- Irony and developing a 'black' or 'dark' sense of insider humour;

- Animals in the workplace;

- Going for a walk/group walk, finding good excuses to be outdoors;

- Helping with good causes, e.g., children's initiatives with parents in prison;

- Conserving hope – for self and others.

'Intrapreneurship': Practitioner-led innovation from within

The criminal justice field offered more examples of practitioners involved in creative work and fruitful cultures of collaboration.

- Innovative initiatives and creative work, *and* systemic change.

- 'Job crafting' – shaping their work to pursue better results, to be proud > led to positive effects for more rehabilitative work cultures.
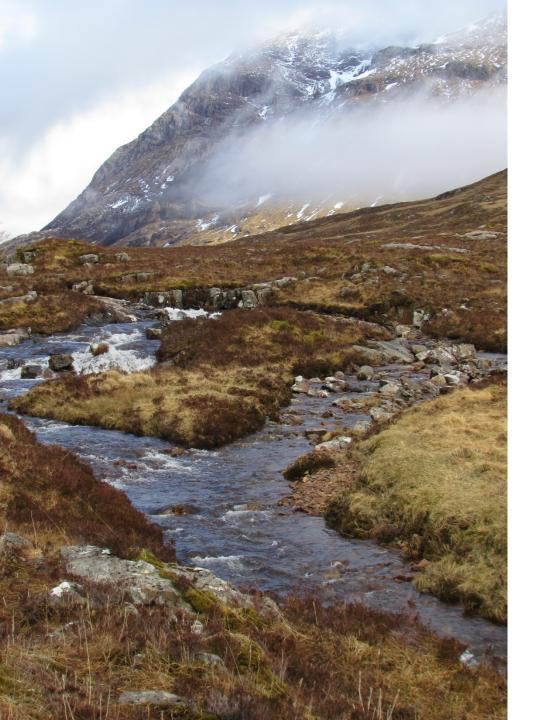
Rehabilitation Work: Key research findings

- **Current funding and governance structuring of voluntary sector services negatively influence practitioners, cultures, and practices:**
    - Short-termism: contractual/tendering and electoral;
    - Workforce conditions/turnover, inequalities, professional dominance;
- **Professional and sectoral identity crisis in alcohol drug field.**
    - However, practitioners want to 'be the change' instead of incessantly being subject to change (ie. 'top down' pressure to professionalise).
    - 'More training' implies blame of practitioners for workforce issues.
- **Criminal justice practitioners want to change the established identity of their field to encompass more rehabilitative notions.**

SUPPORTING DESISTANCE

CHANGING
LIVES&
LIFE CHANCES

SUPPORTING DESISTANCE

Fergus McNeill (2012):
'Four Forms of Rehabilitation'.
Four forms of rehabilitation work?

In your service and your society, how are probation staff valued as *An honourable profession?*

Promoting Practice Wisdom

- 'Pracademia' and pragmatic partnerships with academics;

- Permission and recognition for innovation and creativity;

- Celebration of excellence;

- Ownership of discourses about work and workers;

- Media and awareness raising;

- 'Open days', festivals, fairs;

- Staff exchanges/job swap;

- Promoting to Parliament.

Key References

Graham, H. (2016) *Rehabilitation Work: Supporting Desistance and Recovery,* London: Routledge.

Graham, H., & McNeill, F. (2017) 'Desistência: Vislumbrando Futuros' [Desistance: Envisioning Futures] in Carlen, P., & Ayres França, L. (eds.) *Criminologias Alternativas* [*Alternative Criminologies*] Brasília: iEA Academia.

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Questions?

Contact

Dr Hannah Graham

Email: h.m.graham@stir.ac.uk

Twitter: @DrHannahGraham