Bearing witness to desistance: trauma and offending in the lives of people facing complex needs

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Overview

- Introduction to the project
- Methodological approach
- A case study emerging from the project
- Some tentative thoughts
- ‘Bearing witness’ to desistance
Methodology

Sampling:
- 16 participants
- Selected on basis of co-occurrence of (i) substance use problems; and/or (ii) mental health problems; and/or (iii) homelessness and (iv) repeat offending.
- Gatekeepers report as having made positive changes in life (particularly around offending)

Data collection:
- Open, unstructured approach
- Group art workshops using ‘collage as inquiry (Butler-Kisper, 2008) to visually explore and represent individual lives.
- Detailed field notes from collage creation sessions and use of collages to support elicitation of narratives
- Life history interviews (initial & follow-up after 6 months), using minimalist passive interviewing (Jones, 2003)

Data analysis:
- Pen portraits
- Drawing on broad brush approach of BNIM (Wengraf 2001) by separating out the lived life from the told story & considering relationship between the two
- Drawing on techniques from Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009)
Some tentative thoughts...

- Insufficient attention to embodied and emotional dimensions of desistance
- Desistance partly dependent on recovery from/circumvention of engrained emotional and behavioural responses arising from trauma
- Active role of community and state institutions in engendering desistance
- Misrecognition of victimhood as offending
“being with and relating to others...based on values and beliefs that give rise to a commitment to attend to, honour, and stay with persons’ truths, perspectives, priorities, hopes, and dreams; ...their lived experience.” (Naef 2006: 149)

Anderson (2016)
References
