Paul Donnelly
Research Topic

Is (re)building connections with family

BOTH a Hope and an Outcome

On completing a residential programme for addiction within a Therapeutic Community
“The human being is predicated upon relationship -

We are born into a powerful, usually intensely loving, relationship; we learn to define ourselves through relationship; and throughout our life our evaluation of ourselves is especially influenced by relationship.

Equally

It is relationship that can be most destructive to us.”
Background
ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE, LOVE, LOVE IS ALL YOU NEED.

"THE BEATLES"

I Will Always Love You
Whitney Houston
I Love You Even When
I'M ANGRY!
Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.

*Leo Tolstoy*
Literature Review
Generational Pattern of Attachment

- 80% repeated down the generational cycle

- As humans we have need for love & belonging
- When absent possibility of addiction increases

- Reasonable that when problematic addictive behaviour treated patterns of attachment and relationships in client families are relevant

**Key Point**
- “Help client to deconstruct the unhelpful attachment patterns of the past and to construct new ones in the present (Wallin)”
Study - Self Perception of Improved Attachment

- The idea of family is important in Addiction Recovery
- It can be viewed that the TC model of ‘community as method’ can see the community as a substitute for family support (Valliant 1991)

Indeed speakers here support this view:
- Dr Catherine Comiskey (ROSIE Study 2009) suggests where family & social networks are strong clients are more likely to stay in treatment and less likely to relapse
- Rowdy Yates (2010) highlights the desire of clients for improved relationships and suggests that quality attachment to a family unit, is a key “desistence indicator” that a person can move away from addiction.
Attachment As a Motivator

Family & Children important (especially for women)

- (Neale & Tompkins)
  - “Wanting to win back the trust of family members or aspiring to make their relatives proud were further important incentives for getting help.
  - In contrast, those who were not emotionally supported by their family could feel that there was very little point in trying to address their drug taking.”

- (Babineau, 2015) Makes Important Point
  - Personal motivation rather than obligation is important for increasing chances of treatment success
  - and within this families can be a source of either personal motivation or obligation
  - and it is important to understand the client’s motives.
Gender Differences

Literature & research suggests experience of addiction different for women

- Relationship difficulties more likely to be a factor (Dodge 2001)

- Women suffer more complicated consequences of abuse
  - Men suffer violence and abuse from enemies or strangers - women suffer it from people who tell them they love them (Covington 2008)

- Women rely on family for support more but this network can contain elements of distrust and control (Lewandowski 2009)
Judith Jordan (Feminist Theorist) argues that:

The notion of individuality is a particularly male view of human existence, and that females tend to have a more interdependent and relational understanding of who we are.
Need for Study

- Qualitative findings
- This study quantitative
- Should be evidence/fits TC Model / So is it???

3 Aims of Study

1. Do clients perceive improvement in connectedness to family
2. Do hopes entering differ from thoughts on leaving residential phase
3. Is there a gender difference in results
Study Participants

- Small - 46 Participants
  - 26 Pre-residential
  - 20 Post residential

- Demographics
  - 60% male
  - 65% aged 25-40
  - 74% Parents
Study Method

14 Questions

- 3 Personal Data
- 4 Questions family - importance/acceptance
- 2 Questions - related to sufficiency of family connection at beginning and end of residential phase
- 5 Questions on level of felt support - how supported are they??
Results

- % of parents increased (70 to 80%)
- % of under 25 year olds decreased (23 to 5% - motivation factors???)

Is family important
- Overall improvement in patterns of attachment evidenced
- Want to focus on gender & patterns of self felt support in pre and post groups
Gender Combined Totals - Favourable!!

Q7 Improvement in Family ties is important to me
Gender Combined Totals - Favourable!!

Q8 I am accepted by my Family

Pre-residential
- Definitely False
- Probably False
- Probably True
- Definitely True

Post-residential
- Definitely False
- Probably False
- Probably True
- Definitely True
Q9 At the start of rehabilitation I believe my family connection is/was
Q5 Is Family important

- **Pre-residential**
  - Definitely False
  - Probably False
  - Probably True
  - Definitely True

- **Post-residential**
  - Definitely False
  - Probably False
  - Probably True
  - Definitely True

Some Doubt in Favoured Totals??
When we look at gender differences emerge

- Q5 Is family important

**PRE-Residential:**

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![Graph showing gender differences in importance of family]

COOLMINE
When we look at gender differences emerge

- Q5 Is family important

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When we look at gender differences emerge

- Q6 I understand my family and my family understand me -

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- Q10 At the end of rehabilitation I believe my family connection will be

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When we look at gender differences emerge

- Q11 There are several people I trust to help me solve my problems

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Pronounced positive swing to men throughout

- Q15 There is at least one family member whose advice I really trust

PRE-Residential:

Male

Female
Pronounced positive swing to men throughout

- Q15 There is at least one family member whose advice I really trust

**POST-Residential view:**
Emerging Picture?

- Picture emerging is for many women a challenging position that contains risks BUT also one which presents challenges/opportunities
  - Fear that supports are not enough
  - Acknowledging past supports inadequate & do not want to return to these harmful attachments
  - Awareness that the need to rebuild lives

- Risk - lower resilience and higher risk of relapse (but might also present a realism)

- Covington 2008 - suggest that historically addiction recovery programmes designed for men and that men benefit most in terms of family connectedness.

- This (limited) study reinforces this point and certainly more research is required BUT
Challenge

- Challenge to more comprehensively meet the needs of women addressing:
  - more complicated relationship and relatedness with their support structures
  - More complicated lives (children and frequent economic dependence)
  - Frequently shattered sense of self-worth
Good work continues BUT

- Women need greater representation

  - Services need to adapt to meet the increased level of work required to support women in building new relationships and attachments to replace previous connections that are too harmed (and harming) to be repaired.

  - TCs (community as method) are ideally placed to rise to this challenge and without it more women who seek a life free of addiction will fall through the net of recovery.

  - Logical if damage caused through relationship, cannot healing too.
Thank you