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# Trajectories in long-term recovery from substance use: from gratitude to self-determination and agency

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**Substance Use &  
Addictive Behaviours  
Research**



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# I'm getting the balls to say no

Webb et al 2022 Journal of Health Psychology  
DOI: 10.1177/1359105320941248



Recovery community,  
Liverpool & Manchester:  
what is recovery?

Analysis of a co-produced longitudinal study following six people from treatment exit to 4 years post treatment.

A framework analysis of recovery narratives

# Co-productive data collection – over 4 years...



Recovery walk



Creative action



Co-productive

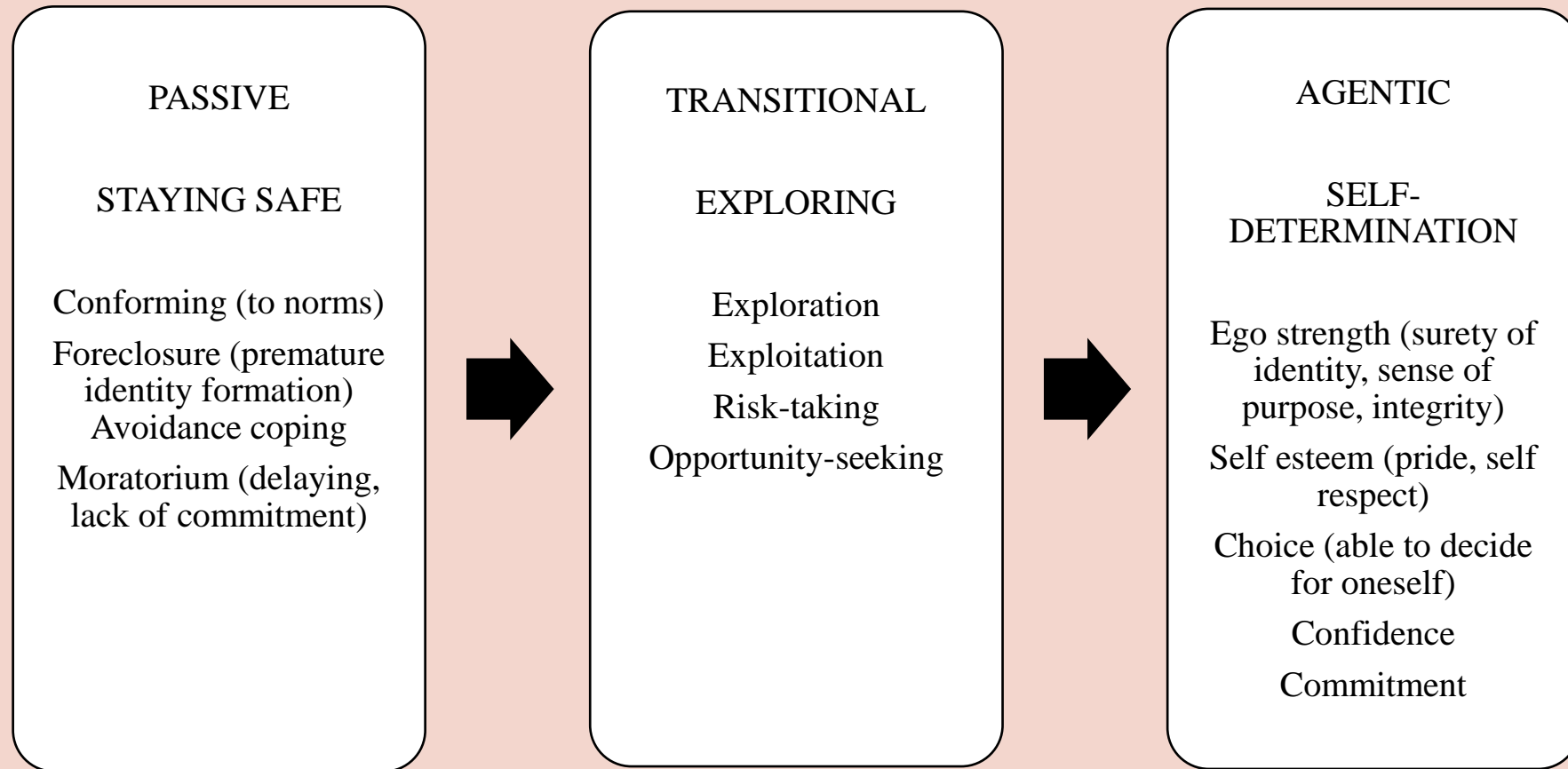


Voicebox  
Interviews

# Themes, categories and superordinate themes

Super-ordinate Themes	Staying safe		Exploring		Self-determination		
Categories	Gratitude	Needing	Taking risks	Seeking/needing opportunities	Integrity and purpose	Self worth and belief	The real you
Themes	Gratitude Feeling lucky	Belonging Scared	Feeling exposed  Learning about self	Frustration  Helping others	Looking after self	Making own decisions  confidence Self respect	Self realisation
Stage of recovery							
Early							
Mid							
Later							

# MAPPING TIME X STAGES OF INDIVIDUALISATION:



Framework adapted from Côté's individualisation hypothesis and Schwartz et al. Agency identity model. Côté's (2002) Schwartz et al (2005)

Superordinate theme	Categories	Theme	Early stage of recovery (0-6 months)	Mid stage (12 – 24 months)	Later stage (36 months+)
Staying safe	Gratitude	Gratitude	RON: glad to be here. I'm lucky to have a roof over my head. Thanks B (support group).	GARY: I love recovery and what it's given me.	LEN: Without recovery my life would be chaos and madness.
		Feeling lucky	LIZ: How lucky was I to be going on this (recovery training) course for free.	GARY: I'm very privileged (to get friendships back)	RON: so lucky, I've had a 2 <sup>nd</sup> chance.
	Needing	Validation	LIZ: All of these people being clean and sober and part of a community: I love being with people.	TERRY: I want to be part of it (being with others in recovery)	TERRY: my daughter says (to me) 'don't drink cider' – you have to hang on to that.
		Belonging	GARY: it was nice because we were all there together.	LIZ: it's not easy being an ex-addict (corrects herself) – an addict.	LIZ: They are not like us (non-recovery people)
		Feeling scared	LIZ: I feel I was quite fragile (in the early stage)	BARBARA: for them (work assessors) to tell me if I'm well enough to work (made me) really anxious (doesn't feel up to working yet but will lose benefits).	RON: I'm not going to risk a 3 <sup>rd</sup> chance. I'm staying where I am.

Superordinate theme	Categories	Theme	Early stage of recovery (0-6 months)	Mid stage (12 – 24 months)	Later stage (36 months+)
Exploring	Taking risks	Feeling exposed	LIZ: I felt a little anxious, if I'd understand it (the recovery training course)		LIZ: at times I have felt vulnerable – when you see yourself back, all the chinks in the armour... (implies surprise at surviving the recovery journey)
		Learning about self	BARBARA: the smile is real, loving it. (I'm) re-discovering life, finding myself.	GARY: I was basically scared... getting to know who I was again.	
		Helping others	LEN: I also give something back through sponsorship. I do a lot of voluntary work.	LEN: I now deliver a self-help group. That's a big step for me.	TERRY: I like helping people, I can point people in the right direction
	Seeking opportunities	frustration	GARY: I was getting told what to do (in the early stages)	TERRY: we're not all useless...	BARBARA: (feeling ill) I'm frustrated because I'm stuck in this flat. I hate it but I've got to take time out. I'm bored, bored, bored.
		Connecting With people	BARBARA: I come to groups to volunteer. It's so liberating.	RON: I've met a nice girl.. good luck to everyone.	TERRY: test the waters, in other places, not being scared.



Superordinate theme	Categories	Theme	Early stage of recovery (0-6 months)	Mid stage (12 – 24 months)	Later stage (36 months+)
Self-determining	Integrity and purpose	Looking after self	GARY: (I learned) I was getting stronger in myself. Taking care of myself again. I learned there was nothing to be scared of.	RON: I hope everything pans out for everyone but I can only look out for myself and (my family).	BARBARA: asked myself a question: what does looking after (me) look like? So I said to the lady, 'I'm not coming in today, I'm going to my friend's, do a bit of gardening which I enjoy'.
		Making own decisions		GARY: I made a brave decision to become what I wanted.	TERRY: recovery is when you are on your own making your own decisions. I'm getting the balls to say 'no'.
	Self worth and belief	Confidence	GARY: I used to do judo [ ] It felt good to be back (training). I felt a little something come back.	TERRY: bit by bit you get stronger. You get stronger as a person.	GARY: I spent 2 years of my life being unhappy and I wasn't prepared to sacrifice my happiness any more.
		Pride and respect		GARY: I've done it. Able to keep a job, be reliable, freedom from pain.	TERRY: Getting myself right. I'm not getting any help ... doing it myself.

EXEMPLAR: 'TERRY'

	Staying safe		exploring		Self-determination		
Stage of recovery	Gratitude	Needing	Taking risks	Seeking/needing opportunities	Self worth and belief	Integrity and purpose	The real you
Early	(treatment centre) they were fantastic	I've come to meet people. I need a bit of direction (about work)		you get stuck in a ball, you do certain things			
Mid	(before recovery) nobody there to listen to us	We need people to help us along the trip	I want to be part of it (helping others)	We're not all useless.			
Later		Daughter says 'don't drink' you have to hang on to that.		I like helping people – I can point people in the right direction	Getting myself right. I do it myself.	I'm getting the balls to say 'no'	it's not recovery, its living again

# FINDINGS

MOVEMENT FROM  
GRATITUDE AND  
DEPENDENCE TO  
AGENTIC GROWTH

12-STEP RELIANCE AT  
EARLY STAGES

ALCOHOL DEPENDENT  
PROGRESSED MORE  
QUICKLY THAN DRUG  
DEPENDENT

# IMPLICATIONS

TIMING OF TYPE OF SUPPORT  
IMPORTANT

MAINTENANCE OF RECOVERY  
CAN BE MAPPED AGAINST  
DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS

RECOVERY MEMBERSHIP MAY  
HOLD SOME PEOPLE BACK FROM  
AGENTIC GROWTH



# Thank you

Webb et al (2020) *'I'm getting the balls to say no'*: Trajectories in long-term recovery from problem substance use. Journal of Health Psychology, DOI: 10.1177/1359105320941248

