Title: Lives and Spaces: Photovoice and Offender Supervision in Ireland and England.

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Abstract

The lives and experiences of those on probation supervision are often invisible and dismissed as unimportant or worse 'an easy option'. This article reviews two different studies in England and Ireland, which utlised an innovative technique, Photovoice, to foreground the challenges that are faced by probationers on their journey towards desistance. The difficulties they face such as stigma, social judgement and exclusion are exposed as well as their need for emotional calm, support and understanding from their supervisors and the wider community. Photovoice as a methodological and creative tool is revealed as a novel and expressive means to develop insight into probation supervision and an effective technique for undertaking cross-national research which can communicate across cultural boundaries.

Key words

Probation, Ireland , England, Photovoice, Community, Desistance

The use of probation supervision in Europe has expanded rapidly over the past thirty years (McNeill and Beyens, 2013) but little is known about the experience of supervision - particularly from the perspective of those subject to it. The topic is now garnering scholarly attention and research is beginning to shed light on probationers' experiences of supervision. This article aims to contribute to this emerging literature by using an innovative technique – Photovoice - to explore the lived experience of supervision in Ireland and England. The project was inspired by the work of the COST Action 1106 Offender Supervision in Europe, particularly that of the Experiencing Supervision working group which investigated different ways to study supervision experiences (see Fitzgibbon, Graebsch and McNeill (2017) for further details).

England and Ireland were chosen as the two research sites because probation supervision in these jurisdictions has evolved quite differently despite a shared legislative origin. The primary legislation governing probation supervision in Ireland is still the Probation Act 1907 which was introduced before Ireland gained independence and has remained in force ever since. Despite some notable developments (such as the introduction of community service orders under the Criminal Justice (Community Service) Act 1983), the history of the Irish Probation Service is characterised primarily by continuity rather than change (Healy, 2015; Healy, 2012). Although recent years have witnessed a growing pre-occupation with public protection and risk management in the discourse surrounding probation supervision, the penal welfare narrative remains dominant. Under the 1907 Act, probation officers' primary function remains to 'advise, assist and befriend' their clients. Managerial preoccupations are largely symbolic; for example, although formal risk assessments must be completed for all probationers, probation officers prefer to make decisions based on clinical judgement and individualised assessments (Bracken, 2010; Fitzgibbon et al., 2010). Nevertheless, the

pace of change has begun to accelerate over the past decade and a new Criminal Justice (Community Sanctions) Bill 2014 which will replace the centenarian 1907 Act is currently working its way slowly through the legislative system. The Bill retains penal welfare ideals (for example, probation officers must possess social work qualifications) but also includes references to risk, responsibility and public protection.

Conversely, the history of probation supervision in England and Wales could be described as turbulent, with probation services enduring frequent renaming and restructuring as well as legislative changes and, most recently, partial privatisation. Robinson (2015: 34) argued that contemporary discourses underpinning probation supervision in England strive to emphasise its "systematic legitimacy" by reframing it as a credible alternative to custody and as an effective tool for managing risky beings in tandem with other agencies, such as the police. She further observed that its traditional welfare ethos has been downplayed in favour of a focus on punishment, responsibilisation and public protection. As part of the Transforming Rehabilitation programme, the government established in 2015 a public National Probation Service (NPS) to deal with high-risk offenders and private Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRC) to deal with low- and medium-risk offenders. Robinson et al. (2016) discovered that these changes elicited feelings of uncertainty and status anxiety among staff, created divisions between former colleagues and eroded organisational loyalty.

Experiencing supervision

Although the penal landscape in Ireland is fairly well-mapped at the macro level, research on the supervision experience from the perspective of probationers is relatively scarce. In one of few available studies, Healy (2016) discovered that the majority of probationers responded favourably to current supervision practices which, in their eyes, were underpinned by penal welfare ideals. Specifically, probationers appreciated practical assistance with social issues such as employment and addiction, as well as opportunities to enhance their skills and prosocial networks through rehabilitation or educational programmes. Relationships based on respect, concern and acceptance helped probationers to gain insight into their offending behaviour and deal with feelings of shame about their offences. Only a minority found probation unhelpful, either because external events undermined their capacity to engage or because they found supervision inconvenient, controlling or intrusive. Seymour (2013) also found that young people valued their relationships with probation officers, particularly when they received non-judgemental support and encouragement, and appreciated officers' willingness and ability to access services on their behalf. Despite overwhelmingly positive assessments, probationers in both studies concluded that probation did not directly cause desistance either because a backdrop of socio-economic problems constrained its impact or because change was perceived as an internal, agentic process.

There is a stronger tradition of probation research in England which provides insights into supervision experiences during different historical periods. Probationers in two classic studies identified welfarist ideals as the key ingredients of effective supervision, including strong working relationships, active and collaborative approaches, assistance with practical problems, and empowerment (Rex, 1999; Farrall and Calverley, 2006).

Again, supervision did not appear to play a direct role in desistance but instead facilitated change indirectly by developing probationers' agency and social capital. However, recent research offers a more ambiguous view of the supervision experience. The probationers in King's (2013) study claimed that their supervision experiences fostered a sense of agency, increased their motivation to change, encouraged them to focus on the future and enhanced their problem-solving skills. However, they were often referred to external agencies for assistance with practical issues like unemployment, which they found demoralising, time-consuming and unconstructive. Probationers in Shapland et al.'s (2012) study painted a largely negative picture. They did not view probation officers as potential sources of assistance with practical problems, few were attending rehabilitation programmes and most perceived probation appointments as too brief and too general. Although the impact of the Transforming Rehabilitation agenda on the experience of probationers is under-researched, Kay (2016) found that 'high-risk' probationers on intensive supervision were adversely affected by the new division of labour. While CRC work was perceived as desistance-focused, meaningful and helpful, NPS work was perceived as offence-focused, painful and unhelpful. Probationers who had to transfer from private to public services due to risk reclassification were particularly confused about the changes.

Despite differing macro climates, this review suggests that there may be areas of convergence as well as divergence between probationer experiences in England and Ireland. While the differences may reflect variations in official rhetoric, it would be simplistic to posit a direct link between the two, as such connections are always mediated by practice cultures. Indeed recent studies suggest that, while English probation officers adopt elements of the new practice philosophies, they continue to endorse values traditionally associated with the welfare ethos (Robinson et al., 2014).

Nevertheless, the literature in both jurisdictions is relatively small and may be somewhat out-of-date given the rapidly changing penal field in England and the planned changes in Ireland. The current dearth of knowledge not only constitutes a gap in academic understanding but also impedes the development of evidence-based policy and practice.

A key aim of this study was therefore to explore the utility of Photovoice as a methodological tool for researching the lived experience of probation supervision and investigating the theoretical, methodological and practical value of this approach in different socio-cultural and penal contexts. People subject to the criminal justice system frequently report negative educational experiences and problems with literacy skills which can inhibit their confidence and ability to articulate experiences and feelings (McNeill et al., 2011). Creative methods offer a valuable way for research participants to increase self-confidence in sharing emotions and experiences and developing new skills including self-reflection (Palibroda et al 2009).

The study aimed to make the invisible visible by creating a set of visual representations of the supervision experience. As Fitzgibbon, Graebsch and McNeill (2017) note, there are few iconic images that evoke this experience, making it difficult to imagine what it *feels* like to be under supervision. The study is, then, embedded in the emerging field of visual criminology (Hayward and Presdee, 2010) the proponents of which argue that images offer a powerful way of 'seeing' crime and crime control. Images are not simply objective representations of reality but are open to multiple, subjective and even contradictory interpretations as different audiences engage with and ascribe meaning to them. The hope was that these images could provide a window onto the experience of

supervision for those subject to it and also for the wider public for whom supervision is often invisible.

METHODOLOGY

Two studies were conducted using the Photovoice methodology, one in Ireland and one in England. The Irish study involved eight Irish men (two groups, n=3 and n=5) who were under probation supervision and attending a probation-funded, community-based rehabilitation programme. The English sample involved ten women who were also on probation and attending a Women's Centre. In total, the Irish men produced 84 photographs and the English women, 131 images. In both cases, photographic exhibitions of the images were subsequently held, attended by a range of academics, practitioners and policymakers as well as some of the photographers.

Photovoice is an established method developed initially by researchers in the area of health promotion (Wang and Burris, 1997). It uses a combination of photography and focus group discussions to gain rich, multi-dimensional understandings of particular phenomena. Its purposes are to create a visual representation of participants' experiences, feelings and perceptions, critically explore the meanings (overt and hidden) within the photographs through focus group discussions, and communicate the findings to others, including policymakers. Photographs can 'encode an enormous amount of information in a single representation' (Grady, 2004: 20) and provide a 'real flesh and blood life experience' (Becker, 2002: 11). As will be shown, this approach is a potentially powerful research tool which provides probationers with the opportunity to reflect on otherwise ignored aspects of their lived reality whilst serving community sentences. It also facilitates distance from ordinary routines and space to articulate

practical knowledge - for example, how probationers negotiate public space or respond to a probation appointment.

Taking photographs can thus facilitate new insights into social phenomena which verbal, aural and written data cannot provide (Bolton 2001). The focus groups which follow the photography session provide participants with space to reflect and explore the reasons, emotions and experiences that have guided their chosen images. This process can cause discussions to become both intense and emotionally engaging. It is important that the co-researchers feel empowered to control the selection and number of images and have the freedom to discard others. They also need to feel free to identify for themselves the captions and the meanings they attach to those photographs (Rose 2008). They are thus enabled critically to analyse their own images and experiences.

In the current study, the co-researchers - here, probationers - were given guidance on how to use the equipment, a simple disposable camera, and asked to capture images representing their experiences of supervision. They were asked to take ten images each, although some chose to take more and some fewer. The photos were then developed into hard copy prints and returned to participants who were asked to think about why they chose the image and what it represented. In focus groups they then shared their thoughts and feelings around the photo(s) and were given an opportunity to identify a caption title and description. Collaborative, reflexive research is seen as truly ethical research (Rose, 2011). Thus, adequate permissions were sought from those taking the photographs and also for the reproduction of photographs at sites of audiencing. The photographs were returned or kept with permission at the end of the project. Ethical approval was obtained from the two host universities and from the agencies that facilitated the research.

The two researchers independently coded both the images and the focus group transcripts using a grounded theory approach. Though the visual and narrative themes were created by the researchers, the meanings attributed to the images by the co-researchers were foregrounded in the coding process where possible (i.e. where the images were discussed during the focus group sessions). As a result, the approach generated multiple levels of interpretation and captured the subjective meanings of supervision from the perspectives of the researcher, the researched and other audiences. This process results in the images no longer being the primary source of meaning since they become theorised as icons through which a range of meanings may be created as viewers bring their own social and cultural understandings to the images (Rose 2011). The ability to produce multi-layered understandings of a phenomenon is a core strength of the Photovoice technique.

It was clear from the focus group discussions that the Photovoice method quickly engaged participants who showed increased confidence in their ability to select images and therefore engage in self-advocacy. By enabling probationers to tap into their creativity and gain photography skills, the projects facilitated the sharing of power through self-expression through language during the reflective process. This differs fundamentally from traditional research where power often lies solely with the researcher and also from probationers' experiences of supervision where the parameters are set by the supervisor.

RESULTS

This section presents the results that emerged from the visual analysis of the photographs and the narrative analysis of the focus group transcripts, focusing on the theoretical and methodological implications of the findings. The findings from the Irish study are discussed first, followed by the results of the English study. Whilst the samples were too small for quantitative comparison, there were some broad similarities between probationer experiences in England and Ireland, and four over-arching themes were identified: (a) *help and support*, the balance between the provision of assistance and the imposition of undue constraints, (b) *Time, nature and growth*, the distinction between quality time and wasted, or suspended, time, (c) *Stigma and identity*, the challenges associated with social exclusion, stigmatisation and labelling, and (d) *Transitions and beginnings*, the challenges associated with shedding obsolete criminal and adolescent values and labels.

STUDY #1 - IRELAND

Help and support

The Irish co-researchers were unanimously positive about their experiences on probation. Many of their photographs depicted the abundant opportunities for personal learning and development within the programme and included images of the library, art room, educational facilities and the horticultural area. Photographs of probationers' mosaics and paintings which adorn the walls of the building were especially common. Jack, who captured this image of the art room, commented "it's not basically about art. It's just….about change, like, learning and change, like to change your life." Here, the paint-splattered table is covered with well-worn artist palettes, brushes and paints while the wall behind the table displays printed images that perhaps represent ideas for future

art projects; the handbag sitting in full view on the table suggests a level of trust between staff and participants.

INSERT IMAGE 1 ABOUT HERE

Daniel's explanation for his love of art was also particularly poignant: "the art room is deadly, have brilliant craic [fun] in there. It's deadly what they do. It just makes my day. Like I was depressed out of my life before I started art. And I mean depressed to bits, cut myself, the whole lot. […] Now it wouldn't be something that come into my head". Conor emphasised the transformative power of art: "there's other things that people have done, put other work on canvases. Like this one here […] could be an inspiration for someone to work on something like that". Creative work thus appeared to serve several purposes, facilitating personal metamorphosis, calming difficult emotions and inspiring change in others. The men's experiences in this regard call to mind the principles of strengths-based rehabilitation models which are designed to help probationers to explore their creative potential and further develop their talents, skills and resources (see e.g. Woldgabreal et al., 2014).

Professional relationships with programme staff were also highly valued by the men. Jack, who photographed the staff offices, explained 'people are listening to you, to your problems, and help you with your day-to-day…Without them I don't think I'd be here like". The attitudes of probation workers marked a welcome departure from the stigmatising and detached relationships probationers had experienced in prison. As Conor noted, "[to prison officers] you're only a number. They throw things back in your face then. When things happen to them then they'd be wondering 'oh why did that happen? Why did he attack them?' […] They want to treat you like a dog, you're going

to act like a dog". Overall, the images and commentary suggest that the probation programme was perceived by the co-researchers to be operating according to the principles of co-production; that is, the development of active, collaborative and humane relationships between service providers and users (McCulloch et al., 2016). Again, these types of relationships are thought to enhance the effectiveness of supervision (Kennealy et al., 2012). The men's experiences also resonate with existing Irish research showing that probationers value practical assistance with issues such as unemployment, addiction and homelessness, strong professional relationships with their supervisors and opportunities to engage in meaningful activities (Healy, 2012). High satisfaction rates with probation supervision are not unusual in the Irish context perhaps as a result of the longstanding commitment to welfarism (see further Healy, 2015).

The men also valued the formal and informal emotional support offered by peers within the programme, a bond that is largely neglected in studies of probation supervision. The canteen often served as a forum for informal discussions between probationers, which strengthened their social bonds and aided the therapeutic process. It is therefore unsurprising that this room appeared in a number of photographs. Thomas observed: "spending time with people like that, not crime or….just for the sake of all being here on the same page trying to help each other. And not having to gain something from interacting, not gaining something, money or whatever. Just being there for the sake of being there". Though criminological researchers have traditionally focused on the negative impact of peer associations, the significance of pro-social peer support is widely recognised in the desistance literature for generating a range of benefits, including the opportunity to learn from the experience of similarly situated others and to encounter living exemplars of successful change (Weaver, 2013).

Time, nature and growth

Time emerged as a central theme, particularly among the older men who distinguished between 'quality' and 'wasted' time. While a prison term was widely regarded as 'lost' time, time spent out of prison and under supervision was almost universally experienced as meaningful time. Jack, who had only recently been released from prison, took the following image of a family in the park to represent this experience.

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In conversation, he contrasted the quality of time spent with family with his experience of prison, explaining, "When I'm on my own or even with the wife and kids in the park, you don't have time like that [in prison]. Quality time". He elaborated, "Freedom yeah, time to think. Things you missed, just simple thing like a park, time to yourself. [In prison] you're not even thinking, you're that wasted. You're not even seeing what you're missing like. Life is just going by you like, life is just whizzing by". Although the men attempted to keep busy to pass the time in prison, this was not directed towards achievement of substantial goals. In contrast, their activities after release were perceived as meaningful and future-oriented. As Daniel observed, "you do it in here [prison] to keep yourself occupied, you do it out here [probation] to get what you want". Their temporal experiences are consistent with O'Donnell's (2014) research which found that prisoners often experience prison time as sluggish, burdensome, meaningless and boring, seeming to move slowly as it is lived but accelerating in retrospect due to the absence of memorable, novel or meaningful events. Conversely, the men found that community sentences which encouraged them to engage in meaningful activities or allowed them to spend quality time with their families created a more lasting impression.

The emphasis on quality time was closely intertwined with time spent in natural environments which elicited feelings of tranquillity, peace and wellbeing. The Irish men's photographs frequently included images of the natural world such as flowers, parks, lakes, rivers, fish and ducks. Conor produced a photograph of the fishbowl in the foyer of the rehabilitation programme:

INSERT IMAGE 3 ABOUT HERE

He described being put at ease on his first day at the programme by spending a few moments in stillness, watching the fish. He continued, "well it is a nervous experience. You're coming into a place you mightn't know anyone. So you sit there and relax for a couple of minutes. […].You can sit there, sit in the chairs and look at the fish, it's relaxing". He later commented on the value of having time and space to reflect: "if you haven't got relaxation or any time to think, you're always on the go, your mind is doing a hundred things that it shouldn't be doing". Daniel also appreciated the healing power of natural environments: "Well I would have took pictures of the park definitely because see that family playing, time to be by yourself, on your own. And the mountains, definitely a picture of the mountains would have gone in coz that's where I go when my head is melted". It is likely that experiences of the drab and artificial prison environment enhanced the vibrancy, beauty and colour of the natural world. As Jack commented, "[you] can't see trees [in prison], green, there's nothing just high walls on either side of you". The men's efforts to find a space for peace and quietude in their lives qualify the growing criminological literature on the intersection between boredom and criminality (Torbenfeldt Bengtsson, 2012). Doing nothing can generate frustration but, in different circumstances, can also foster reflection, a sense of wellbeing and

creativity (Kets de Vries, 2014). Moreover, meaningful contact with the natural world is increasingly recognised as an effective therapeutic tool (e.g. Jordan, 2014).

Stigma and identity

One of the prominent themes that emerged from photographs taken by the Irish co-researchers concerned the issue of place. Hunter and Farrall (2015) observed that the subjective meanings assigned to particular places can provide important insights into people's lives and sense of self. It is telling therefore that the men viewed their surroundings in primarily negative terms and appeared to feel tainted at least to some extent by association. In conversation, they saw their community as having two faces, the clean, prosperous and attractive public façade concealing a darker reality. This spatial dissonance was also reflected in their photographs which included images of rubbish, graffiti, homelessness and crime juxtaposed with images of well-maintained local parks and public artworks.

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Adam, who captured the second image as well as a picture of the same statue photographed by Luke, elaborated on their meanings: "kids singing and dancing, that's not happening […]. So it's the contrast of it. It's just the dirt, it's just hid away. This is on display, all the happy stuff is on display". Michael agreed, noting "In behind the door then, you have this. It's a shock. It's a skip like". Criminality also formed a backdrop to everyday life for these men. Luke, who photographed the front page of a newspaper containing a report of a gangland murder, observed "that's what's going on every day in day to day life. […] Don't feel anything [about it], to be honest. It's bad but it's what happens. They chose that life so".

INSERT IMAGE 5 ABOUT HERE

The salience of place could be explained at least partly by the micro-politics of life in socially disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods. Despite a history of poverty, unemployment, crime and drug problems, the majority of social housing neighbourhoods in Ireland subsequently evolved into 'liveable' environments due to both government-sponsored regeneration schemes and a favourable macro-economic environment (Norris, 2014). However, the transition is not complete and traces of deprivation still exist amidst the ephemera of wealth and prosperity. In this regard, it is notable that members of both groups stressed their compassion for vulnerable people within their community, perhaps to distance themselves from their community's negative reputation. During the fieldwork, members of the first group helped an alcoholic woman to get home safely while a member of the second group expressed sympathy towards a homeless man he encountered while taking his photographs. This interpretation is consistent with existing research which shows that residents in stigmatised communities often stress their pro-social values and behaviours in order to separate themselves from stigmatising labels (Ilan, 2011; see also Wacquant, 2015).

The context in which supervision occurs is recognised as an important aspect of the probation experience but is currently under-explored (although see Farrall et al., 2014). The findings illustrate the challenges faced by putative desisters who reside in stigmatised and criminogenic environments. Like Hunter and Farrall's (2015) sample, the men may have altered the meanings and emotional resonances attached to their surroundings in order to progress towards desistance. The probation programme also

seemed to offer them a safe haven away from this environment, providing a space within which to create and act out a new identity.

Transitions and beginnings

The photographs taken by the Irish co-researchers provided interesting insights into past and emerging identities. While the younger men captured images associated with adolescent masculine values and pursuits, the older group took photographs that represented new beginnings, shifting identities and adult masculine lifestyles. Differing concepts of masculinity between men of different ages have already been documented in the literature and appear to influence offending behaviour. Carlsson (2013), for example, found that adolescent forms of masculinity were associated with criminality whereas adult masculinities were associated with a desire to settle down, care for families and obtain employment as well as desist from crime.

The images produced by the younger cohort included pictures of 'nice' cars, handfuls of cash, pub interiors, the local betting shop and alcohol displays in shop windows. Two co-researchers even described stopping to place bets when out taking photographs. These preoccupations are reminiscent of street culture, which promotes an identity centred on consumerism, hedonism, spontaneity and freedom (Wright and Decker, 2011).

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Images of alcohol were particularly common. Michael, who took this picture of a shop window display of beer cans as well as an image of spirits, acknowledged the links between alcohol and crime when he stated "don't get me wrong, I'd prefer to drink

spirits like but….charges seem to come a lot faster with it.". In the discussion about Sean's photograph, which showed him adopting a triumphant pose in front of the same shop window display, Luke notes: "he [Sean] likes Carlsberg, or Budweiser, yeah" with Sean concurring "yeah, I enjoy the beer.". That the men choose to photograph large quantities of alcohol on display rather than single bottles or cans suggests an attraction to excess, consumerism and hedonism. However, the young people in this sample appeared to have stopped offending. It may be that their ongoing identification with street culture provided a sense of self-continuity as they made the transition from criminality to desistance. This possibility is supported by the ambiguities evident in some of their images - for example, Adam's photograph of the sun breaking through dark clouds and Luke's of a painting portraying a turbulent sky overshadowing a colourful cityscape.

The older co-researchers were dismissive of such values with Jack for example criticising young prisoners for always being "on the phone 'Get me runners, get me tracksuits.'" Instead their images were more suggestive of identity transitions and new beginnings. Conor photographed a blank canvas: "yeah, because everything is blank. You have to paint your own picture. […] You'll have so much of it painted onto a canvas, you'll have to finish it and it's all about yourself. But for me, Jack and I, coming out of a prison we're starting off with a blank canvas. If we want people to trust us, we want our family to trust us and earn their trust and we have their trust now because we're coming here". The reality of starting from scratch was particularly stark in Daniel's account of his lack of even basic domestic skills when he acknowledged "I'm 31 years of age and I've never had to do anything like that".

Jack, who took a self-portrait, evoked similar ideas about new beginnings when he explained its significance: “me as a picture of health, like, I don’t think I’ve ever looked in the mirror and seen myself like. It’s always just been this façade like, stoned, some sort of drug, affected by something, some sort of drug, not like me myself, like 100% me”. Studies suggest that desisters often portray their criminal pasts as a ‘false identity’ and their emerging, non-criminal selves as their true identities (Liem and Richardson, 2014: 699; see also Maruna 2001). The ability to imagine a meaningful and credible non-criminal identity has been shown to aid the change process by inculcating a sense of hope and purpose among early stage desisters (Healy, 2016).

Yet images associated with the criminal justice system such as police cars, solicitors’ offices the courthouse and of course the probation office, were common across both groups. For the older men in particular, these acted as a reminder of a criminal past that they were attempting to leave behind. Daniel’s rejection of the criminal mentality is evident in his comment that “another thing about having a conversation within someone in prison and like, youze are all obviously in prison. It always ends up back talking about like….war stories. […] We never talk about war stories or anything like that [in the programme]”.

The criminal justice imagery also seemed to prompt reflections on a feared future self. Jack’s anxieties are evident in his comments about prisoners serving life sentences: “you’d never be right coming out. I don’t think you’d ever be able to re-adjust back into normal life after being locked up all them years. You’d be like a robot. It would be so frightening I’d say coming back out”. The proximity between desired and feared future selves in desisters’ self-identities has been documented before. Paternoster and Bushway (2009) concluded that putative ex-offenders whose possible future selves

establish an equilibrium between feared and desired selves are most likely to achieve their goals because their behaviour is shaped by both approach- and avoidance-based motivations. Together, desired and feared future selves assist desistance by fostering the hope of a better future, acting as a reminder that change is possible and providing a blueprint for action.

STUDY #2 - ENGLAND

Help and support

In many ways, the picture that emerges from the English research is more nuanced and complex. Although many co-researchers did express positive feelings about the support they had received, there were often mixed feelings regarding supervision experiences at different times and also from different probation centres. Those attending the Women's Centre were largely positive though some previous experiences were seen as unhelpful or just ambiguous. Sophie saw her supervision as enabling her to see "a light at the end of the tunnel". She described her experience as "not so bad, it's not so bad because it will come good. Yes, I have committed an offence, it's not so bad because I'm here and not in prison and the fact that it will come good, it will be alright in the end. 'Cause it did really, it really did bother me when I was stood in court, it really did, to think that I was going to prison was a very, very dark time. But then, because I'm not, that's where my picture is, I'm not there, I'm here". Not only did supervision in the community enable Sophie to escape her demons or another prison sentence, she also found it gave her space to explore her situation in a nurturing context with professionals she could trust.

Melanie also recognised that supervision had enabled her to rebuild her self-esteem, providing her with new skills, symbolised by a tool kit captioned "having the tools to enable yourself to do the right thing moving forward". These skills ranged from learning to receive practical assistance with health care and benefits to discovering and discussing her emotions and sharing them with her family.

In a similar way Julie saw supervision as helping her to regain confidence and to rekindle her interest in arts and other creative activities: "So um and that kind of prompted me into when I came here I start, I em, I taught myself how to crochet um and I've kind of got back into that um trying to be more creative, you know, actually doing something as opposed to just talking about it… It just really cheers me up because now [names staff member] wants me to, well she's going to put me forward now for em a petals course etc so yeah. We had my first art class here last Wednesday and it was a big flop, no it was my fault, well not my fault … So yeah, and I got that piano downstairs, you know, I really feel like I'm getting engaged". Julie has subsequently progressed to enrolment on a fine art degree course.

Nevertheless, support was not always easily received by the co-producers of the images. The women in England often felt that assistance had been accompanied by pressures which made them feel infantilised, that support was too overwhelming and constraining. The co-researchers were aware of the dual role of supervision: that it aimed to help but that supervisors were also there to constrain and to monitor. Melanie observed how "going to probation and talking about the way you ought to react as a woman isn't real life. You'd like it to be and at some point hopefully subconsciously it will be but realistically you don't walk down the street and go oh I mustn't react in this way or…".

She accepts the role the probation supervisor imposes but at the same time sees it as restrictive and perhaps not realistic (see also Trotter 2015**)**.

Time, nature and growth

The English co-researchers also spoke of a sense of time passing but often perceived time as suspended whilst on supervision, as not real or useful time but rather wasted or borrowed time**.** Ellen took a picture of a couch with clock faces printed on cushions. The sofa was in the women's day centre she attended, and she spoke of the time spent waiting there for meetings or for transport to other meetings and services. But she also spoke of waiting for her life to move on, to start again.

Further, Susan, from the Women's Centre, in a discussion prompted by comparing Ellen's picture with one of her own, spoke of fighting her own chaos, attempting to order her time (and thus her life) but having little autonomy or ability to do this. She said "I definitely think subconsciously I'm always fighting that chaotic, you know, yes it's regimented and I've got to be there at 11 o'clock and I've got to stay there till 1 o'clock and it's every week and in the meantime I've got to do X, Y and Z on Tuesday and Friday and whatever else but there is definitely a whirlwind in amongst all of that".

The English co-researchers felt that their own time was less precious or important than the time of those who supervised them. Participants often felt that their time and hence their lives were less valued than staff time. This mirrors Durnescu's (2011) findings in Romania where those of probation supervision experienced the 'pains of probation' as deprivation of their time. Similarly studies in Germany, discussed in Fitzgibbon, Graebsch and McNeill (2017), examined the perception that supervisees' time was 'devalued, suspended and lost'.

Yet the theme of growth and nature was also extremely strong in the English responses**.** Growth and hope were sometimes represented in images of plants or other aspects of nature. The idea of clearing or removing the decayed or rotten parts of one's life so as to enable new development, hope and growth was illustrated by an image of fungus springing up into the space created by a felled tree. Rebecca described how the tree outside her flat was like a friend and then one day was cut down by the council because it was diseased. To her amazement, new growth, mushrooms, began to grow in the cleared earth. But she added: "mushrooms are very temporary, they are not here forever".

INSERT IMAGE 7 ABOUT HERE

Ellen provided another image of a gnarled tree root: "…that's um part of a butterfly tree, the roots of a butterfly tree that's been ripped off. Now they are really pretty bushes, little trees, they are really lovely and um, I saw a yellow one that is very rare, I have actually seen a yellow one and I, I absolutely love butterflies and I think everybody really loves them because of the nature of them… was it the ugly duckling and everything, into the, into the beautiful swan type. But I like it cause it's all knotted and twisted and it kind of looks gnarly and ugly but it, it offers such beautiful flowers and then in return you are surrounded by beautiful butterflies, you know what I mean, so it's not always what you see is it?". Thus nature could provide hope and challenge negative perspectives by creating beauty out of decay or distorted roots/branches (Pretty et al 2013).

INSERT IMAGE 8 ABOUT HERE

Stigma and identity

Discussions about stigma emerged around issues associated with rubbish and debris, particularly the idea of life being wasted related either to an addiction to alcohol or drugs or the sense that the person themselves felt like rubbish. One image taken by Elsie captioned ‘Money down the drain’ was of an empty beer can 'southern comfort' which conveyed a sense of wasted money, life and time but also the fact the booze gave a form of comfort.

Pictures of toilets (and images looking down the toilet pan) were also common. These images were not always negative; sometimes they conveyed a sense of cleansing, flushing the waste away, finally getting rid of the bad stuff. As one co-researcher explained, "I'm surprised I don't remember taking that one, down the pan. My life is going down the pan. It's funny actually because at the time that was my Temple that was where I went to go and sort myself out but actually effectively it was my life going down the pan".

On the other hand some co-researchers literally felt like rubbish, waste, detritus and spoke of feeling that they were isolated and deformed in a world of others who were useful and clean. Rebecca had this conversation with Sophie about her picture of a blue waste bag:

> R - …But I was trying to get the rubbish of my life, like the bag, here, this. Everything else is clean and I’m the rubbish and I was trying to get that in this one. But the thing is…
>
> S - In amongst everything else there’s…

R - There's clean and there's that rubbish, and I'm that…

S - You feel like that, yeah

R - Before probation, yeah, really did!

S - But do you feel that probation has helped you move past that?

R - From that course the Thinking Ahead for Women, I did that and I did another group called The Steps Programme for people with borderline personality."

INSERT IMAGE 9 ABOUT HERE

Betty showed a picture of several painted shoes, almost eccentrically individual with respect to different styles and suitable for different purposes, wanting this to point to the importance of "… the whole judgement -- you shouldn't -- you don't know a man until you've walked a mile in his shoes". Thus she pointed to the presumptuous character of criminalising judgement and to the latent injustice in failing to represent the whole person (see Radcliffe and Hunter 2016 for detailed discussion of these issues). Overall, the English findings evoke the pains of living with a 'spoiled identity' (see Goffman, 1963).

INSERT IMAGE 10 ABOUT HERE

Transitions and beginnings

Among the English women the transition process was associated with the concept of the mask and of a split identity. In discussion of these images it was suggested that being on probation means "you are being someone you are not" (Sally) -- or *being seen as* someone you are not. However, a certain ambiguity about masks was also apparent in

the suggestion that probation also involves taking masks off -- a process which can ease a burden:

> "you are putting on this face, this front. I know when I went in there it was very much about, you know, because you say, and you've got a degree and you've got a child and you've worked your whole life but you're a heroin addict … it was very much like this mask had been finally pulled off for me … in the background there was all this shit going on that nobody knew about and, actually, although it was terrifying, it was quite a relief when someone actually said 'It's all right, we know what's going on and you don't have to pretend anymore, you are..'. But, in the same breath, I'm not comfortable with that label of having been this or been that or been the other. But it's, it's like a relief almost that it's out now." (Sally).

Probationers like Sally were perhaps in a liminal phase between crime and convention, not yet fully free of the criminal past but beginning to reorient themselves towards a future after the mask was discarded. Their experiences are consistent with what is known about the desistance process (e.g. Healy, 2016; Maruna, 2001).

INSERT IMAGE 11 ABOUT HERE

DISCUSSION

The study piloted an innovative research method – Photovoice - to gain novel insights into the lived experience of people under probation supervision. The visual analysis of the images and the narrative analysis of the focus group transcripts identified several

common themes across the jurisdictions, including the significance attached to the provision of practical and emotional support, the need for time to be meaningfully spent, and the desire for peace and emotional calm. The findings also shed light on the challenges faced by these probationers on the journey towards desistance, including exposure to stigma, exclusion and social judgement, as well as the difficulties associated with transitioning to a crime-free identity.

The Photovoice method was able to shed light on participants' perceptions of the positive features of the supervision experience. The Irish co-researchers valued the welfarist, or rehabilitative, features of supervision such as emotional and practical support, collaborative relationships and meaningful rehabilitation activities. Their experiences resonate with existing Irish interview-based research, such as Healy's (2012) study which found that the majority of probationers view supervision favourably. English scholarship (e.g. Shapland et al., 2012) also suggests that probationers respond well to supervision practices characterised by fairness, strong professional relationships with probation officers built on trust, collaboration, respect and communication, and the provision of practical and emotional assistance.

The method was also capable of identifying the more 'painful' dimensions of supervision. Although the Irish co-researchers were uniformly positive about the supervision experience, the English photographs captured the ambiguities of the supervision experience. The women's images vividly portrayed their feelings of being overwhelmed, inconsequential, powerless, constrained, under surveillance and stigmatised. As noted above, the women's experiences are consistent with the emerging literature about the 'pains of probation' which are thought by scholars to be intensified by a perceived lack of autonomy, the sense that time is being wasted, stigmatisation and

shaming, unwanted intrusions into private life, and the omnipresent threat of breach for non-compliance (Hayes, 2015; Durnescu, 2011; Bottoms and Shapland, 2010).

The Photovoice technique also generated insights that went beyond the findings produced by more traditional methods, suggesting that it can offer a new way to study the lived experience of supervision. The study revealed unexpected new findings such as the experienced pervasiveness of probation supervision in England as well as the importance of wider contextual issues such as place, identity and culture in Ireland. While some might regard the emphasis on probationers' lives in general rather than their experience of supervision in particular as a weakness of the method, it could also be argued that the findings highlight the need to study the impact of wider social forces on individual supervision experiences, particularly gender, social exclusion and stigma. Indeed, it is widely recognised that probation supervision does not occur in a vacuum and individuals' choices and actions are inevitably shaped by the social structures that encompass them (Farrall et al., 2011). Photovoice may thus constitute an effective way to explore the supervision experience *within* its social, political and cultural contexts.

In addition, the findings suggest that the Photovoice technique can be used effectively in cross-national research and across different age groups and genders. Though this research is exploratory, the analysis reveals some potentially interesting variations between the two studies. For example, images of stigma were common in both sets of photographs but were framed differently in the two jurisdictions. While the images produced by the Irish co-researchers highlighted the challenges of spatial stigmatisation, the English photographs concentrated on personal stigmatisation. Although it was not possible to empirically explore the reasons for these divergences, gender differences could be significant, since studies show that women tend to internalise feelings of

shame whereas men tend to externalise them (Chaplin and Aldao, 2013). Alternatively, it is possible that the distinctions between supervision experiences in Ireland (positive) and England (ambiguous) may be indicative of differences in the philosophies, values and practices between discourses which prioritise concepts such as risk management, effectiveness, efficiency, punishment and responsibility in England (Robinson, 2015) and concepts associated with welfarist ideals in Ireland (although elements of the Anglo-Welsh model are beginning to creep into official rhetoric (Healy, 2015)).

Perhaps most importantly, Photovoice possesses transformative qualities, as evidenced by the positive response from participants in both jurisdictions. It offers a powerful and evocative method of gaining trust and hearing participants' stories as they choose to share them, making the invisible visible literally and emotionally. Participants become co-producers, experts with the authority to interpret meanings and communicate their own life stories. This in turn distributes the power between researcher and researched. The method is particularly effective for people who have difficulties with verbal self-expression, allowing them to articulate their feelings and experiences through images rather than words. To give participants the opportunity to communicate their experiences of supervision to key stakeholders, photographic exhibitions of the images were held in both jurisdictions and attended by practitioners, policymakers and academics.

Though the study was not designed to test the potential of Photovoice as a rehabilitative tool, some tentative suggestions for its use within practice settings can be advanced. First, the technique could be used to enable probationers – particularly those with verbal or literacy difficulties – to communicate their experiences more effectively to practitioners as well as to policymakers and the general public. Second, the active and

collaborative nature of Photovoice could help to engage and empower probationers, and promote stronger and more equitable relationships between probationers and practitioners. Third, practitioners could use Photovoice as a tool to encourage probationers to reflect on their lives, explore existing strengths and discover new talents and skills. Arts-based interventions that follow similar guidelines have been shown to engender positive changes in participants' motivation, identities and social bonds (see e.g. McNeill et al., 2011). Of course, Photovoice-inspired interventions alone cannot elicit desistance and must always be used alongside other rehabilitative tools and implemented in supportive socio-political and criminal justice contexts; for instance, within criminal justice systems that are genuinely committed to helping probationers to realise their potential (on this point in relation to arts-based programmes more generally, see Cheliotis 2014). Criminological researchers often advocate that rehabilitation should be collaborative, transformative and strengths-based. It is clear from this study that the Photovoice method can enable researchers as well as practitioners to follow these guiding principles when conducting criminological research or working with people under supervision.

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IMAGE 1: 'It's never too late to learn' by Jack

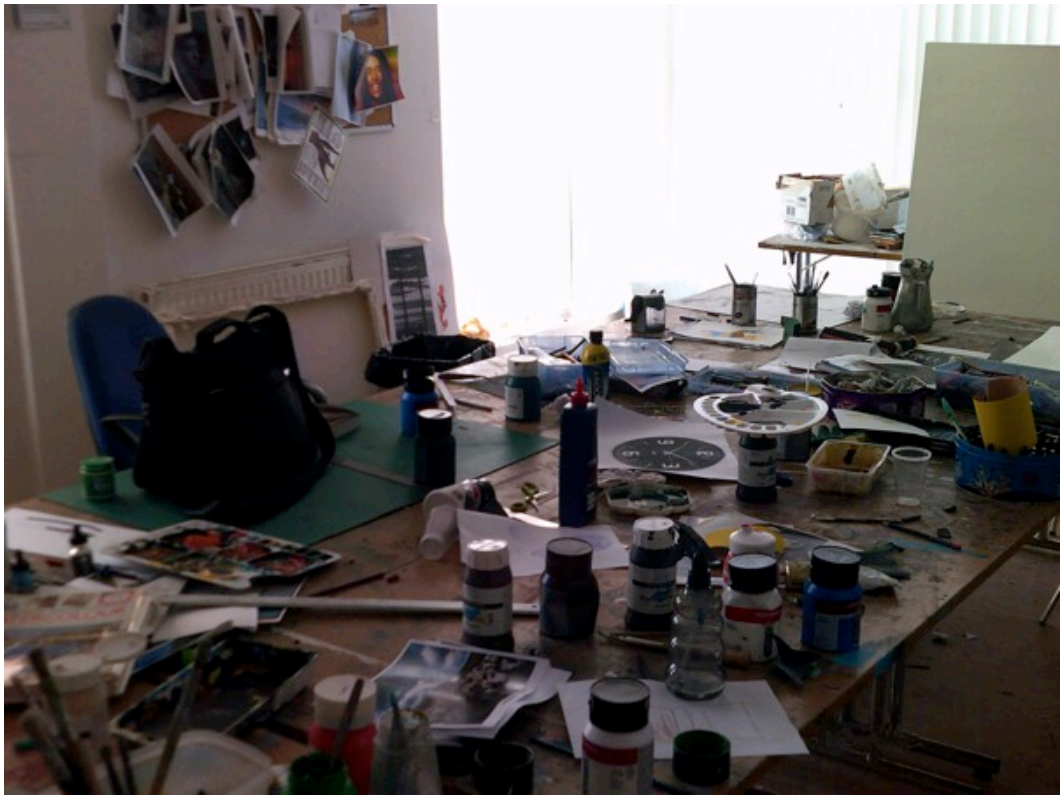

IMAGE 2: *'Never take the little things for granted' by Jack*

IMAGE 3 : 'Relaxing' by Conor

IMAGE 4 : 'Untitled' by Luke

IMAGE 5 : 'Untitled' by Adam

IMAGE 6 : 'Charge sheet' by Michael

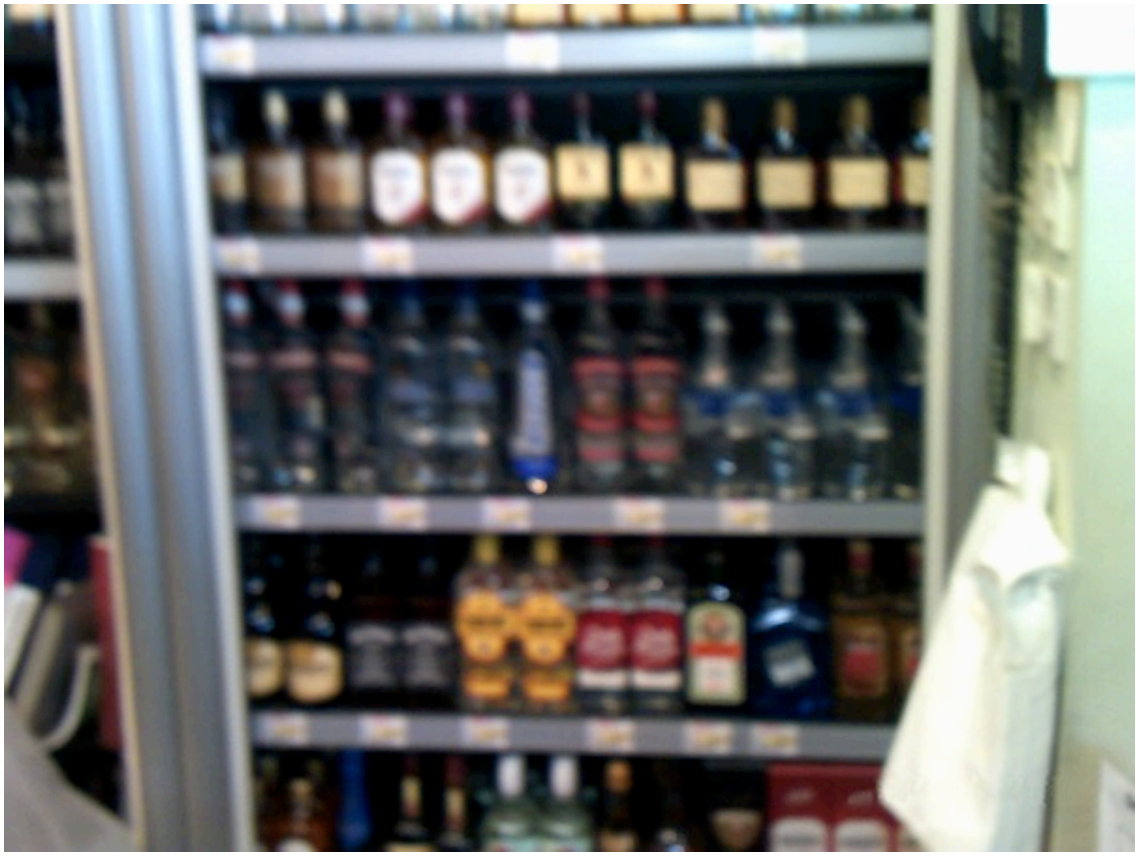

IMAGE 7 : 'Borrowed Time' by Ellen

IMAGE 8 : 'Mushrooms' by Rebecca

IMAGE 9 : 'Money down drain' by Elsie

IMAGE 10 : 'Untitled' by Rebecca (photograph cited in Fitzgibbon and Stengel 2017)

IMAGE 11 : 'Masks' by Sally