Using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis in social work research: a current study

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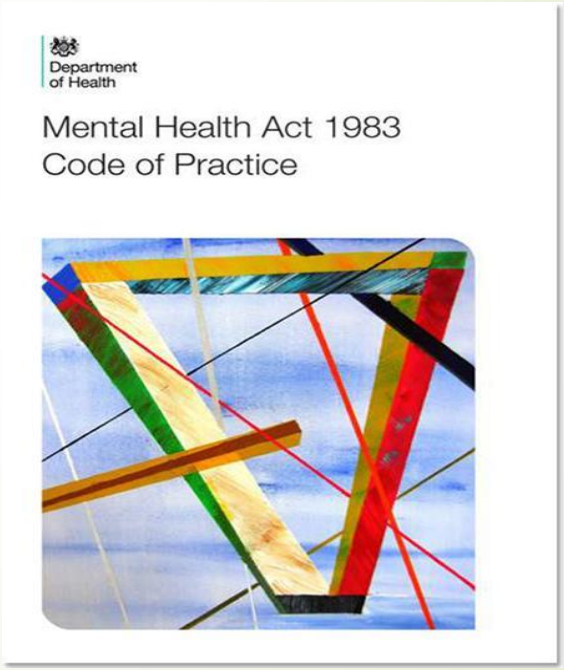
Today's talk

- Background to current study and its aims
- Methodology
- Method
- Analysis
- Some findings with illustrations
- Use of IPA in social work research
- Questions

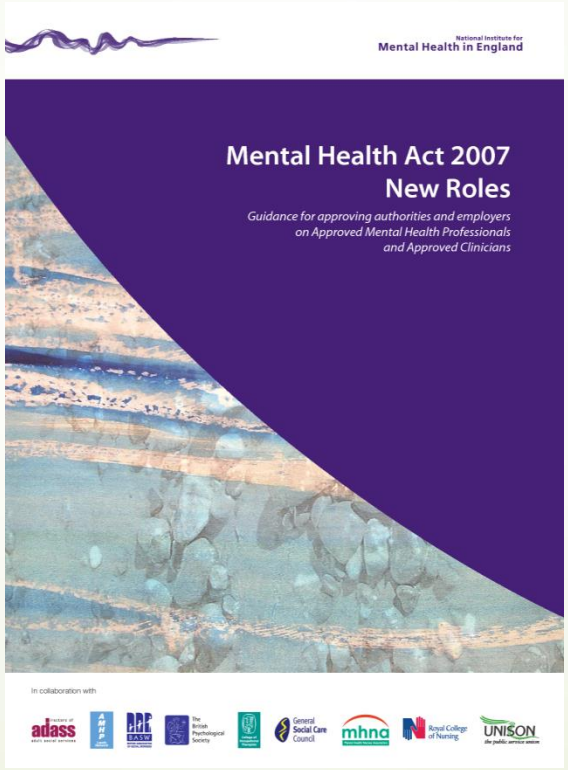
Current study

- Sought to explore what impact, if any professional background has on role fulfilment
- The Approved Mental Health Professional, a reorganised legal role which encapsulates two major policy changes;

The reform of mental health legislation in England and Wales



The distribution of professional roles in mental health services



Result of policy changes

- In England and Wales the role of those eligible to undertake compulsory mental health assessments no longer exclusive to social work
- Introduces other professions (nursing, chartered psychology and occupational therapy) and renames the role as Approved Mental Health Professionals

Aim

- This research aimed to explore what impact, if any, professional background has on a particular role
- Also wanted to explore how the role is experienced

Methodology IPA (Smith et al., 2009)

Phenomenology

- or, the focus on the lived experience
- to explore the experience of the Approved Mental Health Professional

Hermeneutics

- or, the meaning and significance for the person and how this is interpreted
- to explore what it means to be an Approved Mental Health Professional from their perspective

Idiography

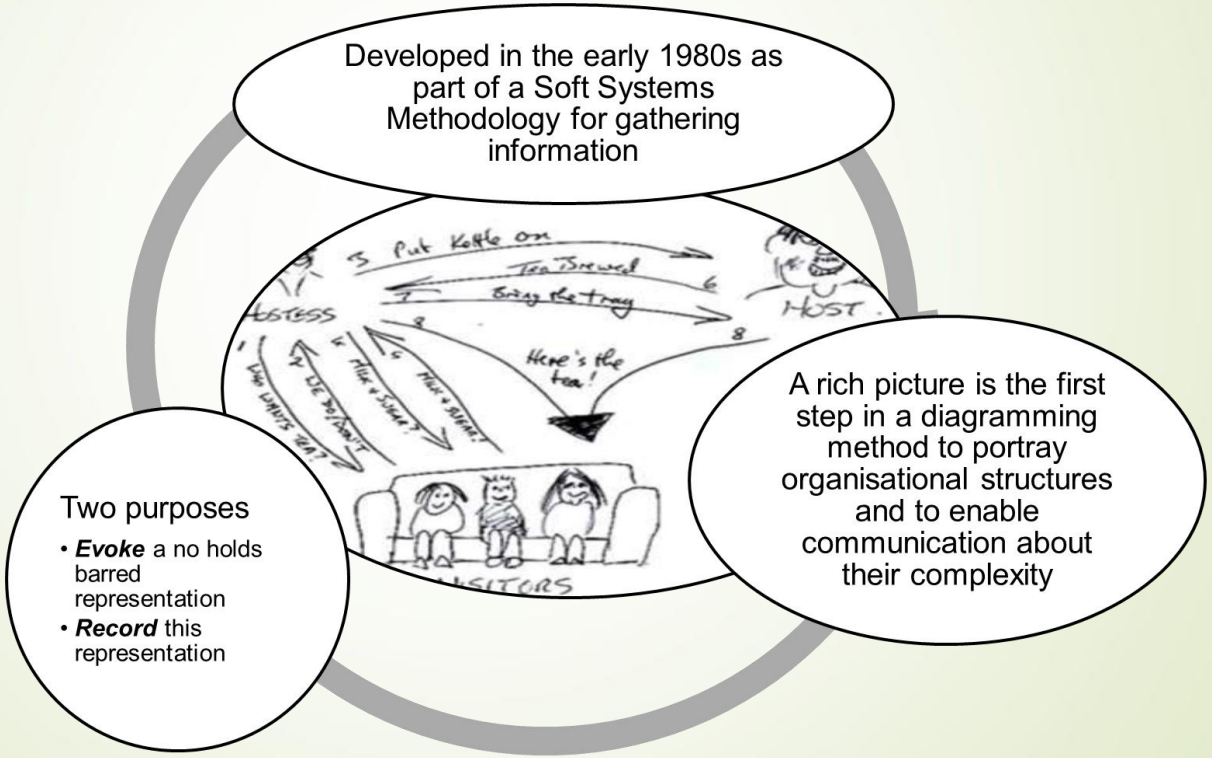
- or, the concern with the particular
- focusses on the particular designation of the Approved Mental Health Professional and analyses data in detail

Research Design

Research Design

- Semi-structured interviews including the drawing and description of a rich picture
- Specifically, the rich picture depicts their experience of undertaking the AMHP role

What is a rich picture?



Why use them?

The cognitive process required to draw leads to a more succinct presentation of the key elements of participants' experiences (Kearney and Hyle 2004:376)

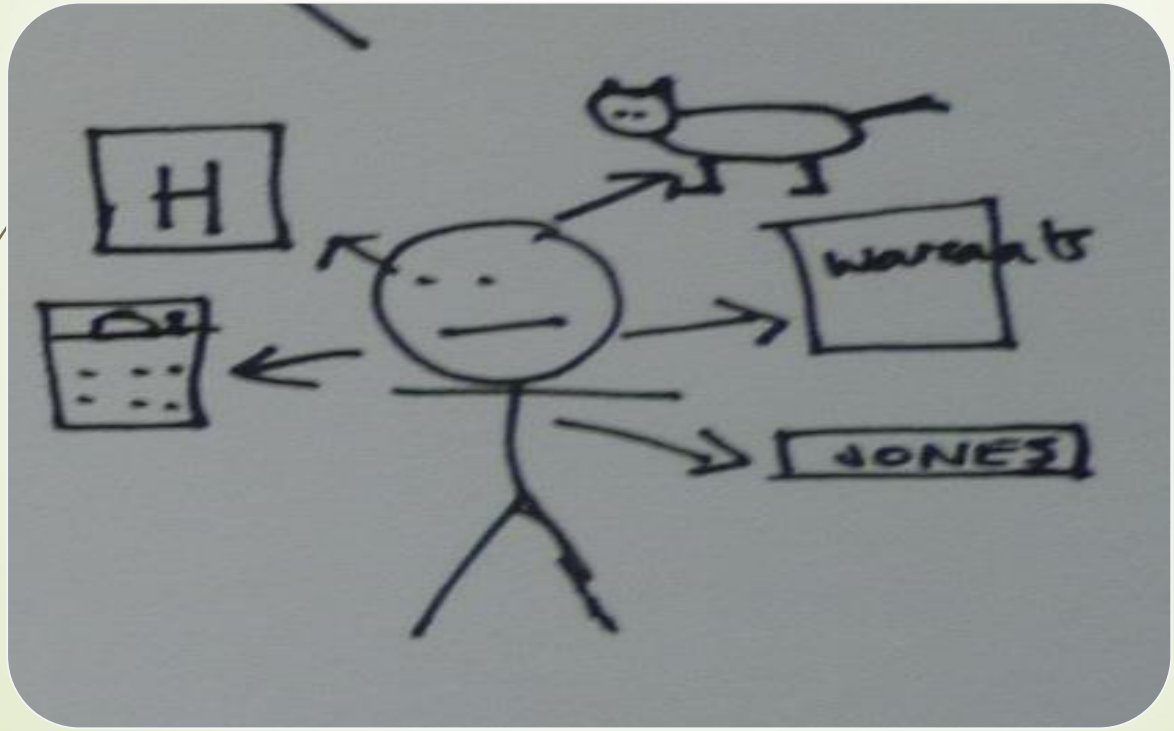
Use of both visual and word based research methods ..offers a way of exploring both the multiplicity and complexity that is the base of much social research interested in human experience (Guillemin 2004:273)

Process of Analysis

- Audio taped and transcribed interviews
- Took photographs of the produced rich pictures
- Imported transcripts and photographs into a computer aided software package

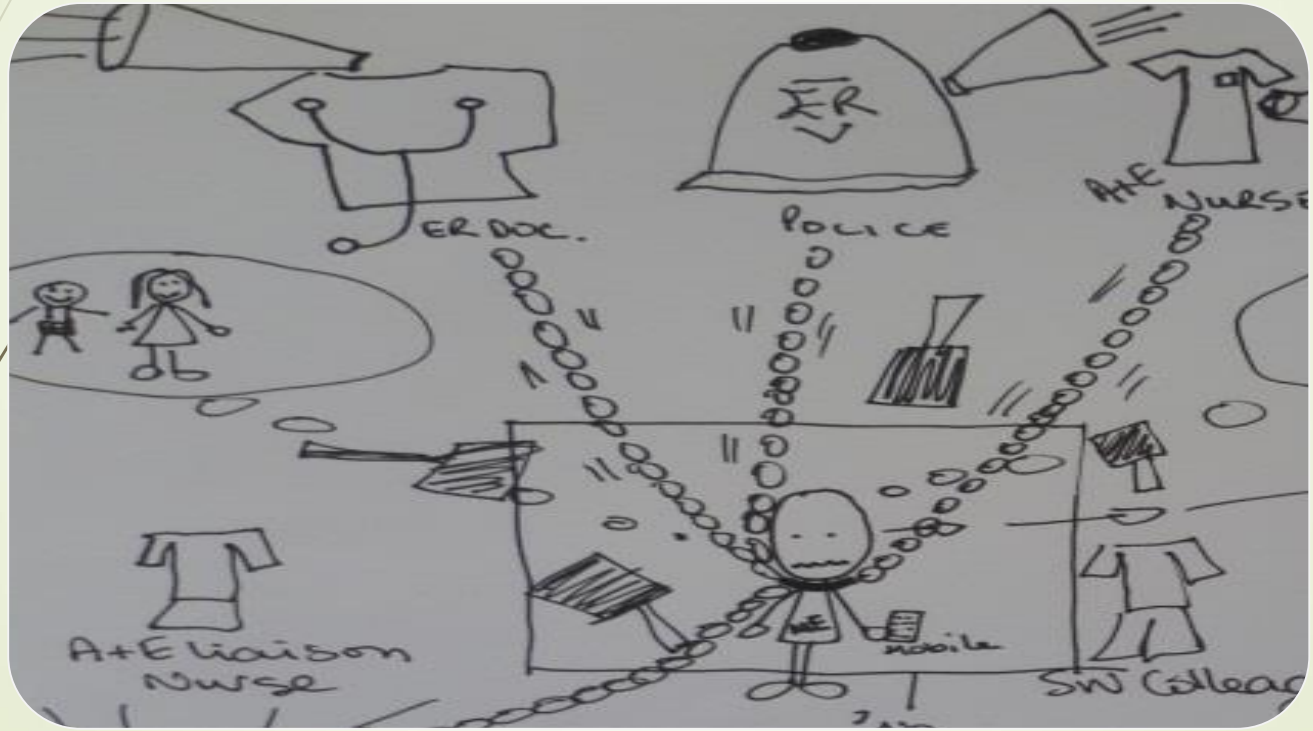
A pictorial understanding and evidence of the perception of their professional role has been provided here, ***caught between the police and the ambulance service***

professional identities as internalised and applied by current approved mental health professionals, including in relation to attributes such as skills here, ***coordination of tasks and services***



Emotional and psychological aspects involved in undertaking the current approved mental health professional designation are clearly depicted

here, ***being pulled in many directions***



Use of IPA

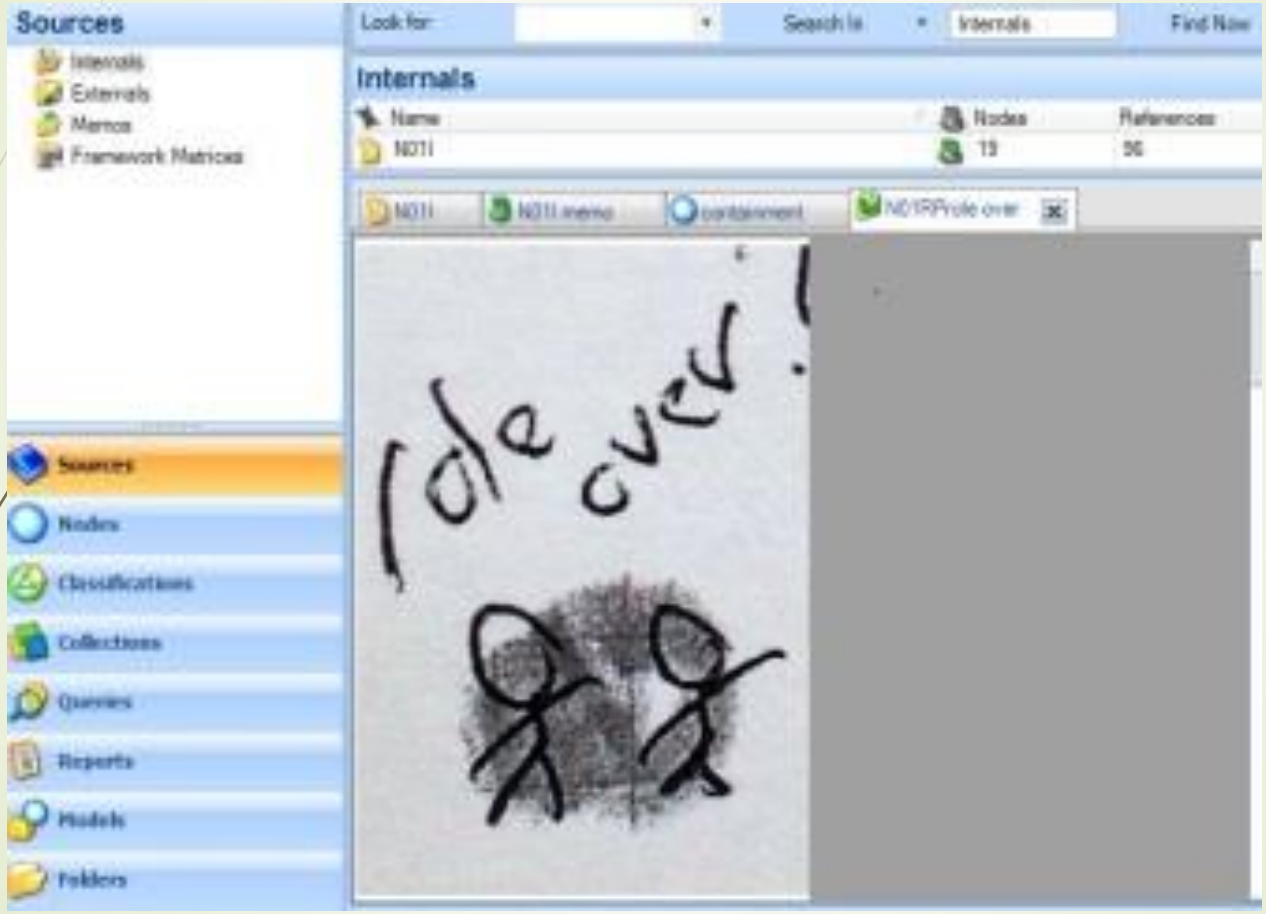
- The use of IPA fits well with exploring the experiential and it is suggested can be more actively used as a methodology in social work research.

How?

- Particular lived experience of a particular group of people with an emphasis on convergence and divergence between participants – emphasis here is on a professional role. Could transfer
- Identity and emotional experience are main constructs to have emerged in IPA studies to date – this study examined identity and explored the human emotional experience of a role
- Role of researcher and dynamics of the research – not a social work interview but need to be aware of researcher's own impact on process. Reflection and reflexivity are important quality and validity

Example :Use of a Journal

- Journal *housed within* software package
- Initially records the mechanics – how does IPA fit?
- Increasingly records the thought and reflections as I did the analysis alongside the stages of IPA analysis also housed within the software package
- Memo linked to each transcript and analysis; description, use of language, use of concepts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Further reading

- Vicary, Sarah; Young, Alys and Hicks, Stephen (2016).
- A reflective journal as learning process and contribution to quality and validity in interpretative phenomenological analysis. Qualitative Social Work

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Questions
Comments