“A stout pair of shoes and an umbrella” how much has the experience of mental health social work changed?

Dr Sarah Vicary
A stout pair of shoes
And an umbrella
The training consisted of being told: you really do need to get yourself a pair of stout shoes and an umbrella.

Although I was employed as a MWO I also had an identity as a social worker which was in its infancy but which was developing as well.
Background and aim of research
Describe the method
Some examples
Reasons for using drawing
Some of the issues
Aim

- to explore the role and experience of social workers as AMHPs
- to examine the impact of professional background on role fulfilment
- To consider any emotional aspects in undertaking the AMHP role, from each research participant’s perspective
Emotional aspects are the focus of today’s talk along with the use of drawing as a tool to elicit data.
Method

Semi-structured interviews including the drawing and description of a Rich Picture

Specifically, the Rich Picture to depict their experience of undertaking the AMHP role
What is a Rich Picture?

Developed in the early 1980s as part of a Soft Systems Methodology for gathering information.

A rich picture is the first step in a diagramming method to portray organisational structures and to enable communication about their complexity.

Two purposes:
- **Evoke** a no holds barred representation
- **Record** this representation
1. Hostess asks who would like a cup of tea
2. Visitors signify whether they want a cup
3. Host is sent to put kettle on
4. Hostess gathers information on preferences for sugar and milk
5. Hostess gets sugar and milk ready
6. Host brews and pours tea
7. Hostess puts mugs on tray
8. Host carries tray back to visitors and hands out mugs
And what does it do?

Two purposes

Evoke a no holds barred representation

Record this representation
Not the picture alone

Without explanation, one person’s rich picture is often a mystery to another observer

It is not meant to be a work of art but a working tool to assist in understanding
I really felt on Wednesday that I was somebody else’s bitch. That is not a great way to describe it but I just felt like there were all these people yanking my chain and I was there to do a job but I was being stopped from doing that because all of these other people wanted a piece of me and wanted their views known and their needs met and their targets. (Social Worker 3)
But, also positive emotions - satisfaction

While the picture also contains illustrations of her frustration here in having to wait for an ambulance, she described the heart in her picture as meaning a best outcome for person and their family. She felt she had done a good job and that a hospital admission was needed in order to provide the appropriate treatment. (nurse 5)
I think it was the bit about yeah actually being pulled in every direction is hard but actually sometimes not being pulled in any direction you can’t you can’t escape you kind of you have to let yourself be pulled in a way which is why I put the hole in it because you kind of you can’t run away from it
Thesis: “pull”; the active use of dissonance
Thesis continued

At first, this analysis shows that in their reflections participants, experience anxiety and fear and the potentially harmful impact of dealing with risk or conflict as AMHPs.

However, they also at the same time experience a range of positive emotions, sometimes in direct contradiction.
In reflecting on their role, these seemingly contrasting emotions co-exist for participants who also use them to control their AMHP practice as they ‘stand back’, or ‘hover over’.

The use of contrasting and sometimes conflicting emotion by the individual is a way of allowing not being in control but also, simultaneously, using their presence to be in control.
Drawing: a tool to elicit data?

The use of the qualitative approach (IPA) fits well with exploring the experiential and I suggested along with drawing can be more actively to elicit (and illustrate)
Is the use of drawing just a ‘pleasant distraction’?
Image based research

Has its roots in social sciences especially social anthropology and sociology

Increasingly recognised and being used as a research method in qualitative research

Are some examples of use in health care research
Researcher Participant relationship

Participants as producers

Researcher and Participant working together

Researcher both as producer and interpreter
Are there particular issues to consider?
Participants

Will they engage?
Reluctance to ‘draw’ perhaps viewed as childlike
Perhaps they will be embarrassed!
Other issues?

Will the method be valid
Will it be reliable

Or, is it just a ‘pleasant distraction’
Valid?

Will the rich picture accurately depict – perhaps too much ‘artistic pleasure’ (Prosser 2000)
Or artistic pain?
Will it be ethical?

Informed consent

Each participant will has an information sheet to include a description and example of what a rich picture is

Each will be aware of the purpose of the research
Ethical Issues continued

Anonymity

Collected and stored in line with policy and protocol

All reference to identifiable data will be anonymous
Other Issues

Legal: who ‘owns’ the image?

Moral; what if the image depicts an illegal, immoral or professionally unacceptable act?
In effect these issues all echo the debates about qualitative methods in general.
So why do this?

Rich pictures will provide a succinct presentation

Integrated approach will give me a new perspective

It will also provide a more participatory perspective and help create a ‘dialogue dimension’ (Humphries 2008:27)
Why use image based research?

an opportunity to reach levels and forms of knowledge not immediately apprehensible to the researcher through other methods (Edgar 1999:207)

creates a generative space for looking and then looking anew’ (Mitchell 2011: xiii)
and...

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)


Questions
Comments?