

QRMH6

6TH QUALITATIVE
RESEARCH ON
MENTAL HEALTH

CHANIA, GREECE | 25-27.5.2016



CONFERENCE TIMETABLE & ABSTRACTS

Hurting and healing in therapeutic environments: How can we understand the role of the relational context?**Organizer:** Simon Clarke, *University of Nottingham, University of Lincoln***Discussant:** Hugh Middleton, *University of Nottingham*

It has long been recognized that relationships are key to good mental health service delivery and yet the quality of the relational context between staff and clients, and between service users, remains poorly understood. This symposium brings together three studies that utilize very different methodologies to explore the various ways in which a process of therapeutic change can be aided or prevented by contextual relational factors. All three studies took place within the context of therapeutic communities. The first abstract by Dr Jenelle Clarke uses narrative ethnography and interaction ritual theory to explain how the mechanisms of everyday interaction rituals in two therapeutic communities, such as community meetings and smoking breaks, transform negative feeling into a sense of belonging and long-lasting emotions such as confidence. The second abstract by Dr Ruth Brown used grounded theory to explore how the relational setting and the altered context of the researcher in a therapeutic faith community environment induced either a positive or negative quality of relationships (labeled 'salutogenic' or pathogenic'). The final abstract by Dr Simon Clarke uses a novel autoethnographic methodology to inform understanding of the relational experience of mental health treatment by comparing and contrasting multiple perspectives of different treatment environments.

The role of everyday interactions and relationships during a process of therapeutic change*Jenelle Clarke, University of Nottingham*

This paper explores the role of everyday social interactions and relationships within two therapeutic communities (TCs) for individuals with a diagnosis of personality disorder (PD). Whilst there have been numerous studies focusing on treatment effectiveness, outcomes and service delivery related to PD, relatively few studies have explored the interpersonal mechanisms involved during a process of change. Using narrative ethnography, the research aims to explain how the mechanisms of everyday interaction rituals (IRs), such as community meetings and smoking breaks, facilitate personal transformation. Theoretically it adopts interaction ritual theory (Collins, 2004; Goffman, 1967; Durkheim, 1912/2001; Mead, 1934) to address how individuals use social encounters and their interpersonal relationships within the communities. Interaction rituals are full of complex social mechanisms, including the role of emotions and power, which help generate personal change in TC client members. Everyday interactions in the TCs reveal that despite a high prevalence of negative emotions, client members continuously work within their relationship networks to transform negative feeling into a sense of belonging and long-lasting emotions such as confidence. Additionally, IRs highlight that the relational hierarchy within TCs becomes fluid, particularly in times of crisis. The study identifies how everyday encounters can significantly impact the process of therapeutic change.

Characteristics of relationships that can hinder or promote mental health and well-being

Ruth Brown, *University of Kent, Canterbury/Kent Community Health Foundation Trust*

The participants in this research were individuals with either current or historic mental illness who had recently joined a therapeutic community. The researcher is a member of the therapeutic community and was also a mental health professional working outside the community. To the participants the researcher was viewed as a mental health professional and not a community member. This altered context was driven by emotions such as fear and shame of their past experiences. The participants described their previous experiences with health professionals and the powerful emotions that accompanied their perception of treatment. They went on to describe their experiences as newcomers to the therapeutic community and the differences in the relationships and culture. Grounded theory method was used to develop a theory of pathogenic (harmful) and salugenetic (healthy) relationships from the data. Pathogenic relationships are characterised by loss of trust, unequal power, feeling judged and led to the individual withdrawing from self and others. Salugenetic relationships are characterised by mutuality, safety, freedom, hope and openness. These relationships resulted in the individual finding more of self and a growing sense of identity.

The 'Quadrilogue': an interpersonal autoethnographic account of madness

Simon Clarke, *University of Lincoln/University of Nottingham*

Fictionalised and biographical accounts of the relational environment in which madness occurs abound (Baker et al., 2010). Despite their undeniable narrative power, many such accounts lack the systematic rigour that is common to social science methodology, including explorations of multiple interpersonal perspectives (Stone, 2006). In addition, many 'madness narratives' cohere to a conventional storied structure that potentially fails to convey the often unpredictable and incomprehensible nature of psychological distress (Baldwin, 2005). Autoethnography is a research method that combines the evocative retelling of autobiographical 'epiphanies' alongside the social science goal of systematically investigating social institutions and practices (Ellis et al., 2012). It is thus an experimental methodology with a range of diverse possibilities for researching the social and relational environment of mental health services (Grant et al., 2013). This paper presents the 'quadrilogue', a novel autoethnographic methodology that utilises a range of sources (e.g. clinical notes, a carer's diary, the researcher's evocative recollections and contemporary reflections of their breakdown) in its depiction of involuntary detention and therapeutic community treatment. The methodology and its findings are discussed against the backdrop of Goffman's (1962) "the moral career of a mental patient" and Foucault's (2001) analysis of institutional frameworks of power.