

# Approaches to Assessment: Employing creative methods as a mode of data engagement and sense-making to explore practitioner perspectives.

Luke Sellers Northumbria University, School of Design l.sellers@northumbria.ac.uk

## Aims

Investigating how mental health practitioners conceptualise and use clinical outcome measures during the initial assessment stage of a therapeutic intervention.

## Design Methodology

Research took an iterative stepped approach with 12 mental health practitioners:

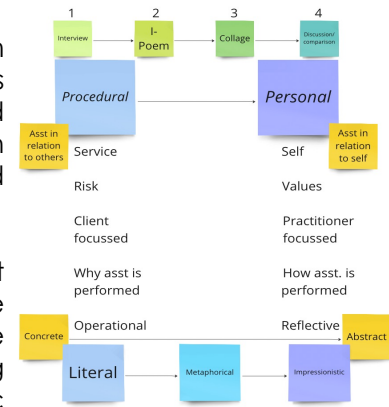
- 1-hour, individual, semi-structured interviews. Transcribed and written up using reflective Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019).
- Researcher produced individual 'I-Poem' for each participant using every 'I' statement from transcribed interview.
- Participant construction of selected 'I-Poem' – individual collage creation based on participant interpretation of own I-Poem. Collage produced by both participant and researcher based on same text.
- Collages 'coded' using visual references, discussion points, observations and comparison to earlier Thematic Analysis.

An example of participant produced 'I-Poem' & collage alongside researcher collage and coding

## Findings

The process of creative data engagement highlighted a move from the *procedural*: service needs, identification of risk, what practitioners are aiming to do during the assessment process (key themes identified during interview), to a more *personal*, nuanced perspective, through the creation and discussion of both I-Poem and collage. This included values and beliefs that individuals brought into the assessment process.

Participants reflected that the creative process allowed for a different way of viewing and discussing their approach to clinical outcome measures. Insights gained from this suggest an interplay between the procedural (service driven) and personal (values etc) dimension during this stage of the therapeutic intervention, providing a greater holistic understanding of and approach to the role of assessment.



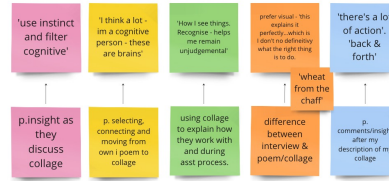
Exploring the difference between the procedural to the personal

## Limitations

12 participants represent a relatively small sample size. Mixture of online and in-person participation meant that individuals experienced the same task in different environments. Subjective nature and individual bias when selecting visual images for collage reflect the difficulty in drawing generalisations.

## Conclusions

By engaging with participants throughout the process of data collection and analysis, knowledge and sense-making is viewed as co-constructed through collaboration (Charmaz, 2017). New points of interest arose as the engagement, both with participants and the creative process developed. Data and the sense-making process is therefore viewed as dynamic and in a constant state of 'becoming' (Ellingson, 2020).



Participant quotes and connections to creative methods

As set out in existing literature regarding qualitative research, 'trustworthiness' is a key component when seeking to validate the credibility and rigor of results (Birt, et al, 2016). The voice and experience of the participant is valued, not only for its content but also to highlight researcher positionality, potential bias, as well as gaps in understanding and interpreting the data.

## References

Birt, L et al. (2016) Member Checking: A Tool to Enhance Trustworthiness or Merely a Nod to Validation? Qualitative Health Research 2016, Vol. 26(13) 1802-1811  
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 Charmaz, K. (2017) Constructivist grounded theory, The Journal of Positive Psychology, 12:3, 299-300,  
 Ellingson, L. L., & Sotirin, P. (2020). Data Engagement: A Critical Materialist Framework for Making Data in Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 26(7), 817-826.