RESEARCH PROJECT
DOCTORATE IN CLINICAL PRACTICE
UNIVERSITY OF EXETER

‘A HOME BY ANY OTHER NAME?
EXPLORATION OF AN ADOLESCENT INPATIENT UNIT THROUGH A SYSTEMIC LENS’

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AFT CONFERENCE
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- FAMILY THERAPIST AT PLYM BRIDGE HOUSE ADOLESCENT IN-PATIENT UNIT, PLYMOUTH

- AT THE UNIVERSITY OF EXETER;

  Academic Lead for the SFP CYP IAPT programme
  Programme tutor on the MSc in Family Therapy at Exeter University
  Tutor on CYP IAPT Supervision training and Family Intervention for Psychosis
  Co-author/Trainer of the Exeter Model Couple Therapy for Depression Course
  Programme Lead for the systemic supervision course
  Programme Lead for the Tier 4 project
  Doctoral Student on the Doctorate in Clinical Practice

- ORIGINALLY GREW UP AND TRAINED AS AN RMN IN BRIGHTON
WORKSHOP AIMS;

• To introduce my research ideas and present the national tier 4 training developments

• To start to explore together how possible it is to understand a unit systemically. (Is it helpful/relevant to attempt to measure how systemically reflexive a group/organisation/system is?)

• Using this systemic understanding, to question where notions of home fit within an inpatient unit?

• To engage and enthuse us in the question more broadly, ‘what do we, as family therapists, understand home to be?’
WHAT IS HOME?
WHAT IS HOME?

Exercise;

In groups, discuss the following two questions;

- What constitutes home to you? Can you choose 3 or 4 words or phrases that symbolise home to you?

- What do you do to make somewhere feel like home?
CAMHS INPATIENT TRAINING PROJECT - PROGRAMME LEAD

- Member of the National Inpatient Curricula group convened by NHS England and co-chaired by Peter Fonagy and Angela Sergeant, tasked with developing new CYP IAPT curricula for tier 4/inpatient services.

Project Aims;

- Systematic review of key literature and policy
- Engage key stakeholders from the 4 regional units including young people and families to influence curriculum development and delivery plan
- Complete a baseline assessment of CYP IAPT key indicators and skills
- Consider applicability and development of supervision leadership and outreach courses
- Deliver out reach activity in Autumn 2016
- Bid to deliver 10 day inpatient training from early 2017
BACK TO THE RESEARCH...

UNDERSTANDING THE UNIT AS A SYSTEM

• Power, hierarchy, structure
• Use of language
• Meanings
• Boundaries
• Culture and beliefs
• Subsystems

HOW TO MEASURE REFLEXIVITY...

• The extent to which teams reflect upon and modify their functioning
• Task and social reflexivity
• How the staff and young people see themselves in relation to the unit..

UNDERSTANDING THE UNIT SYSTEMICALLY PROVIDES THE BACKDROP TO THE RESEARCH QUESTION...
WHERE IS HOME?
Unique research problem – based on my own clinical experience and supported by relevant literature and the current ongoing work with the inpatient curricula group...

There is ambiguity and ambivalence about whether adolescent inpatient units are and should be experienced and treated as ‘home’. Once admitted, YP often find the transitions between the unit and their own home difficult, and may struggle to reintegrate back in their community. After a number of months, the secure base is often the unit.. and home represents past pain and struggle (actual or imagined).

Explorations of the notions of home on such a unit will inform clinical practice and have direct clinical implications..
BACKGROUND

- Inpatient psychiatry for children and adolescence is going through a period of rapid change.
- Over past thirty years there has been a dramatic reduction in inpatient beds, resulting in inpatient psychiatry becoming a low volume, high cost, ‘supra district’ service (Green & Jacobs, 1998).
- The adolescent inpatient context is a complex environment, with the unit needing to respond to the extreme and varied needs of young people.
- Treatment within an inpatient unit carries some unique challenges; and benefits must be weighed against potential harm.

As researcher and Systemic Family Psychotherapist, I am interested in how a systemic perspective may elucidate some of the complex dynamics, interactions and relationships that develop between staff, and between staff and patients. Furthermore, whether understanding this unit as a system increases our understanding of the therapeutic process.
LITERATURE REVIEW QUESTION

‘What is the existing literature about how adolescent inpatient units are understood from a systemic perspective?

‘What is the existing literature about notions of home within inpatient psychiatry (CYP or adult)?’
DEFINE ‘HOME’...

Home

n. 1. The place or a place where one lives: *have you no home to go to?*
2. a house or other dwelling.
3. a family or other group living in a house or other place.
4. a person’s country, city, esp. viewed as a birthplace, a residence during one’s early years, or a place dear to one.
5. the environment or habitat of a person or animal.
6. the place where something is invented, founded or developed: *the US is the home of baseball.*
7.a. a building or organization set up to care for orphans, the aged etc b. an informal name for a mental home.
12. a home from home a place other than one’s own home where one can be at ease.
14. at home in, on, or with. familiar or conversant with.
15. bring home to. a. to make clear to. b. to place the blame on

(Collins English Dictionary, 1979: 701)
EMERGING THEMES ABOUT HOME ...
(MALLET, 2004)

1. House and Home
2. The ‘ideal’ home
3. Actual and remembered home – the idealised home
4. Home as secure base
5. Home as sanctuary
6. Home as haven v. home as a place of fear
7. Home and family
8. Home and gender
9. Home/journeying/displacement
10. Leaving home
11. Being ‘at home’
12. Home, self and identity
PERTINENT THEMES ABOUT HOME THAT ARE EMERGING IN RELATION TO THE RESEARCH PROJECT...

1. Home and hospital
2. Institutionalisation/deinstitutionalisation
3. Clinical paternalism
4. Attachment theory
5. Psychiatric staff as attachment figures
6. Transition, life stage, adolescence - leaving home
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

- Lack of specificity relating to adolescent inpatient settings
- Definitional problems
- Paucity of literature exploring relationships and interactions from a systemic perspective within inpatient settings
- Lack of empirical evidence
- Methodological research issues - little or no systemic research into this area has been conducted using an ethnographic or action research approach
RESEARCH QUESTION/AIMS

If understanding the family unit from a systemic perspective and supporting the reflexive systemic capacity of family members is considered helpful (Bateson, 1956, Minuchin, 1974, Stratton, 2005, Carr, 2014), how do we understand an adolescent inpatient unit and the reflexive capacity of staff from a systemic perspective? Using this framework, how then do young people, their families and staff think about the unit as ‘home’?

Aims;

1) Map the different systemic processes observable to the researcher in a generic adolescent inpatient unit and potentially establish key ‘systemic markers’.

2) Examine the reflexive awareness of staff and their understanding of how the unit operates.

3) Identify particular practices within the unit that seem to directly draw on systemic theory and interrogate how these are enacted. This includes material about if and how the unit is conceptualised as home by patients, their families and staff.
METHODOLOGY

Ethnographic Action Research – Phase I – observations

- Immersion and observation in the social setting at various points
- Detailed field notes taken, possibly documentation and or images collected.
- Conversations and informal interviews to take place on the unit.
- Contemporaneous notes as well as a reflexive journal will be kept.

Ethnographic Action Research – Phase II – focus groups.

- Focus groups for MDT staff to attend will be set up to explore; notions of systemic thinking; how staff conceptualise causality, pathology and family interaction, notions of the unit as ‘home’.
- Focus groups with parents/young people will also then be convened.
- Semi-structured interviews or question prompts may be supplied for these focus groups to run without the necessity of a researcher present.

These focus groups will be audio recorded and later transcribed verbatim.
ACTION RESEARCH

Action research tends to be...

• Participative -- the clients and informants are involved as partners, at least active participants, in the research process;

• Cyclic -- similar steps tend to recur, a similar sequence;

• Reflective -- critical reflection upon the process and outcomes are important parts of each cycle.

• Qualitative -- it deals more often with language than with numbers.
RESEARCHER POSITION

SAMPLE

• The 12 bedded generic adolescent inpatient unit that I work in has already been approached for preliminary discussions.

ETHICS

• Attention and analysis will be explored regarding;
  ▪ Researcher reflexivity
  ▪ Observer effect

• As the lead family therapist and researcher, complex ethical considerations need to be taken into account, both in terms of the clinical population but also the existing staff team.

• Ethical approval sought via University ethics and NHS ethics through the IRAS system
MY HOPES...

This research will provide a unique contribution to the field of systemic practice and will offer innovations in a number of key areas;

• Provide analysis and understanding about how adolescent units are conceptualised by staff and offer an understanding of how this specific unit operates using a systemic framework.

• Information gathered about the ethnographic action research process used to conduct the research will provide further contributions to the field of systemic research.

• Findings are likely to lead to a series of recommendations about staff training in adolescent units, which in turn could be disseminated to the wider field of psychiatry.

• Whilst the findings will be not generalizable per se due to the idiosyncratic nature of each inpatient context, invaluable insight will be gained about the dynamics within an inpatient settings from a systemic perspective that may be pertinent to other inpatient and therapeutic contexts.

• It will provide an exploration about notions of ‘home’ on the unit and furthermore, invites exploration of the notions of home across other family therapy contexts – an area that appears to be under theorized and little explored by the family therapy community...
DISCUSSION, COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS...

STAY IN TOUCH... H.SHERBERSKY@EXETER.AC.UK OR HANNAH.SHERBERSKY@GMAIL.COM
RESOURCES

Ted Talks

https://www.ted.com/playlists/394/what_is_home

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tqDvUdSKt8I

The Common Room

http://www.commonroom.uk.com/#our-films

Home, belonging and identity – Pico Iyer

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPXTKEOOXgE

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D3OK3Ch2ACk