Qualitative Research Methods: Useful research tools for front-line services

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- Staff at Cornerstone

Our Agenda Today

At the conclusion of this presentation you should know:
- How arts programs can enrich day treatment programs.
- The strengths and weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative approaches.
- How qualitative methods can improve our understanding of therapeutic processes.

The Setting

- Children’s mental health services in Ontario not funded by “health”, but by Ministry of Children.
- CMH is not a universally accessible service.
- Day treatment program seen as reducing need for hospitalization, and reducing length of stay.
- Organized on a Therapeutic Community model.

Project’s Objectives

- Is there a correspondence between characteristics of client-students and creative program utilization?
- Do students benefit from creative programs at Cornerstone?
- If so, how do they benefit?

Data Sources

- Brief Child & Family Phone Interview (BCFPI)
- Child and Adolescent Functional Assessment Scale (CAFAS)
- Client-student attendance records
- 1 to 1 Staff Interviews
- Client-student small group interviews
- Client-student web-based survey
Quantitative Findings

- Both BCFPI and CAFAS are mandatory measures for all children receiving CMH services in Ontario.
- Study design based on sample size of 75, with 80% completion rate.
- "Findable" data was less than 50%.
- System issues contributed strongly to missing data.

Key Qualitative Results

Core non-threatening programs
- Supportive and relaxing atmosphere
- Achievable expectations
- Shift locus of control

Varied Therapeutic Gains
- Material benefits
- Facilitate therapeutic process
- Gender division

Three fold function
- Activities
- Spaces
- Skill building

Creative Program's as ...

Pathway to success / healing

"I'll go back to the art room every time I finished something and it turned out a way that I liked it, it was a big deal to me because it was like I'm not a complete and utter failure" (High use client-student)

"it's like small victories and like when you're really down it's something huge to get [used] to seeing something through to its fruition" (Low use client-student)

Varying gains

- Gendered Division
  - Lower and higher groups equally likely to take arts for credit
  - Higher arts participation more likely to be female
  - 'Gendered and 'negative' comments from lower arts participation groups

Creative Program's Roles

They are vital to therapeutic processes at Cornerstone
They generate and support personal growth
They work in complex and interweaving ways
Why Qualitative Useful

• Tailored to site specific questions
• Praxis Approach
• Actually accesses clients’ / patients’ / students’ perspectives
• When well implemented generates quality evidence
• Medical Anthropology’s validity

Questions?

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