A PhD Research Proposal: Identity as a connecting factor between Them & Us

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#ConnectingThem&Us #GTICP2019
Background

• It is a mandatory requirement to have service user and carer involvement in clinical psychology courses across the UK (HCPC, 2015).

• The purpose of service user and carer groups is to be involved in selection, teaching and evaluation of trainee clinical psychologists but now courses are involving these groups in innovative ways to embed the service user and carer voice throughout training.

• The BPS suggests service user and carer involvement is a positive thing but there is little research exploring its impact or efficacy in influencing clinical skills and learning (BPS, 2010).

• Research has tended to focus on the process of involvement rather than outcomes of involvement.
The Literature

• Rush (2009) explores influence of service user and carer involvement on learning in nursing staff.

• Schreur et al (2015) explore mechanisms of learning by trainees through service user and carer involvement.

• Emery (2015) explores the influence of service user involvement on identity of those with learning disabilities.

• Malwah (2013) measures the social identities of service user and carer groups

• Them & Us divisions are considered in all but do not directly measure social identities experimentally.

• They locate explanations within the literature of connecting factors between group identities but no direct measurement of this in studies.

• They also do not measure the influence of trainees’ own identities in relation to other groups in clinical psychology training and the impact of this on clinical skills and learning.
Theoretical framework

• Social identity theory has not been applied to groups involved in clinical psychology training (Service users, Carers, Trainees and Clinical Psychologists).

• Social identity theory talks about In Groups and Out groups. We feel more similar to our In-group and different to Out-groups. (Tajfel & Turner, 1979)

• Social identification leads to in group identification through cognitive and affective states (Leach et al, 2008). This has the potential to connect different groups.

• Many professionals reject the idea of the Them & Us divide but different groups in clinical psychology training may perceive differences between their groups more visibly than others.
Aims & Objectives

• Recreate the social identities of those involved in clinical psychology training to see if there is a Them & Us divide.

• Compare service users, carers, trainees and clinical psychologists Social identities and the extent to which they are constructed with professional and lived experience identities.

• Understand the connecting factors to reduce the Them & Us divide.

• Assess trainees’ resonance with their trainers through their lived experience and professional identities and its influence on learning and clinical practice.

• We also aim to apply learning of how to connect identities within clinical psychology training to better connecting therapists and patients in clinical practice.
Method: Full Circle

- Self categorisation: Measuring Identities of EBEs, EBQs and trainees
- Social Identification of trainees with EBEs and EBQs
- Measuring social comparison between EBEs, EBQs and trainees
- Measuring impact of social identification on learning and clinical skills
- Identity intervention
- Impact of identity intervention on patient outcomes

Identity as a connecting factor
Identity Constructions

• We will be exploring whether different social identities will be made up of different levels of professional and lived experience identities.

• The research will inform us about how to connect these different groups so clinical psychology training can be more cohesive and work together better.

• The idea of the Them & Us divide may be more visible to some groups within clinical psychology training than others.

• The Them & Us divide may be a result of power dynamics at play between these groups and may contribute towards identity formation.
If Identity was looked at through a microscope this research would show that it is a barrier between different groups and that the right catalyst can activate this to open up the connection or close the connection.
Exploring impact on clinical skills and learning

Professional Identity

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Lived experience Identity

Burnout
Person-centred
Resonance with trainer
Attitudes towards coproduction
Attitudes towards self-disclosure
Level of stigmatising attitudes towards mental illness
Potential Implications

• Understanding social identities and connecting factors within clinical psychology training will reduce the Them & Us divide.

• Allows groups involved in clinical psychology training to feel more integrated.

• Insight into levels of lived experience and professional identities.

• By acknowledging differences between groups can encourage understanding of the needs of these groups and lead to development of support structures in an evidence based way.

• Apply learning of what connects groups in clinical psychology to connecting groups in clinical practice through an Identity Intervention.
• Acknowledge there may be a Them & Us divide and this may be more apparent from the perspective of certain groups.

• Connections between different groups can be through cognitive and affective identification.

• Trainees individual identities are likely to influence their clinical skills and learning through resonance with their trainers.

• Previously Social Identity has been used to explain division between groups but this research will aim to show how Identity can be used as a connecting factor between Them & Us.
References

BPS (2010) Good practice guidelines to support the involvement of service users and carers in Clinical Psychology services.


