Drawing as a research tool: what does it add?

Horne M¹,², Masley S³, Allison-Love J⁴
1 School of Healthcare, University of Leeds, Leeds, UK;
2 Bradford Institute for Health Research, Bradford, West Yorkshire, UK.
3 Airedale NHS Trust, West Yorkshire, UK.
4 Honorary Research Associate, Bradford University, West Yorkshire
The team

Samantha Masley

Janet Love
Background

• Visual methods increasingly used in healthcare research
  – Understand patient’s experience of health
  – Patients experiences of healthcare
  – Student nurses perceptions of patient groups

• Drawing has an advantage over other visual methods
  – potential to offer a way of communicating other than speech
  – Encourages collaborative meaning-making
  – offers an opportunity to access material which may be suppressed and repressed by the conscious mind (Edgar, 1999: 207)
  – Offers a way of exploring both multiplicity and complexity of human experience
Aims

To:

(i) outline and debate the use of drawing, as a visual imagery method, within the research process

(ii) provide a critical reflection of the use of drawing in the research process
Case study
Case Study

- Exploratory, qualitative study with a purposive sample of palliative healthcare professionals (n=16) from one hospice in West Yorkshire, England (February-May 2016)

- Used drawing to enrich the narrative account during data collection through semi-structured interviews
  - Adopted an integrated approach providing some structure with a semi-structured interview schedule
Aim

• To explore the process of drawing to help facilitate the exploration, communication and our understanding of how healthcare staff emotionally resource their roles within a Hospice setting
Methodological discussion
## Visual research traditions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Media</th>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Intension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Archival data</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Films, photographs, art, advertisements</td>
<td>Thematic</td>
<td>Visual supports the research activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual ethnography</td>
<td>Observed overtly or covertly</td>
<td>Films, video or photographs taken</td>
<td>Research setting</td>
<td>Visual supports the research activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual as prompt</td>
<td>Shown visual data, such as photographs</td>
<td>Films, photographs, drawings</td>
<td>Not specific</td>
<td>Visual chosen to direct discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual elicitation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Photographs, postcards, posters, pictures, video</td>
<td>Not specific</td>
<td>Visual directs the research activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-driven visual elicitation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Photographs, video</td>
<td>Research setting or thematic</td>
<td>Visual directs the research activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picture elicitation (or external driven visual elicitation)</td>
<td>Draws a picture</td>
<td>Drawings, paintings</td>
<td>Not specific</td>
<td>Visual supports the research activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video diaries</td>
<td>Records reflective accounts</td>
<td>Video</td>
<td>Research setting</td>
<td>Visual directs or supports the research activity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The use of visual research methods

Visual research methods

Strategies
- Mechanical tools
- Non mechanical tools

Participatory research interventions
- Digital techniques
- Non digital techniques
Practicalities of undertaking drawing as a data collection tool

(i) participant preparation

(ii) informed consent

(iii) confidentiality

(iv) dynamics
(i) Participant preparation

• Aesthetics
  – concerns around the production of a ‘good’ picture
  – size of paper

• Invitation needs to reassure participants that the focus is on the content of their drawing and not the quality
  – Recruiting email: “I Can’t Draw – Will This Affect Taking Part? You don’t need to be Leonardo de Vinci to take part! If you can doodle - you can take part!!”.

• Reassurance and re-framing
  – Repeat reassurance in participant information sheet, consent form & when drawing activity commences
  – Rapport building stage of the Interview Schedule to reassure
  – Drawing Protocol: four strategies to help lower the participants expectation of their own work and help re-frame down what is considered as ‘good’ for the project
(ii) informed consent

• clearly explaining the study purpose and reassurance about the purpose of the drawing

• what is expected of the participant – simply line drawings

• the amount of time likely to be required

• participation voluntary, as is drawing

• can withdraw, not draw, without negative repercussions
(iii) Confidentiality

• Applies to both written and image based data
  – ground rules about respecting confidentiality in order to create a safe space for the production of any personal and/or revealing images
  – anonymous titles allocated to prevent identification of participants

• Drawing method might increase participation disclosure, this may in turn open up the risk that the data can be located and people identified (Matthews 2012)
(iv) Dynamics

• Participatory approach
  – shift power imbalance in the researcher-participant relationship
  – establish rapport; engage with researcher prior to drawing

• Drawing tool
  • Lead pencil

• Type and size of paper
  - Participant comfort
Data analysis: A thorny issue

• Images need to be contextualised by the narrative account

• People may read the same image in different ways
  – discussion of the image with the participant during the interview
  – important to understand how the drawings were generated, the conversation that occurred around them and what context brought them into being (Woodhouse 2012)
What does drawing add?
Data collection

• Participatory research approach relies on researcher-participant collaboration
  – shift power imbalance in the researcher-participant relationship

‘this creative method is intrinsically more enjoyable than ticking boxes and gives more control to the subject” (Participant 3)

• Use of an integrated approach (verbal and image) offers a way of exploring multiplicity & complexity in human experience (Guillemin 2004)

‘I found the interview process very therapeutic and it gave me space to clearly understand the mechanisms/processes that I utilise to relieve stress at work and to cope with the everyday ups and downs of palliative care and managing people’ (Participant 1)

• Making a drawing is contingent on a process of reflection & finding a way to express this pictorially

‘I enjoyed the process - doing something a bit different opens up new ways of exploring things/thoughts/feelings. To begin with it felt a little awkward - as it's not a process that I was used to but when you start the drawings start to flow!!’ (Participant 2)
The narrative account

• Portrays individual emotions relatively effortlessly
  • captured the underlying emotional issues present (Vince 1995)

‘It made me realise that stresses are often relieved by simple things and since the interview I am more conscious of the things I do to relieve stress...’ (Participant 1)

• Use of an integrated approach encouraged collaborative meaning-making
  – allowed the drawer to give voice to what the drawing was intended to convey

• Drawings functioned ‘as a catalyst, helping [participants] to articulate feelings that had been implicit and were hard to define’ (Zuboff 1988:141)

‘To be helped to think something through has its own value, quite apart from the research benefits’ (Participant 3)
Data analysis

• Provided contextual meaning to transcripts and enhanced the process of data analysis
  - drawings appeared to create a path toward participant feelings and emotions

• The cognitive process required to draw lead to a more succinct presentation of the key elements of participants’ experiences

• Richer data at an individual and collective level

• Able to make comparisons across the participants’ views of managing stress, accessing psychological support
  - Allowed a more rounded knowledge about managing stress and accessing psychological support
Validity

• Drawings produced by participant without given structure from the researcher assists against researcher bias
  – Lack of structure and direction by the researcher may mean that drawing produced may not relate to the research focus and be of little use

• Using participant produced drawings is more likely to accurately represent participant experiences
  – Reliable and trustworthy (Kearney & Hyle 2004)
  – Participant becomes so engrossed in doing a good job that what is actually being depicted is not the reality; a possible threat to validity and rigour (Matthews 2012)

• To promote validity and reliability:
  – Participant discussed the meaning of the drawing through the semi structured interview
  – The three researchers undertook data analysis of transcripts and images individually before sharing the findings amongst themselves
Acknowledgments

Participants

• A big thank you to all the who took part in this study
References


Thank you for listening

M.Horne@leedsd.ac.uk