

**Learning & reflections
from a realist
evaluation of Schwartz
Rounds® - an
intervention to
promote
compassionate care**

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Introduction

- ▶ What are Schwartz Rounds?
- ▶ What is realist evaluation? Methodological principles
- ▶ How 'to do' a realist evaluation and how not to!
- ▶ What we did – analysis cycles
- ▶ Challenges and what we would do differently
- ▶ Conclusions-would I do it again?

What are Schwartz Center Rounds[®]?

- ▶ Orgins Boston USA – over 20 years ago & introduced UK 2009
- ▶ Regular / monthly, open forum with structured time & safe, confidential space for Healthcare staff
- ▶ Purpose to support staff and enhance their ability to provide compassionate care through reflective practice;
- ▶ Not problem solving/focus on clinical aspects of patient care
- ▶ Rounds = for sharing emotional, social & ethical challenges of providing care
- ▶ Round lasts 1 hour and begins with a pre-arranged and pre-prepared multidisciplinary panel presentation of patient case / different stories based on common theme.
- ▶ Panellists each describe the difficult, demanding or satisfying aspects of the situation (15-20 mins) and topic then opened to the audience for group reflection and facilitated discussion.

What is realist methodology?

- Approach that uses programme-level and middle-range theory(ies) in evaluation and synthesis
- Used in the assessment of complex evidence coming from the implementation of policy, programmes, services and interventions.
- Concerned with understanding context and underlying mechanisms of action

Realist Principles 1

- Evaluators need to penetrate beneath the surface of observable inputs and outputs of an intervention / programme (ontological depth)
- Ask not, “does it work?” or “what works on average”? But “what works, for whom, under what circumstances and how?”
- Based on a logic of mixed methods - evidence/theory configurations
- Interventions do not create change, people do....

Realist Principles 2

- ▶ Realist evaluation - identification of underlying mechanisms of action and how they manifest in contexts to produce outcomes
- ▶ Referred to as the context-mechanism-outcome configuration
- ▶ Key principle = interventions work differently in different contexts – mechanisms triggered to different degrees in different contexts
- ▶ Second key principle = for social interventions e.g. Schwartz Rounds, mechanisms are the cognitive or affective responses of participants to the resources offered
- ▶ Overarching aim = to understand the complex relationship between mechanisms and the effect that context has on their operationalisation and outcome.

Realist Causation:
Context – Mechanism - Outcome Configuration

Context + Mechanism = Outcome



(Environment)

+

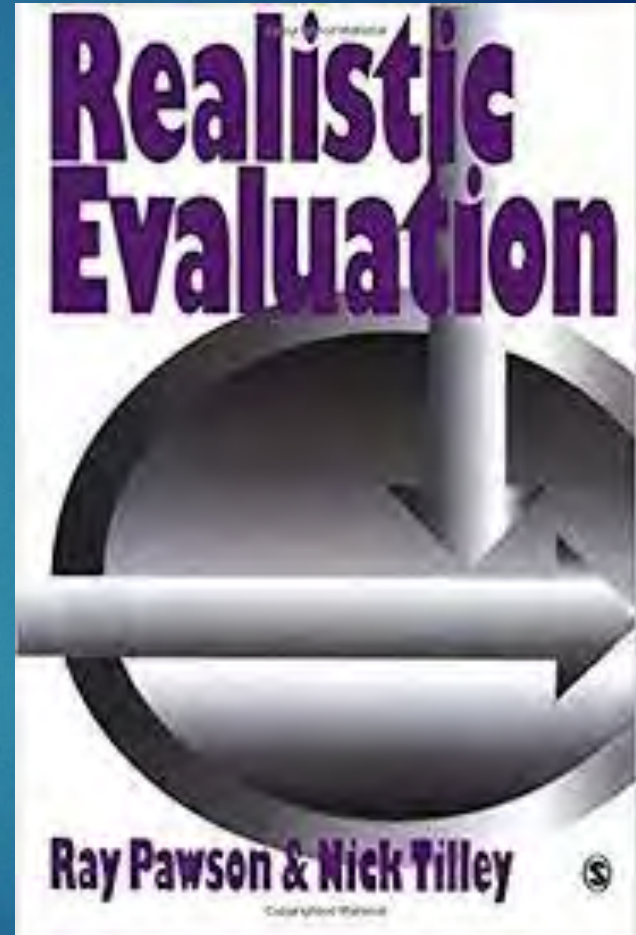


(Resources offered + Reactions) = (Effect & ripple effects)



How 'to do' a realist evaluation?

- ▶ Pawson and Tilley book (1997 / 2003)
- ▶ RAMSES guidelines (2017)
- ▶ Yet many researchers struggle with how to 'do' RE
- ▶ Published studies claiming to use RE methodologies often have little in common
- ▶ Learnt by 'doing' and guided by RE mentor
- ▶ Attended RE conference and gained RE insights from RE colleagues there and at further RE analysis training



Realist evaluation of Schwartz Rounds: data collection & analysis

- ▶ 1. Develop initial programme theory:- All programmes (implicitly/explicitly) have a programme theory/ies re how programme expected to cause its intended outcomes:
 - ▶ initial review of the literature to identify definition and mechanisms of Rounds
 - ▶ interviewed programme architects in USA & key stakeholders in UK
 - ▶ programme documentation review
 - ▶ initial Rounds observations & discussions with key players in UK implementation

- ▶ 2. organisational case studies to
 - ▶ (i) identify the varying contexts and mechanisms by which Rounds 'work' and produce outcomes/ripple effects; and
 - ▶ (ii) to test and refine the initial programme theory

$$C + M = O$$

- ▶ **Context:** Context important because generative mechanisms can only work if the circumstances are 'right'.
 - ▶ Contextual layers include individual, interpersonal, organisational and intra-structural. E.g. intra-structural context = staff emotional labour and high levels of psychological distress
 - ▶ Organisational context includes time running rounds, audience and Rounds characteristics
- ▶ **Mechanisms:** usually hidden, sensitive to variations in context, and produce effects / generate outcomes.
 - ▶ Combination of (i) the resources offered by the programme -Rounds - and (ii) the responses from attendees and other actors to these resources which lead to outcomes.
 - ▶ Mechanism resource e.g. is group setting providing an opportunity for panellists and audience members to tell their story to a group of colleagues (audience), results in a response 'sparking' recognition of shared experiences and feelings & giving & receiving of help & encouragement
- ▶ **Outcomes:** intended or unintended impacts and reported changes in individuals (cognitively-attitudes/beliefs or behaviourally), teams or organisational culture generated intervention mechanisms -can be proximal, intermediate, or final
 - ▶ depends on both the mechanism + context; mechanisms interact with their context -can generate 'x' outcomes in one setting and 'y' outcomes in another.
 - ▶ Examples of Rounds outcomes include increased empathy for self (intermediate), colleagues and patients (final), reduced isolation, staff support; and 'ripple effects'; intended or unintended outcomes of Rounds resulting in cultural change/changes in practice.

Case study interviews

- ▶ Interviews served different purposes at different phases
 - ▶ theory gleaning; theory refining; theory testing & consolidating interviews (Manzano 2016)
- ▶ Drew upon observation data to help develop, test & refine our candidate programme theories (Context(C)-Mechanism(M)-Outcome(O) configurations).
- ▶ Analysed interview data for full & half nuggets of illustrative text (containing full or partial CMOc) → more than 30 CMOc
- ▶ Repeat interviews with key respondents & different interview questions with additional respondents to refine, test and consolidate 30 CMOcs.
- ▶ Further analysis cycles:
 - ▶ iterative analytical process to refine, combine and generate new CMOcs inductive interview analysis
 - ▶ testing causative configurations with well informed 'experts' in focus groups.



12 step
process

Data nuggets

- ▶ Nuggets = direct interview quotes which outline causality.
 - ▶ Full nugget (golden) = causal explanation that includes 'why' whereas a partial one just says that something leads to an outcome but doesn't explain why.
 - ▶ Half nugget partially outlines causality -complete by inferring from data / theory and use to drive subsequent interviews....
- ▶ 'I'll show-you-my-theory-if-you'll-show-me-yours' (Pawson 1996).



Ray Pawson 2007

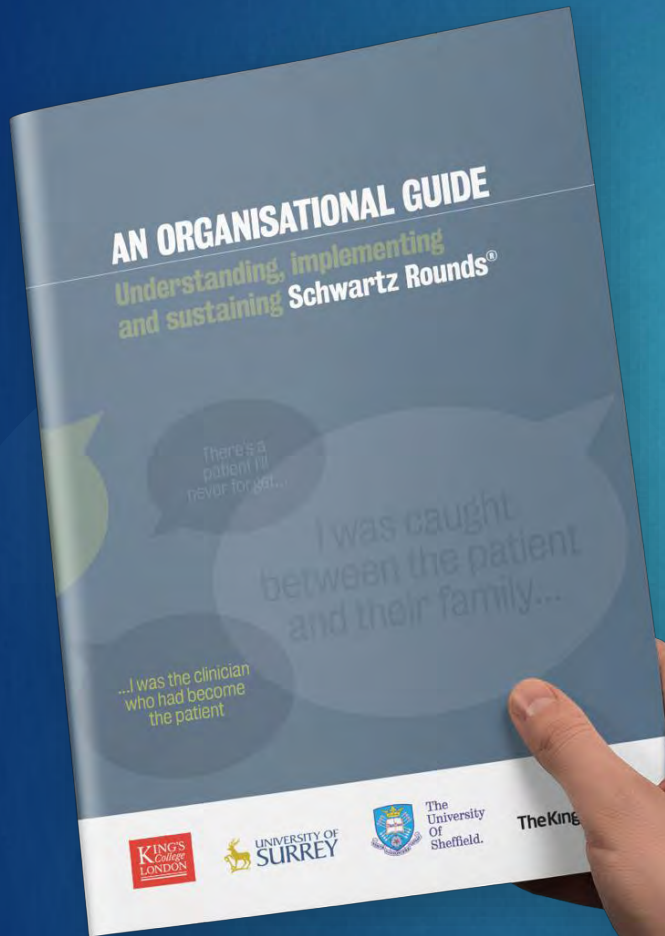
Challenges

- ▶ Understanding and operationalising mechanisms to be able to gather data on them
- ▶ ‘Extracting’ data re what people are experiencing / many mechanisms not seen (even in observation)
- ▶ Defining and searching for CMOc ‘nuggets’ of illustrative text and deciding which CMOc they best illustrated / fitted;
- ▶ Collapsing CMOcs and Identifying core CMOc in such a complex intervention; multiple data ‘discussion’ days
- ▶ What is context and what is mechanism – similar things can be one or the other or both
 - ▶ Helpful to think of contextual factors as acting like a dimmer switch – causing mechanism to fire optimally or not, turning up brightness by which mechanism fires to produce outcomes. (Dalkin 2015 - ‘What’s in a Mechanism’)

In conclusion

- ▶ RE not as easy as it looks or sounds!
- ▶ No easy 'how to' guide- we learnt by doing and by making mistakes and with great mentorship and support
- ▶ Many challenges..as outlined (including not doing realist synthesis)
- ▶ Definitely worth it – best approach to get 'underneath' descriptive data and utilise middle range theory to provide greater explanatory evidence
- ▶ Our resulting causal explanations and evidence-informed programme theory provide a rich, in-depth explanation about how Rounds work, for whom and why, providing an important framework for future evaluations of Rounds, and their implementation.

Research outputs



Film and organisational guide

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