UEL Centre for Narrative Research

To Think Is To Experiment

Using dialogic/performance analysis to assess the suitability and acceptability of social isolation and loneliness interventions for older minoritised people living in the UK

A reflection on the benefits and drawbacks

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Social isolation & loneliness: health & economic impact

• Symptoms of depression (Cacioppo et al., 2010)
• Poor cognitive function (Wang et al., 2015)
• Impaired immunity (Cacioppo et al., 2011)
• Impaired sleep (Cacioppo & Cacioppo, 2014)

Risk associated with them comparable with well-established risk factors for mortality (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2015).

The cost to employers is estimated to be around £2.5 billion per year (New Economics Foundation, 2017)
Older minoritised people: Processes that result in vulnerability

- Geographical separation
- Language difficulties
- Negative effects of persistent discrimination
- Hostile environment policy
- Socioeconomic & health inequalities

(Treas & Mazumdar, 2002; Fokkema & Naderi, 2013; Park et. al. 2019)
Older minoritised people: How do they compare with the majority ethnic group?

- Older minoritised people are at an increased risk of poor health, economic inactivity and late-life poverty (Gough & Adami, 2013; Tillin et al., 2013).
- Around 7% of those over 65 say that they are often lonely and 31% say that they are sometimes lonely (Age UK, 2017).
- Very high rates of loneliness reported ranging from 24%-50% in some minoritised categories (Victor et al., 2012).
- The number of older minoritised people is set to increase in the coming decades (Lievesly, 2010).
Phase 4
Qualitative Analysis

AIM: To assess the efficacy of CBGIs targeting social isolation and loneliness in older people
DATA: 5 process evaluations and 17 outcome evaluations
PRELIMINARY FINDINGS: Process evaluations suggest that Effective interventions give participants active roles, target cognition, enable participants to acquire new skills, activate group processes

Phase 3
Systematic Review

AIM: To assess the suitability and acceptability of the interventions for older minoritised people.
DATA: Secondary data (Phase Two interviews)
FINDINGS: ???

Phase 2
Qualitative analysis

AIM: To explore the social networks of older minoritised people living in the UK
DATA: In-depth interviews with ten people from minoritised ethnic groups
FINDINGS: Community based group interventions appear to be protective of social isolation and loneliness

Phase 1
Quantitative Analysis

AIM: To explore ethnic variations in the friendship networks of older people
DATA: Understanding Society: UK Longitudinal Household study
RESULTS: Older minoritised people reported fewer close friends and fewer friends who live locally.
Are interventions that attend to following features of effective interventions suitable and/or acceptable for older minoritised people?

a) Target cognitive processes
b) Give participants an active role
c) Learn new skills
d) Activate group experiences (emotional support, social interaction, social comparison)

In assessing suitability and acceptability,

• How do older minoritised people position themselves?
• What are older minoritised people’s preferences?
• What circumstances enable/hinder older minoritised people from participating in interventions?
Methods

- **Sample:** 10 older minoritised people aged 65 years and above
- **Recruitment:** Purposive sampling
- **Data:** Revisiting in-depth interviews conducted earlier in the research process.
- **Analysis:** Dialogic/Performance analysis
Dialogic/performance analysis

- Informed by the works of Mikhail Bakhtin and Erving Goffman
- Interrogates how talk between people is interactively produced and performed as narrative
- Aims to uncover what is said, how it is said as well as who it is directed to, why, when and for what purposes
- Performance and context are given considerable attention
- The language of the narrative is scrutinized (Riessman, 2008)
Dialogic/performance analysis process

- **Identify performance features:**
  Narration styles, switched verb tenses, creative language, repetition, direct speech, expressive sounds, asides to the audiences, breakoffs, interruptions and overlaps in speech (Riessman, 2008)

- **Identify dialogic elements features:**
  Polyphony and heteroglossia (Bahktin, 1981)
Dialogic/performance analysis process

Bamberg (1997) encourages analysts to ask of their data different positioning questions e.g.

- ‘How are the characters positioned in relation to one another within the reported events?’
- ‘How does the speaker position him/herself to the audience?’
- ‘How do narrators position themselves to themselves?’
- ‘In what kind of story do narrators place themselves?’ (Riessman, 2002)

Attention to wider historic, cultural and/or social context to demonstrate whether the participants’ narratives resisted or conformed to dominant narratives.
Mr Edosa

- Aged 65+ at the time of the interview
- Retired, lives alone
- Born in Africa
- Has been living in the UK for over 4 decades
- Narrated several stories about the challenges faced by people from Africa who live and grow old in the UK.
- Key themes in his narratives: cultural differences, independence, as well as the push and pull factors influencing return migration
- The narrative identified was produced in response to a question about the available assistance and services provided by government to older people in his area.
Mr Edosa: well there are a lot of (.). There's lots of erm, community things (.). they organise like clubs. Some people, something -Pensioner, some pensioner clubs, pension (.). There are so many! But it depends on, like the way I would say back home, ‘age is number!’ It all depends on how you feel in yourself
Interviewer: ok.
Mr Edosa: My experience is that I don't feel really I'm old! (Laughs)
Interviewer: of course! (Laughs)
Mr Edosa: I could do things, I could do things myself. I go shopping, I cook, I do all things I want to do. So, I don't necessarily have to go to clubs to socialise
Interviewer: /mhmm/
Mr Edosa: You know, that's the way I look at it.
Interviewer: ok.
Mr Edosa: So:: it hasn't come to that yet and I hope it doesn't come. I hope it doesn't come to that anyway
Interviewer: No, at least then, you are alright. You are (.). Yea::h
Mr Edosa: So, you know, I don't have, I don't have to go and rely on people to come and do things for me, you know
• The narrative was co-produced in response to a question I had asked

• Performative features such as repetition, direct speech, creative language were identified

• In this narrative, he positions himself as reliant and independent

• He resists the homogenising of older people and the depiction of older people as dependent

• My age and gender might have influenced the telling of this narrative
• Interventions that are explicitly targeted at older people may not be suitable for Mr Edosa

• Interventions advertised in a way that portrays older people as dependent may be off-putting for him

• He is however, open to socialising through other avenues as seen below when he responds to a question I asked about emotional support,

  “...when there are occasions for, kind of get together, and I get invited, you know, then of course we open up to -Not we all. Some of them from my community belong to (.) call it union, call it association, call it whatever you like. But there is sort of a community meetings where we- Once every two months, we all come together to discuss issues.”

Support for these types of community groups where people from the same background offer support may be necessary
Drawbacks of using dialogic/performance analysis

**Subjectivity:**
- Highly dependent on the my selection of narratives
- Other researchers might select different narratives
- My classification of some performance features e.g. creative language might differ to someone else’s
- I ensured that my interpretations were grounded in the data

**Analysing emotions:**
- Analysing emotions was key to helping me gain insight into what participants find acceptable
- Lack of guidance on how to analyse emotions
- I turned to other analysis methods for guidance
Drawbacks of using dialogic/performance analysis

**Not losing sight of phase 4 aims:**
- Dialogic/performance analysis encourages in-depth analysis which generates rich findings
- I had to remember to link the findings to the research questions and objectives of phase four

**Presentation:**
- Difficulty deciding what to present when communicating the research to others.
- Poses a challenge when writing for journals given that some may impose strict word limits
- Some fascinating findings might be consigned to the appendix section
Drawbacks of using dialogic/performance analysis

Identification of narratives:
• Not restrictive as the definition of narrative not imposed on researchers
• Allows for a flexible approach to the identification of narratives

Draws attention to broader context:
• Looking at the wider context unveiled the different ways that structures of inequality and power are evident in stories of everyday life.
• Akin to intersectional analysis
• Allows for in-depth analysis which results in rich findings
Benefits of using dialogic/performance analysis

**Interpretation of seemingly contradictory narratives:**
- Alerted me to different ways of interpreting contradictory narratives.
- Gave me the language to address seemingly contradictory narratives.

**Attention to the interactional nature of interviewing**
- Helps uncover how the interviews were co-constructed.
- Draws attention to how interviewers/interviewee positioning impacts on the narratives.

**Compatible with data re-use:**
- Enabled the analysis of data collected to address different research objective.
- Concerns over whether I would find narratives to analyse were unfounded.
- Allowed me to make full use of the rich data collected in phase two.
Thank you

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