Complexity and Collaboration

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too many cooks spoil the broth…

many hands make light work…

introduction

All agencies that share a mission to help people also share a risk that they may overlook, or fail to sufficiently address precisely the people or issues that they are constituted to help. It often appears that these risks increase in relation to the complexity of the situation they are trying to improve, and also with the number of agencies involved.

what is complexity?

The word complex derives from the Latin verb "plectare" to braid or entwine with the sense of entangled elements. The meaning "not easily analysed" was first recorded in 1715.

Taxonomy and role, condition what is seen and how it is understood. This underpins thinking and communication as it describes complexity within social networks.

The greater the number of descriptors, the greater the level of complexity.

first order complexity

A complex case is just that ~ complicated circumstance requires different interventions from different agencies.

second order complexity

Agency discourse conditions both perception and intervention.
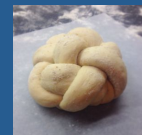

design and method:

Inter-agency discourse exists at the interstices between agencies, as do many complex cases. The interactive processes between the vulnerable case and the agencies, and between the agencies and other agencies, generate evolving complex systems of discourse. Inter-agency meetings provide an opportunity to observe and record these processes of interdiscursivity as naturally occurring data.

data collection:

Data is collected through digital recording and transcription of inter-agency discussion within a local authority children's services department. Consent is sought from all parties and all data is anonymised. Ethical oversight is held by Leicester University

Analysis

qualitative:

Critical Discourse Analysis provides a framework to untangle interdiscursive.processes

CDA addresses social problems

Discourse is a form of social action

Power relations are discursive

quantitative:

Following Casti - Levels of complexity can be measured through the number of inequivalent descriptors at play within inter-discursive processes within a network.

preliminary observations:

It is possible to observe complexity within inter-agency meetings.
It is possible to assess complexity within an inter-agency network.
Discursive processes within inter-agency meetings affect levels of complexity.
Client vulnerability affects discursive processes.

next steps:

To identify different joint working situation with inter-agency meetings as equivalent data source.