

# Staying curious

## Professional Curiosity and Traumatic Brain Injury

*Andy Mantell and Marian Jennings*

Department of Mental Health and Learning  
Disabilities 2016

**London  
South Bank  
University**

School of  
Health and  
Social Care



# Curiosity - an essential attribute

- Qualified, experienced, advanced SW should use critical thinking augmented by creativity and curiosity (BASW 2015 online).
- Curiosity and a desire to enhance and develop nursing knowledge are vital in nursing practice. (Easton 2010)

# The impact of a lack of professional curiosity (PC)

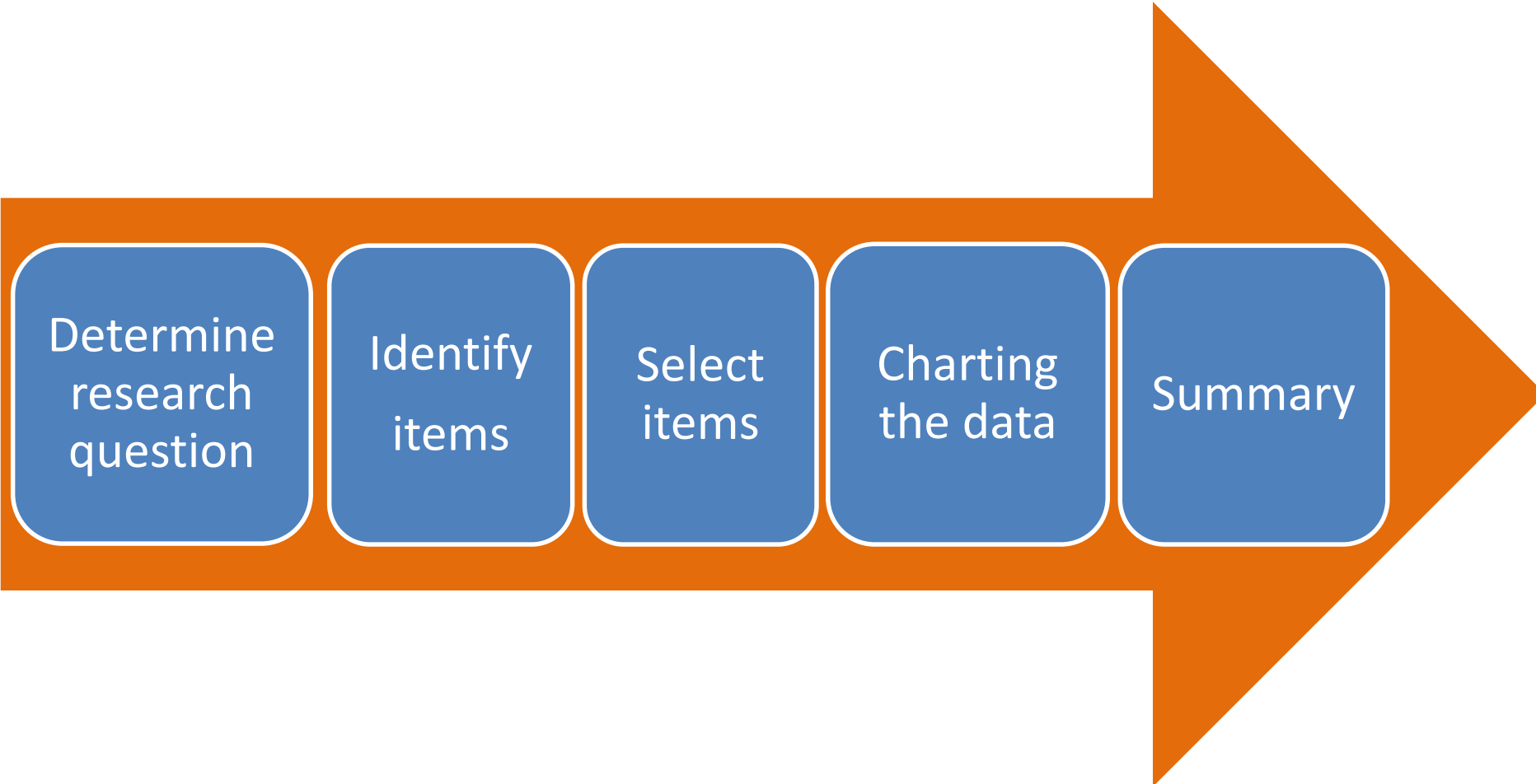
- Lack of professional curiosity repeatedly cited in enquires into the abuse of children.
- Disguised compliance -“Some families are very good at providing professionals with what they need to hear” (Woolmore, interviewed by Naqvi 2013:15)
- Woolmore argues that in order to see “...beyond the barriers put up by families says it is vital social workers retain their ‘professional curiosity’”.

# Purpose

- **Research question:**
  - What is the applicability of professional curiosity to practice with people with traumatic brain injuries
- **Aims:**
  - Identify the knowledge base for professional curiosity in social work
  - Identify the knowledge base for professional curiosity in nursing
  - Compare these knowledge bases
  - Identify any profession specific and common factors that have specific relevance to work with people with TBI and their families.
- **Objective:**
  - To highlight the contribution that professional curiosity may make to practice with people with TBI.

# Methodology: Scoping Study

(Arkesy and O'Malley 2005)



Determine  
research  
question

Identify  
items

Select  
items

Charting  
the data

Summary

# Identifying items

- To identify the literature produced in social work the following databases were searched from 2005 to 2015 :
  - Medline,
  - Psychinfo,
  - Soc Index,Cinahl,
  - ASUS
  - SCOPUS
- The search term used were ‘Professional curiosity”, “Professional curiosity” and “social work” and “curiosity” and “social work”.
- This was repeated for nursing, with ‘nurs\*’ substituted for ‘social work’.

# Selecting items

- The social work search produced 29 results of which 20 were not about social work, 4 not on PC. One was a book review.
  - **4 were accepted.**
- The nursing search produced 27 results.
  - **4 were accepted.**
- The iterative search produced 9 items results, none of which met the criteria.

# Findings – social work

Name	Milner V.	White J.	Voshel E.	Shenaar-Golan V. & Gutman C
Year	2005	2007	2012	2013
Country of origin	New Zealand	Canada	USA	Israel
Source	Social Work Review	Canadian Journal of Counselling	Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping	Social work with Groups
Title	Mapping the new frontier of Foodbank social work	Working in the Midst of Ideological and Cultural Differences	Reflections of a Field Director	Curiosity and the Cat: Teaching Strategies That Foster Curiosity
Practice area	Models	ADP	Reflective	Education (group work)
Knowledge type	Expert opinion	Expert opinion	Expert opinion	Expert opinion
Relevance	Relevant	Relevant	Low relevance	Very relevant



## Findings - nursing

Name	Kedge, S and Appleby,B	Kedge, S and Appleby,B	DeSilets, L. D., & Dickerson, P. S	Eason, T.
Year	2009	2009	2010	2010
Country of origin	UK	UK	USA	USA
Source	British Journal of Nursing	British Journal of Nursing	Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing	Creative Nursing
Title	Promoting a culture of curiosity within nursing practice	Promoting curiosity through the enhancement of competence	Continuing nursing education: Enhancing professional development	Lifelong Learning: Fostering a Culture of Curiosity
Practice area	Education	Education	Education	Education
Knowledge type	Expert Opinion	Expert opinion	Expert opinion	Expert opinion
Relevance	Very relevance	Very relevant	Low relevant	Very relevant

# What is professional curiosity?

- “What makes me question, know, act, ask again, recognize” (Freire 1998: 80)
- “A state of arousal brought about by complex stimuli that leads to exploratory behavior” Shenaar –Golan and Gutman 2013: , after Berlyn 1960
- “A desire to know, to see or to experience that motivates exploratory behavior directed towards the acquisition of new information” (Litman 2005: 793)

Precursor to reflection

Learning

Immersing oneself

Engage

Explore

Inquisitiveness

# Areas where curiosity plays a role

- Curiosity:
  - ✓ Helps us engage with other cultures
  - ✓ Helps clients explore their world
  - ✓ Enhances reflection
  - ✓ Enhances accountability
  - ✓ Professional development

# Lessons from child protection: Uncovering the 'real' story

- *Whose story do we hear?*
  - The client?
  - The carer?
  - Other professionals?
  - Our employers?
  - Our own?
- *Impact of stereotyping and professional prejudice?*
- *Reflection - how do you know, what you don't know?*
- *How do we uncover the story?*

# Relevance to Traumatic Brain Injury: Uncovering the story

- Knowledge of TBI and its sequela.
- Awareness of the impact on the individual's presentation: Low insight, denial, rigidity and mental capacity.
- Awareness of the impact on families.
- Ability to relate to the emotional and psychological impact on the individual and their family.
- Failure to update knowledge base by practitioners.

# Factors that may inhibit curiosity

- Tactical lack of curiosity – to avoid ‘nosiness’
- Assumptions
- Uncertainty
- Lack of time
- Lack of inclination – going through the motions
- Anxiety
- Culture – don’t go looking for work
- Lack of insight into practice
- Lack of creativity in looking for solutions

# The importance of nurturing your own curiosity

- In social work and nursing in the UK, practitioners need to provide evidence of continued development to maintain their registration.
- Competence impacts on self-esteem, self respect, professional status and meaningful work (Desilets and Dickerson 2010)
- Professional curiosity is a driver in acquiring knowledge and updating skills (Eason 2010).
- It is a life long process (Eason 2010).

# The importance of PC for educators

- The educator's role is to:  
“... keep alive the sacred spark of wonder and to fan the flame that already glows” (Dewey, 1938: 34).
- “...good professional practice is driven by knowledge of the latest theory and research” (Munro 2011:19)
- Effective pedagogy must incorporate elements that promote interest and curiosity (Shenaar –Golan and Gutman 2013).



# Nurturing curiosity through education

- **Zone of curiosity** (Day 1982)
- Make training meaningful:
  - ✓ Clear linkage of the impact of curiosity in the clinical environment (Kedge and Appleby 2010) with people with TBI.
  - ✓ Practice dilemmas and role play including TBI.
- Curiosity needs to be encouraged across modules as an essential aspect of reflection.

# The importance of PC for employers

## Systems

- Continuous Professional Development - Professional development underpins the role of social workers and nurses (Desilets and Dickerson 2010).
- Reduced hierarchy can reduce risk of organisational abuse.
- Inflexible, bureaucratic systems – hit the target, but miss the point.
- Legal implications – FGM

# The importance of PC for employers

## **Culture**

- A culture which fosters curiosity is critical in the sustainment of a dynamic workforce (Eason).
- Open cultures encourage challenge to existing practices and development of innovative practices.
- A dynamic work environment promotes professional curiosity.

# The employer's role in nurturing curiosity

- Links to pay and promotion
- Study leave
- Secondments
- Staffing levels
- Time
- Value and cultivate professional opinion v routine
- Fund training
- Develop TBI 'champions'
- Use specialists consultants

# Discussion

- *Aims*
  - ✓ The knowledge base for professional curiosity in social work nursing is still in its infancy (aims 1 and 2).
  - ✓ The nursing literature has a clear focus on education and the continued development of competence, whereas the social work knowledge base is more disparate in focus and origin (aim 3).
  - ✓ No explicit references to PC and TBI were found, but many of the concerns about PC identified from Serious Case Reviews are transferable to TBI (aim 4).

# Discussion

- *Objective*
  - ✓ PC has considerable potential in the field of TBI, where the unique nature and consequences of every injury requires an open curious approach, rather than a stock response.
  - However, what is meant by professional curiosity as opposed to 'common sense' curiosity still requires clarification.

# Discussion

- *Limitations*
  - i. Hearing practitioner's voices on practice.
  - ii. Social work and nursing articles in non-discipline specific journals were not included.
  - iii. Earlier articles not included.
  - iv. Literature by other professionals not included.
  - v. Nursing articles focused on the impact of professional curiosity in the classroom as opposed to it's impact in practice.

# Recommendations – the need to define terms

- **Curiosity by professionals *encompasses*:**
  - Knowledge acquisition – includes exploring situations, evidenced based practice, life long learning etc.
  - Reflective praxis – exploring and developing our practice and the governing factors that may limit it, for examples systems and culture of organisations.
- **Professional curiosity *describes*:**
  - a strengths based and goal focused approach to engaging with individuals. A partnership of exploration that can enable the client to learn as much about themselves as the practitioner does (Buechler 2004).



# Recommendations: curiosity check list

(after Broadhurst et al. 2010)

Practitioners	Employers	Educators
Am I remaining curious and inquisitive about what I am seeing and assessing?	Is the “front-door” organised to ensure optimum conditions for the receiving and recording of information?	Is a culture of openness promoted in relation to practitioners’ anxieties and uncertainties?
Am I open to new information?	Am I able to prioritise the needs of people with TBI over performance targets where necessary?	Are students set practice orientated examples & role plays which stretch them, but are still achievable?
Would I be prepared to change my mind about this case?	Do assessment forms encourage the recording of gaps in understanding?	Are students taught how to critically scrutinise evidence?
Is there sufficient quality and quantity of evidence for judgment?	Does the culture allow for professionals to challenge each others findings?	Are students encouraged to challenge their biases?
Am I exploring process as well as content?	How are habitual practices avoided?	Are students taught how to observe and listen?
Am I able to challenge this person?	Can I recognise when staff are under stress?	Are students taught how to clearly pass on information?

# Conclusion

“Curiosity is the very basis of education, and if you tell me that curiosity killed the cat, I say only that the cat died nobly.”

Arnold Edinborough (cited in Shenaar-Golan 2013)

- It is curiosity that enables us to see and motives us to explore those other narratives.
- So what questions are you going to ask?

# Thank you for listening

- **Any questions?**
- Contact Andy Mantell at:  
[mantella@lsbu.ac.uk](mailto:mantella@lsbu.ac.uk)
- BISWG Website :  
<http://www.biswg.co.uk>
- INSWABI website:  
<http://www.biswg.co.uk/html/inswabi.html>

# References

- Arksey,H & O'Malley L (2005): Scoping studies: towards a methodological framework, International Journal of Social Research Methodology, 8:1, 19-32
- Arnone, M (2003) Using instructional design to strategies to foster curiosity. Available from: <http://www.ericdigests.org/2004-3/foster.html> (accessed 29/4/16)
- BASW (2015) Professionals Capabilities Framework. Available from: <https://www.basw.co.uk/pcf/capabilities/?level=10> (accessed 29/4/16)
- Bedford, A (2015) Serious Case Review into Child Sexual Exploitation in Oxfordshire: from the experiences of Children A, B, C, D, E, and F. Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board. Available from: <http://www.oscb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/SCR-into-CSE-in-Oxfordshire-FINAL-FOR-WEBSITE.pdf> (accessed 26/4/16)
- Berlyn, D (1960) Conflict, arousal and curiosity. New York: McGraw-Hill.

# References

- Broadhurst, K, White, S, Fish, S, Munro, E, Fletcher, K and Lincoln, H. (2010) Ten pitfalls and how to avoid them: What research tells us. NSPCC, available from: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/10-pitfalls-initial-assessments-report.pdf> (accessed 10/5/16).
- Buechler, S (2004) *Clinical Values: Emotions that Guide Psychoanalytic Treatment*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge
- Cooper, J (2011) The need for more critically reflective social work. Community Care, Available from: <http://www.communitycare.co.uk/2011/04/08/the-need-for-more-critically-reflective-social-work/> (accessed 28/4/16)
- Day H (1982) Curiosity and the interested explorer. NSPI Journal 4, 19-22
- Department of Health and Social Services Inspectorate (1996) *A Hidden Disability: The report of the SSI Traumatic Brain Injury Rehabilitation Project*. London: HMSO.
- Department of Health (2005) *Kerr/Haslam Inquiry: Full Report*. London: TSO (The Stationery Office).
- Dewey, (1938) *How we think*. Boston MA: Houghton
- Eason, T. (2010) Lifelong Learning: Fostering a Culture of Curiosity [\*Creative Nursing\* 16\(4\):155-9](#)

# References

- Freire, P (1998) *Pedagogy is freedom: Ethics, democracy and civic courage*. Lanham MD. Rowman and Littlefield.
- Harbeck Voshel E (2012) Reflections of a field director: An opportunity to look into the past and see the future. *Reflections* 18 (2) 24-31.
- Kedge, S and Appleby, B. (2010) Promoting a culture of curiosity within nursing practice *British Journal of Nursing* 2009, Vol 18, No 10
- Kedge, S and Appleby, B. (2009) Promoting curiosity through the enhancement of competence *British Journal of Nursing* 2010, Vol 19, No 9
- Harrington, M (2016) On the road. *Shutterbug* (May Edition).
- Bhardwa, S (2015) A Local Responsibility. *Independent Nurse* 16<sup>th</sup> February 2015. Available from: <https://www.independentnurse.co.uk/news/fgm-a-local-responsibility/73859/> (assessed 18<sup>th</sup> May 2016)
- Izard C (1977) *Human Emotions*. New York: Plenum Press.
- Kashdan, T Social anxiety spectrum and diminished positive experiences: Theoretical synthesis and meta-analysis. *Clinical Psychology Review* 27, 348-365.

# References

- Litman, J (2005) Curiosity and the pleasures of learning: Wanting and liking new information. *Cognitive Emotion* 19(6) 793-814
- Loewenstein's G (1994) The psychology of curiosity. A review and re-interpretation. *Psychological Bulletin* 116, 75-98
- Mantell, A (2010) Traumatic Brain Injury and Potential Safeguarding Concerns. *Journal of Adult Protection*, 12(4) 31-42.
- Milner, V (2005) Mapping the new frontier of foodbank social work. *Social Work Review*.
- Munro (2011) The Munro Review of Child Protection: Interim Report. Available from:  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/206993/DFE-00010-2011.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/206993/DFE-00010-2011.pdf) (accessed 5/5/16)
- Naqvi, S (2013) Thinking the unthinkable. *Professional Social Work*, May, 14-14. Available from [http://cdn.basw.co.uk/upload/basw\\_30935-9.pdf](http://cdn.basw.co.uk/upload/basw_30935-9.pdf) (accessed 11/5/16)
- NMC (2015) <https://www.nmc.org.uk/.../nurses-and-midwives-will-have-to-report-cases-of-fgm/> (assessed 18<sup>th</sup> May 2016)

# References

- [Oshikanlu, R \(2014\) Re-Kindle your Curiosity. Nursing Times 9/5/14, Available from: www.nursingtimes.net/rekindle-your-curiosity](http://www.nursingtimes.net/rekindle-your-curiosity) ( assessed 18/5/16)
- Prilleltensky, I., Rossiter, A., & Walsh-Bowers, R. (1996). Preventing harm and promoting ethical discourse in the helping professions. *Ethics and Behaviour* 4, 287-306.
- Shenaar-Golan V and Gutman C (2013) Curiosity and the cat: Teaching strategies that foster curiosity. *Social work with groups* 36(4) 349-359
- Tate R, Broe G & Lulham J (1989) Impairment after severe blunt head injury: the results from a consecutive series of 100 patients. *Acta Neurologica Scandinavica* **79** (2) 97–100.
- Vygotsky, L (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press
- White, J (2007) Working in the Midst of Ideological and Cultural Differences: Critically Reflecting on Youth Suicide Prevention in Indigenous Communities. *Canadian Journal of Counselling* 41(4), 213-227.



# Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Jo Delree for her support.