

Does inter-professional learning  
(IPL) impact positively on inter-  
agency working in a community  
of child protection practice?

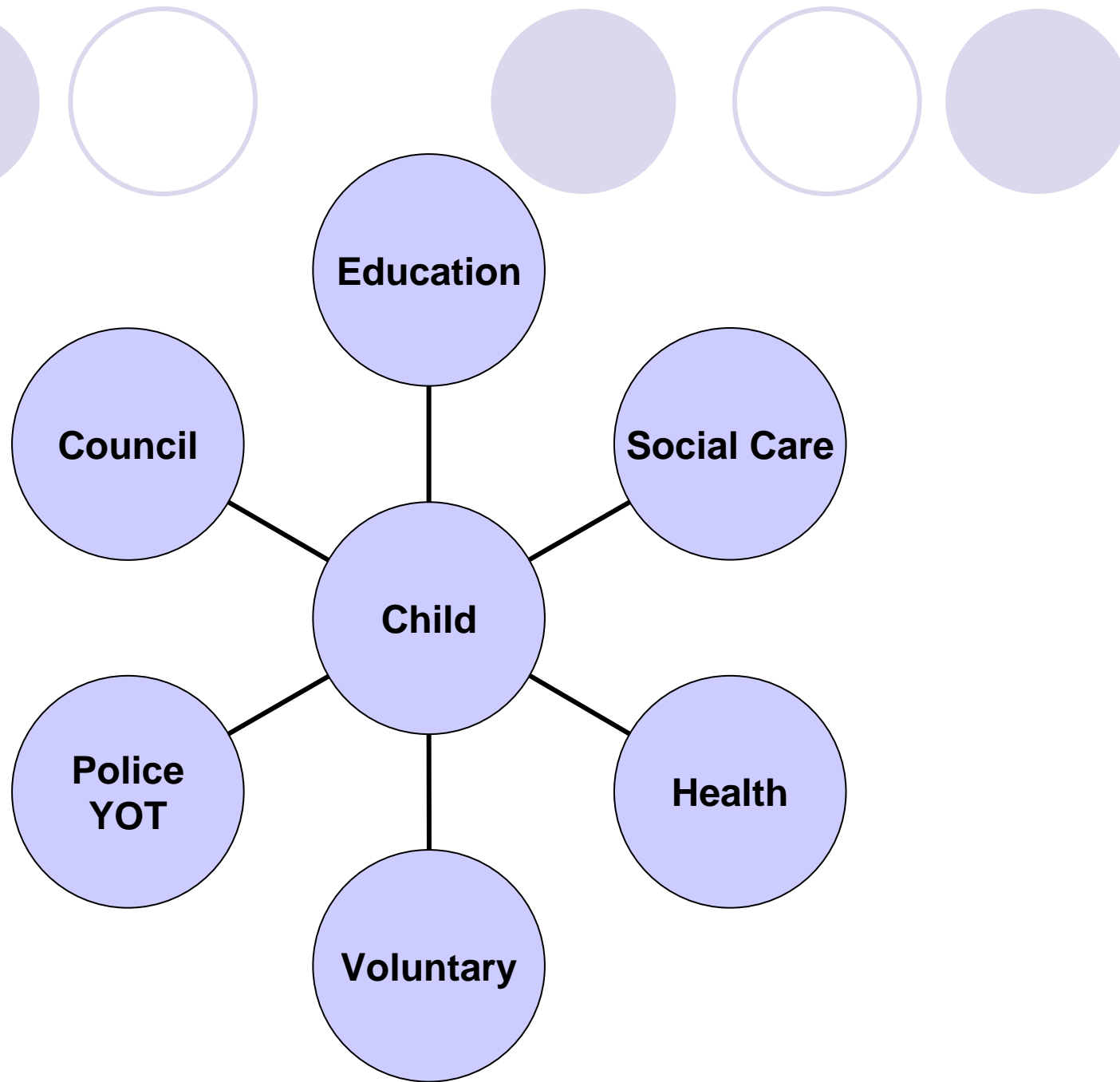
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ECE Conference 2009



# Aims

- To provide a psychodynamic account of interpersonal identifications within the community of child protection practice
- To provide a social cultural analysis of the discursive terrain, its silences & its impact on perceived social roles
- To contribute to social science theory regarding the nature of inter-professional learning
- To provide a framework to guide future practice in the context of IPL in child protection towards enhancing multi-agency working

**Context**



# Research methods - Ethnography

- Importance of context & people  
(Jeffrey & Troman, 2004)
- Extensive data from key informants  
(Woods, 1986)
- Flexibility to follow compelling interests  
(Wolcott, 1986)

# Data Collection



- **Observation** (PIAT evaluation tool)
  - Overt & covert discourse
- **Questionnaire**
  - Demographic data
  - Relationships with other agencies
- **Interviews** (PIAT relationship tool)
  - Professional identity & relationships
  - Appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider & Srivasta, 1987)



# Theoretical framework

- Situated learning

(Lave & Wenger, 1991)

- Community of practice

(Wenger, 1998; 1999)

- Subjectivity & identity

(Lacan, 2005; Zizec, 2005)



# Background

## **Inter-professional learning (IPL)**

- Learning for a common purpose to improve collaboration or quality of care  
(CAIPE, 2003)

## **Child protection**

- Policy direction supports inter-professional working & thus by implication learning  
(Laming, 2003; DH, 2004; DfES, 2004)

# Barriers to IPL

A decorative graphic consisting of two rows of circles. The top row has three circles: a solid light purple circle, a white circle with a light purple outline, and a solid light purple circle. The bottom row has three circles: a solid light purple circle, a white circle with a light purple outline, and a solid light purple circle.

- Professional barriers  
(Harlow & Shardlow, 2006)
- Professional-cultural dimension  
(Hudson, 2005)
- Micro-politics of joined-up endeavours  
(Garrett, 2004)





# Barriers to collaboration

- **Thresholds for intervention**

(Birchall & Hallett, 1995; Reconstruct, 2003)

- **Prevailing professional ideologies** (Powell, 2002)

- **Organisational culture & communication**

(Laming, 2003, Reconstruct, 2003; Reder & Duncan, 2003)

- **Lack of respect or professional mistrust**

(Brandon et al, 1999)

- **Context** (Reder & Duncan, 2003; Brandon et al (1999)

- **Information sharing concerns**

(Reconstruct, 2003; Sinclair & Bullock, 2002; Laming, 2003)

# Interagency Relationships - factors

- Stereotypes
- Value systems
- Unfulfilled expectations
- Disrespect for others expertise
- Territorialism & role identifications
- Status & power
- Competition for resources
- Professional & organisational priorities

Reder & Duncan (2003)

# Solutions?



- Rose (2007) explores team reasoning (Gilbert, 2005; Sugden, 2005) as a means to explain & improve multi-agency collaboration
- Overcome boundedness (Easen et al,2000)
- Common purpose & goals, team building, transparent lines of communication (Robinson et al, 2004)
- Standards for training (Murphy et al, 2006)

# Questionnaires

- A total of 97 questionnaires returned from a variety of agencies & professionals

**Table. 1 What organisation do you work for?**

Health	Social	Education	Early years	Voluntary/ other
20	23	18	26	10

What do think other agencies value most about your role?

## **Health**

- Within health there was a feeling that other agencies were ‘beginning to recognise it’ (H4), including ‘co-operation’. Focus on children (H5), ‘monitoring’ (H17), & ‘knowledge of & access to families’. Knowledge of child development (H18).

What do think other agencies value most about your role?

## **Social care**

- Flexibility (S1); experience (S2, S4), advice, support & guidance (S2, S21); & leadership (S5, S13, S14).
- Tendency to negativity in some responses e.g. 'We will take the flak! Feeling that we are used by some agencies to take on responsibility – buck stops with Children's Services' (S3); 'we aren't considered professionals by others' (S17); social workers are not recognised as professionals' (S18).
- However expertise in a particular field of specialism was recognised (S6), with particular fields such as sexually harmful behavior (S15) & respite care (S9, S10).

What do think other agencies value most about your role?

## **Education**

- Positive factors raised by education staff included knowledge (E3, E4, E5, E9, E16); & the positive impact on children's lives (E11, E12, E13, E14).
- However negative comments materialised here too – 'we feel undervalued (E3) and 'they value the "holidays" we have! I'm not really sure...I don't feel especially feel valued by other agencies' (E8).

What do think other agencies value most about your role?

## **Early years**

- Care provided to children (EY24, EY7, EY18) & knowledge (EY8) highlighted – ‘people often say ‘I couldn’t do your job’ (EY6). The value of child care was emphasised ‘I am willing to give any child/family an opportunity. My setting welcomes every child’ (EY19).
- However – ‘don’t think other agencies see childminders as much more than babysitters (EY26)



What do think other agencies value most about your role?

## **Voluntary/other**

- The 'ability to be flexible, creative, open communication & often role of mediator between housing, police & children's services re ASB & crime & disorder' (C1)
- Providing positive time (C6) to develop young persons' social skills, confidence.....Providing an opportunity for young people to have a voice and develop identity (C6)
- The service we provide for young people, especially as it isn't time limited! (C9)

# Learning & working together - **positive**

## **Learning**

- Enjoy multi-agency training
- Networking
- Knowledge of the other agencies
- Learning about others work/views
- Sharing knowledge, information, expertise, ideas

## **Working**

- Sharing responsibilities
- Maximises services for young people
- Respect other agencies skills & contributions
- Seeing the whole picture, varied info
- Information sharing
- Improving outcomes for children
- Speedier services
- Support

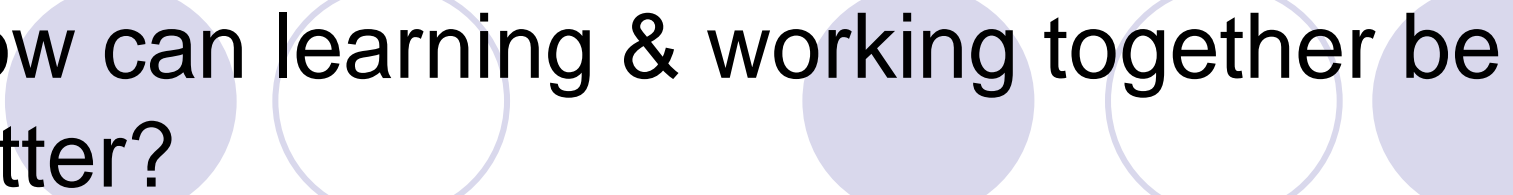
# Learning & working together - **negative**

- **Health** - communication barriers; variability in knowledge base/learning needs; lack of understanding of roles
- **Social care** - lack of flexibility; unrealistic expectations; assumptions regarding the role; different values or philosophies; lack of appreciation or understanding; complaining; communication barriers; conflict of roles or different agendas
- **Education** - lack of contact or commitment; time factors; too many new initiatives & changes; lack of information sharing or poor communication; different boundaries & thresholds

# Learning & working together - **negative**

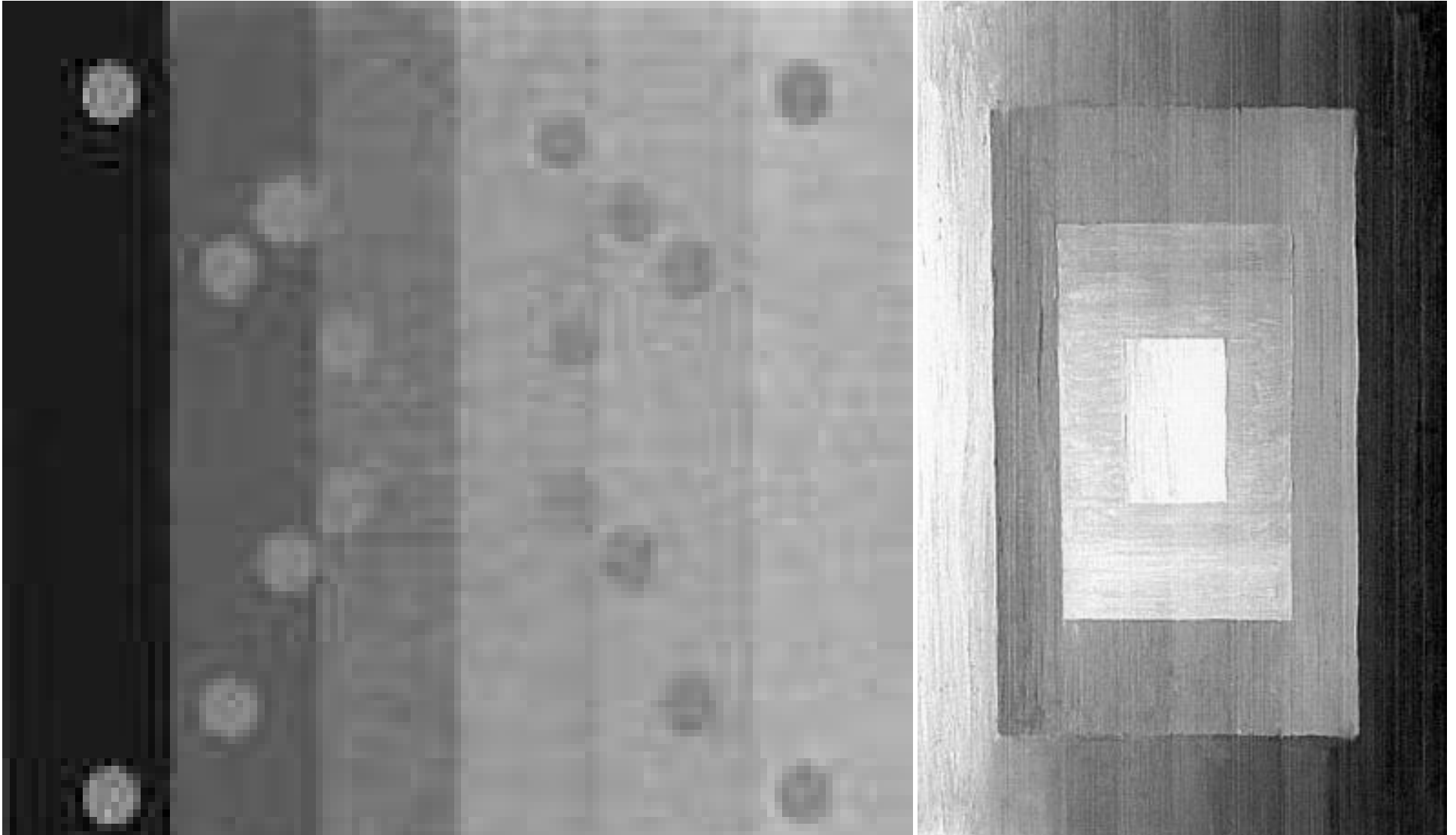
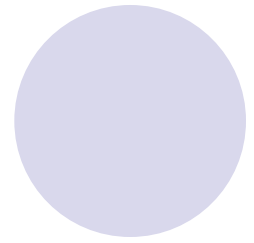
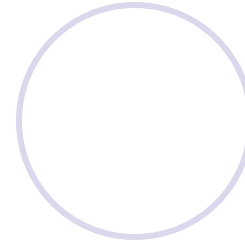
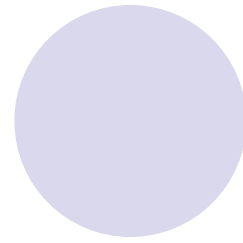
- **Early years** - 'frustration that things don't happen as quickly as I would like & that I don't have authority to change things' (EY5). 'When they don't listen or understand or ask opinion about support' (EY7). 'Do not like being put with nursery workers. 2 different environments' (EY22). 'Do not like being assessed as a nursery worker. We do not run or work in the same way' (EY23)
- **Voluntary** - 4 community workers found nothing to dislike (C4, C5, C7, C8). Other comments raised included: 'conflicting agendas, lack of understanding & willingness to listen to role/responsibilities' (C1); 'sometimes different services ethos/targets e.g. not every service has the same objectives' (C2); & 'stepping on others toes' (C3)

# How can learning & working together be better?

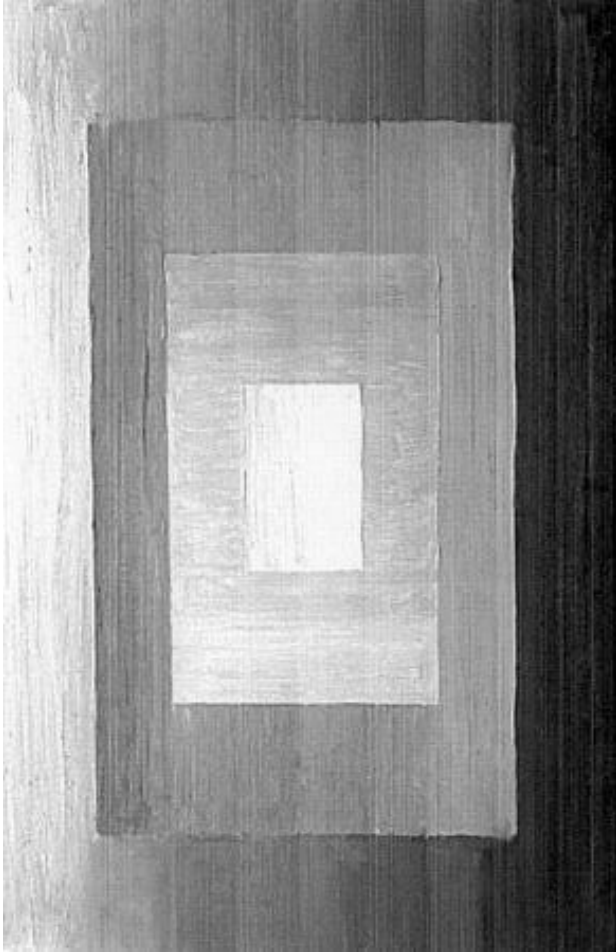


- More training
- More understanding of roles
- Better communication
- Information sharing
- Job shadowing
- Development of mutual respect
- Inter-agency workshops/focus groups
- Team working, collaboration

Shades of grey?



# How can learning & working together be better?



- “Should all be for the better; however fearful that we could all end up the same – varying shades of grey”.

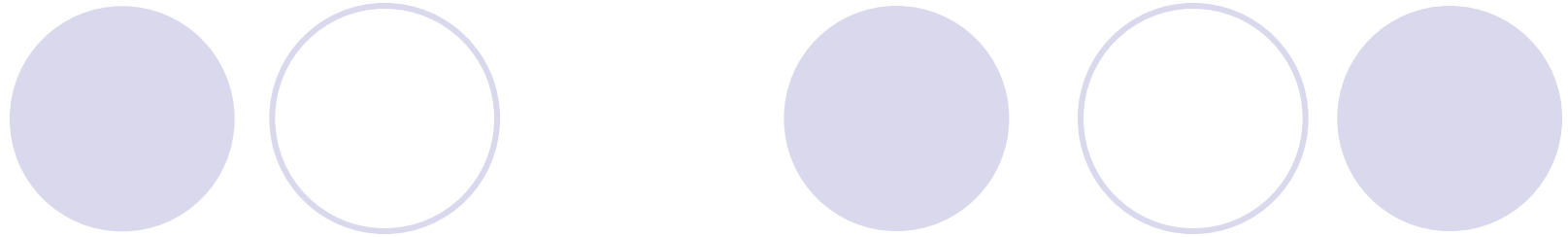
(Social Worker)



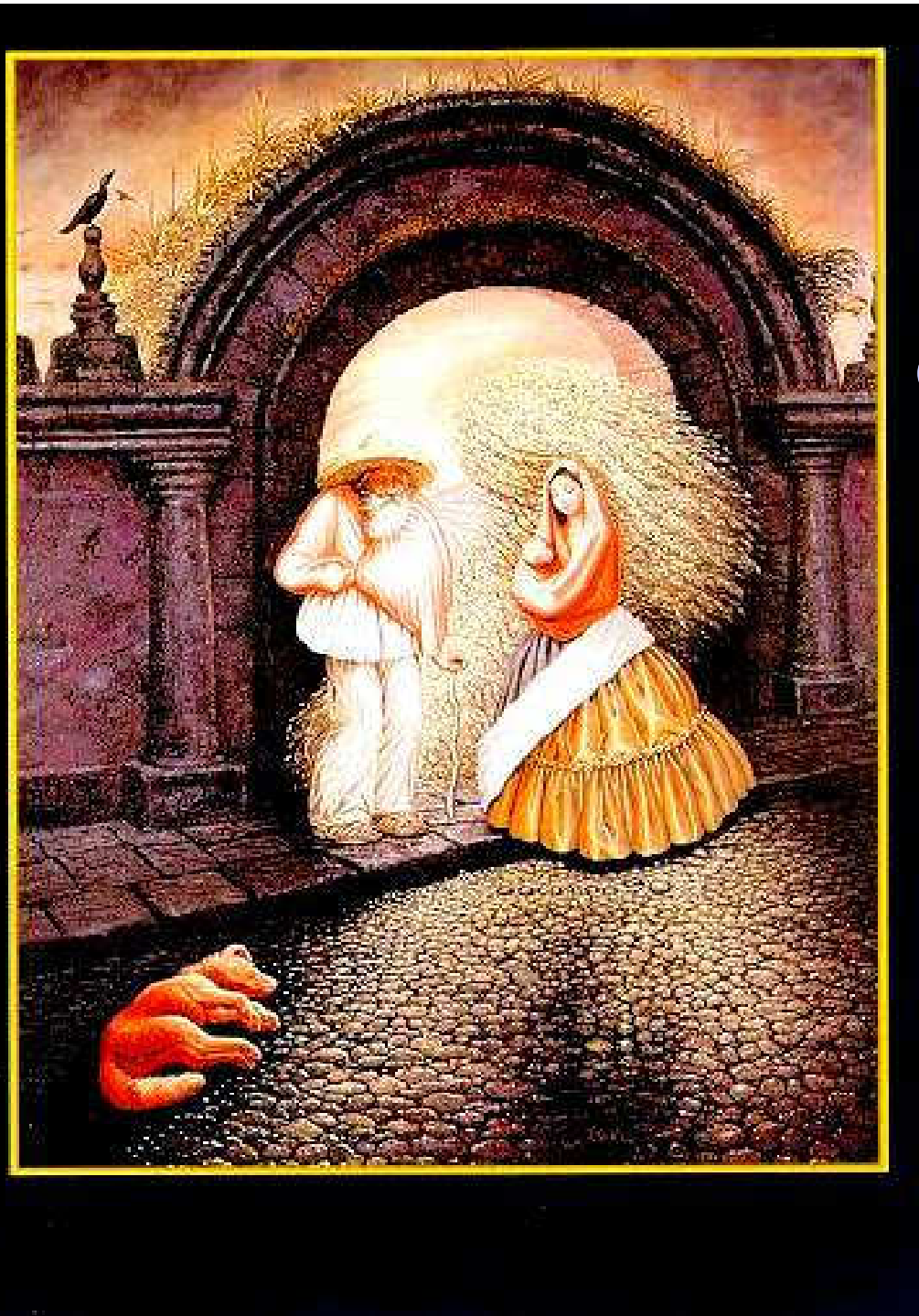


More beautiful in colour?





- ‘..for multi-agency events to be successful, they should allocate time to consider relevant interprofessional relationships, regardless of the topic that has brought everyone together’ (Reder et al, 1993 p.133)



- Can you find 9 people in this picture?