

Getting close enough to 'smell the
real' with psychosocial, visual and
longitudinal narrative research:
implications for research and practice

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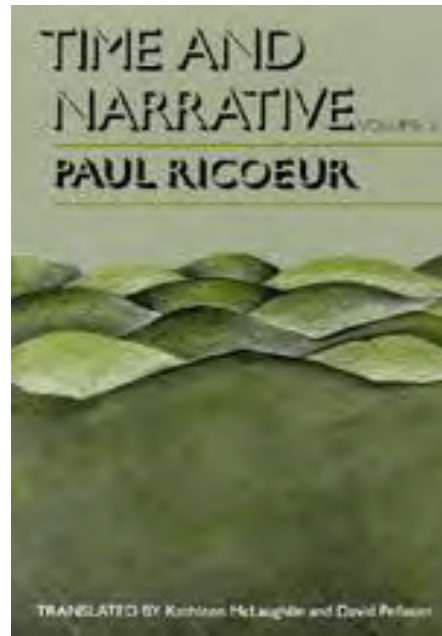
Kelly D, Whelan J, Gibson F

‘Longitudinal narrative study of representations of identity for young adults with cancer over one year from their diagnosis’

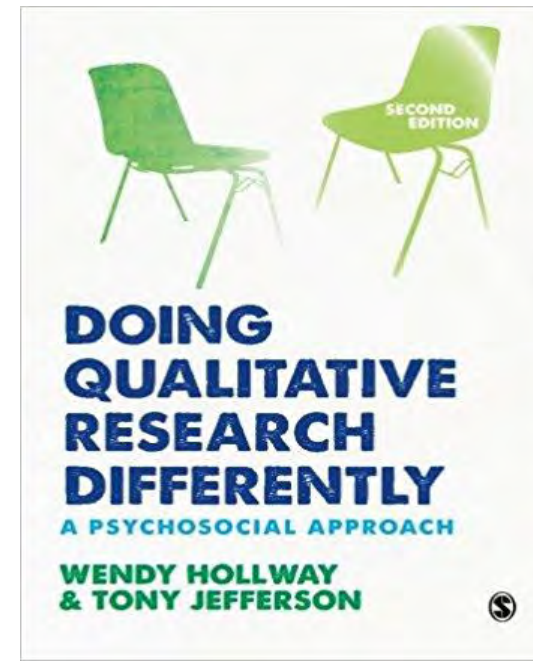
- Understand more fully the contribution of innovative research methods in exploring experience
- ‘Get beneath the surface’ give voice and go beyond social construction of experience

Background to the method

- Firmly grounded in the core philosophical underpinning of the phenomenology (the study of subjective experience)



- ‘Psychosocial thickening’ or enrichment of interpretative experience based research (Hollway and Jefferson, 2013).



Temporal

- 'everything people do is embedded and extended in time, across of past, present and future, time is an inescapable aspect of existence' (Henwood and Shrani, 2012 p1).
- Allows representation of psychologically complex and embodied research subjects, in relation to others and within relation to changing social contexts (Mcleod and Thomson, 2009, Thomson, 2012).

Interview 1.

2 months from diagnosis

Initial discussion about taking photographs



Follow up phone call/text message/visit

Photo diary period 1.

Phone call/ visit/ transfer of photographs to researcher



Interview 2.

About 6 months from diagnosis



Follow phone call/text message/visit

Photo diary period 2.

Phone call/ visit / transfer of photographs to researcher



Interview 3.

12 months from diagnosis



Phone call / text/Visit

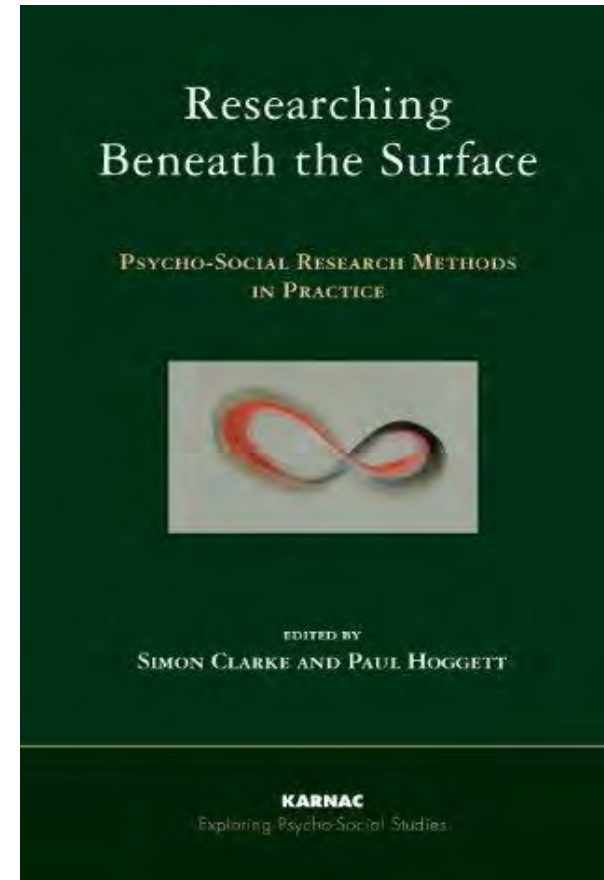
Follow up visit face to face to hello when next in if appropriate

The visual

- Integrated 'seeing' into the research process
- Embodied, symbolic and contextual meaning (Radley and Taylor, 2003)
- Communication of difficult experiences
- Collection of data across moments in time and place.

Psychosocial

- Need to explore emotion as part of the study of experience;
- Bridge the split between individual and society (Frosh and Barraister, 2008)
- Gave me a framework for understanding the depth of data overtime



Data collected	
18 participants	14 male, 4 female
41 interviews	Average 69 minutes
Photographs	5 participants
3 interviews	8 participants
2 interviews	6 participants
1 interview	4 participants

Analysis

- Individual case over time
- The complex and particular
- Use of a reflective psychosocial panel discussion for key chunks of text

1. Narrative was co-produced, accessed the intersubjective.

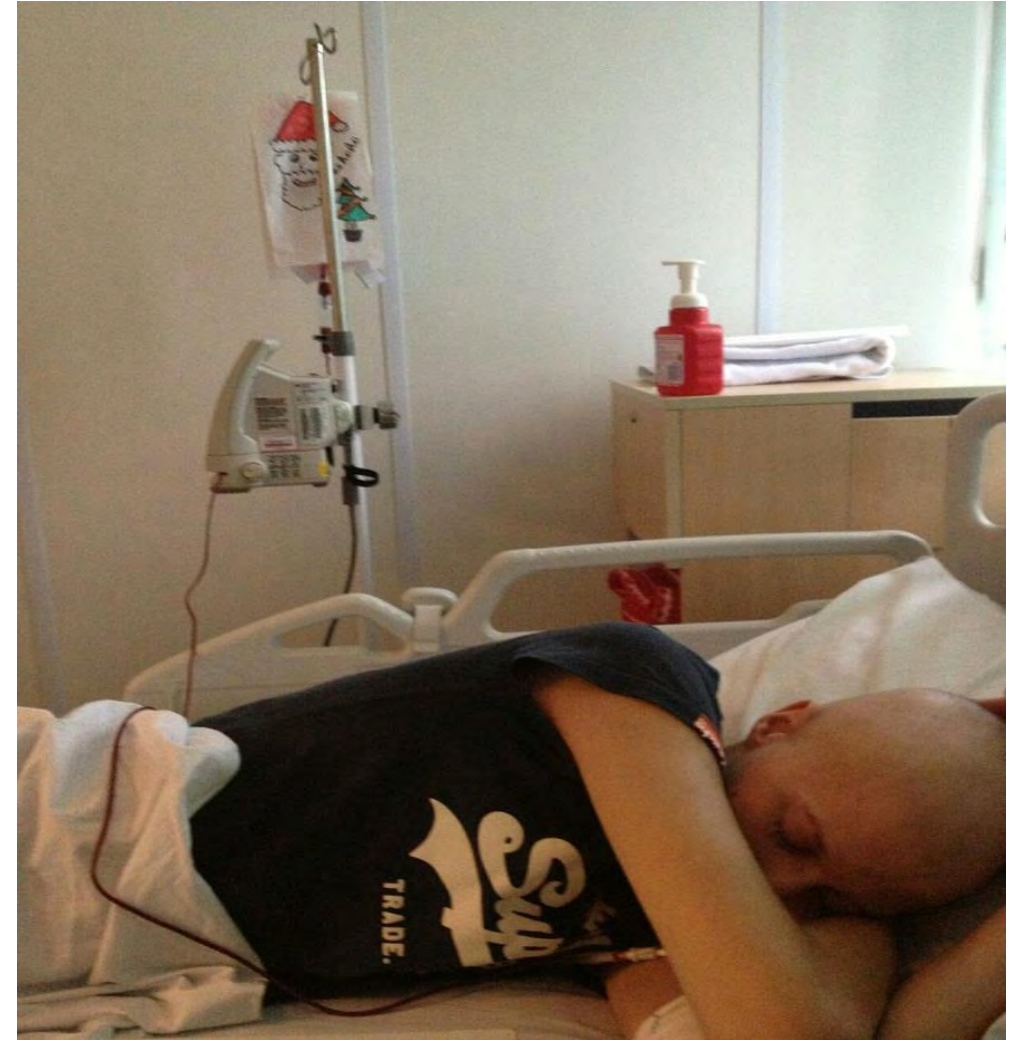
Free association interviews

- A joint construction of narrative and meaning (Mischler, 1986).
- Space to talk about experience in a way they wanted (Wengraf, 2009; Hollway and Jefferson, 2013)
- Intersubjective space through attending and active listening (Lillrank, 2012)

Visual

- A 'tool' in giving a 'voice' - 'photovoice' (Wang, 1999).
- Empowerment, partnership and sharing from the participant to the researcher
- Used as a prompt for the participants to tell their story;
- Averted the researchers gaze (Rollins, 2015)
- Linked past present and future, telling stories not yet known

- Stories of the body, hospitalisation, sense of isolation and boredom;



Important events, family and friends, ritual, place



To things gained and things lost; transformation;
and developmental achievements.



- *"These are all the pictures that I took myself, and they, they're sort of – I almost see them as something through my eyes, something I've done perhaps that no one else was there, like taking the picture of myself when I was feeling really poorly. No one else, a part from us actually, knows about that". Simon, Interview 3*

visual without photographs

- *“A dark room, a dark room just maybe like, just being able to see the outline of me in bed, rolled over, you wouldn’t necessarily know it was me, apart from the bald head. I didn’t want to get up. I was just like lying in bed all day. Not really wanting to talk to anyone the dark days, a dark room”.*

- Simon, Interview2

- **Myth**

- *“The chemo one is also very straight. But it’s a bit hard to go through. It’s like lots of brambles and stuff, a bit overgrown. But I can always cross the path to surgery . . . so that’s always good. It’s like they haven’t ever like cut that path off and said I sort of like to visualise it in that way.”*

- Simon, Interview 2

2. The temporal supported the development of trusting relationships

- Wealth of opportunities for the building of trust, rapport, collaboration and a sense of reciprocity (Laslett and Rapoport, 1975).
- Being in the field
- Impact on the depth data
- Labour- emotionally, practically, time

Storytelling - renegotiation of self over time

"I'm piecing together so many conversations I've had with so many other people, who haven't got the whole picture like I've put it for you. They've had little bits, little conversations. And I'm piecing together all those conversations into sort of one story almost, like now you've got the whole story. And some sort of behind the scenes peeks at what I was thinking and what was going on for me, which a lot of people don't see". Simon, Interview 3.

- A tension - maintaining a sample overtime and ensuring the participants are informed and have an opportunity to withdraw at any time (Neale and Hanna, 2012).
- Face to face communication (Patrick, 2012).
- Managing endings

3. The interview space became a container for the intolerable

- Opportunity to make sense of their experience.
- *“I’m not saying I don’t know you, but I find it easier to talk to you.”* Richard, Interview 2.
- *“talking at this depth is not something I have done with others.”* Max, Interview 3.

Containment

- A mother's capacity to hold her baby's anxiety, contain her own emotion and provide a safe space for the baby
- Psychotherapist, researcher, clinician -hold and contain the intolerable.
- Emotions that cannot be expressed verbally-projective identification

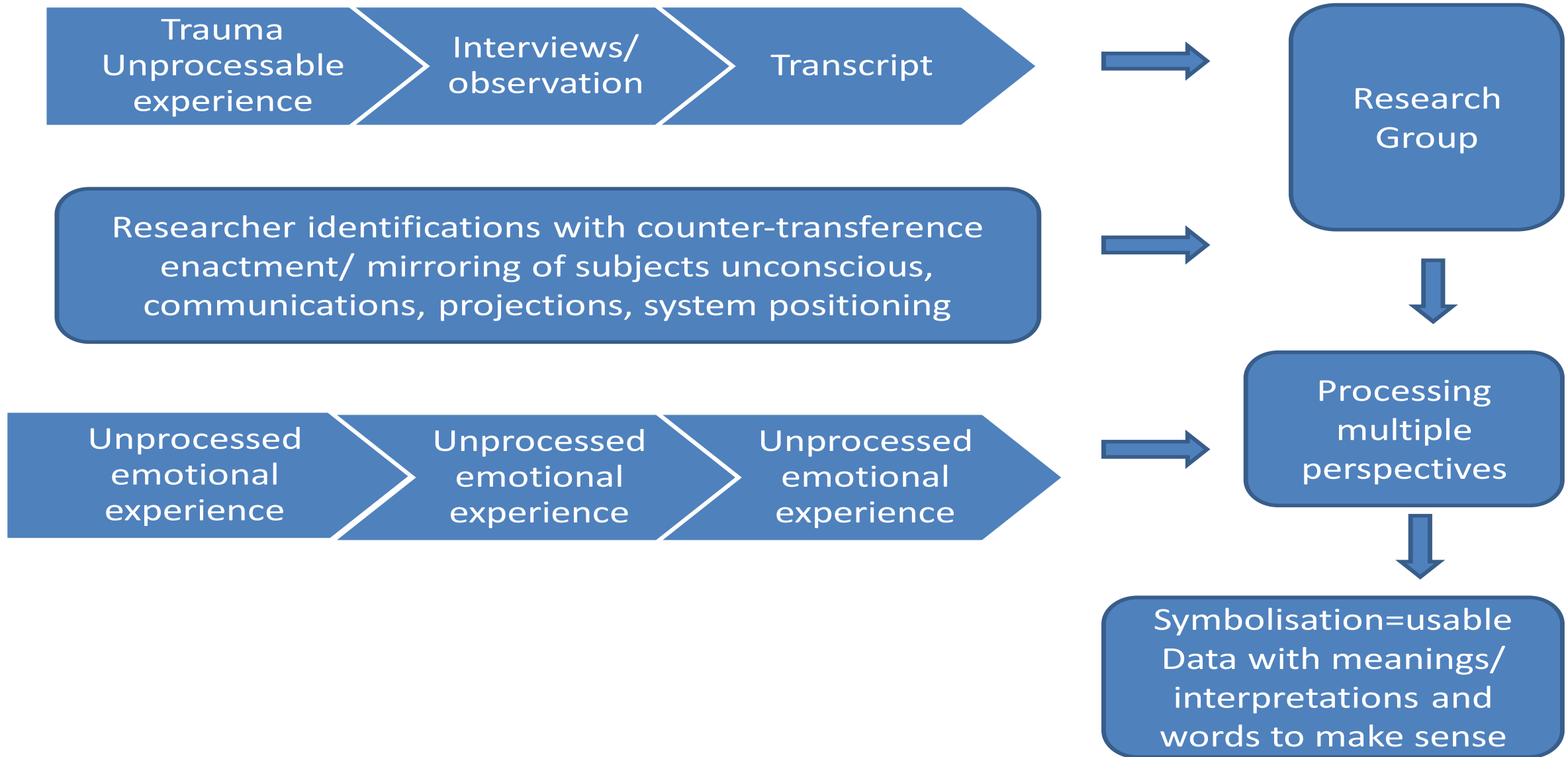
Counter-transference

- Participants may evoke feelings that are their own
- Alien 'otherness'; beyond words (Clarke, 2000).
- *overwhelming sadness, despair and grief that seemed to come from nowhere.*
- A source of meaning (Hollway, 2006)

4. Psychosocial reflexivity-supported through a containing psychosocial research group.

- Chunks of 'stuck' data
- Free association techniques to suggest/ test additional hypotheses within the data.
- Power of the third (Clarke and Hoggett, 2008);
- Thinking minds (Price and Cooper, 2008)

The suggested role of the psychosocial research group in psychoanalytic research
(adapted from Cooper, personal communication)



Reflexivity

- Ongoing capacity to be aware of my feelings, my own defences, assumptions and prejudices (Stanley and Wise, 1983)
- Essential in managing the ethical and methodological complexity of this study

Conclusions

- Close to the real world of practice, 'being with'
- It brings emotion, time and the visual into experience focused research
- The co- construction of narrative – empowering, where the intolerable could be expressed
- Costs to professionals- being emotionally near
- Spaces for psychosocial reflexivity in practice.

Thanks

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