## Centre for Narrative Research in the Social Sciences

## University of East London

***To THink is To eXperiment***

**Wednesday, 20th April, 2016**, **University Square Stratford**,

Room: USS 4.15

Directions: <http://www.universitysquarestratford.ac.uk/find-us.htm>

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| **9.45 - 10.00** | ***Welcome and Introductions*** |
| **10.00 - 10.30** | **Siyanda Ndlovu Memorial Lecture**  **Title tbc**  Dr Marvelle Brown |
| **10.30 – 10.55** | **Why unheard voices matter: The multiple narratives of British women who posed for *Playboy* magazine (1958-1990s)**  Marjolein Van Bavel, University College London |
| **10.55 - 11.20** | **Adolescents narratives of embodied experience of living with chronic kidney disease.**  Colleen O Neill, Dublin City University |
| **11.20 – 11.40** | ***Coffee Break*** |
| **11.40 – 12.05** | **No Papers, No Voice? Questions of reflexivity, recognition and representation in research with undocumented young migrants in the UK.**  Yesim Deveci, University of East London |
| **12.05 – 12.30** | **One researcher’s journey towards understanding the role of affect in teaching and learning about evolution in science**  Emma Newall, UCL IOE |
| **12.30 – 12.55** | **Methodological challenges in researching teacher’s perceptions and identities: An account focused on analysing narratives**  Ferney Cruz, King’s College London |
| **12.55 – 14.00** | ***Lunch Break*** |
| **14.00 - 14.25** | **Personal narratives of film-watching experiences on digital media**  Ignacio López Escarcena, King’s College London |
| **14.25 - 14.50** | **Theorising with borrowed time: The methodological considerations and consequences of combining cross-disciplinary conceptualisations of narrative temporality**  Holly Henderson, University of Birmingham |
| **14.50 –15.15** | **Hidden stories within found words: writing personal narratives with words photographed in public spaces of London**  Manoela Afonso, Chelsea College of Arts, University of the Arts London |
| **15.15 -15.35** | ***Coffee Break*** |
| **15.35 -16.00** | **The Limits and Advantages of Using BNIM when Researching Chinese Mothers across Three Generations**  Xin Guo, UCL (IOE) |
| **16.00 - 16.25** | **Drawing from the life stories of former political violent activists in Portugal**  Raquel da Silva, University of Birmingham |
| **16.25 - 17.00** | Discussion over drinks |

Poster

# Narrative Reflections: Researching within one’s own illness community

# Sharon Gallagher & Diane Trusson

**Abstracts:**

**Why unheard voices matter: The multiple narratives of British women who posed for *Playboy* magazine (1958-1990s)**

**Marjolein Van Bavel, University College London**

Drawing on the oral histories of ten British women who posed for *Playboy* magazine (1958-1990s) and insights from the field of narrative studies, my paper will reflect upon what it is my interviewees choose to share with me and the circumstances under which diverging forms of sharing take place. I will consider how we should make sense of their narratives, considering that the interviewees – within a particular setting and interviewing relationship – actively present the interviewer with particular narratives that work to legitimize the experience of working as a nude model as an either positive or negative experience, constructing the self in the process. Moreover, I will reflect upon the potential silences within my research project and how we are to make sense of these silences. Combining an experience-centred approach with a broader socio-historical approach and taking into consideration the subjective nature of the narration of past in the present, I argue that we can nevertheless learn something about the pressures these women faced within a particular context and their attempts at navigating these pressures. Consequently, my project attempts to transcend the dyadic opposition between victimhood and free agency that has characterized previous debates on pornography.

**Adolescents narratives of embodied experience of living with chronic kidney disease**

**Colleen O Neill, School of Nursing and Human Sciences, Dublin City University**

Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) has profound physiologic effects which can have immense physical and psychological consequences for children as well as their families. Experiencing this disease during adolescence can evoke feelings of confusion, frustration and isolation as the young person is simultaneously contending with a changing pubescent body and a body that is being changed through disease and medical intervention. While some research is available as to how these conflations and restrictions affect physical and social aspects of the adolescent’s life, specific issues pertaining to embodiment and bodily experiences have received little attention. Merleau-Ponty (1962) argued that a person’s relation to the world is defined through his or her body. We experience the world through our bodies and we tell stories about these embodied experiences in order to make sense of events and actions in our lives (Sparkes 1997). Additionally, the stories we are told concerning our bodies shape the stories we learn to tell about our bodies. The aim of this study is to explore embodied experiences of 5 adolescents aged 10 -17 years living with CKD. In the context of this study these body stories are accessed through ethnographic fieldwork; spending extended periods of time with the young people as they encounter and process body experiences. Articulation and exploration of these experiences will be achieved through research orientated conversations and observations. Body stories, particularly among adolescents frequently evade language and traditional linguistic storytelling behaviour. Participatory arts- based narrative work (body mapping) will enable us to access the stories that are written on and in the body.

**No Papers, No Voice? Questions of reflexivity, recognition and representation in research with undocumented young migrants in the UK.**

**Yesim Deveci, University of East London**

The boy had a delightful curious face. "Do you live in London?" he asked Obinze. "Yes," Obinze said, but that did not tell his story, that he lived in London indeed but invisibly, like an erased pencil sketch; each time he saw ... anyone in uniform, anyone with the faintest scent of authority, he would fight the urge to run."

(Adichie, 2013:318)

At a time when unprecedented numbers of people risk their lives to come to the UK and their right to remain is highly contested, representation, particularly in relation to questions of identity and belonging, becomes critical for how people are known and treated.

This paper will argue that the creation of knowledge and the ways in which we know, understand and represent ourselves and others is inextricably bound by our biographies, lived experiences, ethics and values. From this perspective, there is a need to develop radical reflexive methodological frameworks to address the complex multi-dimensionality of subjectivity and social positioning in research on identity, belonging and migration.

This presentation will discuss my current research project exploring the hopes and dreams, everyday lives and life histories of young people living in the UK with irregular immigration status. It will outline an innovative methodological approach which combines practice experience (Deveci, 2012) with creative participatory methods (Deveci & Shakerifar, 2009), unstructured ‘sociable dialogue’ (Sinha & Back, 2013), and psychosocial narrative interview methods (Hollway & Jefferson, 2012, Wengraf, 2001). The paper will reflect upon the ways in which my life history and professional experience, as a second-generation Turkish Cypriot woman working with separated young refugees and migrants in East London, has informed the development of the project.

In conclusion, the paper will discuss the interplay between reflexive positioning and representation and their relationship to questions of belonging, identity, recognition, legitimacy, choice and choicelessness.

**One researcher’s journey towards understanding the role of affect in teaching and learning about evolution in science**

**Emma Newall, UCL IOE**

Evolution is a foundational topic in biological science. However, experience in the classroom, my own and that documented in the research literature, reveals a subject that is perceived by teachers and students as difficult and controversial. My personal experience as a science educator has resulted in an interest in people’s emotional responses to ideas associated with evolutionary concepts, ideas such as extinction, change, purpose and humans as animals. Using a theoretical framework based on psychoanalytical principles I have developed a form of Free Association Narrative Interviewing (FANI) to probe the responses of novice educators in science and other disciplines to a number of visual stimuli chosen to present these ideas for discussion.

My research participants are asked to discuss ideas associated with an abstract scientific concept, but their talk is often highly personal in nature, as they share their experiences in and out of education. I have reflected during my own journey as interviewer on how I can do justice to my interview participant: What is a valid interpretation? How can we attempt to better understand ourselves and each other and what are the implications of my experience in this research for teaching evolution in the classroom?

**Methodological challenges in researching teacher’s perceptions and identities: An account focused on analysing narratives**

**Ferney Cruz, King’s College London**

My PhD is a narrative study which investigates the current state of affairs of the teaching of English in Colombian rural areas. More specifically, drawing on principles of critical pedagogy and theories of social justice, this research aims at examining the ways in which meanings English language teachers have constructed about their practice and about their professional identity may have been influenced by both the requirements of language policies on the one hand and the rural sociocultural landscape on the other. In doing so, the study interrogates the rhetoric on the social impact of the current English Language Teaching (ELT) programmes in light of issues of social inequality present in rural contexts. The data collected consists of two rounds of interviews with each participant (8 in total), participants’ written teaching biographies and field observations.

This paper will focus on discussing the methodological challenges I have had to deal with in the early stage of data analysis. Particularly, I will refer to issues of presentation of data (i.e., what counted as a story and how to integrate them in the discussion of findings), issues of translation (data is in Spanish), selection of appropriate frameworks (focused on the what and on the how), depth of analysis (going beyond the obvious).

**Personal narratives of film-watching experiences on digital media**

**Ignacio López Escarcena, King’s College London**

Within the burgeoning field that looks at online reviews from a discursive standpoint, an aspect that has started to receive scholarly attention is the stories that people tell when they evaluate a product or form of entertainment (Vásquez, 2014). Furthermore, online spaces can offer users the chance to carry out nostalgic performances and collective remembering through shared cultural references (Georgalou, 2015; Vásquez, 2015). As I will argue, discussions about cinema on digital media may include allusions to narratives of the relationship that users might have established with a particular film throughout the years (Vásquez, 2014).

These narratives related to film-consumption may come in the form of co-constructions or fleeting references to past events within the larger exercise of evaluating something. In this sense, they fit into what small stories research (Bamberg, 2004; Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008; Georgakopoulou, 2006, 2007) describes as people using stories in mundane instances, through disclosures that may be fragmented and have more in common with the small moments of talk than with fully-fledged narratives.

The purpose of my paper, then, will be to show some of these situations of co-construction of narratives, as well as more individual nostalgic remembrances that stem from online discussions about cinema.

**Theorising with borrowed time: The methodological considerations and consequences of combining cross-disciplinary conceptualisations of narrative temporality.**

**Holly Henderson, University of Birmingham.**

In this presentation, I explore the challenges of developing a framework for narrative analysis that draws upon three distinct conceptualisations of narrative temporality. My PhD project looks at the experiences of students studying undergraduate degrees in Further Education Colleges in England. I begin from the premise that temporality is inherent to the ways in which narratives of education are both experienced and told; not only does a current course of study draw upon previous learning experiences, but it is undertaken and understood in terms of the future opportunities that gaining a qualification brings. In order to explore the role played by both past and future in present narratives of educational subjectivities, I borrow the concept of ‘possible selves’ (Markus and Nurius, 1986) from cognitive psychology. I combine the ‘possible selves’ concept with writing on narrative time by literary theorist Ricoeur (1980) and on narrative subjectivities by Butler (2005). This presentation outlines the potential for productive discomfort that this cross-disciplinary combination offers, as well as the challenges it creates.

**Hidden stories within found words: writing personal narratives with words photographed in public spaces of London**

**Manoela Afonso, Chelsea College of Arts, University of the Arts London**

The aim of my practice-based PhD research is to create artistic processes for gathering autobiographical narratives about language and place. When I moved to London, most of my experiences became mediated by a new language. I then used my visual art practice to explore writing processes in English, a language that does not belong to me, and in Portuguese, my mother tongue. In this paper, I present the first writing process developed through my art practice. It consists of photographing words available in public spaces of London in order to build a vocabulary for writing personal narratives and creating artists’ books. After this, I offered the same vocabulary to a group of Brazilian women who also live in London in order to observe similarities and differences among our narratives on language and place. The results show that the higher the level of fluency, the more actively the participants behave in relation to a limited vocabulary, modifying the words in order to produce a more meaningful narrative. This part of my research is driven by the Yi-Fu Tuan’s approach to place, Alice Kaplan’s concept of language memoir, Paulo Freire’s approach to literacy, studies on linguistic landscape, and William S. Burroughs’ cut-up technique.

**The Limits and Advantages of Using BNIM when Researching Chinese Mothers across Three Generations**

**Xin Guo, UCL (IOE)**

This paper addresses some methodological reflections on applying the Biographical-Narrative-Interpretative Method (BNIM) in studying three generations of women’s motherhood experiences in China. From the KMT’s Republic of China in the 1920s, to a communist People’s Republic of China in the 1950s/60s, and to a much more capitalised China today, the three generations of mothers in this study have lived through a huge social, cultural and economic transformation. With this historical background, BNIM’s pragmatic attitude towards ‘hard data’ about a ‘lived life’ without losing the focus of the performative features of a ‘told life’ offers a useful technique in understanding these intergenerational women’s stories. However, some of the specific techniques in analysing data emphasised by BNIM created a few cultural and practical challenges. This paper is going to present some of my reflections on these methodological challenges and my adaptations of some BNIM techniques in order to overcome these challenges. Finally, I will propose that some of my adaptations to analysis process are, essentially, integrating sociological inquiry to a greater extent than much BNIM research has demonstrated.

**Drawing from the life stories of former political violent activists in Portugal**

**Raquel da Silva, University of Birmingham**

My doctoral research examined the life stories of former political violent activists in Portugal. In this paper I will explore how the stories people tell about their lives are connected with and shed light on the social, cultural, political, historical and human contexts that frame these same stories and these same lives. I will present an understanding of personal stories that are socially constructed and cannot be taken as *the* representation of *the* reality, but as *a* representation of *a* reality. Stories are the vehicles through which individuals represent their experiences based on the narratives available at their temporal and spatial locations; narratives that constitute the cultural and social resources that enable individuals to put their stories together, giving meaning to themselves and to the world, and shaping their personal identities. Thus, in order to reflect on how I drew from the life stories shared with me, I will discuss the following aspects:

* The ontological and epistemological assumptions in which my research is anchored (informed by Critical Terrorism Studies perspectives and by narrative analysis as a paradigm);
* The fieldwork involved in this research, particularly the procedures of data collection through interviewing;
* The steps taken in the analysis of data (informed by thematic and dialogic narrative analysis); and
* The ethical concerns raised by this research.

# Narrative Reflections: Researching within one’s own illness community

# Sharon Gallagher & Diane Trusson

This poster illustrates the benefits and dilemmas of researching a group with whom the researcher shares a health condition. The poster draws on two individual studies on living with early-stage breast cancer and Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. We found our shared experiences offered an opportunity for rapport where the sensitive topics of pain and suffering could be tackled. These increased levels of empathy and understanding also posed possible drawbacks. The depth of emotional involvement perhaps blurred the lines of researcher position, producing intimate disclosures, where we had to work to remain critically aware of our positions as researcher/and, in Sharon’s case, participant.

Comparisons are made in our markedly different illness experiences. Diane Trusson and her participants had been successfully treated and were living with long-term effects of treatment. Specifically discussed were the consequences of breast surgery on their bodies and relationships. Whereas, Sharon Gallagher and her participants had ongoing, debilitating illnesses, some bedbound and others in recovery, coping strategies were touched on in relation to surviving with this chronic illness. Reflexivity in this type of insider research is highlighted through the use of narrative quotations/images.

We both acknowledge the power differentials between ourselves as researchers and our participants and the possible exploitation of our common understandings (Finch, 1984). However, we argue that high levels of empathy enabled a deeper exploration of complex issues involved in the experience of illness and provided these under-represented populations with a much-needed voice, with some declaring that these stories would not have been offered to someone who had not experienced the illness in question. We hope our frank discussions of our experiences researching within our own illness community will provide useful insights, in so far this area has been under represented within social and health research.