



# Reducing researcher dominance in qualitative interviewing: the intersection of the novel and the mundane

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# Acknowledgements



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# Overview

- Recruitment and retention of participants
- Recognition of researcher dominance
- Participatory methods
  - Visual methods as a participatory approach
- The novel in our research
- The mundane in our research
- Reflections



# Good practice recruiting and retaining hard to reach participants

- Recruitment is always challenging (Grant, forthcoming)
- Balance gentle approach with need to generate data (Wolf, 1991)
- May need to appease gatekeepers (Rashid, 2007)
- Multiple interviews pose additional challenges (Porter & Lanes, 2008)

# Recognition of the impact of researcher dominance

- To be able to challenges dominant power relations, you need to identify them
  - This can be problematic
  - Researchers are often in a position of dominance – education level, social class etc
- Participatory approaches aim to work collaboratively to solve a problem (Vanderberg & Fear, 1983)
- Continuum from full Participatory Action Research to borrowing elements of participatory reserach (McIntyre, 2008)
- reflexivity, relationality and reciprocity can reduce researcher dominance (Vanderberg & Hall, 2011)

# Visual methods as a participatory method

- Visual methods sometimes viewed as creating more equal power relations
- However often partially participatory (not full PAR)
- The use of the visual alone **will not** engender more equal power relations (Mannay, 2016)
  - Eg: collect participant created artefacts but the researcher alone interprets them
  - Prior (2003) the author creates a text for the reader, but a shared knowledge is required
- Visual methods may need additional attention (Mannay, 2013; Lomax, 2015)
- Consider: reflexivity, relationality and reciprocity

# A very brief description of our research

- Population: pregnant women living in disadvantaged areas and claiming benefits
  - Women in this group are more likely to smoke
  - Also more likely to have low birth weight babies, still birth and sudden infant death (SIDS; cot death)
  - Interventions are not taken up (Bennett et al, 2014) and may stigmatise (Grant, Ashton & Phillips, 2014)
- Purpose: to contextualise health behaviours (such as smoking) in pregnancy, in order to improve interventions (and therefore improve health and wellbeing)
- Important elements of research design: build sufficient rapport to encourage full and frank discussion of sensitive subjects

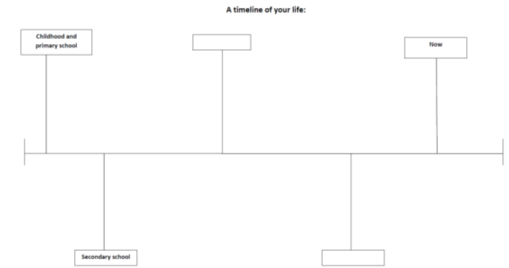
# Our data recruitment and retention strategy: the mundane

- Recruit via trusted community groups
- Offer an adequate incentive (£25 per session) – publicise this
- Quick and friendly response to offers to participate
- Description of participatory method – reassurance you don't have to use it
- Ongoing contact via text message
- Small present when baby was born



# Our data production strategy: the novel (visual methods)

- Timeline facilitated life history interview (Sheridan et al., 2011; Gabb & Fink, 2015)
- Collage facilitated interview (Mannay, 2013; 2016)
- Dyad sandboxing facilitated interview



# A very rich seam of data!

- 10 participants took part in first interview; 9 took part in two interviews
- Over 100,000 words of interview transcripts

Secondary school  
- Bullying fig Arguments

work - started work aged 16, achieved an NVQ level 2 in business admin. very proud.

Now  
pregnant,  
nervous, scared,  
happy.

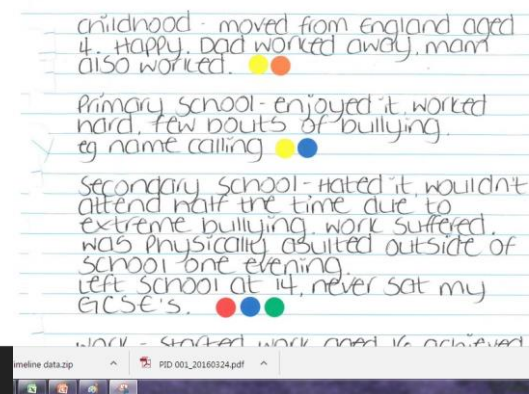
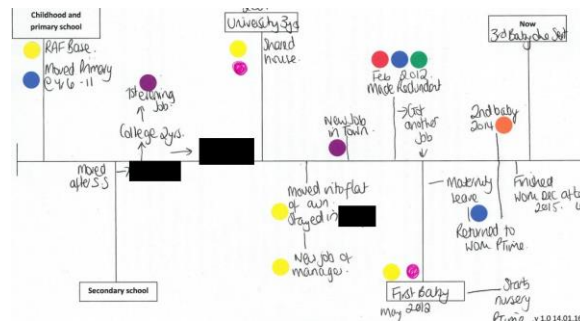
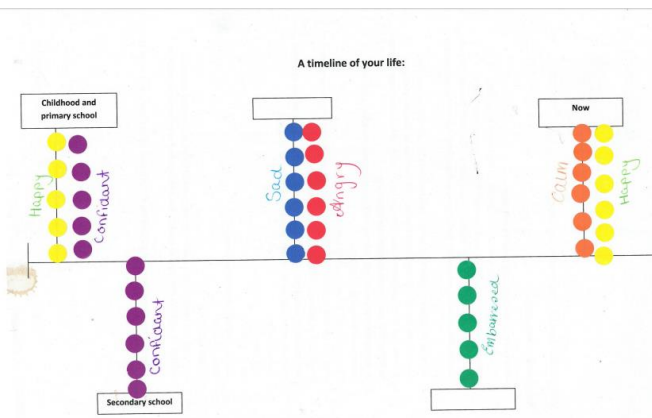


Feb 2012  
Made Redundant  
→ Get another job  
2nd baby 2014  
Materndy leave  
Returned to work PTime  
First baby may 2012  
Starts nursery PTime

Worried  
Angry  
Calm  
confidence  
Anxious  
Disappointed/embarrassed  
Sad

# What we did and how it went: Timelines and first Interviews

- 8 participants out of 10 completed the timeline, using the emotion stickers
  - Time
  - Didn't understand instructions
  - Not sure how much to share
  - Did it their own way
  - Needed reassurance that they had "done it right"



# What we did and how it went: Timelines and first Interviews

**“R: So..., how did you find creating the timeline, I know you said you didn’t have much time, but do you think it was useful as a form of reflection?”**

I: Yeah, my life seemed a bit boring [laughs]. I actually felt really happy doing it which is odd considering I haven’t been through that much I’m not saying that it’s just even doing this bit I kind of sat back and thought, not that it was funny that I had anxiety or anything just I couldn’t imagine having it now. I think that’s what I put here, I think once (son’s name) was born everything seems irrelevant of...of the past if you know what I mean?

**R: Yeah yeah but you think perhaps creating the timeline has enabled you to kind of realise that you look back on it kind of that you’re over it?**

I: Yeah yeah I actually look back positively if you know what I mean, even though it was a really difficult time and it’s a shame I had all this I think, like I said I’ve always thought I was a fairly strong person.” (Hayley)

# What we did and how it went: Thought bubbles, collages and Second Interviews

- 8 out of 9 Participants in second phase completed thought bubbles task prior to first interview.
  - Engaged with tasks on their own terms
  - Words, pictures, emotion stickers to represent important themes around: tiredness, sickness, managing work, time, new baby fitting in to existing family

“I: So I did, I had fun with this. (eldest daughter’s name) helped me actually, love her, she was helping with all the cutting out. So yeah this was just about like different things how it affects lifestyle and things like that.” (Donna)

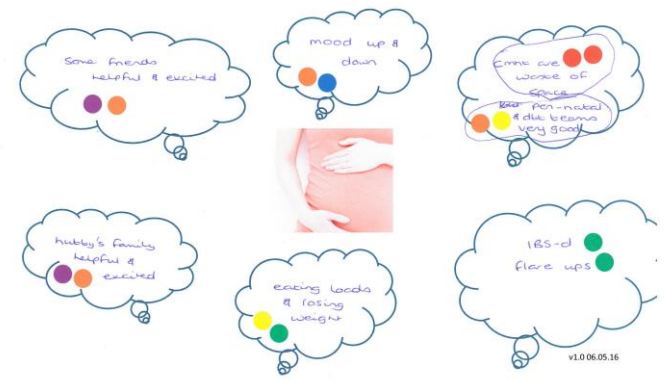
“I: Umm no it does help structure things in my head you know because I thought well how am I feeling, what is bothering me.” (Gaby)



# What we did and how it went: Thought bubbles, collages and Second Interviews



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# What we did and how it went: Sandboxing and Second Interviews

- 9 out of 9 participants engaged in sandboxing alongside researcher.
- Spent 10 mins quietly constructing and then shared
- Engaged on own terms



- “I: Yeah it felt more fact in a way, like my sister saying she was a snake, about me missing the military and then you know the anger management of shooting a paint ball gun and all that, and [husband] being Super Man and me being a warrior and my little cheerleaders, a few of my friends you know that turned a bit more real than in just my head, does that make sense?”

# Reflections on our success: the novel and the mundane

- Women engaged with each tool on their own terms
- Timelines and emotion stickers facilitated biographical accounts which allowed more nuanced understandings of the data by contextualizing the data within a biography. Allowed participants to reflect on their life in a way they wouldn't usually.
- Thought Bubbles facilitated accounts which were current and future oriented and provided nuanced understandings of meaning making.
- Dyad sandboxing particularly successful and enjoyable
- The dyadic nature of the method important – guidance, reassurance for those less confident.
  - “I: Yeah yeah and you know you just sit here talking and it just comes out natural don't it but when you think you've got to sit down, do all that, the paperwork with all the colours and the arts and crafts you think oh my god my head can't cope with that but yeah I enjoyed this one more I would say yeah definitely.” (Cat)



# Reflections on our success: the novel and the mundane

- Collaborative nature of sandboxing allowed us to approach sensitive topics without moral judgement.
- Through the sand scenes the women were able to “say” things that can’t be spoken, and showed us unseen as well as seen aspects of their everyday lives.
- Sandboxing can mean exposing researcher’s own subjectivity – willingness to share
- The impact of the researcher can still glean different accounts

# Conclusions: the novel and mundane

- Mundane - Importance of ground work and continued contact
- Novel – Dyadic nature of sandboxing allowed sensitive topics to be approached in a supportive and non judgmental way.
- Novel – The women engaged with the data collection methods on their own terms.
  - Flexibility in data production
  - Comfortable
  - Happy to take part in follow-up study
- Overall, some success in reducing researcher dominance, but inter-subjectivity and presentation of self/identity work still central in the production of data.

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# Thank you

- Any Questions?



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