

# Re-imagining Diary Methods

**Transformative research: exploring the lives of young 'ostomates' through flexible 'multi-format' & 'culturally credible' diary methods**

## Method Profile:

**Name:** Flexible 'multi-format' & 'culturally-credible' diary methods.

**Definition:** Diary methods co-designed by the researcher and participant. This method prioritises participant **agency**, comfortability, ability, access, and relevance to their everyday lives.

**Transformation:** From fixed & homogenised diaries, to fluid & flexible tasks based on individual positionalities, intersections and everyday lives.

**Benefits:** Flexible to the uncertainties of everyday life; transferable to other methods e.g. interviews; feminist and caring research practice; ethical & respectful to participants' context; can allow for **rich data-sets** and knowledge sharing. Best suited for research with smaller numbers of participants.

**Potential challenges:** Multiple types of data can make analysis timely; can require participants to have access to particular technologies; text-messaging works best when rapport has already been established, but can challenge researcher-participant boundaries (Halliwell & Wilkinson 2021).

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## Abstract:

*Lived experiences of young ostomates: space, relationships and identity* is an ESRC funded, qualitative and mixed-method research project. Through **flexible** 'multi-format' and 'culturally credible' biographical interviews, diary methods, and online focus groups facilitated by the project's CASE partner **GetYourBellyOut**, the research focuses on young ostomates' relationships, negotiations in space, experiences of (in)visibility, and their sources of support.

This poster focuses on bringing together '**multi-format**' and '**culturally credible**' methods to establish flexible diaries as a **transformative** method (Liddiard 2017:46; Halliwell and Wilkinson 2021:267).

**References:** Crenshaw, K., (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: a Black Feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum* Issue 1, Article 8.; Halliwell, J., and Wilkinson, S., (2021) Chapter 20. *Mobile phones, text messaging and social media*, pp.259-91 in von Benzon, N., Holton, M., Wilkinson, C. and Wilkinson, S. eds., 2021. *Creative Methods for Human Geographers*. SAGE; Liddiard, K., (2017). *The intimate lives of disabled people*. Routledge.; Valentine, G., (2007). Theorizing and Researching Intersectionality: A Challenge for Feminist Geography. *The Professional Geographer* 59(1) pp.10-21; Valentine, G., Butler, R. and Skelton, T., (2001). The ethical and methodological complexities of doing research with 'vulnerable' young people. *Ethics, Place & Environment*, 4(2), pp.119-125

## What are 'multi-format' methods?

In *The Intimate Lives of Disabled People*, Kirsty Liddiard (2017:46) introduces the term 'multi-format methods' to describe methods which can be carried out via different mediums. Multi-format methods are implemented in social research to **empower** participants to enact agency across the research processes. Multi-format methods focus on privileging the needs, **abilities**, comfort and preferences of the participant. A key benefit of this type of methodology is its **flexibility** and **caring** design.

The research with young ostomates adopts and extends Kirsty Liddiard's multi-format approach, applying it to both diary and biographical interview methods. The participants will choose the medium and length of documentation. For example:

- Handwritten notes
- Typed notes e.g. in a Word document
- Mobile phone notes
- Text-messaging between researcher & participant
- Voice recordings or voice notes
- Video recording or 'vlogging'
- Blogging

## What are 'culturally credible' methods?

Sam Wilkinson's work with young people, using mobile and text-messaging methods, outlines the benefits of 'culturally credible' approaches to research (Halliwell and Wilkinson 2021:267). The majority of young people in the UK have access to mobile phones and use them in their everyday and 'everynight' lives for text messaging, voice notes, social media, and capturing photographs and videos (*Ibid*). This makes it an informal, unobtrusive and less pressured research method (*Ibid*). In addition, mobile phones require different levels of literacy skills and attention than traditional diary methods making it a more **accessible** method for many (*Ibid*).

Mobile phones can be an appropriate and effective tool within research, and contributes to participant comfortability which is fundamental to **caring research practice**. This transformative diary method builds on Sam Wilkinson's work on text-messaging and mobile phones, extending the idea of 'cultural credibility' to activities such as video recording or 'vlogging', voice-recording and digital note-taking.

## Intersectionality:

Utilising 'multi-format' and 'culturally credible' research designs contributes to overarching **feminist** and intersectional research. Intersectional, 'multi-axis' frameworks consider how positionalities and social markers of difference shape relations and encounters between people, materialities and space (Crenshaw 1989; Valentine 2007). Acknowledging the affective nature of bodies and space in research encounters is important, and so research designs should be flexible to reflect the multiple individual **positionalities** involved.

## Why is flexibility important?

When researching with young, disabled and chronically ill people it is important to prioritise their needs and abilities where possible. Often, home or online based methods are more appropriate, comfortable and safe (Liddiard 2017). Allowing participants to shape the design of the research methods to best fit their personal context can be **empowering**, and demonstrates respect and understanding to those you are working with.

Groups of people who share characteristics, such as young people with ostomies, **do not** have homogenised experiences abilities, or personalities (Valentine, Butler and Skelton 2001). Therefore, **shifting away from** singular-format methods and essentialising research practices is needed to reinforce this understanding (*Ibid*).

Flexible and **fluid** approaches which account for the **uncertainties** of everyday life, enable ethical and participant-centred research.

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