



Managing Selfhood in Dementia ESRC DTP Joint Studentship

Loughborough University and University of Nottingham

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We are now inviting applications for an ESRC Doctoral Joint Studentship between Loughborough University (where the student will be registered) and the University of Nottingham to commence in October 2018.

Managing Selfhood in Dementia: Interrogating the operationalisation of identity work and its relationship with media representations.

The study of how identities are negotiated and enacted in talk has a long history in Conversation Analytic (CA) research and, given the complexities associated with personhood/communication in dementia such research continues to be important. Identity can be particularly fluid and delicate in dementia, and therefore it is especially challenging for informal and formal care providers to negotiate. The loss of sense of selfhood is a commonly feared part of dementia, but little is known about how recent increased dementia media presence impacts wider public identities.

The **goal** of this project is to holistically interrogate the concepts of 'identity' and 'concern' (or dementia worry) within dementia communication and media representation. Thus there is a two-fold focus, guided by the **key research questions**:

RQ1) How are issues of identity, and self, managed in communication with people living with a dementia? What are the interactional components of identity work?

RQ2) How are ideas and expectations about the relationship between memory, self and identity constructed in contemporary media representations of dementia?

RQ3) What is the relationship between media representations of dementia and 'dementia worry', and how do gender, age, and other characteristics inform this relationship?

Methodologically, to address RQ1, this project focuses on analysis of a pre-existing video-data corpus, comprising recordings in domestic contexts (specialist dementia care home and the homes of family dementia carers) and a memory clinic. These data, in combination, will allow for forensic analysis of how 'self'/'identity' are operationalised across key dementia care contexts.

To explore RQ2 and 3, recent media coverage of dementia will be analysed for recurring themes. Vignettes/examples of key media messages about brain health/dementia risk then will comprise part of an attitudinal online questionnaire targeted at a large and broad sample of over 18s. This will substantively add to knowledge about the relationship between dementia media representation and individuals' perceptions of risk and 'concern' about a most feared disease. Moreover, the questionnaire will be used as a recruitment tool to sample a diversity of respondents (in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, personal connection to an individual with dementia) for follow-up interview/focus group (n=30) to gain in-depth insight into the impact of contemporary media representation on perception.

Outcomes: This two-fold focus will make a significant contribution to understandings of dementia care in practice, and the way this relates to media representations. Findings will show how identity and self are managed communicatively in a range of contexts. Theoretically, this will add to the feminist literature on care, and further notions of care as intersubjective practice rather than the 'property' of social groups/roles. In addition, by analysing the production and receipt of media messages about dementia within the neoliberal healthist frame, there will be a further theoretical contribution to notions of 'self-care'.

Outputs: The findings of the project will be disseminated via high quality academic journal articles and accessible project findings summaries will be sent to participants and key stakeholders such as dementia charities and health and social care professionals. A training workshop on maintaining identity in dementia will also be developed and piloted with dementia carers.

Application Process

To be considered for this PhD, please complete the Joint Studentship application form [available online here](#) and provide a CV and covering letter and **email this to spgsresearch@lboro.ac.uk**. Shortlisted applicants will also be required to provide two references.

Application deadline: 10 March 2018

Midlands Graduate School ESRC DTP

Our ESRC studentships cover fees and maintenance stipend and extensive support for research training, as well as research activity support grants. Support is available only to successful applicants who fulfil eligibility criteria. To check your eligibility, visit: www.mgsdtp.ac.uk/studentships/eligibility/

Informal enquiries about the research or Department of Social Sciences prior to application can be directed to Professor Elizabeth Peel, e.peel@lboro.ac.uk. Enquiries about the project can also be directed to Professor Alison Pilnick, Alison.Pilnick@nottingham.ac.uk.