

Supplemental Material 1

Psychosocial Studies (adapted from Froggett, L. (2012) **Psychosocial research in** (eds) S. Becker, A. Bryman and H. Ferguson **Understanding Research for Social Policy and Social Work: Themes, Methods and Approaches**. Bristol: Policy Press

Psychosocial Studies in the UK is represented by a Learned Society – The Association for Psychosocial Studies - admitted to the Academy of Social Sciences in 2015:

It studies the ways in which subjective experience is interwoven with social life. Psychological issues and subjective experiences cannot be abstracted from societal, cultural, and historical contexts; nor can they be deterministically reduced to the social. Similarly, social and cultural worlds are shaped by psychological processes and intersubjective relations. Psychosocial Studies is characterised by (a) its explicit inter or trans-disciplinarity, (b) its development of non-positivistic theory, method and praxis and (c) its orientation towards progressive social and personal change. Psychosocial research draws inspiration from a range of sources including sociology, psychoanalysis, critical psychology, critical theory, post-structuralism, process philosophy, feminism, post-colonial theory, queer theory and affect theory. Various “dialects” are in the process of emergence.

<http://www.psychosocial-studies-association.org/about/>

The website details a wide range of subject areas that psychosocial scholars have addressed and highlights the preoccupation of many of them with fields of practice, particularly “psychotherapy and counselling, psychoanalysis and group analysis, social work and social policy, group relations and organisational consultancy”. The Psychosocial Research Unit at the University of Central Lancashire has focussed on socially engaged art, and the University of New South Wales, Department of Art and Design’s project *Curating Third Space: The value of art-science collaboration*, adds curatorial practice and art-science to the list.

From its inception psychosocial research and scholarship has attempted to move beyond psyche/social dualism to think the psychological and the social together (for example Day Sclater et al 2009, Clarke and Hoggett 2009). Subjectivity is understood as inscribed in intra-psychic, interpersonal, institutional and societal relations (Froggett 2002). Ontologically, what is commonly *described* as ‘individual’ (inner/intra-psychic) is already thoroughly social (interpersonal/cultural/societal) while the ‘social’ is imbued with the ‘psychic’ life of individuals. A key concern is the development of adequate accounts of the inextricably intertwined psyche/social relation. Hence psychosocial research has moved beyond positioning theory where identity is assimilated to social locatedness (gender/race/class etc), to ask how and why people invest in positions which are produced *both* projectively because they fulfil emotional functions *and* discursively (see Frosh et al 2003, Hoggett 2000 and Froggett 2002 on infusion of social and political life with emotions, and Hollway’s 2008 critique of categorising research subjects discursively and demographically)

Epistemologically, psychosocial research insists on depth reflexivity, which is to say that the researcher’s own mind and senses are regarded as key research instruments. The researcher’s subjective response to participants and the societal-collective context informs data collection and analysis. Psychosocial researchers try to avoid imposing categories and frameworks and devise methodologies where, as far as possible, the object of knowing is allowed to reveal

itself (Alford 1989). This is key to understanding the Visual Matrix for example (Froggett et al 2015) which draws both on hermeneutic social scientific inquiry and on forms of attention developed in psychotherapeutic clinical settings – ‘negative capability’ where premature characterisation and interpretation are withheld as the object is beheld ‘without memory or desire’ (Bion 1970), and ‘reverie’ which allows a syncretistic appreciation of the object (Bion 1962, 1970, Ehrenzweig 1967). The concern is to develop methodologies which bring inquiry as close as possible to research participants’ experience. ‘A psychosocial approach towards social research is an attitude, or position towards the subject(s) of study rather than just another methodology’ (Clarke and Hoggett, 2008, p.2).

Psychosocial research is a varied, trans-disciplinary field (Stenner and Taylor 2008). It uses diverse theoretical resources to achieve non-dualistic approaches to a problem that is as old as social science: the individual/society relation and its representations. While grounded in the social sciences, a concern with the sources of creativity and imagination has impelled engagement with the Arts.

References

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Website resources

The UK Psychosocial Studies Network, www.psychosocial-network.org/

The International Research Group for Psychosocietal Analysis <http://www.irgfpsa.org/>