

Telling Disabled Sexual Stories...

Overview

Through a qualitative narrative analysis of the sexual stories of physically disabled and sensory impaired adults, this research focuses on the ways that constructions of sexuality for disabled people, (e.g. as non-existent, sexually inadequate, dark or fetishized, or immoral through the possible use of facilitated/assisted sex), affect individuals' lived experiences of sexuality.

Data Collection Methods

- Multi-method approach gaining data in the form of sexual narratives from participant journals and narrative interviewing, or a combination of both.
- Narratives take the form of an 'autobiographical account', a story in the form of a retrospective account but which at the same time also incorporates individuals' opinions and thoughts on their sexuality in the present.
- These methods are effective for gaining stories while placing the participant at the centre of the storytelling process.

Research Questions

- How do physically disabled and sensory impaired adults understand the immediate life world shapes their sexual opportunities and identities?
- What strategies do physically disabled and sensory impaired adults employ in order to manage and negotiate their sexuality and how do these strategies change over time?
- How do physically disabled and sensory impaired adults narrate their sexual stories and present their experiences?

Methodology

This research works to correct many of the 'methodological wrongs' found within much (though, not all) disability research (see Barnes 1992; Oliver 1992, Mohan 1996; Kitchen 2000). I have designed a 'democratic' research model which is accessible, inclusive and empowering and which seeks to destabilise traditional power imbalances between the researcher and the researched.

This is achieved through:

- Consulting with disabled people at each stage of the research (a Research Advisory Group) in order to create a true working partnership.
- Offering a choice of data production methods (in various formats) to suit preferences and abilities.
- Ensuring all findings/outcomes are disseminated so that they are accessible and meaningful for disabled people and, more importantly, that they transfer to the reality of disabled peoples' lives outside the academy.