What does embodiment mean?
Why it’s important
What we know already
My study
So what?

SOME(BODY) ELSE - TRANSITIONS IN EMBODIED EXPERIENCES AFTER STROKE

Emily Timothy
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EMBODIMENT

‘how we live in and experience the world through our bodies’

Merleau-Ponty (1996)
The embodied experience

The body as a machine

THIS IS ME. WHO ARE YOU?
The unreliable body

The perplexing body

The body as foreign

Creating coherence

Disrupted sense of self

A body that is not me

Societal self-body relationship

Testing the body

Biographical disruption

Fundamental change
AREAS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

- No established theoretical models
- Few studies specifically focused on embodiment in transition from hospital
- Notion of embodiment poorly defined, especially physiotherapy
- Lack of understanding of implications
Purpose: to explore the embodied experience of stroke for people one month after hospital-based rehabilitation

Aims
1) Explore the experience stroke survivors have of living with a changed body when transitioning from hospital
2) Improve understanding of the embodied experience of life after stroke (especially physiotherapists)
**GROUNDDED THEORY**

- Data collection
- Coding
- Theory development
- Constant comparative analysis
- Theoretical sampling
- Memos and diagraming

- Constructivist epistemology
- Relativist ontology
- Symbolic interactionism

- 7 people
- 3 phone interviews
- Full interview 1 month
THE EMBODIED EXPERIENCE

ANCHORS

DIVERGENT BODY-SELF

COHESIVE BODY-SELF
DIVERGENT BODY-SELF

- STRANGE
- UNPREDICATABLE
- EFFORTFUL
It won’t do what you want it to do most times, you know. You want it to, it’s a strange feeling to have it not connecting with your brain. And you take it as, when you’re normal…You don’t think anything about it. When you’re wanting to try and do something, and it won’t let you do it. It’s the strangest feeling in the world.

Peter
My arm is [slaps left arm], I can still feel it, I can feel it, but it’s gone unpredictable. It doesn’t, it isn’t doing this so much [demonstrates wavering left arm]; it was knocking the food off my plate or some of it. And yesterday, what did it do yesterday? Something unpredictable.

Helena
COHESIVE BODY-SELF

FREEDOM

CONTROL

IDENTITY
The time that I really found it most was that time I was telling you when the lady [physiotherapist] said ‘for god’s sake, just walk’.

That was freedom. It really was. I can still recollect what it was like, you know, nothing there, I didn’t have to hang on to anything.

George
What does it make you think when your arm is unpredictable?
That, it makes you wonder if it’s coming, if it will come back. It makes you initially feel as if you’re losing control of yourself completely.

Can you say a bit more about that?
Yes, that is a big shake up. To feel that um, a part of you has well maybe died. That is very challenging.

Helena
ANCHORS

KNOWLEDGE

ATTITUDE

ENVIRONMENT
Suddenly you’re devoid of being able to use your hand, get out and walk, do you own thing; your freedom’s all gone…But I remember there was one sister in particular who was wonderful to me and she, I sort of longed for her to be on duty because um, she would talk to me about a future, and ask me what I wanted to do, and you know, opened a new avenue for me.

Grace

Attitude/environment
Right, you get around at the hospital in a certain way, you know walking and things like that, and the wheelchair. You get home and it was a struggle to get up the steps, a struggle to walk in the passage even with the walking stick, everything like that.

*Michael*
The bodily experience of stroke is altered to the extent that people can question their identity, lose hope for their future and control over their lives.

Context influences the embodied experience – often in seemingly small, incidental ways.

During the transition from hospital, the embodied experience is highly sensitive to influence.

The embodied experience should be integral to physiotherapy and stroke rehabilitation.
IMPLICATIONS FOR MY PRACTICE

- I notice and acknowledge reflections people make on the impact of a changed body
- I convey hope of a positive future
- I promote people as experts in themselves, including their bodies
- I reflect on my approach, with the starting point always being a person first...a stroke second
THOUGHTS ON NEXT STEPS…

How we do what we do

Active listening

Promoting wellness

Skills sharing
The body as foreign

Creating coherence

Disrupted sense of self

Flux

Anchors
Transitions in the Embodied Experience After Stroke: Grounded Theory Study

Emily K. Timothy, Fiona P. Graham, William M.M. Levack

**Background.** The body is central to the practice of physical therapy, but clinical theory largely neglects the body as a concept. A better understanding of the embodied experience could enhance delivery of physical therapy.

**Objectives.** The purpose of this study was to gain an in-depth understanding of embodiment for people after stroke while transitioning from the hospital to the home.
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