## **Symbolic Meanings in Physiotherapy Practice** Hazel Horobin

**Abstract**: This presentation explores symbolic meanings existent within different physiotherapy treatments. These interpretations emerged from a research project to explore the impact on Indian graduate physiotherapists of a UK delivered Masters programme. Students on the programme were interviewed to explore their professional identifications, and interview transcripts were analysed. Participants described very different treatment rationales and treatment approaches in different locations of practice with treatments for pain forming a focus for practice in India, whilst more governmental influences drive treatment towards movement in the UK. Taking a symbolically representational approach to the emergent meanings and practices participants described it can be seen that physiotherapy work is highly symbolic in its engagements with clients with this symbolism shaped by cultural contexts.

**Pre reading** is: Miner, H (1956). Body Ritual Among the Nacirema.  American Anthropologist 58(3), 503-507 (<https://www.sfu.ca/~palys/Miner-1956-BodyRitualAmongTheNacirema.pdf>)

We will discuss this in relation to the issues of studying one’s own culture.

**Background information** can be found here:

Understanding ethnography <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6GxS97YQKHU>. This approximately 3 minute long video is from ‘transformation project’ and offers a background to ethnographic theory useful since my presentation is largely about ethnography applied to physiotherapy.

Also on You Tube, Nicole Sweeney does a series of ‘crash courses’ on sociology that are energetic and enlightening:

What is sociology - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YnCJU6PaCio&list=PLlGZuU5TgJua-rZ8I3NT2-s2oEYlIaTSU> (around 9 minutes long) and Symbols, Values and Norms - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kGrVhM_Gi8k> (again around 9 minutes long) the first 3 minutes explains culture. It goes on to focus on language as part of culture which is not particularly where I want to focus, but that first bit is excellent in supporting the underpinning appreciations on which my presentation is based.

Finally, if listeners wish to hear a little more about the philosopher then they can listen to this podcast from the ABC about Pierre Bourdieu:<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/philosopherszone/cultural-capital---the-story-of-pierre-bourdieu/3109960>

**Questions**:

What role do you feel ‘culture’ plays in your practice?

What symbolic capital do you feel you have? And how do you vary its usage?