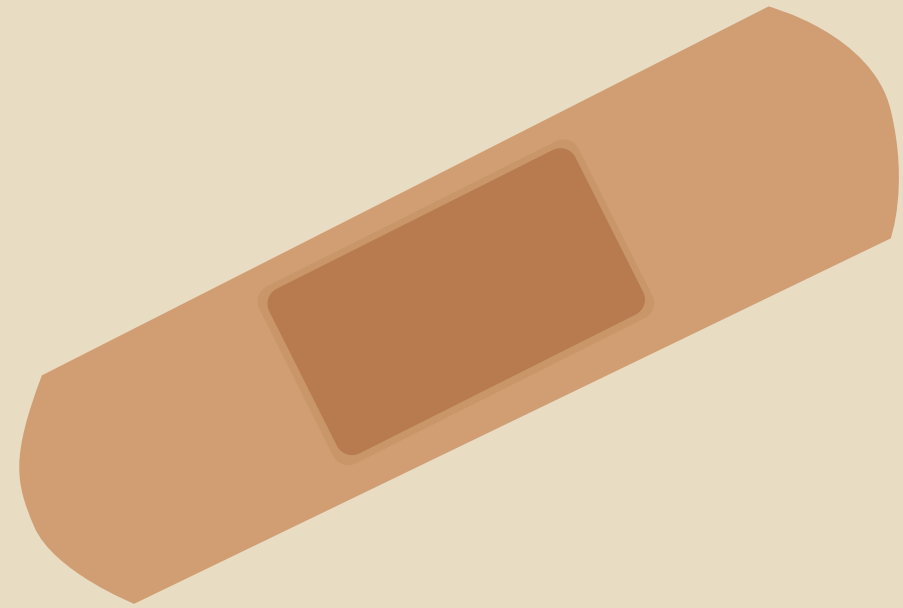




AN AUTHOR'S VOICE AND
THE "WOUNDS THAT SPEAK":

**CREATIVE WRITING AS
EMOTIONAL PROCESSING
AND PUBLIC
COMMUNICATION**

*qualitative research study
by Gabby Piccirilli*



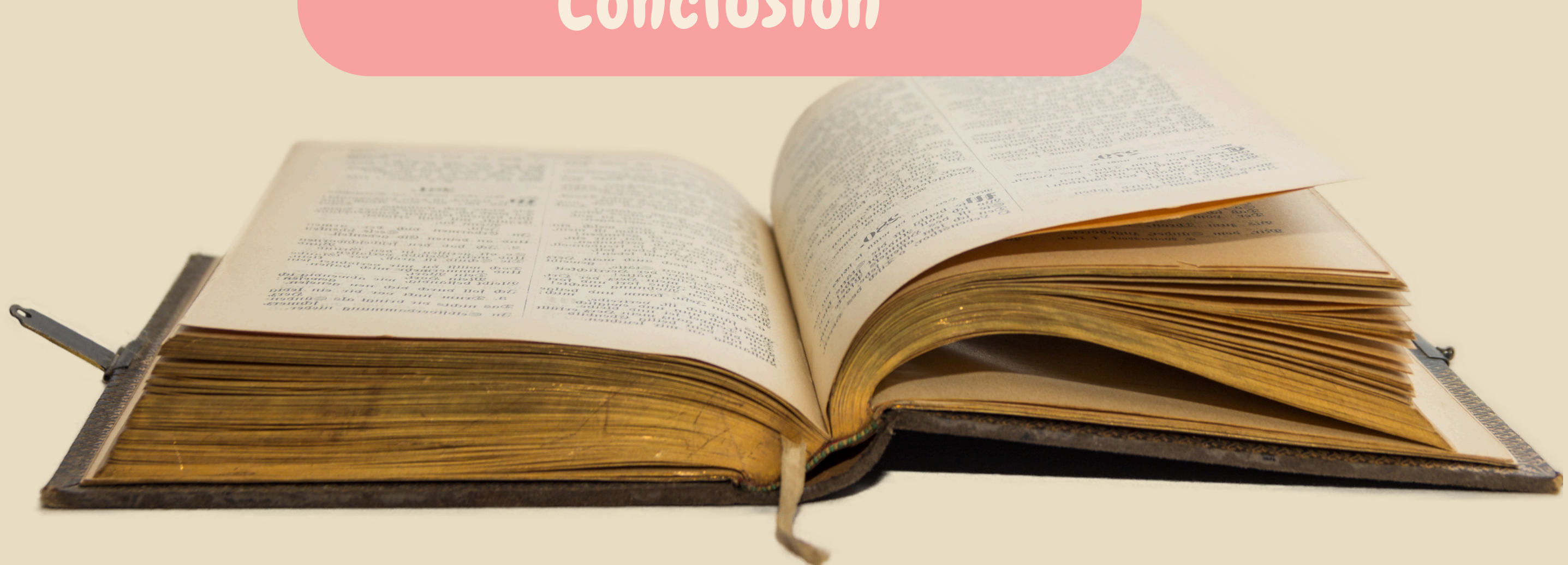
**“WRITING IS THE TRANSFORMATION
FROM RAW MATERIAL OF ONE’S OWN LIFE.
IT IS THE TRAUMATIC WOUND THAT SPEAKS”
(GH, M61).**

RQs & Rationale

Methods

Analysis + Results

Conclusion





INTRODUCTION

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1

HOW DO AUTHORS DESCRIBE THE WRITING PROCESS AS A FORM OF EMOTIONAL PROCESSING?

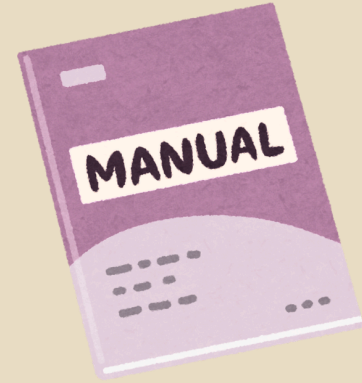
2

WHAT ARE THE MOTIVATIONS BEHIND WHY AUTHORS WRITE, AND HOW DO THEY ARTICULATE THESE MOTIVATIONS?

3

HOW DO PUBLISHED AUTHORS UNDERSTAND THEMSELVES AS PUBLIC COMMUNICATORS?

RATIONALE



**HANDBOOKS, GUIDES
& SCHOLARSHIP
FOCUS ON
TECHNIQUE &
PRACTICAL ADVICE**

Neale (2020), King (2000), Lamott (1994)



**CREATIVE WRITING IS
OVERSHADOWED OR
ABSORBED INTO
BROADER ACADEMIC
CATEGORIES**

Bailey and Bizzaro (2017)



**HAS SEVERAL
PHYSIOLOGICAL
BENEFITS**

**(Lepore & Smyth, 2002),
Pennebaker, 2020).**



**RESEARCH RARELY
EXAMINES THE
AUTHOR'S PUBLIC
ROLE BEYOND THE
TEXT**

Gutkind (2019)



**COGNITIVE PROCESS
THEORY OF WRITING
(FLOWER & HAYES, 2004)**



**AIDS
REHABILITATION**

(Laursen et al., 2021).



**EMPHASIS ON
PERSONAL IDENTITY =
GREATER CREATIVE
ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

(Dollinger et al., 2005).

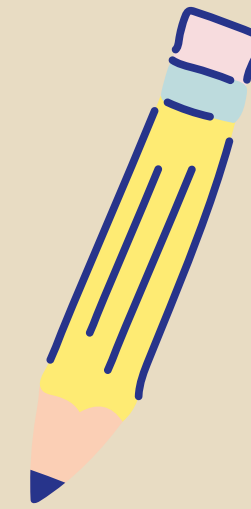
METHODS



**INTERPRETIVE
PARADIGM**



**FLEXIBLE APPROACH TO
ANALYSIS THAT AIMS TO
UNDERSTAND AUTHORS
RATHER THAN MAKE
PREDICTIONS**



**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:
MY IDENTITY AS A NON
PUBLISHED CREATIVE
WRITER & LIMITED
EXPERIENCE IN
NORTHERN IRELAND**



**PARTICIPANT
OBSERVATION IN 3
LOCATIONS AS A
COMPLETE OBSERVER
(TRACY, 2024)**



**2 SEMI-
STRUCTURED
INTERVIEWS**

**PURPOSEFUL
SAMPLING**



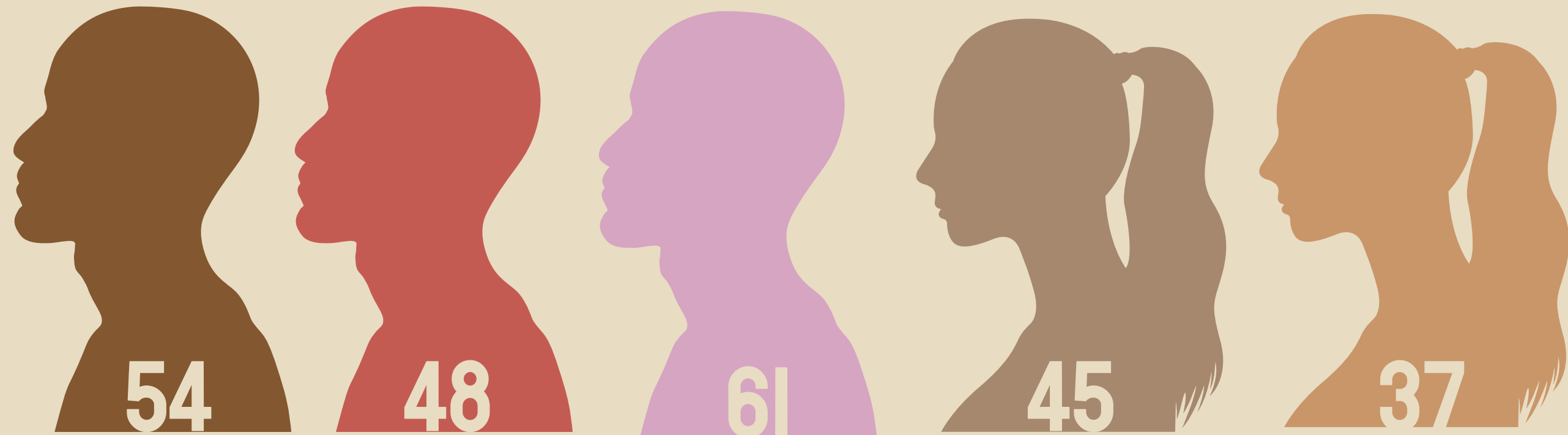
**THEMATIC
ANALYSIS,
FOLLOWING
TRACY'S (2024)
OUTLINED STEPS**



BELFAST, NI



PARTICIPANTS



- FIVE AUTHORS
- AT LEAST ONE PUBLISHED WORK EACH, AVG. THREE PUBLISHED WORKS PER
- 40% IDENTIFIED AS FEMALE, 60% IDENTIFIED AS MALE
- DIVERSE RANGE OF PERSPECTIVES

INTERVIEWS



1

2

5. Do your personal emotions and life experiences often influence your writing, such as your characters, dialogue, and plot, or do you primarily rely on imagination?

11. How does the experience of publishing your work affect your relationship with it?

DATA ANALYSIS

Coding System:

Code	Label	Meaning
CATH	Catharsis	Authors referred to the idea of writing as a potentially cathartic experience.
REF	Reframing of Past	Authors mentioned writing as a tool for reframing past experiences and traumas to understand them in a new light.
HOME	Hometown	Authors refer to their hometowns and the circumstances there as motivation and inspiration for writing.
CHILD	Childhood	Authors reference their childhood experiences as inspiration for their writing.
CARRY	"Carrying" stories metaphor	Authors employ a metaphor of humans inherently having stories inside of them that they "carry" due to life experiences.
TRAUMA	Traumatic events	Authors mention writing about traumatic events they experienced or were in close proximity to.
RESP	Responsibility (authorial)	Authors discuss when they do/don't feel responsible for how their work is received and what a writer should/shouldn't do when converting private work to the public sphere through publication.
POS	Positive for mental health	Authors refer to creative writing as a process that contributes positively to their mental health.
NEG	Negative for mental health	Authors refer to creative writing as a process that contributes negatively to their mental health.
DISL	Dislike for public promotion	Authors discuss the need to promote their work as an experience they dislike.
PURP	Purpose	Authors articulate the purpose behind their writing or behind specific works of theirs.
BARR	Barriers to becoming a writer	Authors (exclusively the women participants) referring to barriers to becoming writers.
CONN	Connection with readers	Authors recall moments of powerful connection between readers and their creative works.

1

DATA IMMERSION

2

PRIMARY CYCLE CODING

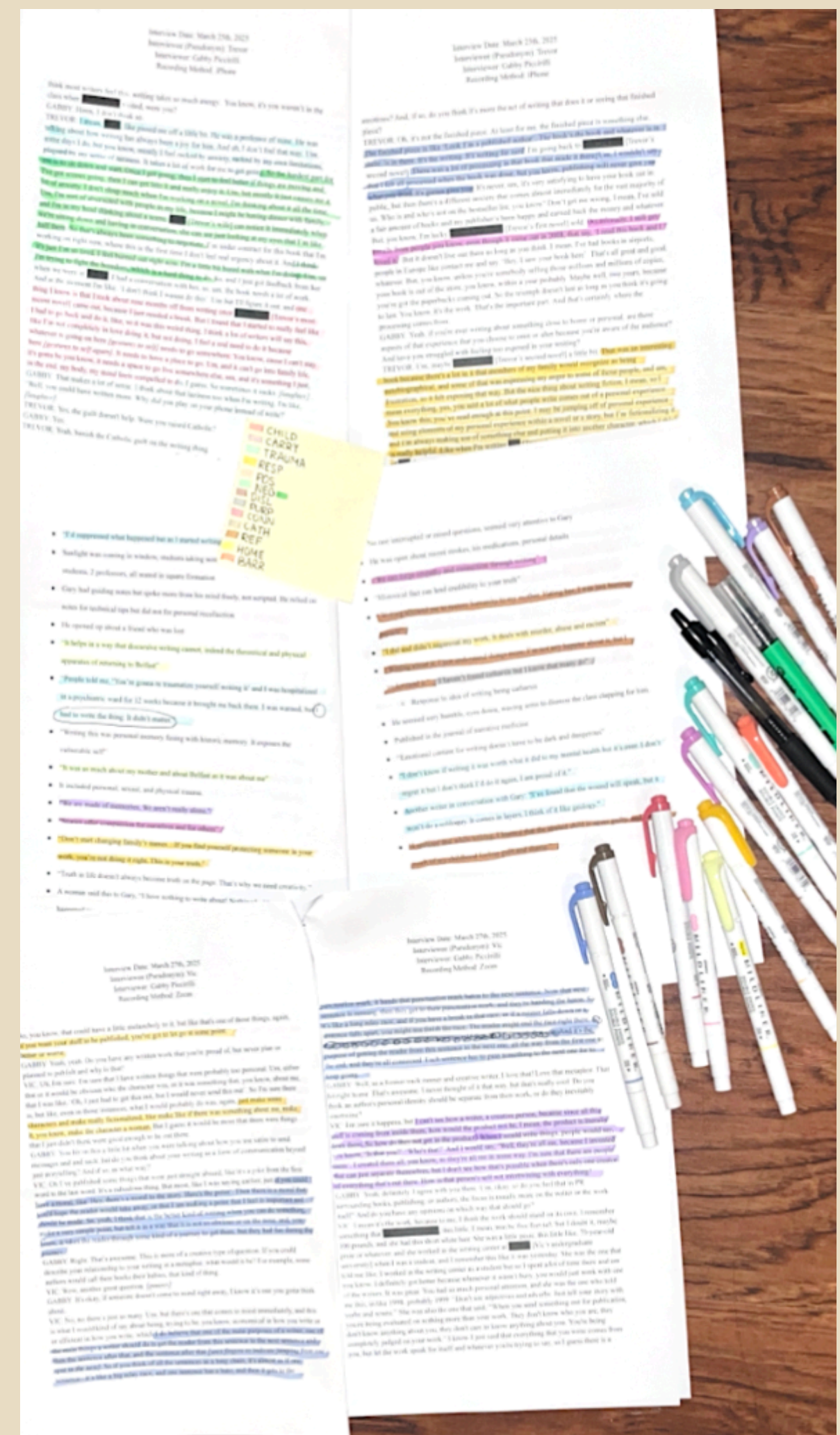
3

SECONDARY CYCLE CODING, INCORPORATING IN VIVO CODES

Tracy (2024)

4

DATA CONFERENCE



RESULTS

Writing as Emotional Processing

CATHARTIC RELEASE

**PROCESSING & REFRAMING
TRAUMA**

**MENTAL HEALTH COSTS &
EMOTIONAL LABOR**

Writing and Public Identity

**AUTHORIAL RESPONSIBILITY
& TRUTH**

**DISCOMFORT WITH PUBLIC
PERSONA**

**AUDIENCE IMPACT
& CONNECTION**

Sources of Inspiration and Motivation

**EARLY INFLUENCES & LIFE
NARRATIVES**

**STORYTELLING AS INHERENT,
PERSONAL & POLITICAL**

**SOCIOCULTURAL BARRIERS &
IDENTITY NEGOTIATION**

1.1

**“I HAD TO WRITE
THE THING”:
CATHARTIC
RELEASE**

**“IF YOU’RE DOING [CREATIVE WRITING], AND
YOU DON’T DO IT FOR A DAY OR TWO, I WOULD
THINK THAT YOU WOULD GO THROUGH SOME
KIND OF WITHDRAWAL, WHICH DOESN’T FEEL
GOOD. IT’S ALMOST LIKE, ‘I NEED TO DO
THIS’ ... IF YOU TAKE IT AWAY, YOU’RE GONNA
CRASH” (VC, M48).**

1.2

**“THE WOUND
BEGAN TO
SPEAK”:
PROCESSING &
REFRAMING
TRAUMA**

**“THROUGH WRITING, I WAS ABLE TO
TRANSFORM TRAUMATIC CHILDHOOD
MEMORIES AND MEMORIES FROM GROWING
UP IN NORTHERN IRELAND. I WAS IMPOSING
ORDER ON THE CHAOS OF MY LIFE, AND THE
CHAOS ON THE STREETS IN NORTHERN
IRELAND” (GH, M6I).**

1.3

“I WAS HOSPITALIZED IN A PSYCHIATRIC WARD...BECAUSE IT BROUGHT ME BACK”: MENTAL HEALTH COSTS & EMOTIONAL LABOR

“I DON'T SLEEP MUCH WHEN I'M WORKING ON A NOVEL. I'M THINKING ABOUT IT ALL THE TIME. I'M SORT OF ABSTRACTED WITH PEOPLE IN MY LIFE...I MIGHT BE HAVING DINNER WITH FAMILY, AND I'M IN MY HEAD THINKING ABOUT A SCENE. MY WIFE CAN NOTICE IT IMMEDIATELY...SHE CAN SEE JUST LOOKING AT MY EYES THAT I'M LIKE HALF THERE. SO THAT'S ALWAYS BEEN SOMETHING TO NEGOTIATE” (CTR, M54).

2.1

**“IT ALWAYS COMES
BACK TO WHERE
I’M FROM”: EARLY
INFLUENCES &
LIFE NARRATIVES**

**“I ALWAYS ASKED A LOT OF QUESTIONS AS A
CHILD AND WAS TIGHTLY CONTROLLED.
CREATIVE THOUGHT WAS FROWNED UPON.
BUT MY PARENTS MADE ONE HUGE MISTAKE
WITH ME. THEY UNDERESTIMATED THE
DANGER OF THE LIBRARY. THERE, I REALIZED
WORDS DO SOMETHING TO YOU” (JA, F45).**

2.2

**“WE ALL HAVE
PERSONAL STORIES
THAT WE CARRY AND
NEED TO WRITE”:
STORYTELLING AS
INHERENT, PERSONAL,
& POLITICAL**

**“I FELL IN LOVE WITH TURKEY AND WAS TEACHING
MUSLIM KIDS THERE. I HAPPENED TO READ THE QURAN,
AND I STARTED TO GET THIS REAL RESPECT FOR ISLAM,
AND SO PART OF THAT NOVEL WAS TRYING TO
NEGOTIATE MY ANGER ABOUT AMERICAN FOREIGN
POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST.”**

(TR, M54).

2.3

**“ASIAN PEOPLE DON’T JUST GO BE WRITERS. I DIDN’T GROW UP WITH THIS PRESENTED AS A POSSIBILITY”:
SOCIOCULTURAL BARRIERS & IDENTITY NEGOTIATION**

“I CAME TO WRITING IN A ROUNDABOUT WAY...I WAS MISERABLE DOING FINANCE. I FELT TRAPPED, SO I STARTED TO WRITE FICTION ON MY LUNCH BREAKS, AND MY BOYFRIEND TOLD ME TO BE A WRITER. I SAID, ‘THAT’S VERY IDEALISTIC AND WESTERN OF YOU, ASIAN PEOPLE DON’T JUST GO BE WRITERS.’ I DIDN’T GROW UP WITH THIS PRESENTED AS A POSSIBILITY FOR ME” (RA, F37).

3.1

**“IT'S NOT YOURS
ANYMORE. NOW
IT'S EVERYONE
ELSE'S”:
AUTHORIAL
RESPONSIBILITY
AND TRUTH**

**“IT'S NOT LIKE YOU CAN'T REVISE IT AND DO
SOMETHING ELSE WITH IT. IT'S ALMOST LIKE YOU
PUSHED IT OUT INTO THE WORLD FOR BETTER OR
WORSE, AND IT'S OUT THERE. AND NOW IT'S ITS OWN
LIVING THING. IT'S NOT YOURS ANYMORE. NOW IT'S
EVERYONE ELSE'S. SO, YOU KNOW, THAT COULD HAVE
A LITTLE MELANCHOLY TO IT, BUT LIKE THAT'S ONE
OF THOSE THINGS, AGAIN, IF YOU WANT YOUR STUFF
TO BE PUBLISHED, YOU'VE GOT TO LET GO AT SOME
POINT,” (VC, M48).**

3.2

“I HAD NO CLUE WHO TREVOR, THE PUBLIC-FACING AUTHOR, WAS”: DISCOMFORT WITH PUBLIC PERSONA

“I WENT ON THE U.S. TOUR, I DIDN'T LIKE THAT. I WAS SO STRESSED AND DIDN'T KNOW HOW I WAS SUPPOSED TO BE. I DIDN'T KNOW WHO I WAS IN PUBLIC AS A WRITER. I DIDN'T HAVE AN AUTHOR PERSONA YET. I WAS LIKE WEARING THESE SUIT THINGS I HATED AND WAS TRYING TO PUT ON A SHOW” (TR, M54).

3.3

**“WE CAN FORGE
EMPATHY AND
CONNECTION
THROUGH WRITING”:
AUDIENCE IMPACT
AND CONNECTION**

**“STORIES OFFER COMPASSION FOR
OURSELVES AND FOR OTHERS...WE CAN
FORGE EMPATHY AND CONNECTION
THROUGH WRITING” (GH, M6I).**

IN CONCLUSION...



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