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Narrative Inquiry Design Essentials: Definition, Research Questions, Propositions

Research Methodology Group Webinar
February 23, 2023

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Agenda

- Focus on narrative inquiry key components
 - Why choose narrative?
 - Research questions
 - Purpose statements
- Provide examples
- Demonstrate and list key resources
- Answer your questions



First Thoughts

Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative enquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular narrative view of experience as phenomena under study (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, in Kim, 2016, p. 18).



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Distinguishing Narrative from Other Qualitative Methods

	Focus	Participants (Diss)	Questions	Outcome
Narrative	Telling person's story	12-20 (homogeneous)	Tell me the story of your experience with...	Vignettes, narratives, meta-narratives, imagery
Ethnography	Describe culture around experience, tell story	12-20	How does the culture affect how this experience occurs?	Themes, understanding of cultural components, story of experience in that culture
Phenomenology	Describing person's experience	3-7	Please describe your experience of....	Descriptions of experience, themes
Hermeneutics	Meaning made from experience	12-20 (homogeneous)	What was your experience of/meaning from that experience?	Themes, characteristics, understanding of meaning-making process

Distinguishing Narrative from Other Qualitative Methods

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Narrative	Telling person's story	12-20	Tell me the story of your experience with...	Vignettes, narratives, meta-narratives, imagery
Grounded Theory	Discovering/developing theory	18-16 (homogeneous) (saturation) Or 100+ (hetero)	Tell me about your experience/process..	Increased theoretical understanding, themes
Case Study	Describing a case example	1+ (bounded) systems	What does this system (business/school/etc .) look like?	Themes, characteristics of the system/case with potential comparisons

So, what is *Narrative Research or Narrative Inquiry*?

- Analysis of a person's *story*, of an experience they have had
- Goal of researcher is to draw out the story from the participant
- Story can be told many ways, including through visual means
- Researchers may create vignettes of each story, create one overarching meta-narrative that includes the main aspects of all shared stories, depict the story through imagery, create a fictitious story/play demonstrating main *gist* of narratives, or even identify main themes found within the narratives.

Philosophical Paradigms

- *All qualitative researchers are philosophers . . . guided by highly abstract principles (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018)*
 - **Ontology:** What is the nature of reality?
 - **Epistemology:** What is the relationship between the inquirer and the known?
 - **Methodology:** How do we know the world or gain knowledge of it?
- The above combine to create a paradigm or interpretive framework, a “basic set of beliefs that guides action (Guba, 1990, in Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).



Narrative & Theoretical Lens/Prism

Narrative cannot exist in a vacuum. We cannot make sense of the stories told without the help of a theory or the intersection of multiple theories. Theories should inform or guide us to understand a story but not to diminish our ability to listen. Theories are there to be used, not to dictate to us or shape our stories (Kim, 2016).

Critical Theory “Examines relationships of domination and subordination that create social inequality in society. ... For critical theorists, the ability to look at the contradictions inherent in a society is a starting point to develop forms of social inquiry that interrogate ‘what is in reality’ and ‘what should be?’” (Kim, 2016, p. 36).



Narrative and Theoretical Lens/Prism

- Some common critical paradigms
 - **Critical Race Theory** focuses on the impact of race and racism
 - **Feminist Theory** focuses on “situations of patriarchy, the unequal ways people are treated due to their gender and sexuality, and the meanings we construct or that are constructed by the prevailing value system that assigns gender roles” (Kim, 2016, p. 48).
 - **Queer Theory** examines “the homo-heterosexual binary in everyday life, ... investigating the way group boundaries are created, negotiated, and changed” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 105).
 - **Cultural studies** examine cultural practices and subjectivities (Denzin & Lincoln, 2016).



Individual stories of each participant

- “People are moved by stories more than by legal theories” (Derrick Bell, in Kim, 2016)
- “Individuals and groups construct identities through storytelling.”
- “Individuals use (narrative) to remember, argue, justify, persuade, engage, entertain, and even mislead.”
- “Groups use stories to mobilize others, and to foster a sense of belonging” (Riessman, 2008, p. 8).
- “Narrative is everywhere” (Riessman, 2008, p. 4).



Esthetics and the Value of the Commonplace

In order to understand the esthetic in its ultimate and approved forms, one must begin with it in the raw; in the events and scenes that hold the attentive eye and ear of man.

Ordinary experiences are the sources outside an individual which give rise to experience ... Ordinarily we take such facts for granted as too commonplace to record.

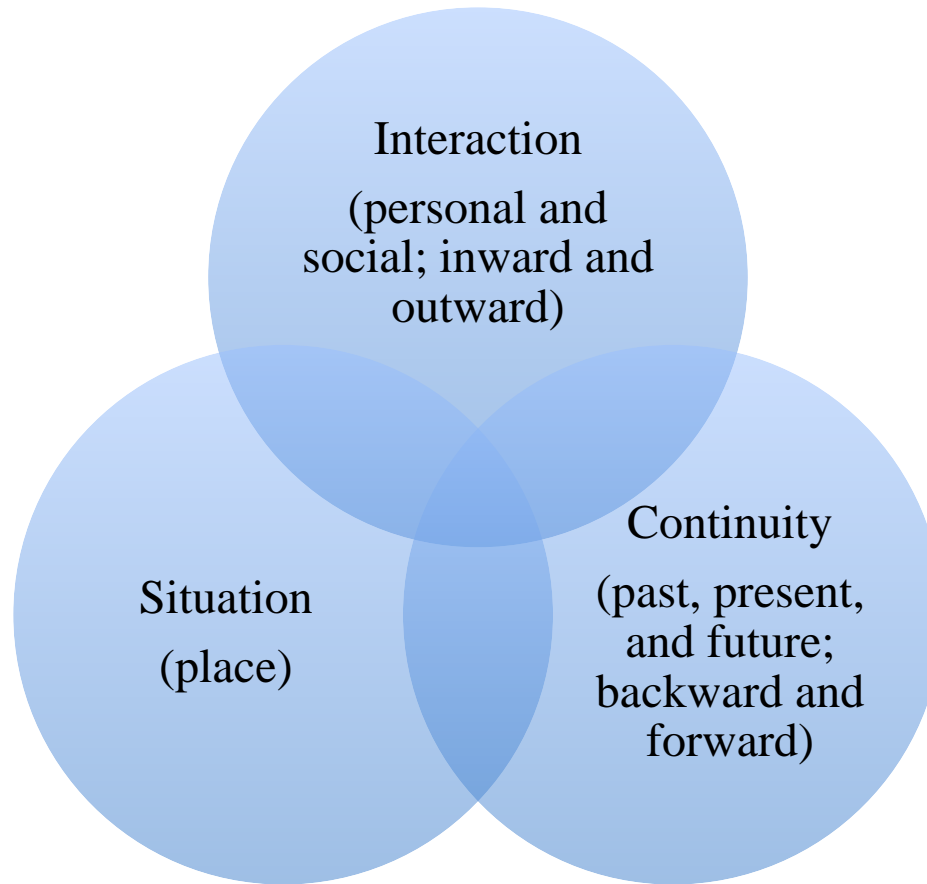
Dewey, 1934



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Interaction, Continuity, and Three-Dimensional Space



Linear Model of Story Re-Creation



Many Types of Narrative

- Discourse Analysis
- Intersection of linguistic analysis & use of story (analyzing elements of a participant's story such as introduction, rising action, climax, resolution)
- *Standard* Narrative Inquiry (interviewing people)
- Visual narrative analysis
- Photo-elicitation
- Art-Based Research Methods
- and more

Narrative: Data Collection

- **Building appropriate interview questions**
 - Semi-structured interviews use “general questions ... to guide the interview, helping you maintain its focus rather than dictate its direction. ... They allow you to ask different but relevant questions depending on the interviewee’s responses” (Kim, 2016, p. 164).
 - In unstructured, open-ended interviews, you, the researcher, may have no set agenda.
 - You play an active role through asking probing or clarifying questions (Kim, 2016, p. 164)

Different types of data a person may use to tell their story

- Narrative thinking
 - A method of creating a story by organizing experiences around our perception, thought, memory, and imagination.
 - An act of narrative thinking elicited through storyteller's narrative schema, prior knowledge, and cognitive strategies, yields a story that facilitates an understanding of the actions of others and oneself in relation to others (Kim, 2016, pp. 156-7).
- Narrative interviewing
 - “We have to think narratively about how we can generate interview data that will help us accomplish our research purpose ... while leaving room for surprises that might come out of our narrative data” (Kim, 2016, p. 169).

Different types of data a person may use to tell their story

- Artifacts: “Personal journals, diaries, letters, books, photographs, paintings, personal belongings, formal and informal documents, or any other objects the storytellers would like to share that are related to the telling of their story” (Kim, 2016, p. 177)
- Visual data: Websites, photos, advertisements, signs, etc. “We don’t always notice the importance of what we see, nor do we attempt to systematically analyze it. It is the *paying attention*, the looking and the taking note of what we see that makes images especially important” (Weber, 2008, in Kim, 2016, p. 178).
- Digital archival data: Personal stories, folk tales, audio files, video files, etc.
- Fieldwork: Living in the research field, collecting data through observations (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006).

Topic and Research Questions: What do you want to learn from the stories?

- “Most research questions begin in one of four ways: What? How? In what ways? Why?” (Saldana & Omasta, 2018, p. 175).
- Research questions are posed to “uncover the perspectives of an individual, a group, or different groups, with relatively small numbers of participants, focusing on the particularities of the locals with the ‘thick description’ of human interactions in that context” (Geertz, 1973, in Kim, 2016, p. 95).
- “New questions might evolve as we witness the lives and perspectives of others unfolding. ... Good questions are refined in all stages of a reflexive and interactive inquiry journey” (Kim, 2016, p. 97).

Topic and Research Questions: What do you want to learn from the stories?

- Developing Research Questions
 - “Narrative research questions ... are used not just as destinations that need to be reached (or answered) but also as guiding points in the inquiry process that allow unexpected but meaningful results and conclusions to emerge” (Kim, 2016, p. 97).
 - “Rather than ... framing a research question with a precise definition or expectation of an answer, narrative researchers frame a research puzzle” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 42).
 - The shift from question to puzzle is one that allows narrative inquirers to make explicit that narrative inquiry is markedly different from other methodologies” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 43).

Research Questions

From the *Dissertation Handbook*:

The research questions should focus on temporality, sociality, and spatiality.
For example:

R1: What were the participants' feelings about the experience (name specific experience)? (temporality)

R2: What were the cultural factors and what were the interrelationships with other people involved in the situation (name specific situation)? (sociality)

R3: What was the physical environment during the experience and how did the environment impact the experience (name specific experience)?
(spatiality)

Research Questions

From the *Dissertation Handbook*:

Additional research question examples:

R1: What do college age Native Americans living on a reservation feel about leaving the reservation to attend college? (*temporality*)

R2: How do cultural factors and other people influence their feelings about leaving the reservation to attend college? (*sociality*)

R3: How do their current environment and the college environment impact their decision? (*spatiality*)

Research Question Examples

1. What significant challenges did students and educators in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands face after experiencing widespread devastation wrought by Hurricanes Irma and Maria in September 2017?
2. How did educators apply personal and professional ethics during the aftermath of these hurricanes?
3. What was it like to experience and re-engage in formal educational practices and learning following the storms?

Research Question Examples

1. What characteristics make rural schools unique?
2. What advantages do rural schools offer for teachers and students?
3. What challenges are faced by rural school educators and their students?
4. How do educators apply personal and professional ethics to meet these the needs of their students?

Significance of the Study

From the *Dissertation Handbook*:

Describe potential benefits to the industry of examining the stories and experiences of the participants.

Purpose Statement

From the *Dissertation Handbook*:

The purpose statement for narrative inquiry studies must include the objective of examining participants' experiences as understood through their stories. The elements of temporality, sociality, and spatiality should be included in the stated study objectives.

Example: The purpose of the proposed narrative inquiry will be to understand the meaning that younger members of Native American tribes place on older tribal members' stories about higher education.

Purpose Statement Example

The purpose of this study was to describe the significant formative experiences of early-career teachers—who they are, how they come to be, what they believe and how they think, the dilemmas and challenges they face — and to show how these experiences shape their professional identities.

Purpose Statement Example

The purpose of this study is for researchers to apply a process of narrative inquiry to capture the significant experiences and insights of current and retired educators who teach or have taught within small rural fringe and distant schools. Queries are designed to capture the unique ethical challenges these educators face.

Processes Used

- Transcribe/edit notes soon after.
- Not a quick read!
- Requires reciprocal processes of reading, writing, thinking
- I have usually begun with a conceptual frame that I/we have revised, based on the data.

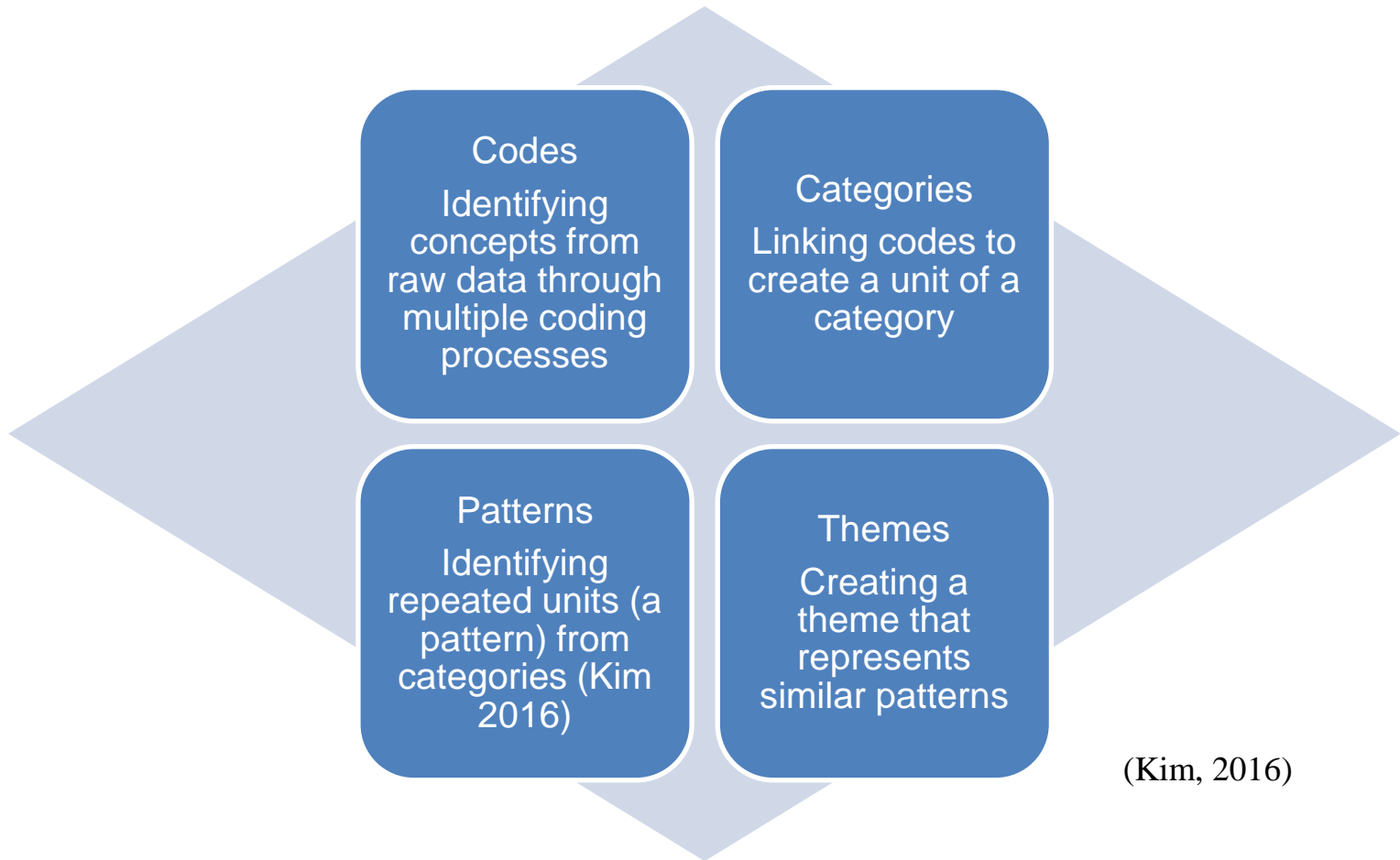


Processes Used

- You must become immersed in the data.
- Can become emotionally draining.
 - Compassion Fatigue and Beginning Teacher Studies
 - I found myself reliving key moments in my life
- Don't assume that even interested participants will be willing to talk
 - Beginning teachers – 12 from 900
 - Compassion Fatigue and Hurricane Shelters and Ethics – Two friends/former colleagues refused to participate
- Conversely, some found the process therapeutic and were eager to share their stories.
- Keep an uninterrupted chain of coffee, chocolate, red wine, and an assortment of nuts, cheese and crackers and even less healthy snacks



Basic Elements of Qualitative Data Analysis



(Kim, 2016)

The Power and Insight of Narrative

Notes From the Field

- *There was no sleeping, even if you could or wanted to, because we were always on call. So much responsibility on you for the lives of these people and their children. You say, “Yes, of course we are going to help you,” although we had no idea. You are scared to death.*
- *I came home, sat in the chair and couldn’t move. My husband called his brother, and he came over. They physically got me in the car and took me to the hospital. They thought I had a stroke. I was physically, emotionally, and cognitively frozen. It took weeks for me to get back to normal. It physically took a toll on me. I wanted to crawl in the closet and shut the door and not let anyone know I was there. It was devastating.*



The Power and Insight of Narrative

Notes From the Field

- *You must carry a chaos inside you to give birth to a dancing star .*
- *I am planning on leaving teaching. It really sucks, because I spent a lot of money, but every day I feel like I'm swimming upstream. My kids have to take state tests and they aren't ready. Three days next week of solid testing, then quarterly tests. Days lost. They are obviously trying to privatize education, and we don't have a voice. Teachers say that all the time. I don't know how. The crossroads of privatization and kids is breaking me. My husband sees it is destroying me. It kills a part of your soul.*



The Power and Insight of Narrative

Notes From the Field

- *Water was about 2 ½ feet deep in our home. Our ceiling caved in. We are just starting to work on hurricane damage, but it's done little by little.*
- *Most of the school had flood damage, landscaping damage, and there was a hole in the roof.*
- *The windows were blown out of some of the classrooms. Some classes were brighter than others. Sometimes breezes came through the window. It was very hot. We had sweat dripping from our eyebrows in 95 degrees.*
- *I felt like the world was ending. Everything was dead. We had beautiful palm trees in our yard, and they were all gone. Afterward everything was dead. The sky was gray. The land was brown. It was like Armageddon.*



The Power and Insight of Narrative

Notes From the Field

I have since become aware of implicit bias. One of the challenges of small schools is finding teachers. Because there was such a shortage of teachers, they hired a young African American woman to teach both boys and girls PE. There was immediately a campaign to discredit her. Boys were spitting at her. One day she was walking home, and someone started shooting at her. She quit the next day. They never caught who did it. That really opened my eyes to bias in the community.



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Key Resources

Journal: *Narrative Inquiry* <https://www.jbe-platform.com/content/journals/15699935/browse>

[SAGE Methods https://methods.sagepub.com/Search/Results](https://methods.sagepub.com/Search/Results)

[Jean Clandinin Video](#)

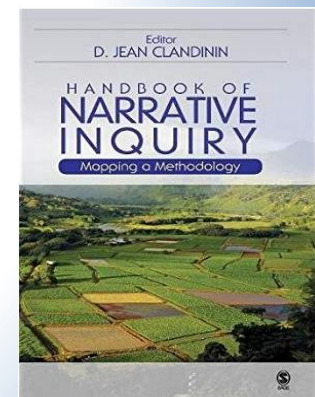
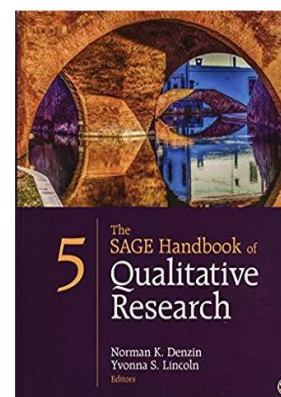
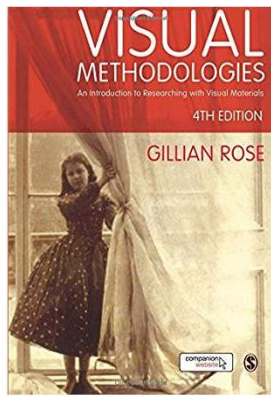
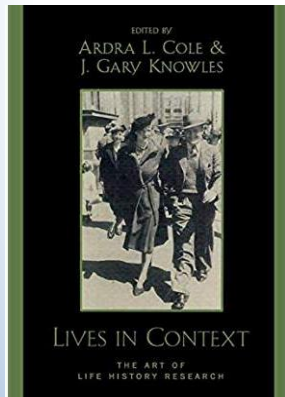
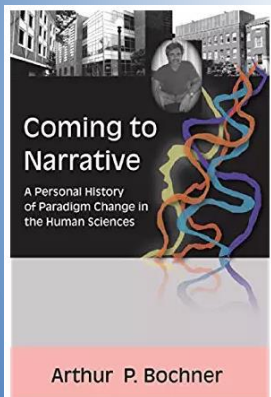
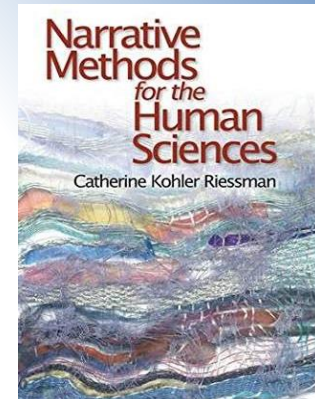
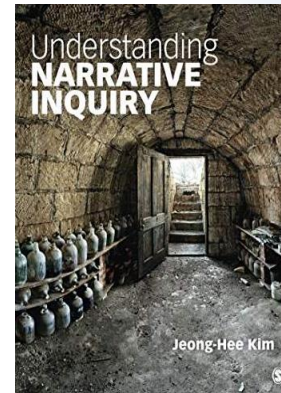
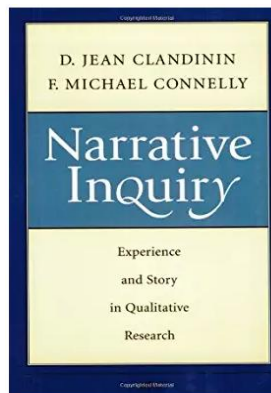
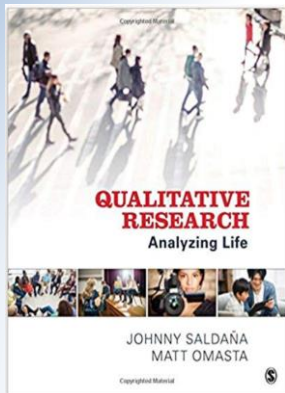
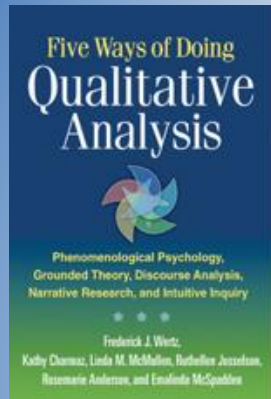
[CDS Central](#)



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More Key Resources



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Narrative Inquiry



Leaders: Dr. Ryan Rominger, Dr. Jim Lane

Narrative Research Methods

Narrative research methods are exemplified by studies which focus on a participant's narrative, or story. While housed within the overarching label 'narrative research' there are actually many different types of narrative research (NR). Some NR focuses on analyzing the elements of a participant's story, while others focus on creating a meta-narrative, or even identifying themes within the different participants' narratives. Some narrative research may include art (an element of art-based research) to help flesh out the verbal narratives. These creative elements may include poetry, visual art, movement, or expressions through many different media. However, the more traditional narrative research focuses on interviews with study participants.

As a group, narrative research methods aligns well with a constructivist worldview, which asserts that we as humans create, or co-create, our reality. This creative aspect may focus more on perception of reality and the ability to change our personal narratives, or it may focus on a belief that verification of an external reality (if it exists) is limited due to inherent subjective experience of reality (i.e., we can only experience the world through our own perceptions).

Next steps...

[Visit and join the Research Methodology Group](#)

Join [Research Methodology Group Teams](#)

- Review materials
- Recorded webinars
- Short burst learning Videos
- Office hours

Provide us with your feedback

- Complete this very brief [Survey](#) (less than 1 minute)

Next meeting: **Research problem, purpose, and questions for a correlational analysis design**

- March 2, 5-6 pm Arizona Time
- Access via [the Workshop site](#)

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Questions?

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