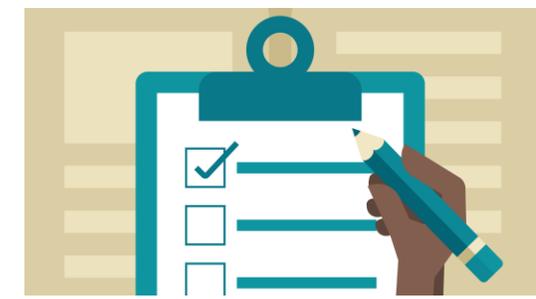




# Narrative Research and Ethical Considerations in Qualitative Research





# Intended Learning Outcomes

**After this lecture you will be able to:**

1. Explain the meaning of narrative research.
2. Identify key characteristics of narrative design.
3. Describe the strengths and weaknesses of narrative design
4. Describe the steps of performing narrative research.
5. Identify ethical challenges faced by qualitative researchers and the ways to mitigate them.

*'Human beings are storying creatures. We make sense of the world and the things that happen to us by constructing narratives to explain and interpret events both to ourselves and to other people.'* Sikes, P. & Gale, K. (2006).



# Narrative research- Introduction

- Narrative inquiry was first used by **Connelly and Clandinin** as a methodology to describe the personal stories of teachers (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).
- Conducted through dialogue between the researcher and the participant.
- Defining features of the narrative approach include the collection of narrative (stories) from individuals or small groups. Most often there is collaboration with the researcher as storytelling engages the audience.
- These stories tell of individual experiences that often exposes the researcher to the identities of that individual.
- Narratives are often collected through interviews but other qualitative forms of data collection, such as observations and documents may be used.



# Narrative research- Definitions

- A narrative (story) is an account with a beginning, a sequence of unfolding events and an ending (Greenhalgh & Hurwitz, 1999).
- It puts characters, events, actions and context together so as to make sense of them, and it generally follows a recognizable form and pattern (e.g. clinical case).



# Narrative research- Definitions

- "Narrative" might be the term assigned to any **text or discourse**, or, it might be text used within the context of a mode of inquiry in qualitative research.
- A methodology which consists of **gathering stories** about a certain theme where the researcher will find out information about a specific phenomenon (Paiva, 2008).
  - It is a compassionate methodology.
  - The inclusion of social, cultural and environmental influences on illness understandings makes narrative inquiry very suitable for research in health as it incorporates all dimensions that impact the individual's health experience.



# Goal of Narrative Enquiry

- To reveal (uncover) the meanings of the individuals' experiences as opposed to objective, decontextualized truths (Bailey & Tilley, 2002).
- Narrative researchers look for ways to understand and then present real-life experiences through the stories of the research participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).



# Narrative research

## Narrative research

- Reasons for its popularity
  - The increased emphasis on teacher reflection.
  - The increased emphasis placed on teacher knowledge, professional development, and decision-making.



As Clandinin (2006) states:

Perhaps in listening and attending to teachers' stories ... we can create conditions that allow us to give them back their stories and perhaps help them see the social, cultural, and institutional stories they work within and that shape them. As [ teachers ] begin to awaken to other stories of community, we might see [ them ] begin to re-story [ their ] stories to live by. Perhaps we can begin to work together to change those social, cultural and institutional narratives. (p.52)



# Benefits of Narrative inquiry

- By using the narratives format to present findings, researchers can access rich layers of information that provide a more in-depth understanding of the particulars of the participants' points of view (Wang & Geale, 2015).
- The knowledge gained can offer the reader a deeper understanding of the subject material and extra insight to apply the stories to their own context (Wang & Geale, 2015).



# Narrative research- Data collection

- The procedures for implementing this research consist of focusing on studying one or two individuals, gathering data through the collection of their stories, reporting individual experiences, and chronologically ordering (or using life course stages) the meaning of those experiences.
- In order to collect the data, several techniques can be used: interviews, journals, autobiographies, oral history, and field notes (Paiva, 2008).

# Oral History

- A method for collecting data from participants by asking them to share their experiences.
- Two ways to develop oral histories
  - Interviews using structured or unstructured protocols
  - Annals and chronicles
    - The participant constructs a timeline and divides it into segments of significant events or memories.

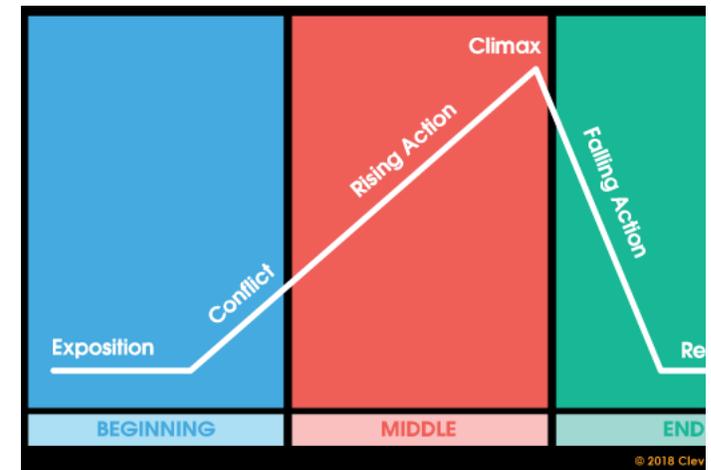
# Analysis of narratives OR Narratives analysis

- Analysis of narratives

- The process whereby the researcher collects stories as data and analyses them into a set of themes that hold across all of the stories
- The themes are the outcomes

- Narrative analysis

- The kind of narrative that is constructed by the researcher who has collected descriptions of events through interviews and observations and synthesized them into stories or narratives.
- The story is the outcome
- This process is called **Emplotment**.
- It includes amalgamation of multiple interviews/conversations into one narrative that encompasses the events discussed, presented in a sequence that creates a **narrative plot** (Tropea, 2012).



# Key Features of Narrative Research

- Concentrates on individual experiences
- Reports a chronology of the experiences
  - use a time sequence of events
- Gathers the individual stories told to the researcher or collected through field texts
  - autobiographies
  - interviews
  - journals



# Key Features of Narrative Research

- Describes the context or setting for the individual stories
- Includes the people involved in the story.
- Includes the physical setting
- Setting may be described before events or actions, or can be woven throughout the study
- Collaborates throughout the process of research with the individuals whose stories are being reported.
- Participants are actively involved in the inquiry as it unfolds.
- Relationships between research and participant are negotiated to minimize the potential gap between narrative told and narrative reported



# Key Features of Narrative Research (continued)

- **Temporality (time): Past, present and future (When)**
  - Past experiences will have an influence on how a patient experiences their present situation and previous encounters in healthcare influence how they perceive their future
- **Sociality: The personal, social and cultural (Who and Why)**
  - A person's narrative will be influenced by the audience, be it a researcher, a family member or a stranger, they will undoubtedly influence how the narrative is told and what the person is willing to include in their narrative.
- **Spatiality (space, environment) (Where)**
  - The environment will also influence how an event is experienced by the person involved

(Connelly & Clandinin, 1990)

## Example on the integration of Temporality, sociality, and spatiality

- Living with a chronic illness or surviving an acute illness can be a life-changing experience and these narratives of illness are descriptions of an individual's experience of their situation, reflected by surroundings, such as hospitals, previous illness and life experience. Hence a person's narratives provide a deep detailed view of their illness experience and inform how we can best provide future care.

## Questions of trustworthiness (has subject told the “truth”)

- Prolonged engagement and persistent observation enhances the quality of the narrative.
- Triangulation – using multiple data sources.
- Member checking – asking participant if interpretation is accurate and making adjustments in the data and interpretation if necessary.
- Thick description ( thorough description of study’s contextual factors, participants, and experiences).
  - Helps in contextualising the data.



# Strengths

- Stories are sense-making devices.
- Stories are inherently nonlinear.
- Stories are often evocative and memorable.
- Stories are necessarily perspectival (i.e. conveying a particular perspective).

(Greenhalgh, 2016)



# Limitations

- The institutional contexts in which research is undertaken may constrain and distort the stories told.
- Some narratives simply cannot be told, perhaps because the individual has lost the ability to narrate.



# Challenges

- The researcher needs to collect extensive information about the participant, and needs to have a clear understanding of the context of the individual's life.
- Active collaboration with the participant is necessary, and researchers need to discuss the participant's stories as well as be reflective about their own personal and political background.



# Steps for performing narrative research

- Identify a phenomenon to explore.
- Purposefully select an individual to learn about the phenomenon.
- Collect the story from the individual.
- Restory or retell the individual's story.
- Collaborate with the participant storyteller.
- Write a story about the participant's experiences.
- Validate the accuracy of the report.



# Final product .....

The amalgamated narrative contains the **temporal dimension** (experiences from the past and visions for the future), **sociality** (how the narrative is presented in the cultural and social environment), and **spatiality** (a description of surroundings, sometimes both where the narrative was experienced and where the narrative is told).

# Ethics in research (Introduction)



- The introduction of the World Medical Association's Declaration of Helsinki in 1964 stressed the importance of establishing Research Ethics Committees or institutional review boards.
- According to the Declaration of Helsinki:
  - ❖ Studies should be designed in the safest manner.
  - ❖ Every medical research study involving human subjects should be preceded by careful assessment of predictable risks and burdens
  - ❖ Informants in research should be recruited on a voluntary basis and should be informed of the research study in order to freely give informed consent, preferably by filling in a written consent form.
  - ❖ The informants must provide entirely voluntary agreement to participate—that is, without physical or psychological coercion.



# Ethical Principles in Research

- Researchers are responsible for ensuring participants
  - Are well-informed about the purpose of the research they are being asked to participate in.
  - Understand the risks they may face as a result of being part of the research
  - Understand the benefits that might occur to them as a result of participating



# Informed consent

- Informed consent stresses the researcher's responsibility to completely inform participants of different aspects of the research in comprehensible language.
  - ❖ The nature of the study
  - ❖ the participants' potential role
  - ❖ the identity of the researcher
  - ❖ the financing body
  - ❖ the objective of the research
  - ❖ how the results will be published and used.
  - ❖ Any potential risks and benefits of the research



# Ethical problems

- Issues that may rise when a researcher gains access to a community and the effect the researcher may have on the participants.
- Ethical problems could occur to both researcher and participants.
  - Ethical unsoundness or physical and emotional risks to the researcher can arise if the researcher
    - (a) faces aggression from the participant.
    - (b) undertakes fieldwork at premises unfamiliar to the researcher.
- The need acknowledge that participants can withdraw from a study at any time.



# Four domains for Ethics

- Procedural ethics
  - Approval processes.
- Situational ethics
  - Research context
- Ethical relationships
  - Dynamics between the researcher and participants.
- Ethical issues in exiting the study
  - Completion and disseminating findings

(Tracy, 2010)



# Procedural Ethics

- Procedural—also known as categorical—ethics refer to ethical actions dictated as universally necessary by larger organizations, institutions or governing bodies.
  1. Encompassed by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), including mandates such as do no harm, avoid deception, negotiate informed consent, and ensure privacy and confidentiality.
  2. Procedural ethics also suggest that research participants have a right to know the nature and potential consequences of the research—and understand that their participation is voluntary.
- As a method of procedural ethics, researchers safeguard participants from undue exposure by securing all personal data—in a locked office or drawer, or a password-protected website.





# Ethical Relationships

- Relational ethics are related to an ethic of care that “recognizes and values mutual respect, dignity, and connectedness between researcher and researched, and between researchers and the communities in which they live and work”.
- the researcher as human instrument should always respect others, which includes allowing participants to assist in defining the rules of the research and helping the researcher to practically understand the ramifications for violating traditional ways of doing things.

# Exiting ethics

- Ethical considerations continue beyond the data collection phase to how researchers leave the scene and share the results.
- Certainly, researchers never have full control over how their work will read, be understood, and used.
- However, they can consider how best to present the research so as to avoid unjust or unintended consequences.

# Ethical Challenges in Qualitative research

- The researcher-participant relationship
  - The desire to participate in a research study depends upon a participant's willingness to share his or her experience.
  - Researchers who develop close relationships with participants and share personal information must treat carefully and acknowledge the ethical risks associated with this behaviour, such as harming participants at the end of the research relationship and the potential for participants to feel misunderstood, or 'used'.
  - Anonymity, confidentiality and informed consent.
  - Confidentiality means that no personal information is to be revealed except in certain situations.
  - ❖ This is especially necessary when working with sensitive information that may reflect a study participant's personal views and experiences.
  - ❖ Participant and institutional confidentiality.



# Ethical Challenges in Qualitative research

- Data gathering
  - Example: Ethnography
    - ✓ Long presence of the researcher amongst people of a particular culture requires informed consent.
    - ✓ Participants should always be aware of the information that has been obtained and is being recorded, and consent to it.
    - ✓ Sometimes this cannot be achieved easily and conflicts may happen.
    - ✓ Emergent data collection (Research Ethics committee must expect amendments to research protocol).

# Ethical Challenges in Qualitative research

- Researcher subjective interpretation of the data
  - It is likely that participants views may be misinterpreted or taken out of context.
  - Member checking must be addressed in the informed consent.



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Thank you.

