

Department of Sociology
Boston College
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Wednesday 4:30-7
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NARRATIVE METHODS IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES (SC 738)

Narrative theory is reshaping qualitative inquiry in virtually every human science discipline and practicing profession. Narrative methods are suited to analysis of oral and written stories of experience and to group, community, organizational and national narratives. We begin with a review of the turn toward narrative in social research, issues of transforming storytelling into text, and then focus on four specific approaches suitable for analysis of various kinds of data that take a narrative form: thematic, structural, dialogic, and visual. Drawing on reading and class discussions of each approach, students will select and critically analyze a text of their own choosing using one of the four approaches. The seminar concludes with a conversation about validity in qualitative research, including guiding concepts for ensuring trustworthiness in narrative inquiry.

COURSE OUTLINE

I. INTRODUCTION (1/18): what is (and is not) narrative; the narrative “turn” in human sciences; functions of narrative; construction of identities--individual, organizational, community, national/political; different approaches: the “told”, “telling”, dialogic encounters, and visual sequences.

Chase, S.E. 2005. “Narrative inquiry: Multiple lenses, approaches, voices.” In N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 3rd. ed. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage, pp. 651-679

Riessman, C.K. 1993. *Narrative Analysis*. Qualitative Research Methods Series, No. 30. Newbury Park, CA: Sage. (Optional) *

II. CONSTRUCTING NARRATIVE TEXTS (1/25): documents that take a narrative form; research interviews; representing discourse; transcription as interpretation.

Gubrium, J.F. and Holstein, J.A. 2002. "From the individual interview to the interview society." In Gubrium and Holstein (eds.) *Handbook of Interview Research*. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage, pp. 3-32.

Mishler, E.G. 1986. *Research Interviewing: Context and Narrative*. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press.*

III. FOUR APPROACHES TO NARRATIVE INQUIRY

A. THEMATIC ANALYSIS (2/1 & 2/8)

Cain, C. 1991. "Personal stories: Identity acquisition and self-understanding in Alcoholics Anonymous." *Ethos* 19:210-253.

Ewick, P. and S. Silbey 2003. "Narrating social structure: Stories of resistance to legal authority." *American Journal of Sociology* 108(6): 1328-72.

Rich, J.A., Grey, C.M. 2005. "Pathways to recurrent trauma among young black men: Traumatic stress, substance use, and the 'code of the street.'" *American Journal of Public Health* 95(5):816-824.

Williams, G. 1984/1997. "The genesis of chronic illness: Narrative reconstruction." In Hinchman, L.P.; Hinchman, S.K. (eds.) *Memory, Identity, Community: The Idea of Narrative in the Human Sciences*. Albany: SUNY Press, pp. 185-212.

B. STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS (2/15)

Edvardsson, D., Rasmussen, B.H., Riessman, C.K. 2003. "Ward atmosphere of horror and healing: A comparative analysis of narrative." *Health* 7(4):377-396.

Gee, J.P. 1991. "A linguistic approach to narrative." *Journal of Narrative and Life History/Narrative Inquiry* 1:15-39.

Labov, W. 1982. "Speech actions and reactions in personal narrative." In D. Tannen (ed.), *Analyzing Discourse: Text and Talk*. Washington D.C.: Georgetown Univ. Press, pp. 219-247.

C. DIALOGIC ANALYSIS (2/22 & 3/1)

Bell, S.E. 1999. "Narratives and lives: Women's health politics and the diagnosis of cancer for DES daughters." *Narrative Inquiry* 9(2):1-43.

Riessman, C.K. 2004. "A thrice told tale: New readings of an old story." In B. Hurwitz, T. Greenhalgh, and V. Skultans (eds.), *Narrative Research in Health and Illness*. London: British Medical Journal Books & Blackwell.

Skultans, V. 2003. "From damaged nerves to masked depression: Inevitability and hope in Latvian psychiatric narratives." *Social Science & Medicine* 56: 2421-2431.

Young, K. 1989. "Narrative embodiments: Enclaves of the self in the realm of medicine." In J. Shotter and K. J. Gergen (eds.), *Texts of Identity*. Newbury Park CA: Sage.

D. VISUAL ANALYSIS (3/15 & 3/22)

Becker, Howard. 1986. "Photography and Sociology," in Becker *Doing Things Together* (Evanston, ILL: Northwestern University Press), pp. 221-271 (originally published in *Studies in Visual Communication* 1:1974, pp. 3-26).

Mishler, Elliot G. 2004. "Historians of the Self: Restorying Lives, Revising Identities," *Research in Human Development* 1:1&2, pp. 101-121
Please see 20 minute video on Reserve ("Betty Tells Her Story") before you read Mishler.

Luttrell, Wendy. 2003. *Pregnant Bodies, Fertile Minds*. NY: Routledge. (Preface, Chapter 1, Chapter 4).

Lykes, M.B. 2001. "Creative arts and photography in participatory action research in Guatemala." In P. Reason and H. Radbury (eds.), *Handbook of Action Research*. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage.

IV. STUDENT PRESENTATIONS (3/29, 4/5, 4/19, 4/26)

V. VALIDATION AND “TRUTH” (5/3): looking back on narrative methods and the seminar.

Estroff, Sue E. 1995. “Whose story is it anyway?” In K.S. Toombs, D. Bernard, and R.A. Carson (eds) *Chronic Illness: From Experience to Policy*. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press.

Langellier, K.M. 2001. “Personal narrative.” In M. Jolly (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Life Writing: Autobiographical and Biographical Forms*, Vol. 2. London: Fitzroy Dearborn, pp. 699-701.

Mishler, E. G. 1990. “Validation in inquiry-guided research: The role of exemplars in narrative studies.” *Harvard Educational Review* 60: 415-442.

Personal Narratives Group 1989. “Truths.” In *Interpreting Women’s Lives*. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, pp. 261-264.

Riessman, C.K. 2002. “Doing justice: Positioning the interpreter in narrative work.” In W. Patterson (ed.), *Strategic Narrative: New Perspectives on the Power of Personal and Cultural Stories*. Lanham MD: Lexington Books, pp. 193-214.

*available in bookstore

Supplemental bibliography on narrative theory/research will be distributed in class.