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Abstract
The analysis stage of a narrative inquiry project presents particular challenges. Finding the most suitable method of data analysis and presentation of the findings takes time and effort. It is important to make the most use of the data collected and to represent participants' narratives in a coherent and meaningful way. This paper reviews some of the analytic lenses used in narrative inquiry and explores some of the difficulties in representing narrative data. Using an example from a PhD study conducted into childhood sexual abuse, the researcher describes reasons for choosing a social constructionist approach, the intertwined processes of data analysis and writing up the thesis. Several data analysis processes were explored the process of analysis of narrativebiographical interviews was chosen (Rosenthal and Fisher-Rosenthal 2004). The practicalities of finding a suitable approach to data analysis are described. How this process could have been improved is examined, with the wisdom of hindsight.

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Analysing and representing narrative data: The long and winding road

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Abstract: *The analysis stage of a narrative inquiry project presents particular challenges. Finding the most suitable method of data analysis and presentation of the findings takes time and effort. It is important to make the most use of the data collected and to represent participants' narratives in a coherent and meaningful way. This paper reviews some of the analytic lenses used in narrative inquiry and explores some of the difficulties in representing narrative data. Using an example from a PhD study conducted into childhood sexual abuse, the researcher describes reasons for choosing a social constructionist approach, the intertwined processes of data analysis and writing up the thesis. Several data analysis processes were explored the process of analysis of narrative-biographical interviews was chosen (Rosenthal and Fisher-Rosenthal 2004). The practicalities of finding a suitable approach to data analysis are described. How this process could have been improved is examined, with the wisdom of hindsight.*

Representation using narrative inquiry

Narrative inquiry has been influenced by philosophers, anthropologists, and psychotherapists such as Dewey, Johnson, Geertz, Bateson, Czarniawska, Coles, and Polkinghorne (Clandinin and Connolly 2001). The theoretical underpinning of narrative inquiry is the belief that 'telling a story about oneself involves telling a story about choice and action, which have integrally moral and ethical dimensions' (Rice and Ezzy 1999: 126). The process of telling the narrative is believed to have the potential to transform the participant's experiences. This form of research represents a change in focus from individual meanings to cultural narratives and their influence on people's lives (Byrne-Armstrong 2001: 110). The aim of narrative inquiry is therefore not to find one generalisable truth but to 'sing up many truths/narratives' (Byrne-Armstrong 2001: 112).

There are many challenges facing the narrative inquiry researcher, including the 'crisis of validity' and the 'rights of representation' (Gergen and Gergen 2003). If we accept the belief that there is no one 'truth' and that narratives are co-constructed between the participant and the researcher in a particular social, cultural, and historical context, this raises issues about the sense in which the research findings can be seen as valid and whether or not the researcher can legitimately represent the research participants.

This narrative inquiry approach inevitably leads to questions about the validity of the narratives told by participants, including the question of whether or not they represent memory reconstruction versus 'facts' (Clandinin and Connolly 2001). The social constructionist perspective is that all 'narratives sit at the intersection of history, biography, and society' (Liamputtong and Ezzy 2005: 132); they are dependent on the context of the teller and the listener; and are not intended to represent 'truth'.

Foucault warned social scientists to be alert to the danger that their explanations and diagnoses, when disseminated, could lead to further subjugation (Gergen and Gergen 2003). Fine (2003) cautioned about the danger of writing about those who have been 'othered', and pointed out the inherent risk of romanticising narratives. There is also a need for qualitative researchers to be aware of their own power when conducting research to 'help' the other (Fine 2003). She described the ethical dilemma that she faced in her own research because 'the power of my translation comes far more from my whiteness, middle-classness, and education than from the stories I tell. But my translation also colludes in structures of domination. I know that when dropouts speak, few listen' (Fine 2003: 150).

A further dilemma in this approach is that of the moral and ethical stance taken by the researcher. The process of telling one's narrative has a moral dimension to it (Liamputtong and Ezzy 2005) since the story told usually involves choices. Whether these are made overt or kept covert, the moral and ethical stance of the researcher is believed to influence the co-construction process, just as the moral and ethical stance of the reader of this paper will influence the co-construction of its meaning. With sensitive topics and given that the process of telling one's narrative can be transformative (Liamputtong and Ezzy 2005) or even therapeutic (Stuhlmiller 2001), this leaves a heavy burden of responsibility on the shoulders of the researcher.

My PhD project was influenced by social constructionist philosophers and sociologists, feminist systemic scholars and narrative therapists (Fine, Weis, Weseen and Wong 2003; Foucault 1987; Gergen 1999; Gergen and Gergen 2003; Gilligan 1982; Goldner 1998; Lisak 1997; McLeod 1997; Miller 1994; Neimeyer 2000; Polkinghorne 1988; Tolman 1994; White 2003). I interviewed participants about their early sexual experiences and the impact that these experiences had on their lives. I explored these less frequently told narratives and examined socially constructed 'realities' and the powerful discourses that influenced them (Layder 1993). I deliberately chose not to frame their experiences as child sexual abuse. As a result of taking this approach, I elicited different narratives from the commonly documented victim or survivor narratives to be found in the current literature.

This approach placed the focus on ways in which participants constructed their own narratives about their experiences in relation to others involved at the time, and in relation to available social and cultural narratives. Inevitably they had absorbed the socially constructed meanings placed on their experiences by others, which influenced the narratives that they chose to tell me. My reasons for adopting this methodology and the narratives that emerged as a result have been documented elsewhere (Hunter 2007, 2009) and are beyond the scope of this paper.

Moving to a social constructionist methodology

Initially I intended to conduct the project using grounded theory methodology (Glaser and Strauss 1967) and to build a theory or model of the adjustment process following early sexual experiences (Strauss 1987). As grounded theory methodology developed, it incorporated postmodern ideas such as acknowledging that participants might have conflicting views about their own reality (Strauss and Corbin 1998). However the methodology did not acknowledge the subjectivity of the researcher (Charmaz 2003), or the influence that the researcher had on the data being collected (Hall and Callery

2001). Grounded theory has been described by Charmaz (2005: 509) as a 'template for doing qualitative research stamped with a positivist approval', which led to a constructivist revisioning of the methodology. Half-way through the project, I decided that I needed to go even further and move to a social constructionist methodology.

There were two main reasons for preferring a social constructionist approach. First, I wanted to explore the issue of early sexual experiences from many perspectives, looking at how participants' narratives might change over time and how these narratives might help them to come to terms with their experiences. Secondly, I wanted to be able to acknowledge the impact of societal views on people's narratives and the restraints placed upon them in terms of what was an acceptable narrative and what was deemed unacceptable, both in childhood and in adulthood.

As I moved towards a social constructionist methodology, I realised that my exploration of the issue would be 'filtered through the lenses of language, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity' (Denzin and Lincoln 1998: 24) of both my participants and myself. A narrative inquiry methodology gave me the opportunity to examine the data that I collected in relation to the social construction of the issue of early sexual experiences and to explore how participants' narratives had changed and evolved over time.

The concept of the social construction of a sense of self also became fundamental to the project. Initially I had been more interested in participants' coping mechanisms but I came to realise that developing a strong sense of self was, in itself, a coping mechanism. It enabled participants to feel good about themselves despite, or perhaps even because of, their early sexual experiences. For example participants were able to feel good about themselves if they knew that they had protected other family members or had sought justice and been strong enough to stand up to the abuse in adulthood. For many, a positive sense of self emerged from their narratives of child maltreatment. The concept of a sense of self differed from the concept of identity in that it was not a permanent or an essential part of the personality, but an emergent and evolving social construction that was influenced by the systemic context.

Polkinghorne (1988) was one of the first theorists to describe the idea of a socially constructed, constantly evolving sense of self that ran counter to Descartes's notion of a unique self or essential, personal identity. He saw identity as linked to the person's life story or 'self as narrative' (Polkinghorne 1988: 151) and emphasised the importance of the temporal dimension to narratives. He also recognised that cultures provide acceptable narratives and agreed with Nietzche's concern that 'people will simply adopt a culturally given plot line' (Polkinghorne 1988: 155).

Neimeyer (2000) developed the idea of a narrative as a metaphor for reconstructing the self, both in psychotherapy and in research. He argued that the self is 'deeply penetrated by the vocabularies of our place and time, expressing dominant modes of discourse as much as any unique personality' (Neimeyer 2000: 209). His ideas moved away from the psychological concept of the personality or identity as a 'fixed inner core or essence' (Layder 1993: 77), which was influenced by childhood developmental experiences. Instead he recognised the influence of the social environment on the on-going construction of a sense of self. Neimeyer (2000) saw the self as situated in language, whereas Layder (1993) believed that the self was 'embedded' in social situations.

Neimeyer built on the concept of narrative therapy (White and Epston 1990) as a way for people 'to gradually succeed in freeing themselves from the dominance of oppressive, problem-saturated life stories' (Neimeyer 2000: 234) and replace them with more constructive stories. I linked Polkinghorne's (1988) concept of a constantly evolving sense of self with Neimeyer's (2000) concept of an integrative narrative. Hence, I viewed my research participants as constructing a narrative of their life stories as a way of developing a coherent account of their lives and positioning themselves in relationship to others. I saw this endeavour as an attempt to construct a stronger sense of self, using narrative as an integrative metaphor (Neimeyer 2000).

Analytic lenses used in narrative inquiry

Chase identified five interconnected, analytic lenses used in narrative inquiry (Chase 2005: 657-8). The first lens focused on the narrative as a vehicle for the uniqueness of human actions, the second on the narrator's voice and the verbal action and choices made by the narrator. The third lens focused on the ways in which the narrative was constrained by social circumstances, whereas the fourth lens treated narratives as socially situated, interactive performances between the researcher and the participant. The final lens focused on researchers as narrators and can be seen in autoethnographic research. In this project, the emphasis was placed on Chase's second and third lenses, i.e. on the ways in which participants told narratives that describe their thoughts, feelings, and behaviour in relation to their early sexual experiences, and on the ways in which those narratives were constrained and influenced by the social mores of the era.

Narrative inquiry methodology provided me with the opportunity to go beyond the search for the one 'grand narrative' (Grbich 1999: 57) and to examine the transformative process of storytelling in this field. It seemed to me that the child who has had early sexual experiences with an adult may tell one story privately to herself or himself as a child. The child's family will probably have a different way of explaining the situation, as will individual members within the family. Over time, ways of discussing the situation will change within the family, the culture, society and the media. As a result, the individual's narrative will also change over time.

In narrative analysis, texts are analysed within their social, cultural, and historical context from many different perspectives. They are deconstructed in order to reveal 'powerful discourses, hierarchies, presuppositions, deliberate omissions and polar opposites' (Grbich 1999: 52). Narrative analyses are usually based on large units of texts or biographical stories (Rice and Ezzy 1999) and the moral and transformational dimensions of storytelling are explored. Different researchers have their own style of narrative analysis. For example, Byrne-Armstrong described her methodology as 'a narrative analysis with a Foucauldian twist' (Byrne-Armstrong 2001: 111). The Foucauldian aspect of the analysis was to examine multiple voices and to draw out which voices were silenced and which were powerful. She believed that 'the interpretation we call truth is the one that is attached to power' (Byrne-Armstrong 2001: 113).

Many therapists have been drawn to narrative methods in qualitative research (Byrne-Armstrong, Higgs and Horsfall 2001; Etherington 2003; J M Hall 2000; McLeod and Lynch 2000; Thompson 1999), perhaps because they already have the required skills and specialised training needed in order to create the necessary level of 'openness and trust between participant and researcher' (Marshall and Rossman 2006: 118), and are

skilled at inviting people to tell their stories. Narrative approaches have also become more popular recently as a methodology for researching and theorising in the field of child sexual abuse (Etherington 2000; Fox 2003; Gill and Tutty 1999; Harvey, Mishler, Koenen and Harney 2000; Kia-Keating, Grossman, Sorsoli and Epstein 2005), perhaps because researchers in this field often have a background in health and considerable interviewing skills.

The practicalities of analysing data

Initially I intended to use grounded theory methodology. Acknowledging my subjective experience as a valuable resource, I attempted to 'bracket' this knowledge (Etherington 2000; Goldner 1998; Meadows and Morse 2001), put it to one side, and not use it as part of the conceptual framework for the study. I attempted to deconstruct the data collected and look for themes and sub-themes, in order to build up a theory grounded in the data that would explain how people coped with their early sexual experiences. However, this process was ultimately unsatisfactory, since it generated no new information and no significant contribution to knowledge in this field.

What eventually emerged was a complex, interwoven process of analysis and writing up of the data, similar to the 'fifth moment' in qualitative research when 'messy, uncertain, multivoiced texts, cultural criticism, and new experimental works will become more common, as will more reflexive forms of fieldwork, analysis, and intertextual representation' (Denzin and Lincoln 1998: 30). I decided to deconstruct the data in a 'process of looking for the underlying sociocultural meanings of texts' (Lupton 1999: 455).

Following each interview, I transcribed the audio-tapes and summarised each participant's narrative in their own words onto four pages, by removing all but the crucial elements of the story. I tried to pull out one representative quote for each participant, but later I rejected these as over-simplistic. I then entered the entire transcript into a qualitative data management program called NVivo and coded each paragraph into themes and sub-themes, using the participant's own language wherever possible. During this process, I listened to the tapes several times and recorded my impressions of what was going on for the participant, for me, and between us as the narrative unfolded. I recorded my thoughts and insights about the data into a memo file attached to the participant's narrative file and coded these insights. I tried to conduct this process with humility, recognising that 'some voices (knowledges) are silenced and other voices and knowledges dominate the airwaves' (Byrne-Armstrong 2001: 112).

The writing up process became entwined with the analytic process (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell and Alexander 1997: 273) as a 'method of discovery and analysis' (Richardson 1994: 516). Initially I wrote up the findings in themes across all the participants, in a horizontal process of analysis. I identified themes across all the stories told and analysed and described them in three chapters: an initial chapter that introduced each participant's story in the context of the societal and family context, multigenerational patterns of abuse and relationships within the family; a second chapter that described the impact of their early sexual experiences on their development and not telling as a coping strategy; and a third chapter that described the impact of their early sexual experiences on their behaviour in adulthood and telling as a coping strategy in adulthood.

At this stage I was dissatisfied with the writing up process and was having difficulty finding one phrase or title that summarised the main theme of the thesis. I experimented with a number of alternative ways to present the data. I examined the data in the light of the Reading Guide (Brown, Debold, Tappan and Gilligan 1991) also known as the Listening Guide analysis method (Taylor, Gilligan and Sullivan 1995). This involved reading the interview at least four times, once for the overall story, and then listening for the first person voice, and other voices such as the relational voice of care, and the voice of justice. This method acknowledged that the person listening influenced what was being said. Using this method, most of the data could be described using the silenced voice, the relational voice of care for others, and the voice of justice. However, this did not seem to draw out the similarities and differences between the stories told by men and women in the sample and seemed to repeat the research findings of other studies into the missing voice of desire among adolescent girls (Tolman 1994, 2002).

I then examined the data from an attachment perspective and a psychodynamic perspective (Herman 1994), as well as from a feminist systemic perspective (Breckenridge 1999; Goldner 1998; Haaken and Lamb 2000; McCarthy 1997; Naples 2003; Orbach 1998). However I decided to take a social constructionist or narrative approach to the analysis. I explored the data vertically in terms of participants' narratives, looked for similarities between narratives, and rewrote the findings into its final form as four chapters describing group narratives and the themes that wove through them.

My final analysis methodology was based on Rosenthal and Fischer-Rosenthal's (2004) analysis of narrative data. These authors draw a distinction between actual events and narratives, arguing that narratives must be based on some form of perception or observation of real events (Rosenthal and Fisher-Rosenthal 2004). They have a six stage process of analysis, which includes an analysis of biographical data, thematic analysis, re-construction of the case history or life as it was lived, an analysis of individual texts, a process of comparison between a narrative and life as lived, and the formation of different types of narratives.

Initially I analysed the data by biographical details, looking for explanatory factors such as age when the sexual contact happened, gender of the participant or the victimiser, and so on. I then conducted a thematic analysis of the data (Ezzy 2002), coding by significant sentences, paragraphs relating to themes, narratives about particular incidents, the structure of the interview, and by the interview as a whole. I used the NVivo computer program to assist me in this process, but mainly for data management. At this stage in the process I constructed a life history for each participant (Flick, von Kardorff and Steinke 2004) by reducing and re-ordering their narratives into a brief summary of their stories told in their own words. I then analysed individual pieces of text, trying to ascertain the influences of social discourses as revealed in these texts. I grouped narratives according to common core concepts in relation to the construction of a sense of self. This produced four main group narratives with three sub-narratives. I then rewrote the findings into the final form as four chapters describing group narratives with interwoven themes.

The processes that I found particularly useful at the analysis stage were: summarising each participant's story in a few pages; coding the data into themes and sub-themes using participants' own language to describe each theme; highlighting 'quotable quotes'

early in the process; pulling out one phrase to represent each participant; using one phrase to summarise the main theme of the thesis; using many different analysis techniques; continuously interrogating the data; and understanding that analysis and writing up are interwoven processes.

Conclusions

Representing and interpreting another's voice is not a simple task and needs to be done with respect and humility. I continue to be grateful to my participants for entrusting me with their stories. In order to do them justice, I felt the need to find an analysis method that suited my data and that made the most of it. This was a social constructionist approach, so that the narratives could be viewed as changing over time and being influenced by societal views about what was deemed to be an acceptable or unacceptable narrative. Using this lens and a narrative inquiry approach enabled me to explore the ways in which participants constructed a sense of self through the narratives they chose to tell.

I believe that my struggle to find a better method of data analysis and writing up was worthwhile. It enabled me to produce a new contribution to scholarship through vertical rather than horizontal analysis of the data.

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