

Centre for Qualitative Research

DEMAND-LED QUALITATIVE INNOVATIONS SESSIONS

SESSION FIVE

Narrative Inquiry in Organisation Studies and Management Research

Dr Katharina Chudzikowski and Dr Stefanie Gustafsson

Monday 5 July 2021

Session Summary

In this session, we shared our experiences of using narrative approaches in the field of Organisation Studies and Management research. Drawing on our own research conducted with elite professionals, we reflected on the value of a narrative approach to understand individuals' meaning making in context, especially how individuals make sense of career-related events and their work experiences.

This session gave insights into narratives as a method that serves the dual purpose – individuals make meaning through narration (i.e., through the telling of stories); and narratives as outcomes of this meaning making process. From a narrative perspective, people's stories about their relational context are not simply data about the aspects of an external context – with its constraints and opportunities. Rather, narratives offer insights into the ways by which the narrator maintains agency in relation to his or her construal of social space.

In the session, we also introduced participants to stories as a particular type of narrative. We showed a short video clip where a leader makes use of storytelling to inform and influence their audience. We talked about the meaning of stories, their role in social interactions and the context in which they might be used. We also explored different types of poetic modes including comic, tragic, epic and romantic. To show these modes in practice, we provided an example of our own research into workplace promotions. In the second half, we further talked about narrative analysis, and introduced participants to different tools they can draw on when analysing narratives. We ended with a critical reflection on stories and considered the interplay between facts and fiction. Finally, participants were encouraged to ask clarifying questions and reflect on the session collectively.

Reading List

- Chudzikowski, K., Gustafsson, S., & Tams, S. (2020). Constructing alignment for sustainable careers: Insights from the career narratives of management consultants. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 117, [103312]. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2019.05.009>
- Czarniawska, B. (2002). Narrative, interviews, and organizations. *Handbook of interview research: Context and method*, 733-749.
- Gabriel Y 2000 *Storytelling in Organizations: Facts, Fictions, Fantasies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gabriel, Y. (2004). Narratives, stories and texts. *The Sage handbook of organizational discourse*, 61, 77.
- Gustafsson S, Swart J. 'It's not all it's cracked up to be': Narratives of promotions in elite professional careers. *Human Relations*. 2020;73(9):1199-1225. doi:10.1177/0018726719859404
- Riessman CK (1993) *Narrative Analysis*. *Qualitative Research Methods*, Vol. 30. London: SAGE.

Recording

Find the link below to access the recording of the session

<https://vimeo.com/572111539>

Summary

- To learn more about the significance of narrative inquiry in organisation studies and management research, specifically people's experiences at work and their careers
- To understanding value of narrative approaches in researching workers' subjective and emotional experiences
- To reflect about the analysis of narratives and stories in a situated way
- To engage with examples of our research projects, and related findings

Animation

<https://biteable.com/watch/3123240/570c41d18c317607aaf8d5018c9b7c04>