Narrative Analysis: The Constructionist Approach

Cigdem Esin, Mastoureh Fathi and Corinne Squire

Narrative analysis is an analytical method that accommodates a variety of approaches. Through these approaches, social researchers explore how people story their lives. This is also a process through which researchers understand the complexities of personal and social relations. Narrative analysis provides the researcher with useful tools to comprehend the diversity and the different levels involved in stories, rather than treating those stories simply as coherent, natural and unified entities (Andrews et al., 2004). It is this approach to narrative analysis, which we shall call the constructionist approach to narrative analysis, that we aim to explain in the chapter that follows.

Constructionism has a strong recent history within social sciences (Burr, 2003; Holstein and Gubrium, 2008; Sparkes and Smith, 2008). What we describe as a constructionist approach is very often adopted, in many of its features, by contemporary narrative researchers. The approach is distinct, first, as Holstein and Gubrium (2008) suggest, because of its critical take on naturalism, and in consequence its attention to the diversity, contradictions and failures of meaning, research participants' own generations of meaning, and to the mutual constitution of meanings between participants, researchers, the research context and the wider context – where 'context' refers to many different levels and complex relations of power. However, the constructionist approach has also a great deal in common with

narrative frameworks that rely on analyses of social positioning, or performance, or some variety of complexity theory.

In this chapter, we start by providing a brief overview of the contemporary place of narrative research, and summarizing the epistemological arguments involved with a constructionist view of narratives and narrative analysis. We examine the place of audience, the positioning of subjects within narratives, and the significance of power relations in stories, from within the constructionist perspective. We then proceed to describe, via examples, three analytical sites in which multiple, interconnected elements in the construction of narratives might be examined. The chapter ends with a brief discussion on the range and limitations of the constructionist approach to narrative analysis.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF NARRATIVE RESEARCH

Squire et al. (2008: 3–12) describe the development of narrative research within different theoretical and epistemological traditions, and at different historical times. Across these sizeable differences, researchers most often work with narratives because they want to address narratives' different and sometimes contradictory layers of meaning, to put them in dialogue with each other, and to understand how narratives operate dialogically between the personal and the surrounding social worlds that produce, consume, silence and contest them.

The use of narrative methods and analysis in social science research has proliferated since the 1980s. The narrative turn in social sciences (see Czarniawska, 2005) opened up an interdisciplinary space in which researchers used narratives as a tool to analyse participants' experiences of a wide range of social issues such as social inequalities, migration, gender relations, health and illness. Research in the fields of

sociology (Bell, 1999; Riessman, 1993; 2002; Somers and Gibson, 1994), psychology (Bruner, 1990; Mishler, 1986; Rosenwald and Ochberg, 1992), history (White, 1984) and anthropology (Mattingly, 1998) all helped constitute this narrative turn. Such researchers criticize methods that treat research respondents only as sources of information, rather than also paying attention to the ways these respondents construct and express their understandings of social reality.

Recent work in the field of narrative research tries to bring together humanist and post-humanist academic traditions (Squire et al. 2008: 3–4), often in the direction of a modified critical humanism, informed by for instance psychoanalysis (Rustin, 2001) or Foucault (Plummer, 2001). Alternatively, such work abdicates the task of theoretical reconciliation in the service of other theoretical goals, for instance, the conceptualization of narrative incoherence (Hyvarinen et al., 2010) or time (Freeman, 2010); or in order to examine the human functioning of narratives (Herman, 2004); or in order to pursue political thinking about narratives (Andrews, 2007; Polletta, 2006), or to adopt a pragmatist position (Squire, 2007).

Narrative analysis, whatever its theoretical and methodological orientation, whether it is addressing biographical life stories, or dealing with the linguistic or discursive structure of stories, or describing various levels of positioning performed by narratives, tends to focus on participants' self-generated meanings. Even narrative analysis which is primarily interested in the linguistics of stories, for instance, tends now to address the contexts of telling and hearing as well (De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2012: 18).

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND ASSUMPTIONS OF CONSTRUCTIONIST NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

What Is Constructionist Narrative Analysis?

The constructionist approach to narrative analysis may focus on the linguistic minutiae of the co-construction of a story between speaker and listener, but usually it also takes into account the broader social construction of that story within interpersonal, social and cultural relations.

This approach is placed within socially oriented narrative research, one of the two forms of narrative research. Socially oriented narrative research differentiates from individually oriented forms which draw on the assumptions that narratives are expressions of individuals' internal states (Squire et al., 2008: 5). The narrative constructionist approach is not really interested in internal states that can be separated off from the narratives themselves. It is interested in the states produced socially by the narratives; the narratives themselves are, in such accounts, social phenomena.

These characteristics mean that the constructionist approach also differs from cognitively based approaches to narrative. Such approaches argue that particular cognitive records gain their linguistic expression, directly or indirectly, in stories – as Labov (Patterson, 2008: 23) thought happened with the 'event stories' we tell of striking events. In these approaches, the stories are useful but in the end secondary servants of internal states – here, of thinking, rather than feeling. The narrative constructionist approach, by contrast, is more concerned with stories as social events and/or social functions.

In our application of the constructionist approach, we extend Riessman's (2008) dialogic narrative analysis model of stories as co-constructed in various contexts: interactional, historical, institutional and discursive (2008: 105).

In this model, narrative constructionism operates at different and connected levels. At one level, such constructionism takes in the interactional co-constructions that operate between stories *within* any one text, including, perhaps, between stories of different kinds, and even perhaps between conscious and preconscious or unconscious stories (Hollway and Jefferson, 2004). The power relations that are played out within stories (Phoenix, 2008) are also considered as part of co-construction processes. By addressing stories as co-constructed, or dialogically constructed (Bakhtin, 1981), this constructionist approach stresses the constantly changing elements in the construction of narratives rather than reading them as finished products of particular circumstances that may change over time.

The Constructing Effects of Audiences on Stories

Whether it is individually or socially oriented, narrative analysis is interested in the role of audience in the constitution and understanding of narratives, albeit to varying degrees. Although individually oriented approaches focus on analysing narratives as told by individual narrators, they usually acknowledge the role of the listener in shaping the structure of narratives. However, it is within more socially oriented forms of narrative analysis that the role of audience is strongest, and it is integral to constructionist approaches.

The meanings of narratives are constructed not only in relation to the audience's meaning-making at the time, location and social context within which the story is first told, but also by many differently positioned audiences. Audiences include future readers who will interpret the words of a story within their own, perhaps radically different, frames of understanding (Bakhtin, 1981; see also Stanley, 1992) A story

may also be retold for different audiences, or told for several different audiences at the same time.

All these different aspects of the audienced construction of stories are also aspects of the audienced constitution of *subjectivities*. Subjects are performed into existence during and by their narrative telling. It is to this relationship between narrative and subjectivities that we now turn.

Positioning Within the Processes of Telling and Listening to Stories

Positioning is often included within descriptions of narrative analysis, as the part of the process that allows us to hear the multiplicity and complexity of the narrative voices that make meaning (Davies and Harré, 1990).

Narrative researchers who take a constructionist approach pay attention to the 'positioning' of two kinds of subjects – the tellers and the listeners, their personal, social, cultural and political worlds, and how these worlds come together and interact within the narrative process. As Davies and Harré (1990: 46) point out, tellers draw upon both cultural and personal resources in constructing their stories. This makes narratives a kind of conversation between and across the personal and cultural resources of both narrator(s) and audience(s).

However, such narrative 'conversations' are not simply rational and value-free exchanges between subjects and subject positions; they are alliances, conflicts and negotiations, and they are not conducted entirely according to the laws of reason or even of individual affect. Having once taken up a particular position as their own, a person inevitably sees the world from the vantage point of that position and in terms of the particular images, metaphors, storylines and concepts which are made relevant within the particular discursive practices in which they are positioned and by their

own lived histories (Davies and Harré, 1990: 46, 51). Storytellers and listeners do not move freely between subject positions; they are invested in and by them.

In addition, while telling stories, individuals do not speak from a single position. As they draw on available storylines, public discourses and others' stories, storytellers' positions continuously change in relation to what discursive resources they deploy. Moreover, while the notions of 'positioning' and 'subject position' might suggest that people are choosing subjects, as indeed we mostly think of ourselves as doing, the constructionist account of narrative asks us to understand ourselves as chosen, as much as choosing.

Power Relations in the Analysis of Narratives

Power relations are frequently invoked as a constituent of narratives in the constructionist narrative analysis. Analysing 'context' is, indeed, one way to describe analysing power relations that shape the research practice on different levels. For researchers who take a constructionist approach, this interest in power relations is even more significant; for in this approach, power is usually understood in a Foucauldian way (Foucault, 1998; 2001), as widely dispersed, and held everywhere, in different forms. Power is multiple, mobile and contestable, always relational, and inheres within language itself.

When taking a constructionist approach to narratives, we would therefore want to examine how a set of power relations operates in the construction of narratives. A constructionist narrative analysis would put relations of research under scrutiny. At the same time, it would examine how the narrative is an effect of specific historical, social, cultural, political and economic discourses, rather than being natural and unquestionable (Tamboukou, 2008: 103). Addressing power relations within the

constructionist analysis of narratives is critical, in order to see the points at which power works to reproduce or produce some narratives as dominant while marginalizing others (Tamboukou, 2003; 2008).

Narrative researchers' own positioning within power relations, and the power relations operating between them, the participants, the data and its interpretation, also have to be taken into account in a constructionist analysis. Researchers working within this tradition have to analyse their own personal, social and cultural positioning(s), as well as their methodological and theoretical frameworks. From this analysis there can emerge a creative approach to the 'story' of the research itself that is perhaps more likely to be critical and qualified about what that story is doing than would be the case with researchers simply telling stories of data (see for instance Taylor, 2012 and Walkerdine, 1986).

CONSTRUCTIONIST NARRATIVE ANALYSIS IN PRACTICE

We turn now to the procedures through which a constructionist narrative analysis might proceed, using as an example some data from a recent empirical study. However, we need to start with a few qualifications.

Narrative analysis rarely provides strict guidelines for researchers that tell them where to look for stories, how to identify them, how to obtain them, or what aspects of them they should investigate (see Chase, 2011, for a detailed review of multiple approaches in the field of narrative research). Even within a single approach to narrative analysis, there is no single way to implement it. Many researchers combine different narrative-analytic approaches, for instance taking a constructionist approach but also looking at particular thematic narratives; or they combine different qualitative

approaches, for example following content analysis with narrative analysis (Simons et al., 2008). The aim is, therefore, as full as possible an understanding of stories' constituting elements (Elliott, 2005; Squire, 2008).

A practical start to narrative analysis using the constructionist approach is to think about the steps that will be taken within the analysis. It is difficult to predefine these steps. However, a constructionist approach will generally concentrate on the story as the analytical unit and explore how different levels of context – processes of research and broader socio-cultural and historical contexts – generate stories and are responded to by them. Similar to other qualitative analysis methods, there are decisions to be made. Researchers need to clarify the analytical approach to be used in their research and how they are going to select narratives to be analysed. Even though the constructionist narrative analysis aims to explore multiple constituent elements of narratives on various levels, it is practical to select narrative segments and focus on these segments as the micro units of analysis.

The focus of analysis within the constructionist approach is to address a couple of questions that help the analyst to examine constituents of stories in specific contexts. In the sections that follow, we will describe how some of these questions could be addressed in analysis. The outline below considers the analysis within and between three sites of narrative constructions: (a) the research process, (b) the interview context, and (c) historical and cultural contexts. For these are three main sites in which several elements interconnect in the configuration of narratives. Narrative researchers may use these sites as a starting point to build up their own analytical path.

It is also practical for researchers to consider addressing particular questions while working on their analysis. We include questions and examples of analysis in each section, in order to demonstrate an application of constructionist narrative analysis in current research.

The Research Process

One way to begin constructionist narrative analysis is to consider the research process as one contextual level and to look at elements of language, sociality and power within the research situation, and the broader determinants of those elements within the analysis.

In what follows, we look at four elements that operate on and in constructionist narrative analysis: transcription (see Kowal and O'Connell, Chapter 5, this volume), where narrative research involves spoken material; translation, where narrative research is carried out across languages, as is increasingly the case; the researcher's own processes of analysis and writing (see Denzin, Chapter 39, this volume); and ethical considerations as part of research relations (see Mertens, Chapter 35, this volume).

Analysis of Transcription

As Riessman (2002) reminds us, it is misleading to focus only on the transcripts that have been constructed from the interviews (see Roulston, Chapter 20, this volume) while conducting narrative analysis. Much that is important about interviews themselves, and about the research situation, is not in the transcripts. However, transcription of interviews remains integral to a great deal of narrative research. From a narrative constructionist perspective, it is one part of analysis. The choices of what

to include, and how to structure and present the transcribed text, 'have serious implications for how a reader will understand the narrative' (Riessman, 1993: 12).

Transcription is often carried out in multiple rounds. Riessman (1993: 56) advises beginning with a 'rough transcription'. This is a first draft of the entire interview and includes all the words and other main features of the conversation such as crying, laughing and pauses, however these are defined. The interview can be re-transcribed to add the shorter pauses, false starts, emphases and non-verbal utterances such as 'uhm'. There is no possibility of reaching an 'end' to this kind of data collection; tone, pitch, aspiration and many other characteristics of voice could also be included; levels of detail could be perpetually increased and checked. This is why decisions about what to transcribe, and at what level, are also decisions about analysis, and need to be discussed within research reports.

Questions to be addressed:

- *What decisions were involved in the transcription process?*

- *How have these decisions constructed the narratives to be analysed?*

Narrative researchers also make field notes about the interview situation and interactions, usually directly after interview, so that they are able to include relevant details in transcriptions (see Frost, 2009, for a clearly described implementation). Again, this is not a simple process; field notes of such kinds are never complete. Some researchers use additional materials such as video records, in order to aid or expand transcriptions. Field notes may also raise ethical issues, since they may contain material and lead to analyses that were not foreseen during the original planning for voice- and text-based narrative research and analysis (see Kowal and O'Connell, Chapter 5, this volume).

Analysis of Translation

Researchers who work across languages, or between different versions of the same language, should consider translation as another layer in the construction of stories.

'Constructing a transcript from a translated interview involves difficult interpretative decisions' (Riessman, 2008: 42). In translating stories, the researchers play an active role, not limited to their knowledge of the two languages, but including their understanding of the full lived and spoken contexts of those two languages (see Temple, 2005).

Both Fathi and Esin carried out interviews in languages other than English and produced theses and publications in English. They found that although parts of the stories are indeed 'lost in translation', new meanings also emerge within translated materials, which can help the analysis of narrative constructions. A translator–researcher, like any other speaker or writer, does not play an invisible or disinterested role. Concerns about who the future readers of their translations are, are always at the back of their minds. And despite the positive possibilities that translation presents, it must be acknowledged that some nuances of one language may never be adequately translated into another. Accounts of such translation issues need, therefore, to be incorporated into reports of research, which involves more than one language.

Question to be addressed:

- *To what extent does telling a story in one language and translating it into another affect aspects of the story such as its sequencing, its characters, and the meanings it has within a particular language-specific context?*

See for an example Box 14.1.

Analysis of Research Positioning

The analysis of the power relations that shape the research and how they affect the narratives obtained is another element to be included into constructionist narrative analysis. This can be initiated by examining how researchers are positioned within the research.

Chase's (2005: 664–6) typology of the three voices that narrative researchers use in the interpretive process might be useful to demonstrate the ways in which the analysts' voices could be positioned in the analysis. The first voice is *the researcher's authoritative voice* through which researchers separate their own interpretation from the narrators' voice by making clear that, as researchers, they have a different interest in the narratives under analysis (2005: 664). The second voice is the *researcher's supportive voice* which is used by researchers to make narrators' voices more heard within the analysis; often this involves presenting it with minimum intervention (2005: 665). The third voice is *the researcher's interactive voice*, through which researchers examine the complex interaction between voices of narrators and their own in research processes. Narrative researchers are able to put subject positions under detailed scrutiny through this strategy (2005: 666).

Questions to be addressed:

- *How do researchers position themselves within the context of their research*
  - *in their interaction with participants and audiences?*
  - *in relation to the cultural, social and political contexts that shape their research?*

- *How do these positioning(s) affect the co-construction of narratives?*

The following excerpt from Fathi's work (see Box 14.2) is an example where the positioning of both the researcher and the participants, in their interaction with each other and in relation to broader cultural and political context of the research, affected the story.

[To TS: Insert box 14.2 here]

It should be noted that a constructionist approach will often take such analysis further than we have done here, to examine researchers' disciplinary and institutional positioning, educational history, funding, publication and conference plans. All of these play a part in how the research participants are addressed, and how the research materials are elicited, recorded, analysed and reported.

Ethical Considerations

Because narrative research focuses on people's lives and selves, ethical considerations have particular importance in this kind of research and become part of a constructionist analysis of research positioning. As with other research practices, participants are assured that personal identifiers will be removed or changed from the written data and presentations of analysis. Sharing the transcripts, analysis and publications with research participants is a common practice in narrative studies, which enables researchers to expand the limits of co-constructed interpretive process (see Mertens, Chapter 35, this volume).

What, though, does a constructionist approach say, specifically, about the ethics of narrative research? First, it sees explicit considerations of ethical issues as particularly useful for research audiences, not because such considerations legitimate the research,

but because they make the particularities of research decisions highly visible. Second, such considerations will often, within a constructionist approach, go beyond ethical nostrums, for instance about what 'consent' is, when it should be obtained and what for, or what is a sensitive topic or a vulnerable subject, to understand such categories in positioned and relational ways (Hydén, 2008).

The constructionist approach considers research ethics as constituted by the particular circumstances of each research project – that is, the relationship between the teller and the listener; the institutional context; the broader cultural and historical context. Obtaining institutional 'consent' may not adequately address the ambiguous and ongoing relations that participants have with the research, or the differential responses they may have to the research process and the research outcomes. When working with personal narratives, it is difficult to work with fixed definitions of confidential, secure, private or sensitive. Confidentiality and anonymity may be such high priorities as to be met for some research participants; for others, extremely 'difficult' topics may be readily engaged with in a non-judgemental research context which they will never have to revisit.

Question to be addressed:

- *How do ethical decisions in the research process affect the co-construction of narratives?*

In her research on the sexual stories of young Turkish women, Esin found that participants often welcomed the opportunity to talk about sexual experiences, which are highly private and confidential in many cultural contexts, to a stranger who was a researcher, promising to listen to these stories confidentially and without judging the teller. In Squire's (2007) research with South Africans living with HIV, refusing

anonymity was part of some interviewees' personal and political self-positioning as accepting, campaigning HIV citizens, working against the mainstream governmental silencing of the condition. However, other interviewees were so concerned about confidentiality within this non-disclosing, pathologizing context, that they signed consent forms with pretend names or deliberately illegible scrawls.

The Interview as a Context

Interviews (see Roulston, Chapter 20, this volume) are processes of construction in which respondents constitute worlds of meaning and make sense of their experiences (Mishler, 1986: 118). But the interview partnerships shape how the stories are told and heard. Therefore, they must be integrated into the analysis process. Interviewing as a context is a rich source for narrative analysis, although what, exactly, is to be analysed is sometimes difficult to define. This difficulty is compounded when we address narratives as co-constructed within interviews. The material of the interviews – spoken words, paralinguistic communications, other sounds, and non-verbal communications – has multiple meanings that are multiplied again by the changing interactions between research participant and researcher.

Respondents' agreement to cooperate with interviewers does not necessarily mean that cooperation is limited to their responses to what they are asked. Rather, the interview is constituted over a complex interaction between responses (Mishler, 1986: 54–5). This process turns into collaborative meaning-making rather than simply the imposition or reception of the interviewer's or interviewee's framework of meanings (see for instance Phoenix, 2008). A constructionist narrative analysis thus needs to explore the negotiation of meanings within the micro context of interviews.

Questions to be addressed:

- *What do interviewers and interviewees say to each other in the interviews?*

- *How does the interaction between interviewer and interviewee shape the co-construction narratives?*

In the example in Box 14.3, Fathi explores how interview negotiations influence the way in which the research participants made sense of the concept of class in myriad ways. Meanings of class constituted in the interviews were not only responses to questions, but also responses given to the researcher's responses.

[To TS Insert box 14.3 here]

Excerpt from the Analysis

First, Fathi follows up Giti's association between education and integration – and the idea of shame, which Giti has previously talked about. Giti, however, in the position of the interviewee, has the power not to follow the interviewer down that path, and indeed she does not. She departs from the researcher's class focus towards a more universalist one, thus implicitly opposing Fathi's suggestion, and her own previous implication that integration might be a class issue, and leaving aside the topic of shame. Instead, Giti tells an exemplifying story of a 'woman who came from Canada' and gave a talk in London. The authority of a woman who gives 'talks' legitimates Giti's perspective, as does the woman's internationalism. Giti also asks Fathi if she were aware of the talk, a question that allies Giti herself with academic knowledge, and with Fathi herself. Through the story that Giti then tells, integration becomes a universally prized property, and England a nation that, regardless of class, fails this standard. Giti gives an example of that failure which perhaps would not have been given to all researchers – Fathi, she knows, is herself an Iranian living in the UK.

Fathi responds to Giti's new positioning of integration as a moral right of the young, including the Iranian young, by asking about children and language, and bringing this issue back to Giti herself: 'would you like your children to speak Farsi or English?' Giti now sounds like another person entirely to the one who last spoke. Educationally, 'of course' they should speak English, she says, returning to the professionalized, classed notion of integration she advocated at the start – but they must at the same time speak Farsi.

Following up on the possibilities above, we turn now to examining how a constructionist approach might look at narratives such as Giti's and Fathi's in terms of narrative positioning other than those operating between narrator, researcher and audience, and in relation to cultural and historical narrative contexts.

Historical and Cultural Contexts

Narrative researchers who take a constructionist approach also emphasize that these processes are tied to and make sense within specific historical and cultural contexts. Stories are drawn from a repertoire of available narrative resources – although these become personalized (Atkinson et al., 2003: 117). Somers (1994) calls such resources public narratives; Malson (2004) calls them 'meta narratives'; Esin (2009) refers to them as 'macro narratives'. These are 'narratives attached to cultural and institutional formations larger than the single individual' (Somers, 1994: 619). While constituting their narratives, individuals use public narratives available within specific cultural and historical contexts. These narratives may also function as a tool to facilitate the co-construction between the tellers and reader/hearers of stories. Here, though, we examine them more simply, in terms of their effects on a story, rather than on story co-construction.

Questions to be addressed:

- *How is the narrative linked to macro/meta/public narratives available within the historical and cultural context of research?*

- *How does the narrative reiterate or counter these macro/meta/public narratives?*

For example, in Esin's (2009) research about sexual narratives on narratives of educated young women and their mothers in Turkey, the analysis focuses on understanding how modernist discourses available within this historically specific context operated to construct participants' personal narratives of sexuality. Part of the aim was to trace modernist political and cultural grand narratives surrounding gender and sexuality in the stories within the interviews, in order to elucidate the ways in which individual narratives reiterate and/or contest these macro narratives.

As the excerpt in Box 14.4 demonstrates, these ways could be identified through participants' references to and more implicit positioning in relation to modernist narratives of lifestyles, families and relationships. These narratives were closely linked to the sexual regulations for women, and the sexual regulation of women, in contemporary Turkey. The interview from which this extract is taken was conducted in Turkish. It was transcribed and translated into English by Esin herself. The excerpt is taken from Zuhal's (not her real name) long opening narrative. The ellipses at the beginning and end of the excerpt are used to indicate that Esin chose this particular passage for analysis but that it is actually part of a longer response to the opening question posed by the researcher, 'Could you please tell me about yourself?'

[To TS: Insert box 14.4 here]

CONCLUSION: LIMITS AND RANGE OF THE CONSTRUCTIONIST APPROACH

Working with a narrative constructionist approach does not mean that researchers can explain everything about narratives by parsing their social and cultural constituents, however complexly. It is possible for constructionist narrative analysis to adopt a variety of positions about narrative truth, truths or persuasiveness that allow for personal and political beliefs and actions. We think of the constructionist approach as a very useful way of thinking about and through narrative analysis, with its strong attention to language, process and change, to different levels of social phenomena, and to the co-construction of phenomena.

Yet, as in every approach to data analysis, the constructionist approach to narrative analysis has some limitations. The approach focuses on contextual interrelations in the construction of narratives. It does not deal with specific self-contained stories – for instance, stories about salient events, or key moments. Neither does it treat life stories as holistic accounts, and so it is quite different from what is often thought to be characteristically 'narrative' research, based on a few cases, or complete interviews. It does not, necessarily, consider stories' relations to reality.

Thus this approach is not suitable for researchers who are interested primarily in the direct relation between narratives and phenomena beyond them. The approach is also not focused principally on agency, though it is often interested in the effects of narratives and the ways in which they instantiate, enact and impact on subjectivities. Nor does it separate out 'ethics' from the analysis of other contextual elements. Ethical considerations are rather being treated as part of the broader pattern of power relations sustaining research.

Researchers who work within the constructionist approach to narrative analysis may have varying research interests and concerns in relation to the sociality and fluidity of narratives, such as how broader cultural narratives are exemplified and resisted in personal narratives (Plummer, 2001; Squire, 2007), how personal narratives are constructed through interaction and the performance of identities in common cultural spaces (Phoenix, 2008; Riessman, 2008); and how the political and cultural contexts of research shape the understanding of stories by researchers (Andrews, 2007; Riessman, 2002).

However, as we have discussed in this chapter, the constructionist approach to narratives has some common and, we would argue, useful features. It focuses on narratives as socially constructed by the interplay between interpersonal, social and cultural relations, rather than analysing them as a representation of reality, or as a representation with a single meaning. Within the constructionist approach, too, the unit of analysis is not only the story itself as it is told and/or written, but also how it is told and makes sense to both tellers and listeners/readers, including the researchers and the research audience. Elucidating these elements and coming to a provisional interpretive ending is what characterizes such analysis.

FURTHER READING

Andrews, Molly, Squire, Corinne and Tamboukou, Maria (eds) (2008) *Doing Narrative Research*. London: Sage.

Holstein, James and Gubrium, Jaber (eds) (2012) *Varieties of Narrative Analysis.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Josselson, Ruthellen, Lieblich, Amia and McAdams, Dan (2003) *Up Close and Personal: The Teaching and Learning of Narrative Research*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

REFERENCES

Andrews, Molly (2002) 'Generational consciousness, dialogue, and political engagement', in June Edmunds and Bryan S. Turner (eds), *Generational Consciousness, Narrative, and Politics*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield. pp. 75–88.

Andrews, Molly (2007) *Shaping History: Narratives of Political Change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Andrews, Molly, Day Sclater, Shelley, Squire, Corinne and Tamboukou, Maria (2004). 'Narrative research', in Clive Seale et al. (eds), *Qualitative Research Practice*. London: Sage. pp. 97–112.

Atkinson, Paul, Coffey, Amanda and Delamont, Sara (2003) *Key Themes in Qualitative Research*. Oxford: AltaMira Press.

Bakhtin, Mikhail (1981) *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. M. Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Bell, S. (1999) 'Narratives and lives: Women's health politics and the diagnosis of cancer for DES daughters', *Narrative Inquiry*, 9: 347–89.

Bruner, Jerome (1990) *Acts of Meaning.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Burr, Vivien (2003) *Social Constructionism.* London: Sage.

Chase, Susan E. (2005) 'Narrative inquiry: Multiple lenses, approaches, voices', in Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (eds) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 3rd edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. pp. 651–79.

Chase, Susan E. (2011) 'Narrative inquiry: Still a field in the making', in Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (eds), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 4th edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. pp. 421–34.

Czarniawska, Barbara (2004) *Narratives in Social Science Research*. London: Sage.

Davies, Bronwyn and Harré, Rom (1990) 'Positioning: The discursive construction of

selves', *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 20: 43–63.

De Fina, Anna and Georgakopoulou, Alexandra (2011) *Analyzing Narratives: Discourse and Sociolinguistic Perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Elliott, Jane (2005) *Using Narrative in Social Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. London: Sage.

Esin, Cigdem (2009) 'Construction of sexuality in the narratives of well-educated women in Turkey', PhD thesis, University of East London.

Fathi, Mastoureh (2011) 'Classed pathways: narratives of Iranian women migrants', PhD thesis, University of East London.

Foucault, Michel (1998) *The History of Sexuality 1 – The Will to Kno*wledge. London: Penguin.

Foucault, Michel (2001) 'The subject and the power', in James D. Faubion (ed.), *Power: Essential Works of Foucault (1954–1984)*. London: Allen Lane/The Penguin Press. pp. 326–48.

Freeman, Mark (2010) *Hindsight*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Frost, N. (2009) '"Do you know what I mean?" The use of a pluralistic narrative analysis approach in the interpretation of an interview', *Qualitative Research*, 9 (1): 9–29.

Herman, David (2004) *Story Logic.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Hollway, Wendy and Jefferson, Tony (2004) 'Narrative, discourse and the unconscious', in Molly Andrews et al. (eds), *The Uses of Narrative*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction. pp. 139–149.

Holstein, James and Gubrium, Jaber (eds) (2008) *Handbook of Constructionist Research*. New York: Guilford Press.

Hydén, Margareta (2008) 'Narrating sensitive topics', in Molly Andrews et al. (eds), *Doing Narrative Research*. London: Sage. pp. 121–36.

Hyvarinen, Matti, Hyden, Lars-Christer, Saarenheimo, Marja and Tamboukou, Maria (eds.) (2010) *Beyond Narrative Coherence*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Malson, Helen (2004) 'Fiction(ising)', in Molly Andrews et al. (eds), *The Uses of Narrative*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction. pp. 150–63.

Mattingly, Cheryl (1998) *Healing Dramas and Clinical Plots: The Narrative Structure of Experience*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mishler, Elliot (1986) *Research Interviewing: Context and Narrative*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Mishler, Elliot (1991) 'Representing discourse: The rhetoric of transcription', *Journal of Narrative and Life History*, 1 (4): 255–80.

Patterson, Wendy (2008) 'Narratives of events: Labovian narrative analysis and its limitations', in Molly Andrews et al. (eds), *Doing Narrative Research*. London: Sage. pp. 22–40.

Phoenix, Anne (2008) 'Analyzing narrative contexts', in Molly Andrews et al. (eds), *Doing Narrative Research*. London: Sage. pp. 64–77.

Plummer, Kenneth (2001) *Documents of Life 2*. London: Sage.

Polletta, Francesca (2006) *It was like a Fever: Storytelling in Protest and Politics*. London: University of Chicago Press.

Riessman, Catherine K. (1993) *Narrative Analysis*. London: Sage.

Riessman, Catherine K. (2002) 'Analysis of personal narratives', in Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein (eds), *Handbook of Interview Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. pp. 695–710.

Riessman, Catherine K. (2005) 'Narrative analysis', in Nancy Kelly et al. (eds), *Narrative, Memory and Everyday Life*. Huddersfield: University of Huddersfield Press. pp. 1–7.

Riessman, Catherine K. (2008) *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences*. Thousand

Oaks, CA: Sage.

Rosenwald, George C. and Ochberg, Richard L. (1992) 'Introduction: Life stories, cultural politics, and self-understanding', in George C. Rosenwald and Richard L. Ochberg (eds), *Storied Lives: The Cultural Politics of Self-understanding*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. pp. 1–18.

Rustin, Michael (2001) *Reason and Unreason*. London: Athlone Press.

Simons, Lucy, Lachlean, Judith and Squire, Corinne (2008) 'Shifting the focus: Sequential methods of analysis with qualitative data', *Qualitative Health Research*, 18: 120–32.

Somers, Margaret R. (1994) 'The narrative constitution of identity: A relational and network approach', *Theory and Society*, 23: 605–49.

Somers, Margaret and Gibson, Gloria (1994) 'Reclaiming the epistemological "Other": Narrative and the social constitution of identity', in Craig Calhoun (ed.), *Social Theory and the Politics of identity*. Oxford: Blackwell. pp. 37–99.

Sparkes, Andrew C. and Smith, Brett (2008) 'Narrative constructionist inquiry', in James Holstein and Jaber Gubrium (eds), *Handbook of Constructionist Research*. New York: Guilford Press. pp. 295–314.

Squire, Corinne (2007) *HIV in South Africa: Talking about the Big Thing*. London: Routledge.

Squire, Corinne (2008) 'Experience-centred and culturally oriented approaches to narrative', in Molly Andrews et al. (eds), *Doing Narrative Research*. London: Sage. pp. 41–63.

Squire, Corinne, Andrews, Molly and Tamboukou, Maria (2008) 'Introduction: What is narrative research?', in Molly Andrews et al. (eds), *Doing Narrative Research*. London: Sage. pp. 1–21.

Stanley, Liz (1992) *The Auto/Biographical I: Theory and Practice of Feminist Auto/Biography*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Tamboukou, Maria (2003) *Women, Education, and the Self: A Foucauldian Perspective*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Tamboukou, Maria (2008) 'A Foucauldian approach to narratives', in Molly Andrews et al. (eds), *Doing Narrative Research*. London: Sage. pp. 102–20.

Taylor, Stephanie (2012) '"One participant said …": The implications of quotations from biographical talk', *Qualitative Research*, 12 (4): 388–401.

Temple, Bogusia (2005) 'Nice and tidy: translation and representation', *Sociological Research Online*, 10 (2): www.socresonline.org.uk/10/2/temple.html (accessed 3 May 2013).

Walkerdine, Valerie (1986) "Video replay: families, films and fantasy', in Victor et al. (eds) *Formations of Fantasy* London: Methuen.

White, H. (1984) 'The question of narrative in contemporary historical theory', *History and Theory*, 23 (1): 1–33.