



# Narrative Inquiry

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# Overview

- +What is a Narrative?
- +Narrative Research and Analysis
- +Narrative Inquiry



# What is a Narrative?

- + The way that people produce, represent, and contextualize their experience and personal knowledge
  - + Narratives are not simply a collection of facts or perceptions
- + How people make sense of what happened
  - + Reflection on things in their own life and putting it into a meaningful context for themselves and for others
- + “The oldest and most natural form of sense making” (Jonassen and Hernandez-Serrano 2002)

# What is a Narrative?

Narratives, or stories, "assist humans to make life experiences meaningful. Stories preserve our memories, prompt our reflections, connect us with our past and present, and assist us to envision our future."

- Kramp 2004

# Telling Stories



- + Think of an important event in your life or a loved one's life and how would you tell someone who was not present at this event about what happened?
  - + In what ways does sharing this story help make it meaningful?
  - + In what ways does sharing this story cause you to reflect (on the event, on people you love, on your life, etc)?
  - + In what ways does sharing this story connect you to the past? To the present? To the future?

# What is a Narrative?

“It is because we all live out narratives in our lives and because we understand our own lives in terms of the narratives that the form of narrative is appropriate for understanding the actions of others. Stories are lived before they are told.”

- MacIntyre 1981

# What is a Narrative?

- + Narrative are social products created within the context of social, historical, and cultural locations
- + Stories mean different things and are told in different ways by different people or groups
  - + Differences between cultures, socio-economic groups, genders, ages, etc.
  - + Differences in content, organization or sequencing, what's included and what's left out, use of signs and symbols
- + There is no one way in which a story is defined

# Narrative Research and Analysis

- + Narrative research is much more than the telling of stories
- + It is also about using narratives to make meaning of life experiences that can then inform our understanding of some phenomena

# Narrative Research and Analysis

- + Research that uses stories or narratives as data
  - + As a process during data collection (the **telling**)
  - + As an outcome of the data collection (the **told** story)
  - + The story the researcher tells about the data collected (the **re-told** story)

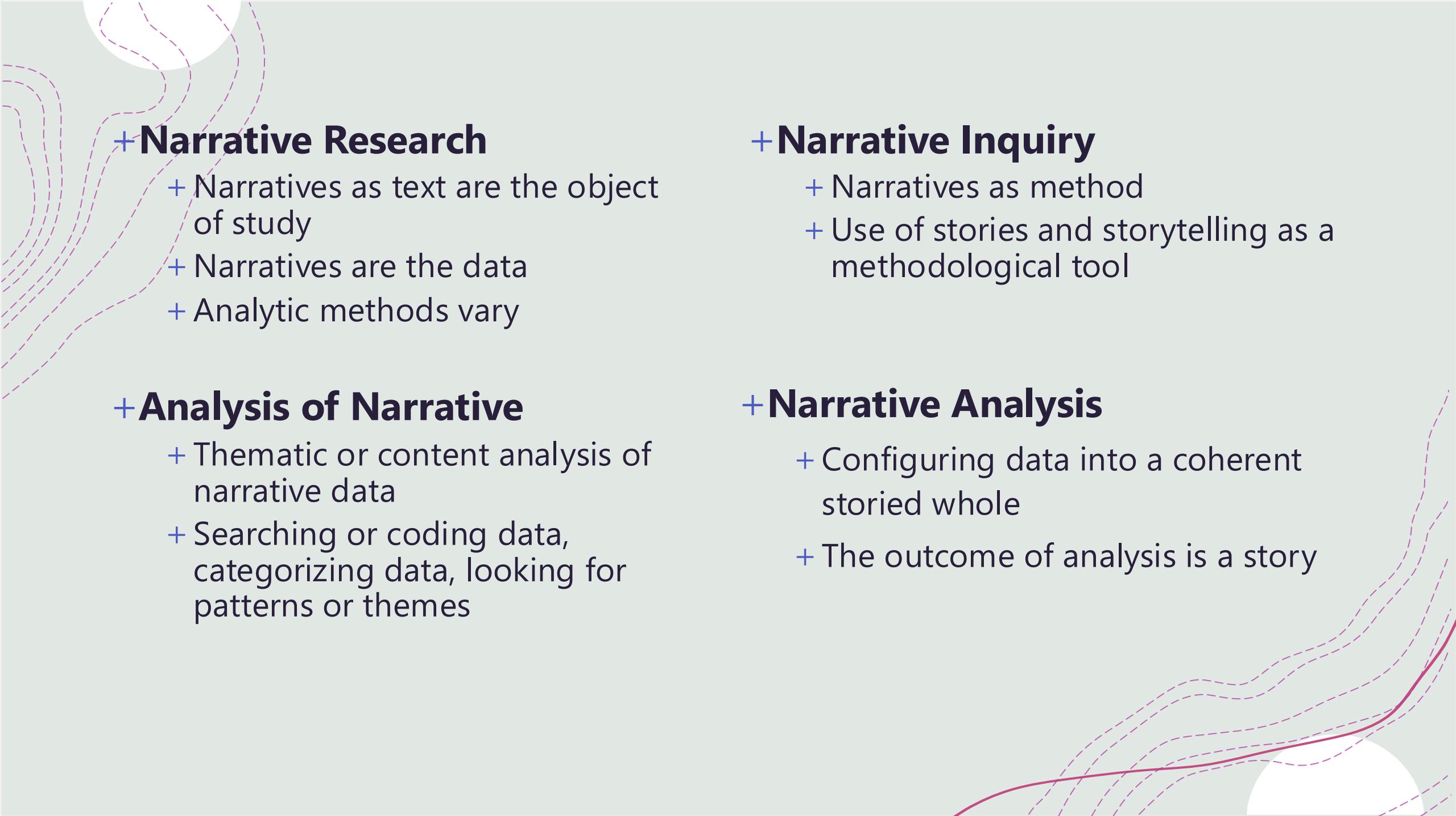
# Narrative Research and Analysis

## + Analytic focus can vary

- + What the story is about (the **content**)
- + The way the story has been organized or structured (their **form**)
- + The way in what events were experienced in life or told in the story (their **context**)
- + Or any combination of these

## + Many methods of analyses

- + e.g., thematic analysis, linguistic analysis, structural analysis
- + Many of these are also used in other qualitative research methodologies



## + **Narrative Research**

- + Narratives as text are the object of study
- + Narratives are the data
- + Analytic methods vary

## + **Analysis of Narrative**

- + Thematic or content analysis of narrative data
- + Searching or coding data, categorizing data, looking for patterns or themes

## + **Narrative Inquiry**

- + Narratives as method
- + Use of stories and storytelling as a methodological tool

## + **Narrative Analysis**

- + Configuring data into a coherent storied whole
- + The outcome of analysis is a story

# Narrative Inquiry: Assumptions

- + Humans live storied lives
- + Our understanding of the stories we tell and the stories we hear others tell shape our lives
- + Multiple interpretations and vantage points are possible
- + Individual experiences can inform and give meaning to shared experiences and social reality
- + Stories represent a way of knowing

# Narrative Inquiry: 4 Key Terms

- + **Living stories:** how people live out their experiences
- + **Telling stories:** individual's stories about their experiences that are told to others
- + **Retelling stories:** the joint effort of the inquirer and participants investigating lived and told stories
- + **Reliving stories:** participants and researchers may relive stories as they are changed by the retelling of those stories

# Standard Research Approach

- + Research question
- + Rationale
- + Methods
- + Analysis
- + Dissemination of results

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# Research Puzzle

- + Narrative inquiry begins with a research puzzle rather than research questions
- + Narrative inquirers “come alongside” participants and learn about people’s experiences through their lived and told stories
- + The puzzle can shift and evolve as the researcher gathers more data

# Sampling and Sample Size

- + Narrative inquiry utilizes purposive sampling techniques, where researchers focus on obtaining detailed and rich information from
- + There is no single or strict rule for determining the appropriate sample size for a narrative inquiry
  - + Use of "saturation" is contested amongst narrative inquirers
  - + Sample size is sometimes 1, but can be much more (feasibility can be the limiting factor)
  - + Ultimately, determined by the research puzzle, the ability of participants to provide an understanding of the issues of interest, and the ability of the researcher to get a deep understanding of the participants' experiences and their meanings within their respective contexts

# Data

## + Oral stories

- + Interviews with one or more person, conversations

## + Written stories

- + Journals, diaries, emails, photography

## + Lived stories

- + Observations, interactions

## + ***Multiple interactions with a participant***



# Storied Fieldnotes

- + Rich description
- + Chronological order
- + Provides details about the setting and context
- + Direct quotes (when possible)
- + Researcher reflections
  - + Researcher interpretations of the interaction and story
  - + Potential influences of the researcher's presence on the story shared (reflexivity)
- + Balance of description and analysis

# Storying as Analysis



- + Knowledge is embedded in the holistic nature of the stories
- + Knowledge would be lost if these stories were deconstructed, abstracted, or categorized
- + Analysis is a process of storying or thinking in stories
- + Stories are reconstructed or re-storyed to create a grand narrative with characters, scene, and plot

# Storying as Analysis

- + Storying attends to 3 commonplaces
  - + Temporality
  - + Spatiality
  - + Sociality

# Temporality: Past, Present, and Future

- + Everything is transitional
- + There is continuity between the past, present, and future
  - + Stories are often experiences from the past
  - + As they are communicated, they will be remembered and changed to accommodate for similar experiences
  - + Social change that happens over time may become more apparent and perspectives about the situation may change
  - + Past experiences have an influence on the present situation and will influence how a person perceives their future

# Spatiality: Place and Environment

- + Physical locations and surrounding of the events and experiences
- + "All events take place some place" (Connelly and Clandinin 2006)
- + Places and events are interconnected



# Temporality and Spatiality

+ Think of your story from earlier:

**What is/are the role(s) of time and place?**

# Sociality: The Personal, Social and Cultural

- + Internal personal characteristics: feelings, hopes, reactions, viewpoints, moral dispositions, etc. of the story characters
- + External social conditions, including cultural, institutional, societal, and family
- + The individual's experience and understanding of the events being shared are embedded in these social contexts
- + The telling of narratives is also influenced by sociality
  - + Includes the relationship and interactions between the storyteller and the listener (i.e., participant and inquirer)

# Sociality

+ Think of your story from earlier:

**In what ways does the social context influence how you make sense of the story?**

**How might the story you tell change based on your audience?**



# Re-Storying



# Re-Storying

- + Re-storying the original narrative involves
  - + Reorganizing the story in chronological order
  - + Identifying important details, such as turning points, significant events, or important relationships
  - + Adding new interpretation by highlighting patterns, themes, or other significant meanings that may not be obvious in the original narrative
- + Re-storying can also include the interaction between the participant and researcher included

# Narrative Threads or Strands

- + Narrative threads are central narratives or patterns that reverberate across individual narrative accounts
  - + Narratives are re-storied using narrative threads with the complexities of these commonplaces woven together
  - + Re-storied narratives can be further analyzed (e.g., thematic analysis)
- + A new narrative based on the research findings (the narrative threads) can be constructed to share the research findings

# Narrative Inquiry: Strengths

- + Ability to capture rich, detailed insights into individual experiences
- + Provides a deep understanding of a person's perspective by allowing them to tell their story in their own words
- + Promotes a holistic view by considering the context of a person's life story
- + Allows for flexibility in exploring complex phenomena
- + Empowers participants by giving them a voice