

Book Review

Doing Narrative Research (Second Edition)

Molly Andrews, Corinne Squire & Maria Tamboukou

SAGE (2013)

Review by Gill Clifton

The second edition of this popular book was penned by an international team of experts whose backgrounds span a variety of disciplines. This diversity is further reflected in the journey the authors take through the complex theoretical divergences that are embedded in narrative research methods and which are explored through interdisciplinary themes, and examples of practical applications. This structure, the authors report, came from a 'series of narrative symposia' (Squire *et al*, 2013, p:13) presented by the authors at the Centre for Narrative Research in the University of East London some 10 years ago. Their first book set out to replicate the idea of contributors not simply describing their research but critically talking about how they do it (*ibid*, p:13). This multi-disciplinary mix of theory and application is followed through in this second edition, making the book an interesting read in its own right as well as a useful point of reference for researchers designing studies and exploring narrative methods.

There are 13 chapters each written by a different contributor and covering a different aspect of narratology. Each topic or theme fluently links to the next ensuring a holistic read. Through the various chapter themes, the reader is invited to reflect on different types of narrative research and how meaning is derived. Additionally the relationship between truth, reality and 'place' of the researcher is discussed, particularly in terms of implications for data analysis, interpretation and ethical considerations.

Of particular note for me was Chapter 4. Tamboukou (2013) draws on a Foucauldian analytics of power and history to critically discuss narratives 'as sources {for} revealing how human subjects constitute themselves through writing practices interwoven with power/knowledge relations' (Tamboukou, 2013, p:89). She does this through her own interest framework of women. Tamboukou concludes with the observation that Foucault's work 'has been criticised for failing to employ recognisable methodologies' (*ibid*, p:103) but asserts this as a positive for 'the making of new questions to interrogate the truths' (*ibid*, p:103). I would suggest, it could be argued, this is counter to the frequently-voiced critique that narrative research 'offers no automatic starting or finishing points ... no overall rules about suitable materials or modes of investigation' (Squire *et al*, 2013, P:1) and thus the very incoherency of narrative research 'encourages and inspires the making of new questions' (Tamboukou, 2013, P:103).

It is not surprising therefore that the following Chapter (5) continues the theme and takes a rhizomatic perspective on narrative research. The rhizome methodological metaphor of an underground roots system through which there are multiple entry points, is used by the authors (Loot *et al*, 2013) to deconstruct the narratives of former child soldiers' re-integration back into their post-war communities in Northern Uganda – an example of the aforementioned practical application.

The book itself is a fine example of the multi-layered characteristics of narrative research and presents interesting and valuable critical insights into the methodology in an engaging and accessible way.