Narrative analysis

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Introduction

We all have stories. These may not be objective representations of reality, but they are all we have. We depend on them. We need them to understand our existence, to be who we are, to change, and to navigate the world around us. We think in story form, and we make sense of our experiences via the stories we tell ourselves and others. As Gergen (2001) summarized, stories are the "vehicle through which the reality of life is made manifest" (p. 248). Stories, therefore, matter. They are a vital resource to understand and live life.

Psychologists have been paying attention to stories for decades. In 1986, Sarbin coined the term narrative psychology, arguing that stories are useful to understand human conduct. From then on, researchers in psychology have become increasingly interested in narrative forms of inquiry (Bruner, 2002; McAdams, 2001; Murray, 2003; Polkinghorne, 1988; Smith & Sparkes, 2006). This is not to say that psychology has undergone a narrative revolution or turned to narrative. As Schiff (2017) argued, making such claims would be going too far as the field of psychology as a whole has not yet turned narrative. In would be safer to say instead that the irruption and growth of narrative methods in the last decades has shifted the trajectories of some scholars and students educated in conventional psychology. Liz Partington is a case in point:

> My background as a psychology student meant that I had been trained in the
> traditional positivistic paradigm of scientific inquiry . . . Although I enjoyed scientific
> inquiry I always felt slightly uncomfortable with it and was left feeling frustrated by
> the results. My research did not seem to get to the real issues; it did not embrace or
> accept the complexity of the human condition. I was introduced to narrative at the
> postgraduate level and at first my positivistic training rebelled against it. I wasn't
> convinced that this was proper research, however, as I sat down to try to conceptualise

my MSc thesis I began to realise that narrative was the way forward for me. It captured my interest in a way that other approaches did not (in Smith, 2010, p. 89).

As the above quote shows, the idea of turning to narrative can be charming for psychology students and researchers. This charm might contribute to its proliferation, which in principle is positive. However, the turn to narrative is merely tokenistic if it does not come hand in hand with a labour of hard reading. We should not then engage with narrative methods if we are not willing to labour over the texts that created them. In other words, every person who feels appealed by and to narrative ought to engage in deep readings of the various dimensions that compose narrative scholarship.

One of these key dimensions is analysis. Researchers need to know and understand narrative analysis with a certain depth and accuracy. What is or what can be narrative analysis? Why have researchers used it to go after psychological knowledge? Which forms of narrative analysis are available? How can we assess the quality of a narrative analysis? When we ignore such questions there is a risk of producing superficial, stagnant, and incoherent narrative research that is easier to condemn -even for inappropriate reasons. Accordingly, this chapter offers initial guidance about how to enter narrative analysis in a responsible, rigorous, and fruitful manner.

The chapter is devoted to researchers, students, and practitioners with good predisposition to narrative analysis, but also to those who may be, *a priori*, unfriendly to it. Our intention is not to convince the doubters to do narrative. Instead, we want to help them becoming connoisseurs of this form of analysis. Being a connoisseur of narrative analysis does not mean one must like it; it means to judge narrative studies appropriately and appreciate them, even when narrative research is an object of doubt and criticism. This

appreciative form of scholarship is crucial to build a rich scholarly community. Seen in this light, the present chapter concerns, to a lesser or greater extent, every single psychologist.

Conceptual backdrop: stories, narratives and narrative inquiry

Before introducing narrative analysis, it is necessary to define (at least) three concepts: story, narrative, and narrative inquiry. It is difficult to give a single and clear-cut definition of such concepts, since multiple and often conflicting definitions exist within the specialised literature. Here, there is scope for only a schematic overview. To be both consistent and offer the best of our knowledge, we draw extensively on the theoretical work of Arthur Frank, a narrative scholar that we recognize as the most important influence in our understanding of narrative.

Stories

A story is a tale that an individual or group embedded in a social world tells and performs. Like chronicles, public policy statements, laws, instructions or technical reports, stories are one genre within which a discourse is expressed (Frank, 2016). Discourse refers to a relatively consistent set of socially constructed ideas that people use to navigate the social world and to make sense of their experiences (Potter & Edwards, 2001). According to Frank (2010), two key aspects distinguish stories from other forms of discourse. One is sequence and consequence. In stories, things happen like the ticking of a clock: each tick creates an expectation for the corresponding tock to follow. One thing happens in consequence to another. The other key aspect is imagination. Stories are like a portal through which we see imaginative possibilities about how things are now, how they were in the past, and how they might be in the future. As Frank (2010) pointed out, even if a narration has sequence and consequence it will not be much of a story if it does not arise a sufficient degree of imagination.

Importantly, stories rest on context. This means that their capacities and values depend on who shares them, when, where, and how. Stories can do good or bad, but not on their own; they are symbiotic with people who tell them and with situations in which telling happens. As Frank (2010) noted, the responsibility falls on people to recognize which stories cause trouble in which situations and to navigate that trouble. Some psychological struggles are related with being trapped in a story that causes trouble. One example, as Boden and Eatough (2020) showed, is guilt. Individuals remain psychologically stuck when they keep returning to the story that causes them guilt feelings. Whilst not easy, a way of moving on from the guilt experience is telling an alternative, fitting story that feels right and adequately contains the lived experience. Hence the importance of knowing different stories and knowing how to make them our own. Frank (2013), however, cautions that a person that is saturated with so many stories and points of view would struggle to hold one point of view that can be recognized as her own. In this sense, stories are like water. We need them to live, we are made of them, and we can drown in them.

Narratives

According to Frank (2010), we use the term story when referring to actual tales people tell and narrative when discussing *general* dimensions or properties which comprise *specific* stories. One *single* narrative has a recognizable plot and character structure that informs *multiple* stories and marks a similarity between them. Narratives, therefore, can be described as generalized types of stories. As Frank (2013) put it, a narrative is 'the most general storyline that can be recognized underlying the plot and tensions of particular stories' (p. 75). While stories are unique and individual, people compose their stories by adapting and combining the narratives that cultures make available.

To elucidate, Frank (2013) proposed restitution as one illness narrative that people use to organize and tell their illness stories. The restitution narrative holds a basic structure of

'yesterday I was healthy, today I'm sick, tomorrow I'll be healthy again' (p. 77). This narrative is adopted by many ill (and disabled) people irrespective of the intricate details that characterize their own personal story. Whether it is cancer, injury or an eating disorder, restitution is often the template on which to map personal stories of illness. As Papathomas (2016) stressed, this speaks to the difference between narrative and story: we can have two different stories (e.g., cancer and eating disorders) guided by the same narrative (restitution). Interestingly, we can also find the restitution narrative in stories that do not talk about illness whatsoever. The work of Monforte, Pérez-Samaniego and Devís-Devís (2018) showed this through the case of Patrick, a man living with cancer and spinal cord injury. Typically, the restitution narrative is conveyed by, and learned from those who have traversed the territory of illness (Sparkes, 2009). However, instead of drawing on some illness story, Patrick took an ancient war tale called Anabasis (written in the year 370 BC by Xenophon) as relevant to his illness experience. He positioned his own story in relation to Anabasis, in turn building a restitution story. This was possible because the narrative structure of Anabasis and restitution are allegorical. Like restitution, Anabasis is about a 'fight to make a comeback' (Smith & Sparkes, 2004). It tells a journey back from loss to recovery. In adapting Anabasis to his situation, Patrick crafted a self-story structured by restitution. The point that this example illuminates with intensity is that looking at narratives allows us to understand the relation of a story to a prior story, even when such stories take place within vastly different contexts.

Narrative inquiry

Narrative inquiry is the careful study and interpretation of stories and narratives as they unfold over time. As a tradition, narrative inquiry associates with psychological humanities, which are different from psychological science in that the former moves from disciplinarity to transdisciplinarity, from empirical to reflexive work, and from hypothesis-testing to asking questions about human subjectivity (Teo, 2017). In terms of its

philosophical assumptions, narrative inquiry is largely (yet not always) underpinned and informed by interpretivism: a relativist ontology and a constructionist epistemology. This means that narrative researchers accept there is a physical reality but believe that humans socially construct knowledge and our realties in multiple and subjective ways.

Narrative researchers are deeply committed to the truth. However, they suggest that truth is enacted and dynamic, that 'stories *become true* as they are told' (Frank, 2010, p. 41). Hence, narrative researchers do not claim to capture and produce 'The Truth' or 'The Reality' of a phenomenon. Instead, they focus on exploring which kind of truths a participant is telling, which are not necessarily verifiable or objective -though they may be one or both of these (Andrews, 2020). What is meant here is captured in Bakhtin's (1984) understanding of truth: 'Truth is not born, nor is it to found, inside the head of an individual person. It is born between people, collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction' (p. 10). In keeping with this notion of truth-seeking, narrative researchers recognize the 'unfinalizability' of people (Frank, 2010). In practice, this means that their research does not claim to speak the last word about who the participants are or might become. Because people can and do change, this recognition is both ethical and an empirically faithful account of human life. Indeed, narrative inquiry bears within it the promise of fashioning a kind of scholarship that seeks to practice a deep fidelity to the possibilities of change, resistance and living life differently. The point is that transforming the stories people live by is a way of transforming people's lives and society as well.

What 'is' narrative analysis?

After presenting some of the concepts that constitute the basis of narrative analysis, we now turn to the fundamental question of what narrative analysis is. As an umbrella term, narrative analysis can be described as a psychosocial approach that takes storytelling as its object of enquiry. According to Riessman (2008), it 'is 'a family of methods for interpreting

texts [e.g., oral, written, and visual] that have in common a storied form' (p. 11). It is an

approach that seeks to describe and interpret the ways in which people perceive reality, make

sense of their worlds and perform social actions (Griffin & Phoenix, 2016). This is a useful

understanding from which to start. It captures the distinguishing feature of a narrative

analysis and its centre of gravity, that is, a focus on stories. To add some nuance to this

definition effort, narrative scholars have discussed the subtle divergences (Smith, 2016) and

overlaps (McGannon & Smith, 2015) between narrative analysis and some other kinds of

qualitative analysis, including interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) and discursive

analysis. Suffice to say here is that, unlike many other qualitative research perspectives,

narrative research offers no overall rules about suitable materials or modes of analysis, or the

best level at which to study stories (Squire, Andrews & Tamboukou, 2008). Clear accounts of

how to analyze data, as found for instance in grounded theory and in IPA, are also rare in

narrative analysis.

Adding to the challenge of understanding narrative analysis is that there is a huge

variety in what constitutes narrative analysis (see Holstein & Gubrium, 2012). For example,

some narrative researchers emphasize during data analysis the *whats* of narratives, that is, the

content, characters, and themes. Others focus more on the *hows* of narrative production. To

organize these divergent views into a summary representation, we present a typology of

narrative analysis (Figure 1). Illuminated by the typology are two contrasting standpoints on

narrative analysis. These are known as the storyanalyst and storyteller.

INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE

On the one hand, a *story analyst* places narratives *under* analysis to produce an

analytical account *of* narratives (Bochner & Riggs, 2014). 'Narrative-under-analysis' refers to

the practice of using one or more specific types of narrative analysis to scrutinize, think about and theoretically interpret certain elements of a story. The research conducted then is *on* stories, where stories are fundamental data for systematic, rigorous, principled narrative analysis. The researcher when operating as a story analyst collects stories for data, turns these stories told into stories to be formally analyzed, extrapolates theoretical propositions and categories from them, and then represents the findings of the analytical process (Smith, 2016).

For story analysts, the findings are often then represented using the conventions of the realist tale -the most common genre of representation in qualitative research (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). According to Sparkes and Smith, this genre has three key characteristics. Firstly, the researcher/author is almost completely absent from most segments of the finished text. There is no use of the first person and no reflections upon the author's role in constructing the report. This is termed 'experiential authority'. Secondly, the researcher/author presents extensive and closely edited storied data to reveal what is known as the participant's point of view. Thirdly, illustrated through empirical data, the researcher/author tells a theoretical account of the story to provide an explanation of it. This is known as 'interpretive omnipotence'. What the researcher as author then ends up with is an abstract tale of narratives rather than a story itself. Examples of the types of narrative analysis that a researcher might use when operating as a story analyst are as follows.

- *Thematic narrative analysis:* With a focus on the *whats* of stories, the purpose is to identify central narrative themes (i.e. a pattern that runs through a story or set of stories) and relationships among these within stories (see Riessman, 2008).

- *Holistic-form structural narrative analysis:* With a focus on the *hows* of stories, and more concretely on their formal plot and organization, the purpose is to tease out the distinct

structures that hold it together with a view to identifying a particular narrative type (see Lieblich *et al*., 1998).

- *Categorical-form narrative analysis:* With a focus on the *hows* of stories, this narrative analysis focuses on defined linguistic characteristics of the story (e.g., adverbs, intensifiers, repetitions), which offer emphasis and style in retelling the story (see Lieblich *et al*., 1998).

- *Personal narrative analysis:* With a focus on the *whats* of stories, the purpose is to examine the internalized and evolving life stories of individuals (see McAdams, 2013).

- *Grounded theory narrative analysis:* With a focus largely on the *whats* of stories, the purpose is to develop categories and produce a theory grounded in data while being sensitive to narratives by looking at the ways narrativity can be integrated conceptually and used systematically for shaping the way in which coding, category development and the representation of results in study proceed (see Ruppel & Mey, 2015).

- *Rhetorical narrative analysis:* With a focus on the *hows* of stories, the purpose is to identify the oppositions (e.g., good and bad therapy) and enthymemes (e.g., incomplete or probable arguments) that make up stories (see Feldman Skoldberg, Brown, & Horner, 2004).

- *Interactional narrative analysis:* With a focus on the *hows* of stories, and borrowing ideas and techniques from conversation analysis (see Potter & Edwards, 2013), the purpose is to examine the interactional activity through which stories are constructed (see Gubrium & Holstein, 2009; Bamberg, 2012).

- *Dialogical narrative analysis:* With an interest in the *whats* and *hows* of stories, the purpose is to examine what is told in the story, how it is told, and what happens as a result of telling that story – its effects (see below).

- *Visual narrative analysis:* With a focus on the *whats* or *hows*, the purpose is to examine how and when visual material was made, and who created it; what is included (and excluded) in the image itself, how component parts are arranged, and use of color and technologies; and ideally people's responses to an image (see Riessman, 2008).

- *Sensorial narrative analysis:* With a focus on moving between the *whats* and *hows*, the purpose is to examine what senses are used and how for making sense of human life and social actions (see Sparkes & Smith, 2012).

In contrast to a story analyst, when operating as a *storyteller* analysis *is* the story and the research is communicated *as* a story. Thus, when operating as a storyteller the end product of your research would read more 'like a story' than a traditional research report like a realist tale. To say that analysis is the story is to emphasize that, rather than putting a story under analysis and doing research *on* narratives, the story in its own right is analytical and theoretical. Stories help us understand aspects of our lives. Hence, 'narrative analysis assumes that a good story is itself analytical and theoretical. When people tell their stories, they employ analytic techniques to interpret their worlds. Stories are themselves analytic' (Ellis, 2004, pp. 195– 196).

According to the above arguments, for psychologists who operate as a storyteller there is a move from explaining and toward the goal of he(art)ful engagement and thinking with stories. There are indeed several moves:

from abstract theorising toward a goal of evocation; from transferring information and toward communication; from categorical thought and abstracted theory and toward embracing the values of emotionality and performing theory; from assuming the stance of disinterested spectator and toward assuming the posture of a feeling and vulnerable observer; from closing down interpretations and toward laying open and

encouraging multiple interpretations; from the gaze of the distanced observer toward the embrace of intimate involvement; and away from a head, cut off from the living body toward feeling, hearing, tasting, breathing, smelling, and emotionally witnessing an embodied life (Smith & Sparkes, 2009, p. 282)

To show rather than explicitly tell readers what stories mean storytellers produce written, oral, theatrical performances, and/or, for example, visual 'creative analytic practices'. As described by Richardson (2000), this is an umbrella term for different kinds of writing, visual, oral, and, for example, ethnodramatic practices that are both creative and analytic. Here textual, verbal, ethnodramatic, or visual representation cannot be divorced from analysis, and each should be thought as analytic in its own right. When written, for instance, as Richardson (2000) noted, they display 'the writing process and the writing product as deeply intertwined; both are privileged. The product cannot be separated from the producer or the mode of production or the method of knowing' (p. 930). Examples of the types of creative analytical practices that a researcher might use when operating as a storyteller are highlighted below.

- *Autoethnography:* The focus is on creating stories about the researcher's lived experience, relating the personal to the cultural (see Ellis & Adams, 2014).

- *Creative nonfiction:* The focus is on creating a story that is grounded in research findings and composed using the techniques of fiction (see below).

- *Creative fiction:* This is different from the creative nonfiction genre in that it includes things that never happened, giving the narrative imagination free rein (see Sparkes, 2002).

- *Messy texts:* The focus is on showing and telling a story in a manner that is characterized by a continuous movement throughout among description, interpretation, and voice (see Griffin & Phoenix, 2014).

- *Digital stories:* The focus is on using the internet (e.g., Facebook or blogs) to construct and communicate a digital story (see Cunsolo Willox, Harper & Edge, 2013).

- *Poetic representation:* The focus is on transforming data into a poem-like composition (see Richardson, 2000).

- *Ethnodrama:* The focus is on producing a written play script based on stories collected and interpreted (see Mura, 2020).

- *Ethnotheatre:* The focus is on turning a written play script into an actual theatrical production. The play becomes another layer of analysis (see Mura, 2020).

- *Musical performance:* The focus is on using music as way of analyzing data and communicating findings (see Sparkes & Smith, 2014).

Story analyst and storyteller are different standpoints, but neither one is better than the other. Researchers may, for certain purposes, choose to operate as one or the other. Or they might move from one standpoint to another within a project, utilizing both rather than pledging allegiance to one standpoint only (e.g., storyteller) and seeing the other (e.g., story analyst) as a family enemy. Examples of researchers moving back and forth between standpoints, operating in some instances as storyanalyst and then at other times as storyteller to thicken understandings of a specific topic, can be found in the work of Smith et al. (2015) on spinal cord injury rehabilitation and Owton and Sparkes (2017) on sexual abuse and the grooming process. Below, we back up to consider how narrative analysis can be put into practice from each of the two presented standpoints.

How narrative analysis might proceed?

As highlighted, there are multiple types of narrative analysis that fall under the umbrella of a storyanalyst and a storyteller. For space and affinity reasons, we narrow the

focus on how to practice two analyses which belong to different standpoints but have in common their emphasis on the reflexive interplay between the *whats* and *hows* of storytelling. These are dialogical narrative analysis, and creative non-fiction.

Dialogical narrative analysis

Dialogical narrative analysis (DNA) examines how a story is put together in terms of the narrative resources that are artfully used. It also 'studies the mirroring between what is told in the story – the story's content – and what happens as a result of telling that story – its effects' (Frank, 2010, p. 71-72). Thus, in a DNA, stories are examined not simply for what is said or the narrative resources used to help structure storytelling. It extends analytic interest to what stories *do* both for and to people.

Unlike other methods, DNA does not prescribe a step-by-step approach in which the analyst must follow a set list of stringent procedures. Instead, it functions as a heuristic guide -a guide to interpretation. Drawing on Frank (2010, 2012), and also articulated in Smith and Monforte (2020), what follows is a guide for doing a DNA. It represents an attempt to help aspiring narrative analysts to steer a way through the analytic process. This guide consists of various analytic strategies. These are mostly presented as a set of questions that are grounded in the theoretical assumptions outlined earlier and that orient a DNA. The rationale for approaching analysis as a method of questioning is based on several observations. For Frank (2010, p. 72), 'Some methods are more useful for the questions they offer than for any procedures they prescribe'. Questions do more than act as a guide for how to move along in the analytic process. Approaching data with a set of carefully considered questions in mind and examining the data with the aid of these questions can help to get thought moving. It can spur imagination and inspiration that, in turn, can lead to insight and understanding.

The analytic process. The contour of the guide for doing a DNA can be viewed as cyclical and iterative as opposed to linear and fixed. The researcher engages in the process of

moving forward through each strategy outlined in the guide but can move back and forth between each, circling backward and forward sometimes, even jumping between strategies as well as appreciating that some will have different utility with respect to different stories. That said, we might begin by 'getting the story'. This might be done as follows.

- *Deciding what is a story and/or narrative*. Many definitions of a story and narrative exist but, to analyse stories, a researcher needs to decide what is a story and if they see it as different from a narrative. These were differentiated earlier in this chapter but, to help decide what is a story, a researcher can also use their experiences: often we know a story when we hear one.

- *Collect big and/or small stories*. It may be stating the obvious but, to analyse stories, a researcher needs stories! Whilst interviews are commonly used to collect stories, autobiographies, letters, diaries, vignettes, the media (for example, newspapers), ethnographic fieldwork notes, the internet (for example, blogs), visual material (for example, photographs) and conversations in everyday life can all be good sources of stories – big stories, small stories and everything-in-between. 'Big stories' are long stories that entail a considerable amount of reflection on an experience or event, a significant part of a life, or the whole of it. In contrast, 'small stories' refer to fleeting conversations told during interaction about mundane things and everyday occurrences (Griffin & Phoenix, 2016).

- *Transcribe data*. If collecting stories from interviews, for instance, you should transcribe the data verbatim as soon as possible after collecting it. Transcription is much more than a technical exercise. It is a constructive process in which analytical thoughts can emerge and 'percolate'. Thus, not only should a researcher carefully decide on what to include and how to present the transcribed data; they should also think of transcription as part of the analytic process. You should jot down notes as you transcribe. For instance, ask

yourself what types of stories might be emerging, which ones seem crucial and how particular stories unfold.

- *Writing*. Write continuously throughout the research project. Writing is not a 'mopping activity', something to be done just at the end of the research to communicate the results. Writing is a form of analysis because analysis happens in the process of writing (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). As you jot down notes, write memos, edit your report and so on through the entire research process, you can progressively discover ideas, what counts and how stories 'hang together'. Think of writing as an iterative and inductive process of hearing stories speak to the research aims, representing those stories and theoretical thoughts in writing, revising your selection of stories and theory as you develop your arguments, and revising the writing as those stories and theory require (Frank, 2012). But, of course, writing has to start somewhere. To get analysis moving, to open it up, the following strategies are offered.

- *Indwelling*. Like familiarization or immersion within other types of analysis, 'indwelling' involves reading the data (for example, an interview transcript) several times whilst, if possible, listening to any recording and jotting down initial impressions. But, according to Maykut and Morehouse (1994, p. 25) it also 'means to live within…understanding the person's point of view from an empathetic rather than a sympathetic position'. As part of this, rather than thinking of the person as a vessel from which to extract information, the researcher orients themselves to the participant as someone who is a storyteller and who shares a story with another person or other people.

- *Identify stories*. Identify the story or stories in the actual data (for example, in the transcript). To help with this, look out for new beginnings in talk where there are marked shifts in content. The researcher might also try to look for where each line might be seen to begin and end. Once a collection of lines is established, a story may come into view.

Another strategy is to look for classic elements of story structure in the text: is there an orientation or setting introduced? Is there a complicating action and a resolution? Is there a coda (a summary or concluding event) that returns to the present? To help with this, look for phrases like 'It all started with . . .' because these can signal an opening to a story, and declarations such as 'So that's why I left' because these can highlight the end of the story. Finally, try to get a feel for stories being developed across the interview/transcript as a whole.

- *Identify narrative themes and thematic relationships*. The focus here is on 'what' is said, that is, the content of the story. A narrative theme is a pattern that runs through a story or set of stories. To search for and identify themes in a manner that keeps the story or stories intact, look for patterns within the stories by closely reading the text. To help with identifying patterns, the researcher can ask, 'What is the common theme(s) or thread(s) in each story?', 'What occurs repeatedly within the whole story?' As you systematically work through the text, identify theme materials by highlighting key sentences in different colours, underlining key phrases in the text and/or circling key words. In addition, in the margins of the transcript, field notes or other data source, write extended phrases (in four or five words) that summarize the manifest (apparent) and latent (underlying) meanings of the data. Do not think of this process as a typical sort of coding which, in other qualitative approaches, usually involves coding line by line and summarizing data in a code of one, two or three words. As we noted earlier, this can result in over-coding which can break the text down too much for a narrative analysis to work; the researcher is left with a set of codes, not a story. Thus, rather than over-code by coding the data line by line, think of the process as 'theme-ing' the data.

- *Identify the structure*. The focus here is on 'how' the story is put together. To help with identifying the structure, consider (a) the direction(s) of the story (for example, decline

and then progress) and depict this in a graph; (b) the use of terms which point to structure (for example, when the participant refers to experiencing a 'crossroads'); (c) the participant's reflections on specific phases or chapters in their life (for example, 'It was then that I realised I had to fight to recover from my illness'); (d) the use of evaluative comments (for example, 'My life has gone downhill since I retired from the army'); (e) tone and changes in tone within the story (for example, pessimistic and later optimistic); (f) the objectives or 'wants' of the characters involved (for example, after spinal cord injury a person wants to walk again); the conflicts or obstacles they face as they try to achieve their objectives (for example, doctors say that medicine has not yet found a cure for spinal injury); tactics or strategies they employ to reach their objectives (for example, going to the gym to keep muscles healthy for when a cure does come); their attitudes towards others and towards given circumstances (for example, optimistic about walking); the particular emotions they experience throughout (for example, sadness and a sense of loss); and/or their 'subtexts' or underlying and unspoken thoughts (for example, scared about a cure not happening).

Opening up analytical dialogue further. Following Frank (2010a, 2012) and Sparkes and Smith (2012), when reading the data, thinking with it and travelling with the stories in their everyday lives, a researcher might next ask the following questions. Some questions can open up what was unnoticed about the story; the usefulness of others will arise from thinking about why they do not apply to a story. Each set of questions and each response to them will not always be applicable for inclusion in the final research report but asking each question can enhance understandings of the story. In addition, when asking each question, a researcher can think with the story as a whole. It can also be useful to write a paragraph or two in response to each question or group of questions, revising and editing as needed.

- *Resource questions*. What resources does the storyteller draw upon to shape their

experiences? What narrative resources shape how their story is told? Not everyone can simply access any narrative resource they wish and people cannot simply tell any story they choose about their lives and expect to be believed. Who, then, has access to which resources? Who is under what constraints in the resources they use? To understand the resources being used, it might be useful also to ask what other resources might lead to different stories. What might be preventing those alternative resources from being mobilized? How does the story reiterate, borrow or counter these narratives?

- *Circulation questions*. Understanding who your participants tell their stories to in everyday life can reveal useful insights into who those stories are intended for and how they may have been constructed with that intended audience in mind. Who, then, tells which stories to whom? Who would immediately understand that story and who would not understand it? Are there some people to whom the storyteller would not tell that story, and why not?

- *Connection questions*. The stories we tell to others can appeal to or repel those others. To whom does a person's story connect them? Who is placed outside this connection? How might groups be formed through sharing a common understanding of a certain story? Whom does the story render external or 'other' to the group? Who is excluded from the 'we' who share the story? Who does the storyteller speak against? Who does the storyteller want to hear the story and who might they be afraid to hear it?

- *Identity questions*: What stories give people a sense of who they are? How do these stories do this? How do people tell stories to explore who they might become, and if not, why*?*

- *Body questions*: Stories are told not only about our bodies but using – and out of – our bodies. We often get a sense or a feeling within our bodies of what stories are good, virtuous and worth listening to or acting on, and which are bad, loathsome or best

ignored. What stories do the participant and the researcher hold close to their hearts? How do these stories enable and constrain the ways we understand participants' experiences? What stories evoke fear in our bodies? What is our body telling us about the story, the storyteller and what it means to live well? How does your body respond to the story and what might that tell you about the story that was told? For an example in action, see Sparkes and Smith (2012).

- *Function questions*: As an actor or form of action, what does each story do for and on the person? That is, how might the story a person tells be useful to them, help them live a good life and do things 'for' them, and how might it lead them down dangerous roads and do things 'on' them? What does this story do for and on other people? How does a story shape a person's conduct, affecting what they do and do not do?

Pulling the analysis together. This can be done in numerous ways. For example, a researcher might choose to move from a story analyst to a storyteller. Drawing upon a creative analytical practice like creative non-fiction, they might synthesize the results of a dialogical narrative analysis (DNA) in and as a story. The researcher might also produce a traditional realist tale in which the story – and its effects – are described systematically and explained to the reader. Here a researcher might blend the results generated from the strategies around a set of interacting and interplaying themes that capture the content of stories and their functional dynamics or they might begin with a particular analytic interest and then organize the stories around it. Alternatively, there can be a focus on pulling the results together to build a typology of narratives. This analytical move of identifying different types of narratives that people draw on to construct their stories is summarized as follows.

- *Build a typology*. This can be done by reading through each result from the phases and then bringing these together – clustering them – into a set of narratives that constitute various 'ideal types' (that is, clearly defined narratives that are different from other ideal

types and express something unique about participants' experiences). A story identified as belonging to a particular ideal type should capture not just content and/or structure but also functions – what it can do. To help with this process the researcher can (a) translate the stories into images and then imagine these impacting on people and consider the consequences; (b) create time to think about the story, tell the story slowly to themselves, wait and listen to it and reflect some more without rushing the thinking process along; and (c) structure their writing around each type, revising and editing along the way to help 'discover' further the types of narratives used. After identifying the types of stories people tell, name each in a way that captures the essence of each narrative, for example a 'quest' narrative that speaks of life as an adventure or a 'chaos' narrative that speaks of life as an endless series of destructive events or a meaningless and empty vacuum. It can be useful after this to revisit the data to ensure the typology being built is grounded in the stories collected. The researcher may then need to revise the typology and names of the narratives.

- *Represent the results*. Structure the report around the typology (for example, see the paper by Smith and Sparkes (2004), which is structured around a typology of three ideal types). The report can take the form of a realist tale but, given the commitment to 'unfinalizability', any ending of a DNA as represented in a realist tale is necessarily provisional. This does not mean that the results or end report are tentative. Rather, whilst all reports need to close for practical reasons, participants in most studies are still alive and, rather than giving their last word, can tell new stories in which they may become someone different (Frank, 2010).

Some useful examples of DNA in action are: Smith (2013), Sparkes (2015), and Monforte, Pérez-Samaniego and Devís-Devís (2018). See also Caddick (2016) and Chapter 5 in Frank (2010).

Creative non-fiction

As articulated in Smith, McGannon, and Williams (2015), the following are some guiding tips for how to help craft a creative non-fiction. When we speak about what a creative non-fiction *might* look like, these tips should not be seen as a set of prescriptive techniques or recipe. Rather, we hope that some of the tips are useful for thinking about how to transform data into a story.

- *Epistemological and ontological awareness*: Throughout writing be attentive to how, as a researcher, one's epistemology and ontology informs the story. Also consider the world views of the people in the story and how these are inseparable from culture and the social world.

- *A purpose:* A creative non-fiction needs to have and communicate an important point. This helps enable stories to succeed not only as artful literary pieces, but as human science research, too. Make sure the purpose is clear to readers.

- *Analysis and theory:* Some researchers opt first to conduct a formal analysis of the data (e.g., a narrative analysis or thematic analysis) and theoretical interpret the results. The results of the analysis, along with theoretical interpretations of these, are then gathered together and used to help assemble the story in terms of what the content of the story (e.g., what characters say, enact, and don't say) and how the story unfolds in relation to people (e.g., how people say things in interaction with other people). Researchers may also add findings from other research to their story. This can help create a more complex picture and show tensions, contradictions, and connections between research. Collating all analytic results and theories in table can sometimes be useful; it condenses points to be made, is easily accessible, and can help jog the memory about ideas to be included when crafting the story.

- *Verisimilitude*: Seek truthfulness, not The Truth. The story needs to demonstrate how true to an experience a narrative can be and with that, the evocation of emotion and feeling from the reader(s). This might include trying to create an account that feels close to the participant's own telling, attempting to be faithful to the experiences and emotions described, the meanings they inscribed, and their own styles of speech.

- *Think with your body*: Draw on your senses, listen to the many voices you've heard in your heart and head, feel these stories pulsating through your body, and tell them as if they were your own whilst respecting the fact you can never truly know the other.

- *Select and develop characters*: Consider how many characters are needed to tell the story, who will the characters be and become, how will they drive the story along, what stories will each tell, and how will they interact with each other are some issues to consider to help select and develop characters. Make characters complex too, not simply all good or all bad.

- *Use dialogue*: Show what has happened, the point of the story, emotions, and so on through conversations where appropriate.

- *Embodiment*: Evoke a sense of the characters body in motion and being still. Show bodies being emotionally expressive (or not) and enacting on, within and against stories. Let the characters act out the story in relation to other people and reveal things about themselves to others through these actions.

- *Write evocatively and engagingly*: As well as showing through dialogue, use different senses (e.g. smell, sound, taste) to evocate emotions, create suspension, and engage the readers viscerally as well as cognitively. It can also be useful to use flashback, metaphor, and dramatic evocation.

- *Develop a plot*: A plot can't always contain tension, as everyday life is not like that. But a story needs to some dramatic tension. It needs to connect points across time, be cohesive,

and have a consequence(s). A story needs a beginning, middle, and 'end' (not the final word), but not always told in that order. To help drive the plot along also consider the characters, what obstacles along the story they will face, what they care about, and how they might change, even if only very subtly.

- *Scene setting*: Think about where (e.g. places) and when (e.g. morning breakfast) to locate people and their conversations (including internal dialogues with phantom others). Ask yourself about the backstages and front stages people behave in as well as how many scenes readers are willing to move in and out of.

- *Selectivity*: No can tell the 'whole' story of a research topic. Don't try to pack it all in on. Select what needs to be told in this paper, to meet a certain purpose, and to communicate an important point for a particular audience.

- *Edit*: Revise your work numerous times – editing, revising, editing more, and revising again - over a period of time (often this is over many months). Make every word count. Don't make the story too long.

Some useful examples of this creative analytical practice in action are: Smith et al. (2013, 2015) and Sparkes and Owton (2015). Also, Orr et al. (2020) offer an accessible discussion of the process of developing a creative nonfiction.

Quality and rigor in narrative analysis

How can we tell a good narrative analysis from the not so good? How might the quality and rigor of narrative inquiry in psychology be judged? Having a response to these questions is vital if we are to make fair, appropriate, and informed judgments about narrative analysis. To offer an appropriate response, we should follow an initial premise. That is: any research method needs to be evaluated in terms of the logic that is inherent to it. According to Burke (2016), we can differentiate two basic logics: the criteriologist and the relativist.

The criteriologist logic parallels the dominant positivist views of what constitutes rigour in quantitative research and advocates the need of adopting universal, fixed and established criteria to determine whether a narrative study is of value, regardless of its purpose (Burke, 2016). Such a criteriological view that seeks to judge all narrative inquiry against pre-established notions creates problems for when put in front a more unusual form of inquiry and genre of representation, such as autoethnography and creative non-fiction. If we apply the criteriologist logic, only one conclusion is possible from the start regarding these works, and that is they are 'bad' research. Indeed, we may even judge them not to be worthy of the name 'research' at all (Sparkes & Smith, 2009). For this reason, the criteriologist logic is antithetical to narrative analysis. This problem is especially visible in relation to the storyteller standpoint, although it applies to most kinds of interpretivist research. In view of that, it would be more sensible to adopt a relativist approach to judge a qualitative study using narrative analysis.

The label relativist should not be misunderstood with the idea that quality and rigor are of relative importance in narrative research. This is not the case, not even in the case of arts-based, experimental research. As Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) stated, creative analytical practices need to be 'held to high and difficult standards: mere novelty does not suffice' (p. 960). So, relativism does not mean that 'anything goes'; it means that anything that goes depends. A researcher adopting a relativist logic is willing to describe what one *might* do but is not prepared to mandate what one *must* do across all contexts and on all occasions prior to any piece of research being conducted (Sparkes & Smith, 2009). Researchers do not determine criteria in advance of any particular piece of inquiry. The term criteria is thus not seen as meaning an absolute or preordained standard against which to make judgment, as this position is laden with foundational implications. The process of judging research is viewed as a craft skill, whereby the relativist must make informed

decisions and ongoing judgements about which criteria reflect the inherent properties of a particular study as it develops over time. As Burke (2016) noted, these judgements are based on a time- and place- contingent list of characteristics. For example, Sparkes (2020) compiled various lists of criteria for judging the quality of autoethnographic texts. Meanwhile, Smith, McGannon and Williams (2015) offered some possible starting points on how supervisors, researchers, reviewers, and editors might pass judgment on creative non-fiction stories. These authors provided a list that illustrate how an ongoing list of criteria might look like:

- *Substantive contribution and worthiness*: Does research contribute empirically, methodologically, theoretically, and/or practically to our understanding of social life, and how? Is the topic of the research relevant, timely, significant, and interesting? Has the work provided me new knowledge, fresh insights, or a deeper understanding? Did the work provide me with things I didn't know before?

- *Focus*: Is there a purpose or point to the research? Is there a sense of focus throughout or does the story go too far off track?

- *Aesthetic merit*: Does this research succeed aesthetically? Do the stories open up the text, and invite interpretive responses? Is the text artistically shaped, satisfying, complex, and not boring? Do they **'work'**?

- *Expression of a reality*: Does this text embody a fleshed out, embodied sense of lived experience? Does it seem "true" - a credible account of a psychological, cultural, social, individual, or communal sense of the "real"?

- *Evocation and illumination*: Does the work emotionally and/or intellectually illuminate a terrain, a process, individual, group, and/or theory? Does the researcher begin to feel meanings within the story being told?

- *Engagement*: Does the research keep me emotionally and intellectually interested? Do I want to carry on reading half way through?

- *Incitement to action*: Does the research move me, intellectually and emotionally? Does it generate new questions? Does it move people to act? How well does the work create a plausible and visceral lifeworld and charged emotional atmosphere as an incitement to act within and outside the context of the work? What might I do with this research?

- *Meaningful coherence*: The study achieves what it purports to be about; uses methods and procedures that fit its stated goals; and meaningfully interconnects literature, research questions/foci, findings, and interpretations with each other.

One should not think of this list like an enclosed and precisely specified list that must be applied to all narrative work. To do that would be to miss the point of thinking of criteria as list-like. Lists are always open-ended, and ever subject to constant reinterpretation so that items can be added to the list or taken away. While there is utility in commonality, there is also liability in that one can get locked into criteria in ways that constrain innovation and dampen the imagination. Criteria, then, as Sparkes and Smith (2009) concluded, should be viewed as lists of characterizing traits that are open to reinterpretation as times, conditions, and purposes change.

A new narrative: narrative analysis after new materialism

Robinson (2007) argued that, 'of all subjects, psychology has most to learn from sources external to itself' (p. 197). Accordingly, psychology has forged interdisciplinary connections with a number of intellectual projects from the social sciences and the humanities (Held, 2020). One intellectual project that is just beginning to connect with psychology is new materialism (Coole & Frost, 2014). We are interested to sit with new materialism because it intersects and seeks to retain critical insights of social constructionism and narrative inquiry but suggests, at the same time, that narrative analysis draws on problematic conventions. The argument follows that such conventions lead researchers to

overemphasize human knowing, meaning and methods and in turn to neglect ontology, material entities and theory (see Monforte & Smith, 2021). To be sure, we do not intend to suggest that the task now should be for narrative researchers to become 'new materialists'. Rather, we invite narrative psychologists to reinterpret their concepts and practices after the new materialist provocation. Doing so affords some opportunities to rethink narrative analysis and, without giving it up, to 'do something different *from the beginning*' (St. Pierre, 2019, p.7, original emphasis). But where might new materialist ideas enter into deliberations about narrative analysis? How might ideas from new materialism modify how we think about narrative analysis and how we frame our narrative research? For the purpose of illustration, we identify three aspects through which new materialism can make interesting changes in narrative analysis: materiality, pluralism and fiction.

Materiality

Narrative analysis might contribute to a glorification of meaning at the expense of materiality. Memorably, Barad (2007) suggested that narrative has been granted too much power. For her, overemphasizing 'narrative matters' has reduced the space for materiality to the point where 'the only thing that doesn't seem to matter anymore is matter' (p. 132). This observation, however, should not simply be taken to mean that narrative psychologists have not acknowledged the importance of material bodies and the material world. In fact, it is difficult to find occasions where narrative researchers have explicitly denied the existence of an extra-narrative realm. Rather, the problem is the treatment of material things as relatively passive, as 'neutral bearers of meanings' or 'symbols of underlying social mechanisms' (Aagaard & Matthiesen, 2016, p. 35). As Alaimo and Hekman (2008) clarified,

> Even though many social constructionist theories grant the existence of material
> reality, that reality is often posited as a realm entirely separate from that of language,
> discourse, and culture. This presumption of separation has meant, in practice, that

feminist theory and cultural studies have focused almost entirely on the textual, linguistic, and discursive (p. 3)

As an interpretivist approach that reacts to post-positivism, narrative inquiry has become a paired opposite to forms of analysis linked to cognitive approaches in psychology. Importantly, new materialism is said to cut across the backbone of cognitive and interpretivist traditions as it shows that *both* start from a distinctive pole, that is, they are consistently predicated on dualist structures. New materialism traverses such dualist structures by conceptualising discourse (including stories) and materiality (including material things and bodies) as co-constitutive instead of pre-determined. (Figure 2).

New materialist is a monist (as opposed to dualist) tradition. However, it is not necessarily new or different from any other monist tradition. As Dolphijn and van der Tuin and (2012) explained, new materialism 'does not add something to thought (a series of ideas that wasn't there, that was left out by others)' (p. 13). It rather 'traverses and thereby rewrites thinking *as a whole*, leaving nothing untouched, redirecting every possible idea according to its new sense of orientation.' It 'works through' intellectual traditions; it 'says "yes, *and*" to all of them, traversing them all' (p. 89). It changes the way we understand and treat stories.

INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE

Echoing Law (2000), in new materialism '*there is no important difference between stories and materials*' (p. 2, original emphasis). Law (2019) himself noted that this 'materialsemiotic' proposition might be seen as a 'scandal'. Analytically, it is indeed counter-intuitive for the psychological researcher. This is because he or she is 'accustomed to academic analyses which, implicitly or explicitly, privilege one order of analysis, and read an entire system through that particular order' (Feely, 2016, p. 874). While for the sociobiologist

it is the gene, for the narrative researcher, it is the story. In contrast, by engaging with new materialism, narrative researchers would refuse to privilege and grant final causality to a particular order. Instead, they think through complex networks or assemblages made of stories and other elements that come together over time and produce a whole. In these assemblages, what matter is not the elements that compose them, but rather their relations, as it is through such relations that the elements come to exist (Feely, 2016; Law, 2019).

In line with this relational philosophy, Monforte, Pérez-Samaniego and Smith (2020) argued that narratives could be recast as assemblages of material and semiotic forces, which are mutually affecting. For example, the restitution narrative that we have mentioned in this chapter could be reimagined as an open-ended assemblage of stories, interactions, medical and rehabilitation procedures, bodies, objects, buildings, and fluids, which work together as a whole to shape the process of recovery from illness. As in Feely (2020), assemblage analysis stories and narratives are analysed as part of an assemblage. The analytic emphasis is not put in how people *construct reality symbolically* through stories, but rather in how stories *produce reality materially* in tandem with, and *as*, material resources.

Pluralism

Narrative inquiry and new materialism have different philosophical assumptions. Despite some overlaps (see e.g., Rosiek & Snyder, 2020), the narrative approach and new materialism are incommensurable. According to Kuhn (1962), if two paradigms are incommensurable, we cannot compare them with one another because there is no common language into which both can be translated. Incommensurability also means that paradigms are not compatible with each other and therefore should not be combined. Kuhn would have argued that the term 'story' actually means something different from narrative and new materialism, since the philosophical assumptions in which each embed the term are different.

This implies that narrative and new materialism are in effect speaking different languages, which complicates any attempt to use them together.

Without neglecting the lessons learned from Kuhn, some researchers have sought for dialogue across 'different languages'. One way such dialogue can occur is trough engaging with the idea of ontological and analytical pluralism. This idea refers to the never unproblematic use of different views of reality and forms of analysis within the same study. Acknowledging the risks and tensions that pluralism entails, Smith and Monforte (2020) showed how a variant of narrative analysis (called dialogical narrative analysis) and a new materialist form of analysis (called assemblage analysis) can coalesce via a form of pluralism advanced by new materialist scholars. Such kind of pluralism can be identified with the concept of diffraction (see e.g., Haraway, 1997; Barad, 2007). Smith and Monforte found in the words of Geerts and Van der Tuin (2016) an accessible definition of this concept:

> Rather than employing a hierarchical methodology that would put different texts, theories, and strands of thought against one another, diffractively engaging with texts and intellectual traditions means that they are dialogically read "through one another" to engender creative, and unexpected outcomes (Barad, 2007, p. 30). And that all while acknowledging and respecting the contextual and theoretical differences between the readings in question. This methodology thus stays true to Haraway's idea of diffraction: Rather than flat-out rejecting what has been theorized before, the foundations of the old, so to say, are being re-used to think anew.

Through diffraction, narrative dialogism and new materialism became two in one body, generating what Anzaldúa (1987, p. 194, quoted by Barad, 2014) called 'the coming together of opposite qualities within'. Despite that new materialism principles served to re-

imagine the principles of narrative dialogism, previous narrative foundations were not completely abandoned. Following Clark and Thorpe, (2020), Smith and Monforte (2020) did not take up diffractive reading to move on from or counter narrative analysis, but rather to work the limits of theory-method to prompt new connections, relations, and transformations. Such transformations allowed them to see beyond narrative. And yet, without the narrative approach, they could have not reimagined and extended previous narrative knowledge. Diffraction, in this sense, reveals an interesting paradox: thinking with narrative helps thinking beyond narrative and transcending its own boundaries.

Fiction

From a storyteller standpoint, some researchers have experimented with creative fiction, using 'the imagination [instead of conventional empirical materials] to discover and embody truth' (Lockridge, 1998, in Richardson, 2000). Caveats have been offered that help making a responsible use of fiction in and for research (Sparkes, 1998; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005; Best, 2020). Despite this, psychology seems to offer little or no serious role for fictional literature. Some will think that using fiction in psychology research would be another 'scandal', one that trivializes the power of reality (Law, 2019). Against the tide, however, a few psychologists have argued for its value. For example, Moghaddam (2004) argued that literature can be a source of psychological data and theory, helping psychologists gain a better understanding of long-term psychological processes and change. Further, Brinkmann (2009, see also Lehmann & Brinkmann, 2020) argued that 'literature can be considered as qualitative research in itself' given that 'we can learn as much from fiction novelists about contemporary human lives, experiences, and sufferings as we can from traditional forms of empirical qualitative research'. These arguments are quite rare, though. As Sparkes (1998) pointed out, for many disciplines (including psychology) fiction remains a no-no, a mode of expression that is simply off limits in academic discourse.

In new materialism, however, postures like the above are not exceptional. As Skiveren (2020, p. 2) noted, 'fiction is not a mark of disqualification in the field of new materialism'. In particular, scholars in this field do draw on literary works to grasp phenomena that are 'true' and that, in principle, reside beyond the limits of intelligibility. In other words, fiction is used as 'an epistemological tool for envisioning that which cannot (yet) be perceived as "true"' (p. 3). As Knausgaard (2018) clarified,

> this truth is the novel's truth. The novel [but also the short story and other fictional forms] is a place where that which cannot be thought elsewhere can be thought and where the reality we find ourselves in, which sometimes runs counter to the reality we talk about, can be manifest in images.

In addition to illuminate what there is (the actual), fiction might allow us to imagine what might become (the virtual). This is particularly interesting for new materialist scholars, as for them '"what there is" *is* just a process of becoming' (Brinkmann, 2017, p. 116). For new materialist scholars, then, one epistemological value of engaging with fiction is to explore alternative possibilities for society, communities, organizations, and individuals – to expand narrative resources. In Benjamin's (2016, p. 2) words, fictions that observe the future 'are not meant to convince others of what is, but to expand our own visions of what is possible'. Haraway's (2016) work provides an example in practice. Instead of summing up the findings of her research, she closed her book with the Camille Stories, a set of speculative fabulations that encourage the reader to imagine life on earth five generations into the future. For Skiveren (2020, p. 10), the Camille stories are

> tentative prophecies, tools for the imagination to envision a future (…). The quality of these futuristic fictionalizations, then, cannot be evaluated in terms of likelihood or probability, insofar as the aim of these stories is not to predict, but to direct. When

Haraway makes stuff up, it is in order to carve out perceptions of a sustainable world that had, until then, seemed unimaginable.

In keeping with the welcoming attitude of new materialism towards fiction, both storytellers and story analysts can benefit from engaging with the truth of fiction to understand and provide understanding of the psychological processes they study. Moreover, they can harness the potential of fiction to produce imaginative and effective psychology work. For example, in working with participants, co-researchers or therapy receivers they might use a technique that has re-gained attention in psychology: story completion. This entails participants writing stories about hypothetical scenarios created by the researcher, through responding to a stem consisting of at least one complete sentence which represents the beginning of a story (Clarke et al., 2019). Again, story completion might be used to study multiple topics, but also for political and therapeutic ends. As Smith (2019) suggested, maybe it could modestly contribute to individual and social change by enabling people to imagine difference, expand the stories they have available to make meaning, and contemplate a world that could be. This 'possibility of renewal and change', Andrews (2014, p. 115) noted, 'is one of the greatest gifts of our narrative imagination'.

Conclusion

This chapter has offered a concise overview of narrative analysis in psychology. Our hope is that readers are now a little more confident about their knowledge of narrative analysis. At the same time, we invite them to consider the chapter as an initial, general, and embarrassingly incomplete resource, which ought to be complemented by further resources. Many are already available which will help readers enrich their understandings and ask themselves deeper questions. Some have been quoted here. As such, we encourage readers to

keep reading once this very sentence ends, to find in the reference list some more exciting stories about stories… and more.

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