

Centre for Narrative Research in the Social Sciences
University of East London

To Think is To experiment

Wednesday, 22nd April, 2009, Docklands Campus, East Building

Abstracts:

Institutional Abuse in Ireland: Survival, Redress and Recovery.

Mary Lodato, University of East London

This is a practice-based PhD. I will be presenting a visual text narrative on my autobiography, which is called *Golden Slippers in the Sand*. I intend to use the visual aspect to accompany extracts from the autobiography, which charts my childhood experience of institutional life and abuse in an industrial school in Dublin in the 1960s. I will then move on to discuss the writing of the autobiography as a healing process, which enabled me to formulate a new identity. Finally, I will talk about the new phase of my work – writing the theoretical thesis to discuss how I am trying to locate my life experience in the social, political, religious and cultural context of that time in Ireland.

Back home? Social integration and coping with trauma in former child soldiers in Northern Uganda.

Kathleen Coppens, Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB)

During a study visit in 2008 to different rehabilitation centres for former child soldiers in Northern Uganda, I noticed that these children were encouraged to narrate their war experiences as a way to give their traumas a place. In these centres, former child soldiers were received for medical and psychological support during a short period of time (1-2 months) and they were also prepared for reintegration in the society. From the estimated 24,000 to 38,000 children (Pham,

Vinck, & Stover, 2007) who were abducted since the beginning of the war between the army of the government (Ugandan People Defense Forces, UPFD) and the rebels (Lord's Resistance Army, LRA) in 1986, about 25,000 were rehabilitated in these centers. Own interviews conducted with former child soldiers, parents and social workers in Northern Uganda, indicated certain social problems concerning the rebuilding of the communities and the reintegration of the former child soldiers. Between civilians, but also between parents and children, there was a huge amount of mistrust. Parents indicated that they experienced contradictory feelings when their abducted children returned. The interviewed parents and social workers were trying to forget the atrocities their children were involved in.

Starting from the research findings of the aforementioned interviews, participants will be invited to discuss methodologically the research design of a doctoral research project that aims to investigate the social reintegration of former child soldiers in Northern Uganda from a culture oriented narrative perspective. More concrete, the research project aims to study how the life stories of former child soldiers are interwoven with the community discourses and what the influences of these discourses are on the process of social reintegration and coping with trauma.

Operational Risk Management In Banks

Edna Stan-Maduka, University of East London

This research is being undertaken to study operational risk management which is a new and developing area of interest in financial services. The awareness and importance of operational risks has increased significantly over the last fourteen years, from the inception of the Basel II sound practices in 1992. Other reasons for the heightened interest in operational risk management include the failure of large international banks like Barings banks in 1995 and the changes and complexities which continuously occur in the business environment. It is widely acclaimed that the inability of the management of Barings bank to manage its operational risks was

the key factor behind the collapse of the bank. This study is focused on the Nigerian banking sector and examines the operational risk management strategies of banks by identifying the major sources of operational risks events and the most frequently affected business line.

Finding a generally accepted definition of operational risk within the financial industry was the initial problem faced by operational risks management. Basel committee on Banking supervision, a committee of banking supervisory authorities which was established by the central bank governors of the group of ten countries in 1975 defined operational risk as the potential for loss arising from inadequate or failed internal process, people and system or from external events. This definition therefore present operational risk as an umbrella term under which several other risk categories such as legal risk, technology risk, compliance risks, and strategic risk are covered. The committee in January (2001) published the popular capital accord with a mandatory requirement for banks to set aside a proportion of their capital to cater for their operational risk exposures. Since its inception, this capital accord has generated so many documents and discussions in the literature on the need for banks and their management to make operational risk management an important aspect of their management functions; to ensure that operational risk is effectively managed and losses which result from operational risk events are reduced significantly.

The need to achieve this reduction in losses from operational risk events has necessitated this research, which will stands as the first and independently sponsored research on operational risk management and an analysis of the Nigerian Central bank loss database to determine the major cause of operational risk event and the most vulnerable business line according to Basel classification. It will also determine the efficiency of operational risk management frameworks in mitigating operational risks exposures.

The research is exploratory and inter-disciplinary in its approach. Information will be gathered from interviewing officers and risk managers from different departments

and business units in four carefully selected Nigerian banks with minimum capital base of N20 billion as a representation of the Nigerian banking sector. Theoretical proposition in decision making process formed the basis for information sourced during the fieldwork. The research questions will be answered through the use of multiple case study design, document analysis and archival records.

The bio-political and psychocultural uncertainties of CFS/ME (Chronic Fatigue Syndrome/Myalgic Encephalomyelitis): Living with severe illness through narrative

Sharon Gallagher, University of East London

In this presentation I will be providing an overview of my research into the discourses of uncertainties associated with CFS/ME. I adopt an interdisciplinary approach to investigate, both theoretically and using a narrative methodology, the connections/differences between the bio-political and psychocultural discourses of uncertainty that may exist for people diagnosed with 'severe' CFS/ME.

My study will analyse four life histories of people diagnosed with severe CFS/ME¹ and explore how they negotiate living with the uncertainties associated with symptomology, medical practices, socio-political and cultural discourses. With labels of 'malingerer', 'yuppie syndrome' and recently 'shirkers syndrome',² how do they gather personal and social meaning from this contested illness? The abundant literature on CFS/ME concentrates on those who are able to attend hospitals, clinics, ME groups and therapy sessions. Severe sufferers have limited mobility, and are often housebound and/or bedbound. This group has therefore been under investigated within the research community and largely ignored by the new ways of treating chronic illness and self management programme. They are often isolated from medical interventions and understanding and have particular extensive experience of living with CFS/ME. I hope my research will allow the wider community to understand and

¹[1] This follows the Fukuda et al., 1994 symptoms led criteria for CFS/ME and Cox & Findley 1998 definition of 'severe' category.

²[2] Tuller, D., (2007) 'Chronic Fatigue no longer Seen as Yuppie Flu' **The New York Times** 17.07.07

recognize how people with severe CFS/ME, live with the uncertainties of this contested illness.

Social Representations of Childhood and Motherhood in Aymara Culture.

Charlotte Viaene, Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB)

In this contribution I present the research findings of a study on social representations of childhood and motherhood in the urban Aymara community living in La Paz. The study is based on two focus groups of Aymara mothers. In the focus groups we discussed general topics on childhood. In a second, more profound phase of the study participants at the focus groups were involved in life story interviews, focusing on their own childhood and motherhood. Data were analysed in a narrative way to understand the interconnectedness among women's childhood representations, own experiences as a child and the social and cultural position of women and children in the urban Aymara community at La Paz. Special attention will be given to methodological issues on the position of an European researcher in Bolivian Aymara culture.

Complex Meanings of Craftmaking

Marty Grace and Enza Gandolfo, Victoria University, Melbourne

The *Everyday Creativity of Women Craftmakers* is a narrative research project exploring the ways that contemporary women narrate the meanings of craftmaking in their lives. For our research, we filmed interviews with 15 individual amateur craftmakers in their own homes. We analysed the transcripts, and have produced an exhibition of works, a book (see <http://www.vulgar.com.au/sane.html>) and a short film based on the research.

The women we interviewed see craftwork as a way of relaxing, providing stress relief, and time out; as a source of joy and pleasure.. They understand the ways their craft making supports them in the promotion of their wellbeing, and in building familial and community connections; and they actively utilise it for this purpose. For a number of women craftmaking provides a vehicle for assertion of chosen identities and subversion of some attributed identities, giving a political edge to this apparently 'soft and warm' craftmaking practice.

In this conference presentation, we will show the short film, and discuss the ways that the participants' narratives communicate the richness, complexity and multiple layers of the meanings of their craftmaking.

Families Confronted with Poverty and Bereavement: Using Creativity to Connect

Karen Puttemans, Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB)

The central focus of the doctoral research I'm doing is meaning (re)construction in families facing poverty when confronted with bereavement. Connectedly, I want to explore the possible roles of (bereavement) rituals, described by Romanoff and Terenzio (1998, p. 698) as 'the use of symbols within a performance framework'. I have chosen an arts-based inquiry approach to work with bereavement narratives as thickly described materials, and to build up a locally useful project in collaboration with the participating families (see e.g. Denzin, 2001; Finley, 2008). In this presentation, I want to relate the project's focus to relevant literature and practice, clarify the research design and examine the possibilities of translating research findings into film to engage diverse audiences. Participants will be invited to join in discussing some of the above-mentioned themes and the usefulness of the project's design to effect social change.

References

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Finley, S. (2008). Arts-based inquiry. Performing revolutionary pedagogy. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials*. Los Angeles: Sage.

Romanoff, B. D., & Terenzio, M. (1998). Rituals and the grieving process. *Death Studies, 22*, 697-711.

Others – relevant to research focus and design

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