

Narrative research, participation, and social transformation:

A programme of dialogue and training

with Professor Jill Bradbury (Witwatersrand University) and Professor Michelle Fine (City University of New York), NCRM International Visitors

November 2016: Centre for Narrative Research, University of East London, Thomas Coram Research Unity, UCL IoE, and the Centre for Narrative and Auto/Biographical Studies, Edinburgh University.

Narrative research is a dynamic and growing field in the social sciences. It frequently engages with issues of social justice and social change, particularly in the current context of global inequalities, conflict, mobility and precarity. How to address these issues in our methods, for instance through the involvement of research participants, and through relating research processes and analyses to social transformation, is a common and complex question. In November 2016, UK researchers will have the opportunity to develop their work in this field through a number of research and training events, in London and Edinburgh, with NCRM International Visitors, Professor Jill Bradbury, Witwatersrand University, and Professor Michelle Fine, City University of New York.

Edinburgh University, November 18

Narrative research, participation, and social transformation:

Seminar, 10-12.30

There will be two presentations of around 40 minutes each, with 10 minutes' discussion of each and a short break between them, followed by 30 minutes' general discussion

Creative Twists in the Tale: Narrative and visual methodologies in action

Jill Bradbury, University of the Witwatersrand

Narrative methodologies emphasise the temporal quality of both lived lives and told stories, and the meaning-making processes of both researchers and participants in the exploration of psychosocial life. The approach enables us to attend to the ways in which the grand narratives of history and socio-political life articulate with individual, personal lives or psychological realities. In many cases, though certainly not all, participants in narrative research find the process of talking about them-selves a positive or even possibly cathartic experience, enabling new insights not only for the researcher but also for themselves. However, narrative methodologies are limited and these liberatory possibilities of the framework are challenged in the process of implementation. There are three key problems that emerge: 1) the imposition of a particular conception of a 'good' narrative (and by implication, psyche or life) that entails integration, coherence and a logical flow of language; 2) the production and re-inscription of a gap between life and story, particularly stories told in research interviews, and 3) individualising single narrators extracted from their contexts. I argue that combining narrative research methods with visual methodologies within an action paradigm may assist us to work with and against these limitations. I will present examples from research conducted by my students over the last few years, mostly focused on different aspects of youth identities in South Africa and all utilising a broadly narrative approach and forming a kernel of research for the NEST (Narrative Enquiry for Social Transformation) research

network. Examples will be chosen to illustrate possibilities for challenging the limits listed above: 1) Repetitive Stress Injuries: Non-stories and visual techniques for sense-making; 2) Visual tracking of multiple temporal trajectories; and 3) Re-invoking the relational quality of narrated identity.

Just methods in ‘revolting’ times

Michelle Fine, City University of New York

This paper invites a conversation about how critical participatory research transforms the production of knowledge; enables a complex chronicling of counter-stories and nurtures the contestation of dominant narratives with the very people who have been mis-represented as Others. Through a series of research stories fomented in prison, courtrooms, and social movements, I hope to incite a provocative imagination for critical research “to be of use” to social movements for social justice, interrogating two projects in depth - one conducted with women in prison studying the effects of college in prison, and the other conducted with queer youth of color the structural betrayals they confront and their ‘wild subjectivities’” (Ahmed) and creative forms of ‘surveillance’ (Vizor).

To attend, please follow this link to register:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/narrative-research-participation-and-social-transformation-tickets-28139889166>

Narrative research, participatory methods, and social transformation:

A workshop. 2-5.

Jill Bradbury:

Visual methodologies are relatively commonplace as a means to collect data (e.g. photo voice or body mapping) and often used in combination with narrative interviewing, but less typically utilised in the analysis of data. Using examples from my own work, I will show how and why these techniques are particularly helpful when stories are difficult to articulate and how they might facilitate new perspectives. We will: 1) explore the argument around theory-method and possibilities for action; 2 and 3) workshop data and analysis from different empirical studies all of which are focused on transformative possibilities for marginalised groups in unequal contexts of intersectional asymmetries, e.g. Marikana youth, school leavers, black women scientists, informal women traders, young unemployed men, young homeless people, child-headed households.

Michelle Fine: Drawing on the cognitive ‘mapping’ practices of both Winnicott and then Milgram and Jodelet, we will explore how critical qualitative research can be ‘opened’ with an activity that engages the aesthetic (as in Dewey’s sense of aesthetic methods — provocative, generative), inviting the ‘IRREAL’ in Husserl’s language, and exploring the borderlands in Anzaldua’s texts - to understand identities, relations and movements over time. Cognitive or identity maps have been used in our research with women experiencing domestic violence, low income graduates from schools of concentrated poverty, immigrant youth formerly incarcerated women, and most recently students of colour in the university to trace the gifts, and the struggles, of young people

Participants will be asked to read two preparatory papers from Bradbury and Fine, and to bring 2 pages (with ethical clearance) of transcripts or images for discussion, or to consult about other material they might bring (in this case, please email Corinne c.squire@uel.ac.uk)

To attend, please follow this link to register: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/narrative-research-participatory-methods-and-social-transformation-a-workshop-tickets-28139968403>

Biographical notes

Jill Bradbury is Associate Professor of Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand where she is co-ordinator of postgraduate studies. She has worked extensively on action-research projects engaged with transformation in South African higher education and more recently, her narrative work focuses on questions of youth identities, (dis)continuities between traumatic histories and possible futures and the ways these interact in the present. She has been the lead researcher on several large scale research projects: 1) *Fast Forward* action research programme at UKZN (2003 -2009); 2) *Youth Identities* (2012-2014) and 2) *REAP* (Reaching for Excellent Achievement Programme, 2011 – 2014). She has twenty-five years of teaching experience in the South African higher education sector and has supervised approximately 50 postgraduate students, many of whom have utilised narrative methodologies to focus on multiple dimensions of inequality and possibilities for individual and social change. She is the founding lead researcher on the South African NEST (Narrative Enquiry for Social Transformation) network launched in 2015, connecting and facilitating interdisciplinary research from psychology, literature, film, music, politics and sociology.

Recent Publications

1. Haley, J. & **Bradbury, J.** (2015) Child-headed households under watchful adult eyes: Support or surveillance? *Childhood*, 22(3), pp. 394 – 408.
2. **Bradbury, J.** (2014) Coming Out Within, *PINS*, 46, pp. 5 – 8.
3. **Bradbury, J.** (2012) Narrative Possibilities of the Past for the Future. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, pp. 341-350.
4. **Bradbury, J.** & Clark, J. (2012) Echoes of the past in imaginings of the future: The problems and possibilities of working with young people in contemporary South Africa, *Global studies of Childhood*, pp. 176 – 189.
5. **Bradbury, J.** & Kiguwa, P. (2012) Thinking Women's Worlds. *Feminist Africa*, pp. 28 – 47.
6. Frankish, T. & **Bradbury, J.** (2012) Telling Stories for the Next Generation: Trauma and Nostalgia. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, pp. 294-306.

Michelle Fine is a Distinguished Professor of Critical Psychology, Women's Studies, American Studies and Urban Education at the Graduate Center, CUNY. Fine is a university teacher, educational activist and researcher who works on social justice projects with youth, women and men in prison, educators and social movements on the ground. Fine taught at the University of Pennsylvania from 1981 – 1991, when she was co-director of the Philadelphia Schools Collaborative, a member of Women Organized Against Rape and the National Coalition for the Defense of Battered Women. She has authored many 'classics' – books and articles on high school push outs, adolescent sexuality – called the 'missing discourse of desire,' the impact of college in prison, the struggles and brilliance of the children of incarcerated adults, the wisdom of Muslim American youth. She writes on the injustice of high stakes testing, the racial abuse of mass incarceration of people of color and queer youth,

and she loves to conduct research with young people who know intimately the scars of injustice and the laughter of surviving the streets of New York. A pioneer in the field of youth Participatory Action Research, and a founding faculty member of the Public Science Project, Fine has been involved with a series of participatory studies with youth and elders, from across different racial, ethnic and social class backgrounds, to investigate circuits of dispossession, and circuits of critical resistance

Recent publications:

- 1) Sandwick, T., **Fine, M.** Greene, A., Stoudt, B., Torre, M. and Patel, L. (2016) Critical PAR and Policy Documents: Delicious Dilemmas of Science. *The Urban Review*.
- 2) **Fine, M.** (2016) Accumulation and its Dis'(sed) Contents: The Politics of Evidence in the struggle for public education. In M. Spooner (ed) *Neoliberalism, Indigenization and Higher Education*. Regina: University of Regina Press.
- 3) Anderson, S. and **Fine, M.** (2016) Research and Gender. In K. Nadal (ed) *Encyclopedia of Gender and Psychology*. Sage Publications.
- 4) Sanchez, Carmen, S., Dominguez, M., Greene, A., Mendoza, E., **Fine, M.** and Neville, H. (2015) Revisiting the collective in critical consciousness. *The Urban Review*, 47, 3.
- 5) Torre, M., Stoudt, B., Manoff, E. and **Fine, M.** (2015) Building Fragile Solidarities: Critical PAR in Revolting Times . In N. Denzin (ed) *Handbook of Qualitative Inquiry*. Sage Publications
- 6) Fabricant, M. and **Fine, M.** (2013). *The Changing Politics of Education: Privatization and the Dispossessed Lives of Those Left Behind*. Paradigm Publishers.