



Karolinska
Institutet

Narrativity and healthcare – tales from the field

Research examples, conclusions and lessons learned

Lisa Herulf Scholander

PhD Student, Reg. physiotherapist



Agenda

1

My own journey

Becoming a researcher in the field of narrativity and healthcare



2

Sorting things out ...

Narrative as:

Subject?

Method?

Research?

Care practice?

3

Examples

Scholander, L. H., Boström, A.-M., Josephsson, S., & Vikström, S. (2022). Engaging in narrative relations in everyday work on a geriatric ward: A qualitative study with healthcare professionals. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*.

Journal of Aging Studies
Journal of Aging Studies
Journal of Aging Studies

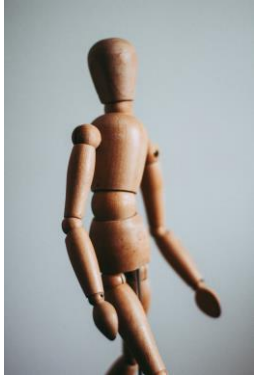
Journal of Clinical Nursing
Journal of Clinical Nursing

Stories under construction: Exploring meaning-making on a geriatric ward
Lisa Heidi Scholander^{1,2,3}, Sofia Vikström^{1,2,3}, Margareta Moberg^{1,2}, Sofia Josephsson^{1,2,3}

Engaging in narrative relations in everyday work on a geriatric ward: A qualitative study with healthcare professionals
Lisa Heidi Scholander Reg, PT, MSc, PhD student^{1,2,3}, Anne-Marie Boström RN, PhD, Senior Lecturer^{1,2,3}, Sofia Josephsson Reg, OT, PhD, Professor^{1,2,3}, Sofia Vikström Reg, OT, PhD, Senior Lecturer¹

Scholander, L. H., Vikström, S., Mondaca, M., & Josephsson, S. (2021). Stories under construction: Exploring meaning-making on a geriatric ward. *J Aging Stud*, 58, 100940.

Venturing into the realm of narrativity ...



Sorting things out ...

Narrative
mode of
knowing

vs.

Logico-
scientific
mode of
knowing

Narrative
methods

vs.

Narrative
as the
subject
of
interest

Narrative
analysis

vs.

Analysis
of
narratives

Narrative
research

vs.

Narrative
practice

Sorting things out ...



Narrative
mode og
knowing



Logico-
scientific
mode of
knowing



Bruner, J. S. (1986). *Actual minds, possible worlds.* Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Sorting things out ...

Narrative
mode of
knowing

vs.

Logico-
scientific
mode of
knowing

Narrative
methods

vs.

Narrative
as the
subject
of
interest

Narrative
analysis

vs.


Analysis
of
narratives

Narrative
research

vs.


Narrative
practice

Sorting things out ...



Narrative analysis

- **Data:** eventful
- **Analysis:** finding linkages between data elements to develop a plot
- **Logic:** synthesizing
- **Result:** an emplotted narrative



Analysis of narratives

- **Data:** storied
- **Analysis:** logico-scientific type
- **Logic:** separating
- **Result:** themes or categories

Polkinghorne, D. E. (1995). Narrative configuration in qualitative analysis. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 8(1), 5–23.

Sorting things out ...

Narrative
mode of
knowing

vs.

Logico-
scientific
mode of
knowing

Narrative
methods

vs.

Narrative
as the
subject
of
interest

Narrative
analysis

vs.

Analysis
of
narratives

Narrative
research

vs.

Narrative
practice

Sorting things out ...

Narrative methods



Photo: Claudia van Zyl, unsplash.com

- Meaning/meaning-making?
- Unfolding, multifaceted character of phenomena in everyday situations

Josephsson, S., & Alsaker, S. (2015). Narrative methodology: A tool to access unfolding and situated meaning in occupation. In S. Nayar & M. Stanley (Eds.), *Qualitative research methodologies for occupational science and therapy* (pp. 86–99). Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Narrative as the subject of interest

- Doesn't necessarily require narrative methods



Photo: Alexander Ruas

Sorting things out ...

Narrative
mode of
knowing

vs.

Logico-
scientific
mode of
knowing

Narrative
methods

vs.

Narrative
as the
subject
of
interest

Narrative
analysis

vs.

Analysis
of
narratives

Narrative
research

vs.


Narrative
practice

Sorting things out ...



Narrative
research

Mainly what we have been talking
about so far...



Narrative
practice

Examples

- Narrative medicine (Charon)
- Life story work (e.g. McKeown et al., McKinney et al.)
- Person-centred care according to GPCC framework (Ekman et al.)
- Engaging in narrative relations (Scholander et al.)

Sorted things out ...

Narrative
mode of
knowing

vs.

Logico-
scientific
mode of
knowing

Narrative
methods

vs.

Narrative
as the
subject
of
interest

Narrative
analysis

vs.

Analysis
of
narratives

Narrative
research

vs.

Narrative
practice

Examples from ongoing research project

Narrative analysis



Photo: Pixabay

Narrative practice as the subject of interest



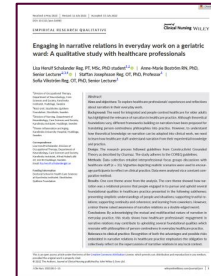
Photo: Alexander Ruas



Scholander, L. H., Vikström, S.,
Mondaca, M., & Josephsson, S. (2021).

**Stories under construction:
Exploring meaning-making on a
geriatric ward.**

J Aging Stud



Scholander, L. H., Boström, A.-M.,
Josephsson, S., & Vikström, S. (2022).

**Engaging in narrative relations in
everyday work on a geriatric ward: A
qualitative study with healthcare
professionals.**

J Clin Nurs

Examples from ongoing research project

Narrative analysis

Explored how meaning-making takes place and unfolds in everyday situations on a geriatric ward

Examples from ongoing research project

Narrative analysis

Explored **how meaning-making takes place** and **unfolds** in **everyday situations** on a geriatric ward

Photo: Pixabay

Examples from ongoing research project

Narrative analysis

Ethnographic fieldwork

- Participant observation
- Informal interviewing

➤ fieldnotes

Examples from ongoing research project

Narrative analysis

- Narrative-in-action methodology
- Significant events
- Wrote "first analytic text"
- Iterative process with my "analysis group"
- Hermeneutic
- Storied findings

A triptych of vignettes



Foto: Claudia van Zyl,
unsplash.com

'It was a sunny day.
Clear blue sky. I was just
going to the kitchen to
drink some water, then I
don't remember
anything more. Now I
can't stop thinking
about it. How could it
happen?'

Alice, patient

'Isn't it just typical?
To us and to the nursing
assistants they show
they are worried, but as
soon as you [*physicians*]
arrive, they say that
everything is just fine.'

Idil, nurse



Foto: Todd Cravens,
unsplash.com

'If they would just
sit back and
listen, they would
get the whole
story.'

Frida, patient



Foto: Luke Jones,
unsplash.com

Photo: Pixabay

Challenging traditional healthcare science paper formats ...



in several other situations in the fieldnote corpus and offers one possible understanding of how narrative meaning-making and PCC are related on the ward and how meaning-making processes, when seen as a socially and culturally constructed, can be obstructed or facilitated in different clinical situations and encounters.

Here we use pseudonyms in the vignettes and have altered any personal information jeopardizing the participant's anonymity in a way that we believe protects that anonymity while preserving the meaning in the data.

Findings and discussion

The vignettes each represent interpretations of possible facets contributing separately to the study aim, but when interrelated they also give to a fuller picture of how processes of narrative meaning-making may take place in a complex interplay between different agents in various everyday situations on the ward.

The first vignette, 'Mismatched reasoning', describes a spontaneous encounter between the first author and one of the patients, Alice, which took place in the corridor on the ward. It illustrates how narrative meaning-making is affected when staff miss the opportunity to join in on co-constructing a meaningful plot with the patient. The second vignette, 'Meaning-making in the clinical backstage', depicts a physician struggling to make sense of a care situation where she feels the patient is holding back information which compromises her good intentions as a professional. The vignette adds a clinical backstage perspective (Ellingson, 2003), where colleagues are invited to join the meaning-making process. The third vignette, 'Patient observations – requesting another approach', integrates experiences from a patient at the ward whose comments help further elucidate how subtle mannerisms might affect how much the patient is willing to reveal to healthcare staff. Together, the vignettes serve as a starting point for further analytical reflections on the underlying complexity in healthcare relations and the possible influence on the conditions for PCC.

Mismatched reasoning

Alice, a woman in her 80s, is in her wheelchair outside the dining room. I have seen her sitting there for a while. Mira, the nurse responsible for Alice's section of the ward, is walking by, and Alice asks her if she can have a new pair of socks. Mira stops to inspect the grey anti-slip socks all patients receive when they come to the ward and concludes that, unfortunately, they are running out of socks and so Alice will have to wait until tomorrow for another pair. Alice tells me she keeps her private socks in her room and invites me to come with her. While moving towards the room she tells me about her

suggests a timely (and interplay where both people are agents who must actively step into the intersubjective space where possibilities can be explored and meaning co-constructed and negotiated. Applying a narrative mode of thought implies being in a *subjunctivizing reality* (Bruner, 1986) where possibilities and hypothetical circumstances rather than settled certainties can be explored. Alice's depiction of the moment before the fall – her description of the environment, the particular action she was performed when she suddenly fell – sets the stage for a story, indicating that the narrative mode of thought was dominating her reasoning at that moment. She states that she cannot stop thinking about it. Even now, emotionally, she seems to be in an ongoing drama – a subjunctivizing reality – in which she broods on the possible causes which she still cannot grasp, repeating the scene over and over to find a plausible answer.

Halfway to her room, Alice tells me she is feeling dizzy and asks me to measure her blood pressure. I remind her that I am a researcher and not in a position to do that and propose that I call for the nurse. When I find Mira [a nurse] at the office, she tells me that Alice sometimes likes to exaggerate things but adds that she will check on her soon. I go back to communicate the message to Alice. While waiting, she repeats her concern that she cannot understand how she could fall.

'And now they are sending me to a short-term accommodation', she says.

I ask her what she would prefer, and she tells me forcefully that she wants to go home.

Mira arrives and asks how Alice is feeling. She tells Alice that she is going to check her vitals.

'What did she say?' Alice asks me and I repeat Mira's words, wondering if Alice knows what 'checking vitals' means. She nods her head, and Mira puts the blood pressure cuff on her arm.

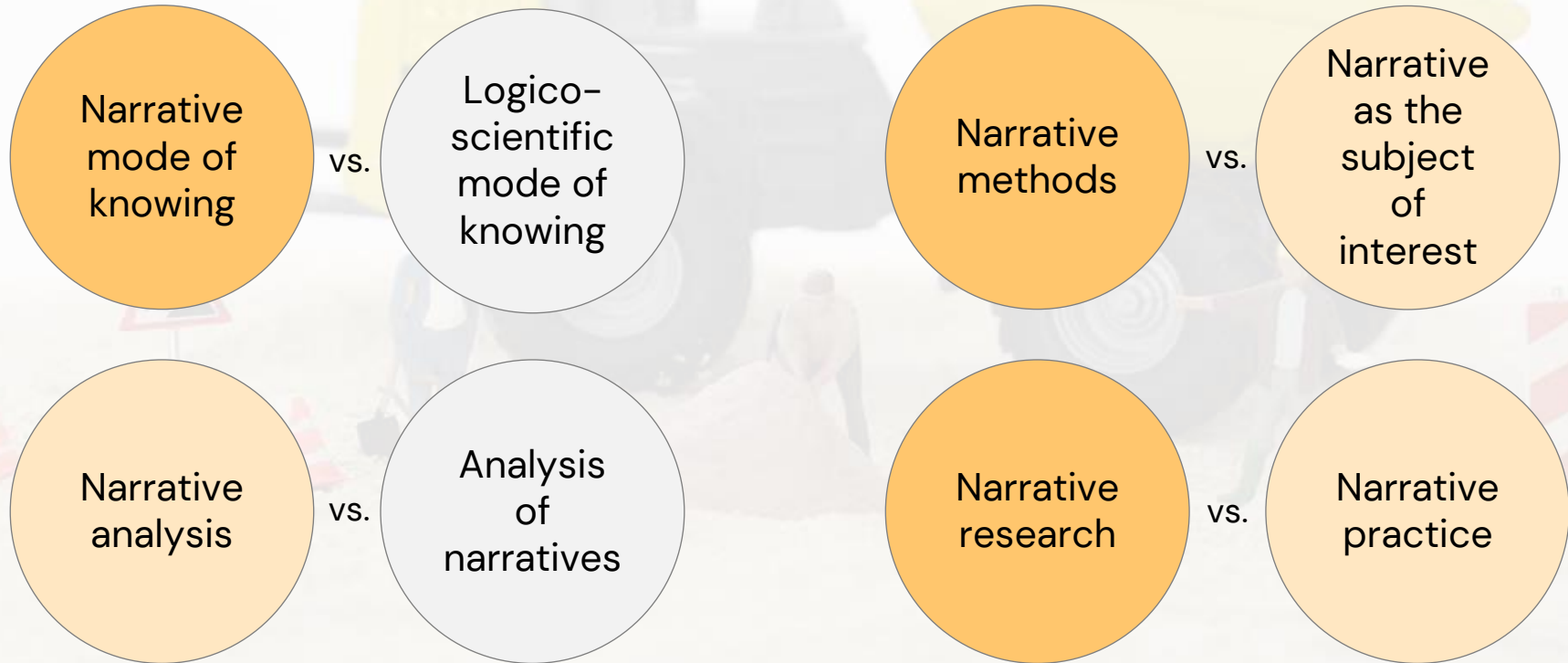
'What did I have?' Alice wonders. Mira tells her the measured values.

'What's normal?' Alice adds. Mira tells her [120/70].

After being quiet for a while, Alice turns towards the windows. There is a large balcony outside the dining room. She comments that she has a very nice balcony at home. Mira says that she is going to inform the doctor about Alice's dizziness and leaves. Looking at the balcony, Alice once again says that she does not understand how she could fall.

Alice's utterances and the story fragments presented in her speech – the dizziness, the rumination over the fall, the desire to return to her home – could be interpreted as somewhat associated in her train of thought. This section of the vignette relates to how various pieces of

Narrative elements in the study?



Examples from ongoing research project

Narrative analysis



Photo: Pixabay



Scholander, L. H., Vikström, S.,
Mondaca, M., & Josephsson, S. (2021).

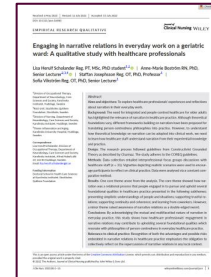
**Stories under construction:
Exploring meaning-making on a
geriatric ward.**

J Aging Stud

Narrative practice as the subject of interest



Photo: Alexander Ruas



Scholander, L. H., Boström, A.-M.,
Josephsson, S., & Vikström, S. (2022).

**Engaging in narrative relations in
everyday work on a geriatric ward: A
qualitative study with healthcare
professionals.**

J Clin Nurs

Examples from ongoing research project

Narrative practice as the subject of interest

Explored healthcare professionals' experiences and reflections about narration in their everyday work

Examples from ongoing research project

Narrative practice as the subject of interest

- Interprofessional focus groups
- **Vignettes** as prompts
- Constant comparative analysis

Engaging in narrative relations to pursue foundational qualities of healthcare practice

- Exposing meanings that might pass unnoticed if interpreted literally
- Being responsive for what patients ask for to make sense of their situation
- Acknowledging professionals as persons by allowing for their stories

Preventing simplistic understandings of people and situations

Learning from coworkers

- Exchanging experiential and tacit knowledge
- Bridging professional boundaries
- Favouring a broader understanding of healthcare practice
- *Narration as a double-edged sword*



Supporting trustful relations

- Bringing calm and a sense of security and trust to the patients
- Fostering empathic relations with patients by imagining a plausible patient story
- Fostering interprofessional affinity and peer support

Supporting continuity and coherence

- Connecting pieces to a bigger picture
- Using narratives to inform the healthcare activities and decisions

Narrative elements in the study?

Narrative
mode of
knowing

vs.

Logico-
scientific
mode of
knowing

Narrative
methods
(vignette)

vs.

Narrative
as the
subject
of
interest

Narrative
analysis

vs.

Analysis
of
narratives

Narrative
research

vs.

Narrative
practice

Thank you!

lisa.herulf.scholander@ki.se



**Karolinska
Institutet**