Making Sense of Stories

Making Sense of Stories:

An Inquirer's Compendium

Edited by

Andrew Rixon and Geof Hill

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OVERTURE

It only seems sensible to begin a book about "Making sense of stories" by first sharing a story. A story about this book's origin.

It was on a warm afternoon in the late summer of 2008 in Brisbane where sitting on the deck outlooking a great view of trees with the occasional magpie coming to visit, that Bob Dick and I began a conversation about the possibility of a new kind of conference.

A story conference!

After attending a number of the Australian Facilitator Network conferences, I couldn't help but wonder what interest and opportunity there was in an experiential conference that had as its sole focus sharing the many ways that people work with stories.

Bob responded, in a way that for those who know him would understand it to be both encouraging, yet with a helpful silence and wisdom stimulating further reflection. This initial conversation became the crucible for what would – in 2009 – see the first story conference launched in Melbourne at the Abbotsford Convent on my birthday, because I couldn't think of a better way to celebrate than to invite people from all around the world to explore the possibilities and potentialities of working with story.

Indeed, this first conference was themed on "Celebrating Story".

Fast forward to 2019, and we returned to the Abbotsford Convent for our 5th Story Conference celebrating a 10th year anniversary. In those 10 years, a community of people from across Australia, New Zealand and internationally from Europe and America have built and contributed to the conferences. The 10th year anniversary conference also saw the book launch of the community's first book *The Story Cookbook: Practical Recipes for Change* published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing. The publication of the *Story Cookbook* saw what has been called an "invaluable treasury of storytelling resources" all contributed by experienced consultants, trainers, educators and facilitators.

It was sitting out of session on the second day of the 2019 conference where Geof Hill and I were discussing and reflecting on the Story Cookbook that the seed was planted. Geof observed that, if The Story Cookbook represented the many diverse ways that stories could be used in 'pedagogy', then there was a space and opportunity for a similar book mapping out the many and diverse ways for the story and narratives to be part of 'research'. Indeed, what we both observed was that there was a gap in the market around books that helped or provided guidance on 'making sense' of stories, and more importantly – we seemed to have both noticed a growing community of people with varying ways of doing this.

One of the interesting innovations to emerge from *The Story Cookbook* was the use of a template approach to compile and curate the book. Geof had the great idea of using a similar approach in this book, however with an editorial twist. Based on the growing community of people developed through the Story Conference, and *the Story Cookbook*, we put out an expression of interest to this community as well as to others such as the Australian Facilitator Network, and through the use of survey monkey and our 'making sense of stories template', we began the process of bringing this book together.

The conversations with each of the authors based on their templates helped to develop chapters that illuminated the methodology. Not being limited by a concept of 'story', this opened the book up to a wide range of story analysis that included the traditional narrative analysis common in literary work as well as the wide use of personal stories used for developing professional practice and stories used in organisational inquiry.

The collection of chapters was itself an iterative action inquiry as the focus of the book emerged from the detail provided in the individual chapters. In some instances, we worked with individual authors to tease out the analysis methods which were not even referred to as analysis but were about making sense of stories. On the basis that analysis or research needs to lead to claims that contribute to knowledge, in the final chapter we look at the different types of contributions to knowledge made by different authors with their analytic approaches.

Finally, the last editing process saw us inviting authors to share tips for other inquirers, a small but we think important contribution helping to make the book useful and practical for others seeking to draw inspiration from the methods and apply in their own situations.

We have adopted some writing devices in this book to make connections between the array of resources. Each of the methods for story elicitation or story analysis have been presented in italic text to highlight the variety of tools and methods. Where we refer to an author who has written in this collection, we have used the writing device of emboldening the text. This helps distinguish this type of reference from those where we refer to the vast array of literature on story elicitation and analysis.

Within each chapter you will find an image associated with the work, used to distinguish each of the chapters. We invited authors to provide a note explaining their chosen image, and these explanations provide another angle to the chapter's contribution. A final image connection to the *Story Cookbook* was a discussion with the cover designer Cathryn Lloyd to revisit an image she developed for the previous book that used with this book demonstrated the 'second lens' approach that we have taken.

THE EDITORS

Andrew Rixon, Ph.D., D.TM., is an internationally experienced consultant, coach and educator with a particular interest and passion for innovation, leadership and change.

In 2009, Andrew founded The Story Conference (http://www.thestory conference.com.au), a national story conference providing a space for practitioners interested in the use and application of story and narrative techniques for individuals, communities and organisations and in 2019 was the co-editor of *The Story Cookbook: Practical Recipes for Change*.

With significant educator experience across Australian business schools including the University of Melbourne, Monash University, and James Cook University, he is a faculty member at Swinburne Business School.

Geof Hill, Ph.D., Ed. D. SFHEA, is a Management Consultant. His training in the 1980s as a Work Study analyst, provided the foundation for later consultancies supporting and advocating professional practice change in Business, Health, Education and Mining.

Concurrent with his consultancy he has held academic positions; notably as the Co-ordinator of Research Supervision professional development at Queensland (Australia) University of Technology for thirteen years and later as Reader in Education at Birmingham City (U.K) University, where he introduced a community of practice agenda around research supervision professional development.

Geof is the instigator and principal author of *The research supervisor's friend* – a Wordpress blog. He uses stories extensively in his work with academics.

INTRODUCTION

Provenance

Since ancient time, storytellers have told and retold remembered stories. Stories were the substance of oral communication and they helped disseminate knowledge across geographical and time boundaries.

Inventions of paper and writing implements (Tsien, 1985; Harnad, 1991) complemented the oral tradition and initiated a written tradition of knowledge. Documents recording the spoken word invited new forms of knowledge sharing; they opened texts up to new analytical possibilities. Plato's scribing Socrates' speeches[1] is a good example of parallel oral and written traditions of knowledge. Copies of the Socratic manuscripts, stored in the ancient University of Constantinople library, facilitated later study of Socrates' philosophy when they were subsequently rediscovered. As well as knowledge conveyors, stories themselves became subjects of investigation and analysis.

Written texts expanded opportunities for philosophical exploration, unpacking propositions and uncovering and illuminating underlying belief systems. This form of analysis also has provenance to the Greek curriculum and Foucault (1972/74, 6) writes…

> *ever since a discipline such as history has existed, documents have been used, questioned, and have given rise to questions; scholars have asked not only what these documents meant, but also whether they were telling the truth. and by what right they could claim to be doing so, whether they were sincere or deliberately misleading, well informed or ignorant, authentic or tampered with.*

While religious beliefs played an important role in ancient philosophy, later secularism fuelled growth in Science, requiring philosophers to articulate non-religious beliefs about truth and knowledge. French philosopher Auguste Comte (1844/65), philosophising about science and discovery, coined the term 'Positivism' to describe beliefs underpinning scientific

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[1] http://www.spaceandmotion.com/Philosophy-Socrates-Philosopher.htm – accessed January 16th, 2018.

investigation. Comte (1844/65) posited knowledge based on 'Positivism' was the *only* form of knowledge.

Philosopher Foucault (1972/74, 49) proffered multiple ways for understanding 'discourse', one of which was that it is a group of '*practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak*'. Mac Naughton (2003, 20), adopting this definition of 'discourse', further suggested that…

> *discourses systematise and frame how we think, feel, understand and practice in specific areas of our lives*

Stories represent one such discourse!

Professional Practice

Although discourse around professional practice is recognised as a recent contribution, the idea of professional practice has a lengthy existence back to early civilisations. Ancient texts refer to administrator education in satrap schools in Emperor Belshazzar's 550BC ancient Persian kingdom (Waters, 2014). Emperor Charlemagne established *studia generalia* to educate administrators for his 13th century European empire. These *studia generalia* are recognised as precursors to the modern-day universities (Dunbabin, 1999). Professions such as Medicine and Law were initiated in the *studia generalia.* Other professions, such as Religious Ministry and Teaching, were initiated in the medieval monasteries, also recognised as educational institutes (Glazer, 1974). Professional practice surged in the 19th century representing a specific strand of thinking within Sociology, the field of study founded by Auguste Comte. By the early 20th century there was an established discourse around and about professional practice (Dingwall and Lewis, 1983).

Different sets of questions generated successive discussions around professionalism.

The earliest writing about professionalism asked questions about '**what is a profession?**' and '**what is not a profession?**'. Through this inquiry, Moore and Rosenblum (1970, 5-6) identified six distinguishing features of professional practice:

> *a fulltime occupation, ...commitment to a calling, ... formal organisation, ...esoteric but useful knowledge or skills acquired through training or education, ...an orientation towards service,... and autonomy.*

A similar attempt to categorize professions, proposed major and minor professions (Glazer,1974); the major professions were those represented in medieval universities or *studia generalia*.

In a second wave of writing, typified with texts such as *The Professions* (Carr-Saunders and Wilson, 1933), inquirers asked questions such as **'what do members of this profession do?'** and **'how does one become a member of the professions?'**.

A third wave influenced by the Critical Theorists – for example Friere (1986) and Habermas (1987) and typified with texts such as Abbott's (1988) *The System of Professions* – asked questions relating to assumptions that underpinned discussions about professionalism, such as **'is professionalism self-serving?'** and **'is professionalism designed to monopolise work or dominate occupations?'.**

A fourth wave of writing about professional practice asked the question '**how do professionals do the work they do and why?'.** Friedson (1989, 425), author of *Theory and Professions,* defined a profession as

> *a kind of occupation whose members control recruitment, training and the work they do.*

Friedson (1989, 431) drew attention to emerging ethnographic studies of professional practices and the university's professional schools' influence in offering education that helped distinguish a profession from a craft. Mischler (1990), inspired by William Morris's (1983/1966) 'craftsman ideal' that involved valuing craft work as creative, varied and useful, raised questions such as **how do craftspeople balance their "mode of being" with economic, social, and family demands?** These questions also contributed to a more focussed discourse around professional identity. In answering this fourth wave of questions about professional practice, several researchers turned to professional stories – stories which illuminated the nature of professional work – to shed light on what it means to be professional.

Several of the professionalism inquiries were undertaken in a context of post-positivism. Following Comte's (1844/65) propositions around 'Positivism', the idea of their being a single 'truth' about professional practice was challenged and gave way to the suggestion that professional practice meant different things to different people across different periods of time. This rethinking of understanding professional practice, and particularly what counted as evidence of professional practice, created

opportunity for stories of professional practice to become a mode of knowledge. The move was dubbed the Narrative Turn, and matched similarly identified 'turns' in the study of practice and professional practice, such as Schön's (1991, 5) 'reflective turn' describing the proliferation of tools and processes in the wake of his (1983) *Reflective Practitioner;* and Schatzki's (2001) 'practice turn' describing the school of thought theorizing practice.

Mischler (1990) identified a 'narrative turn' in Health sciences, paralleling an already established use of practitioner stories in Educational research. Researchers in Business and Management studies similarly used stories for insights into professional practice. McAdams (1993) suggested

> *stories clients tell about themselves are important threads in the fabric of their self- identities;*

and Boyce (1996, 5) described stories as

> *a natural entry point to understanding and intervening in the culture(s) of an organization.*

Snowdon (1999, 31), referring to the value of the story in organisational analysis, suggested

> *It is something which already exists as an integral part of defining what that organization is; what it means to buy from it; what it means to work for it.*

Drake (2007) signalled an overlap between different discipline professionals in his reference to narrative in coaching psychology professionals. He suggested stories help people negotiate differences between themselves and their environments and, in this regard, reflect both the teller of the story and their context.

A method for inquiring into professional practice

Comte's (1848) belief system of Positivism formed the basis for scientific method and dominated inquiry. This dominance was challenged in 'the paradigm wars' (Anderson and Herr, 1999; Denzin, 2010, 420; Klaes, 2012, 13), when philosophers drew on Thomas Kuhn's (1962) notion of 'paradigm' – a term referring to a set of beliefs – to challenge the appropriateness of a Positivist paradigm underpinning research involving people. Guba and Lincoln (1982) posed an alternative 'naturalistic paradigm' to underpin ways of undertaking research with people. A second challenge to

Positivism's application to human beings was Husserl's (1913/ 1962, 1936/1965) Phenomenology movement which attempted to clarify a way of viewing human beings and their lives and identified the essential uniqueness of the human world (McPhail, 1995). This wave of post-positivism broadened understanding about epistemology (knowledge) and what counted as data for understanding practice (Starkey and Madan, 2001).

Laurence Stenhouse also questioned Positivism's dominance in research and asked 'what counts as research?'. He (1981, 104) advocated teachers investigate their professional practices by drawing on their lived experiences as data.

> *While the hard sciences produce our hardware, history produces our software: it is the expression of a systematic critical inquiry into the fruits of our experience. In the broadest sense the physical and life sciences pursue research into the context of experience: history is concerned—again in the broadest sense—with research into the content of experience.*

Stenhouse (1981, 110) called his approach of working with practitioner stories, 'practitioner research'. Connelly and Clandinnin (1990, 2) advocated a similar narrative approach to inquiry, encouraging lived experience as articulated in teachers' stories to provide insights into classroom teachers' practices.

> *The main claim for the use of narrative in educational research is that humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives.*

Anderson and Herr (1999) similarly affirmed using teacher stories as a basis for examining their practice and, like Stenhouse (1981), adopted the term 'practitioner research'.

In addition to 'naturalistic inquiry'[2] (Guba and Lincoln, 1982, 1), and 'practitioner research' (Stenhouse, 1981, 110; Anderson and Herr, 1999, 12), other alternate ways of investigating practice were advocated in 'reflective practice' (Schön, 1983, 21), 'co-operative inquiry' (Heron, 1985) and 'practice-led inquiry' (Gray, 1996, 1). Each of these approaches utilised practitioner stories as the data.

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[2] Several researchers positing alternative paradigms to Positivism, have used the term 'inquiry' instead of 'research' to indicate the non-positivist view of investigation. The choice of this word is based on an assumption that the word 'research' is too closely associated with scientific method and Positivism.

Mischler (1990), like Stenhouse (1981) and Guba and Lincoln (1982), proposed an alternative 'interpretive paradigm' to Positivism's dominance. Narrative studies subsequently migrated to other health related fields of Psychotherapy and Social work. The Cambridge Dictionary[3] definition described narrative as 'a particular way of explaining or understanding events' and gave the impression that 'Narrative' was synonymous with 'story'. Mischler (1990, 417) described the rise in Narrative popularity as 'the narrative turn'.

> *Recent studies in the history, philosophy, and sociology of science have seriously damaged the "storybook image of science" (Mitroff, 1974) - an image that has served to legitimate the dominant conception of validation. These new studies, which focus on actual practices of scientists rather than on textbook idealizations, reveal science as a human endeavour marked by uncertainty, controversy, and ad hoc pragmatic procedures - a far cry from an abstract and severe "logic" of scientific discovery.*

Storytelling as Inquiry

Within a spirit of seeking alternative ways to undertake inquiry with people, Reason and Hawkins (1988), drawing on Glasser and Strauss's (1967) 'grounded theory', posited inquirers use their own stories of their investigative practices as the bases for study. They described this process as 'storytelling as inquiry', positing it in a collection of person-centred ways of undertaking action inquiry as an approach for undertaking research with people. Snowden (2002, 2-3), similarly described the value in using stories as data for exploring organisational change, making this a basis for his IBM Cynefin Centre for Organisational Complexity:

> *It is about engaging human organisational complexity in its many manifestations, including the ancient collective and emergent patterns of narrative, ritual, negotiation of identity and truth, self-representation and knowledge exchange.*

Bath University Centre for Organisational Change and Cynefin Centre for Organisational Complexity both advocated using stories as data for organisational inquiry.

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[3] Cambridge Dictionary accessed at
https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/narrative on March 12th 2020.

While sources such as the Cambridge Dictionary[4] advocated narrative as synonymous with 'story', Boer (2019, 6-7) distinguished between the two.

> *a story is separate from its rendering. What this means is that a narrative can be organized in different ways, all the while referring to the same order of events (the story). Simply put, 'something' is being told in a particular way: the 'something' here being the story; its rendering the narrative. More comprehensively defined, a narrative, is a representation of*
> > *(i) a structured time-course of particularized events that*
> > *(ii) introduces conflict [...] into a story world [...] conveying*
> > *(iii) what it's like to live through that disruption*

Boer (2019) suggested this distinction was important for stories being used as data in the legal profession. Snowden (2020) drew a similar distinction between stories and anecdotes.

Using stories as data for inquiry invites two distinct and sometimes overlapping inquiry processes. Collecting stories is the first of these processes and having collected data, making sense of the stories follows. A third defining step in the inquiry process is evident in claims made based on one's analysis or making sense of the story data. Through this final step, an inquiry contributes to bodies of knowledge.

We have structured this collection of examples of ways of making sense of stories by firstly discussing the array of methods for collecting stories; then illuminating the plethora of techniques different inquirers adopt to make sense of the stories they have elicited or collected. Finally, we draw attention to the claims that individual processes generate in terms of their contributions to knowledge.

Across the whole collection we have adopted a view of knowledge (epistemology) that it arises from individual practitioners detailing their particular approach. In our own post-positivist stance, we also maintain that there is no single truth (ontology) about the ways in which stories are collected or analysed, and in fact, the chapters celebrate the vast variety of ways to approach very similarly named methods.

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[4] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/learner-english/narrative accessed April 3rd 2020

COLLECTING STORIES

Bruner's (1990) *Acts of Meaning* thesis is that humans have different ways of understanding the world. Sometimes they seek to comprehend it in logical and empirical ways – strategies that often relate to scientific ways of inquiring; at other times they adopt a mode of making sense of the world through stories.

The idea of a 'story' as data invites many different ways of thinking about a 'story' and indeed many different terms for story – there are fictional stories such as 'tales' and 'anecdotes', and non-fictional stories that include 'memoirs', 'biographies' and 'news accounts'. Some anecdotes are also non-fictional. Each variation of the construct of a story provides insights into the sources from which the stories are drawn. Some authors who write about story analysis distinguish between small, big and grand stories. Grand stories or grand narratives are the type of story discussed by philosopher Lyotard (1984) in which multiple stories are amalgamated to give a philosophical position. In contrast Alexandra Georgakopoulou (2007), taking a lead from Bamberg (2004), suggested that small stories are both small in terms of the length of the narrative as well as the personal nature of the story told. Thus, creating the middle category of big stories which represent stories told about complex events and thus warranting multiple pages of text.

An alternative distinction, and one we have chosen for this book, is to distinguish stories based on the sources from which the stories are drawn. Stories can be classified based on the story source thus inviting distinctions between a story sourced from the researcher/inquirer's own life and stories sourced from other's lives

Inquirers using their own story

Where the inquirer as researcher draws on their own story as data for their lived experience, they bring to the inquiry the authenticity of knowing the data. Sometimes this inquiry process is referred to as autoethnography (Dilthey, 1976). A specific form of drawing on knowledge of one's own professional practice is sometimes referred to as practice-led inquiry (Gray, 1996). When authors use their own stories as the initiation for studying

professional practice, the term 'Provenance' has been used (Hill and Lloyd, 2018) to refer to this historical and chronological collection of data.

Inquirers using their own story as the basis for their inquiry construct it over time and can develop a story with historical accuracy. In some disciplines, the story strength is attributed to its immediacy rather than its historical accuracy, and an inquirer is encouraged to tell their story without possible censorship through either historical or geographical accuracy. Sometimes, the telling and retelling of a story provides opportunities for iterative rehearsals to generate a new telling of a story.

Denning (2001), describing stories that work as data, suggested that some stories *spring* to life. This can often be the case where the inquirer/storyteller has told the story on several occasions and so it comes to them easily and equally easily converts into a written form. Some stories have this 'springing forth' element in that the event about which the story is told and the teller's motivation about the story are so strong, that the storytellers can barely contain themselves. Ellis, Adams and Boechner (2011, 275) used the term 'epiphanies' to describe such uncontainable events. Elsewhere, Hill and Lloyd (2018, 7) described events informing a story as 'critical incidents' and suggested they play a role in helping a professional construct their Provenance story.

> *The process we described for Provenance started with the practitioner identifying critical incidents related to development of their practice, then organising those incidents chronologically to posit a developmental story. By constantly revisiting the story, a practitioner added more and more detail generating depth and clarity of the practice. These iterations of inquiry also made possible recognition or illumination of the practitioner/inquirer's bias in their practice. Vagle (2010, 403) cautions about this form of bias contaminating the inquirer's analysis of the data drawn from their own story.*

Inquirers using other people's stories

Some investigations into practice are based entirely on stories gathered by the inquirer/researcher. This data collection approach might be used in conjunction with the research/inquirer's own story, using other's stories as a basis of comparison. Some inquiries begin with the inquirer's own story, and progress to include stories from other similar professionals. Other inquiries are based solely on other's stories.

As with individual's using their own stories, Denning's (2001) suggestion that stories *spring* forth may also be relevant in soliciting stories from others. A person can be flattered that their story has been invited and thus finds it easy to tell. Some stories have been told so many times, that asking a professional to tell their story involves a well-rehearsed presentation.

Although different inquirers may draw on a plethora of methods, this does not mean that the task of eliciting stories is easy. **Lauren Woodland** talked about the challenge for a researcher in obtaining stories of professional practice. Working with educators, she suggested that there is often disconnect between theoretical models of learning and teaching and the practical experiences of educators working with learners (Knight, Tait and Mantz, 2006). Reflective practice is one clear avenue that can surface the complexity of lived experience that educators can draw upon. This process allows higher education professionals to deepen their educator identity and strengthen their sense of self as a teaching professional. The impetus to developing an educator identity is further complicated by the fact that many educators in tertiary institutes have been drawn to work in higher education predominantly as researchers, or are brought in to teach based on their industry and clinical skills.

The diversity of examples in this collection

The bulk of the analysis methods in this collection are used in relation to stories collected from others. The examples in the collection illuminate a wide range of story elicitation strategies.

Some stories elicited from others are already a part of our collective understanding. This can be the case when story analysis is undertaken on stories that already exist. Some of these types of stories are historical, as **Dimitar Angelov** and **Rommany Jenkins** demonstrate with their analysis of stories from classical literature – Jenkins based her analysis on Medieval literature by Cavalcanti and Angelov analysed a D.H. Lawrence travel story. A different example of stories already in the vernacular is evident in **Pam Blamey's** analysis of fairy tales.

Sometimes historical stories are constructed from source artefacts. **Catherine Le Brun** talks about developing an historical story using photos and letters.

> *Transcripts of audio files and live conversations were also categorised as stories and were an important part of the complete historical narrative. Stories were also derived from administrative and clerical notes and asides*

> *in archived Milton District Band documents (e.g. secretarial minutes, bandmaster's annual report) and from newspaper articles dating from 1869 to the current time (Trove, Milton Ulladulla Times).*

In contrast to being historical stories, other stories used in these examples have an immediacy. A common method used to elicit stories in the present is to ask people to 'tell their story'. This type of invitation opens the story source up with a distinction raised by **Bob Dick** between spoken and written stories**. Bob Dick** suggests

> *I've found that most people provide more detail in a spoken story compared to one that is written. Most people find speaking less onerous that writing. Also, occasionally, people are not literate.*

…but some authors will find telling their story difficult, and so we see in this collection an array of story eliciting devices.

Pam Blamey referred to a *Six Part story method* (Lahad, 1992) that she uses to develop a story. **Andrea Quinn** described leading a storywriter through a *Kolb-based framework* with a series of specific questions. **Birgitt Williams and Rachel Bolton** described their *Whole Person Process* to elicit stories for their analysis. **Amanda Villiers** referred to *workbooks with journaling questions* that help her clients develop their stories. **Leanne Dodd** referred to *sensory and meditational exercises* that help clients think about negative experiences and construct their stories. **Bob Dick** relied on *convergent interviewing* (Dick, 2017) to help people develop their story. **Margaret McAllister and Colleen Ryan** described Wengraf's (2008) *Biographical Narrative Interview Method (BNIM).*

> *According to Wengraf (2008,) BNIM uses a single open-ended question to elicit a person's. In this way, the researcher can be sure that they are not dominating the conversation, and that the story is the focus. If the participant digresses or comes to a halt without finishing the story, the researcher might use connecting words or prompts to encourage the full retelling. Thus, in the first interaction with our research participants, we stated:*
>
> > *we are interested in gathering nurses' stories of night shift and practices that might take place on the night shift, to prepare nursing students for practice. I have only one question. After I ask it, I will not be interrupting you until you indicate you have finished sharing your story. I might take notes and then ask you questions when you have completed your story, to deepen my understanding. Here is the question. Could you tell me a story of your night duty work?*

Prior to these interviews we devised a bank of prompt questions that could be used to enquire of the storyteller their meaning of the narrative. These included:

- *How did the event and experiences affect you?*
- *Can you remember anything at the time that frightened you?*
- *Did you feel a change in temperature?*
- *Could you clarify that one part of your story for me?*
- *Anything else you might like to share?*

Andrew Rixon described collecting stories using 'Story pods' – portable video studios – in which young people in the streets record their stories about alcohol culture change after a night out.

Several of the examples in this collection specifically name interview methods. Other authors used the more general term 'interview', and within this term made distinctions of practice. Interviewing involves asking questions. Open questions in an interview can be used to get the person talking; alternately, closed questions might allow for confirmation of certain facts. These differences in the interview questions are referred to as levels of structure: **Saphiya Rajer** used *semi-structured interviews*; **Ree Jordan** opted for a more *structured interview* to make sure that each participant answered the same questions.

In some story interviews, the questions are designed to be provocative. Cope (2003, 436) described the interview process he used in a series of interviews with entrepreneurs as a

sense-making process in which together, the researcher and the participant clarified the meanings and importance attached to their experience.

Cope's (2003) method aligns with affirming the practitioner and letting their voice be heard as compared to undertaking an interview to extract specific data that furthers the investigator's agenda. A contrasting interview method is described by Kupers, Mantere and Statler (2013, 87) who described the interviewer's role as 'surpris[ing]' or 'shock[ing]' the participant as they were telling their story to elicit specific phenomenological data that impacted on the sense making.

Sometimes, an interview method is used to initiate a story and utilises other editing processes to develop the story. **Geof Hill** talked about the interviewing process used for *The Journeying Postgraduate Supervision* on-line resource, a site containing stories about research supervision.

The stories for Journeying Postgraduate Supervision were acquired by interviewing well regarded research supervisors at one Australian university. I interviewed these people using an open interview (Corbin and Morse, 2003) based on questions that had informed my own experiences as a doctoral candidate and being supervised. The interviews were open and chatty, and while there were several catalyst questions to get the conversation going, the interviews were very participant driven, often with only clarifying questions being asked.

The interviews were professionally transcribed, converted to a narrative by removing the questions, then presented to each of the authors – the storytellers – for authentication.

Removing the questions was not intended to mask the act of the catalyst questions, but to create a seamless text that depicted reality (Norris, 1983) as if the professional had talked without interruption about their practice.

A distinguishing feature of this type of data elicitation is the provision for the storyteller to make changes to their story after reading the full transcript. Each participant authenticates their story or makes changes and authenticates the subsequent transcript as 'their story'. This authentication choice affirms the storyteller's rights to have the story told in whatever way they decide. From previous experience (Hill, 2002), this approach to soliciting stories generates four types of corrections.

1. *text is altered because it is inaccurate.*
2. *text is altered because, while it is seen to be potentially accurate, the interviewee/respondent does not feel it conveys their intended meaning.*
3. *text is identified as correct but the relevance of the text for publication is questioned.*
4. *text is identified as correct, and the author believes it reveals too much about their identity, so they request that that an aspect of the text be eliminated.*

These strategies within a 'story' development recognise storytellers' multiple truths and enhance the participant articulating their *truth. Such a declaration of a view of reality also impacts on the researcher's view of reality.*

An important aspect of eliciting a story through interview is encouraging the storyteller to reflect and tell their story. **Lauren Woodland**, describes her process for encouraging academic professionals to explore their lived experience as data for their HEA Senior Fellowship applications:

I get educators to pair up and form an inner and outer circle. For five minutes, the partner on the inner circle gets to speak uninterrupted about their teaching by describing two teaching experiences – one which they perceived went well, and another where they perceived things didn't go so well. If the dialogue wanes before the time is up, the partner from the outer circle can ask a few stimulus questions but provide no feedback. After five minutes had elapsed, it is the turn for the partner on the outside circle to describe their own perceived good/not so good teaching experiences. After the mutual sharing, the outer circle moves one person clockwise so there was a new pair formed. I start the process again with each partner sharing their same experiences but provide a minute less time each rotation so that after a few rotations, pairs were down to 2 minutes per person. I pause at this stage and get participants to reflect: What did you notice? Many observe that they heard similarities between their own stories and the ones they listened to from others, or that they got better at expressing the point, or had noticed new connections or ideas simply by stating what had happened out loud. This naturally leads to the question: What do you need to do as an educator? Responses include enthusiastic commitment to talking more to their colleagues, sharing their highs and lows of teaching, and spending time making sense of the encounters they had. While I could have simply told the room these exact same principles of reflective practice, it was more powerful for them to come to the realisation on their own. For teachers, the act of reflecting on practice, and why these actions were important will help the educator to understand how their own values drive their practice. Many educators have reflected in their workshop feedback that this circles exercise was a turning point for them in realising they need to spend more time unpacking their experiences.

MAKING SENSE OF STORIES AS DATA

Stories are intended to convey knowledge. A story conveys meaning in its own right. Telling a story combines description along with explanation. As soon as events have happened and are told in retrospect, then the story contains both the reconstruction of the events along with first reflective explanations of those events (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Telling a story thus opens it up to a first level of analysis whereby the storyteller, in hindsight, recognises explanations embedded within a story; as well as second level analysis wherein identified analytical tools are used to assist meaning making. Van Manen (2016, 324) describing phenomenological analysis, talked about 'insight cultivators' as the emergence and realisation of ways of gaining insights into descriptions of lived experience. His analysis invited "detailed reading" of a transcript such that 'every sentence and sentence cluster' is considered in light of "what [it] may reveal about the phenomenon or experience being described". Other authors talked about the storyteller analysing their own story through their writing process (Richardson, 1994) or of making use of 'critical friends' to analyse a story (Stieha, 2014). Some authors in this collection suggested that not every story needed analysis. **Pam Blamey** talked about stories being used for healing rather than meaning.

> *Some stories need to be unpacked, while others need to be left to steep and percolate through the unconscious without interpretation from others.*

The idea of the writing process providing a form of analysis is explored by authors in the broader literature. Richardson (1994) described writing itself being a form of inquiry and thus as people document their stories, the writing process contributes to their analysis and their meaning generating from the story. Denzin's (1994, 501-2) description of a story writing process illuminated how it formed an analytical process.

> *Moving from field to text to the reader is a complex, reflexive process. The researcher creates a field text consisting of field notes and documents from the field. From this text he or she creates a research text. The researcher then re-creates the research text as a working interpretive document. This working document contains the writer's initial attempts to make sense of what has been learned. The writer next produces a quasi-public text, one that is shared with colleagues, whose comments and suggestions the writer*

> *seeks. The writer then transforms this statement into a public document which embodies the writer's self-understandings, which are now inscribed in the experiences of those studied. This statement, in turn furnishes the context for the understandings the reader brings to the experiences described by the writer.*

In light of first level analysis being the storyteller in hindsight recognising meaning in their story, second level analysis often involves an analyst/inquirer making sense of the text using an established method.

Mischler (1990), in an iconic argument for new methods of trustworthiness and validity in qualitative data, illuminated two different ways of analysing a narrative text. Both methods have applicability to story analysis. Mischler (1990, 427-32) distinguished between Gee's (1985, 1986) oral analysis and White's (1989) narrative analysis to differentiate between ways of analysing stories

> *This is not a weakness, but rather a hallmark of interpretive research in which the key problem is understanding how individuals interpret events and experiences, rather than assessing whether or not their interpretations correspond to or mirror the researchers' interpretive construct of "objective" reality.*

The Gee exemplar (1985, 1986, 431) was analysed by identifying different writing technical devices – such as

> *repetition, parallelism, sound play, juxtaposition, foregrounding, delaying, and showing rather than telling [that] are hallmarks of spoken language in its most oral mode, reaching its peak in the poetry, narratives, and epics of oral cultures….the technical devices that make it work are clearly defined and visible; the underlying structure is specified; and his interpretation is tied directly to the data.*

The White exemplar (1989), analysing text from a Marcel Proust novel, used a method which highlighted different writing techniques such as *metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony*.

Editing/Transcribing stories

Sometimes told stories need to be transcribed to a written form ahead of analysis. Sometimes the transcription can be immediate, similar to a court reporter documenting as a witness is speaking. At other times a recording device is used, and transcribing follows. Transcription can impact on the subsequent story analysis. As the transcriber listens to the story being told,

they have immediate thoughts about what a text means. When the transcriber is also the inquirer, these insights are recorded as footnotes to the transcript and contribute to the overall analysis. This feature of transcription prompts inquirers to distinguish between having a text transcribed and transcribing the stories themselves. Transcription can also involve analytical forms, as **Sascha Rixon's** description of conversation analysis applied to stories illuminates.

Diversity of analysis methods

The editors of this book invited different people to tell stories about their various investigations, to thus illuminate the approaches they adopted to make sense of that data. The following chapters provide a diversity of analytical methods.

Some analysis methods are simple: for example, **Geof Hill's** use of *juxtaposition* of story samples simply compares and contrasts aligned stories. A similar compare and contrast method is used when making comparisons between different artefacts that eventually lead to the construction of an historical story – such as described by **Catherine Le Brun** in making sense with *chronology and cross referencing*. A third example of compare and contrast is **Geof Hill's** *benchmarking by seeking affirming and disconfirming evidence.*

Other analysis methods rely on genre specific traditions. Some of the earliest forms of narrative analysis were aligned with literary studies. **Rommany Jenkins** applied a form of *pre-history analysis* that looked at the origins of words and phrases to make sense of Dantean texts; **Dimitar Angelov** identified *narrative conventions* in his analysis of a D.H. Lawrence travel story.

Other analytical methods come from psychological traditions. Carl Jung's approach to analysing stories forms the basis of the Jungian tradition that explores symbolism in the text. **Pam Blamey** explored *circumambulation* and **Toula Gordillo** developed *story image analysis,* both of which relied on Jungian analysis for their making sense of stories. **Glen Bates** provided an example of *Psychotherapeutic analysis* and **Sam Hardy** illuminated a specific application of therapeutic analysis in her working with *personal conflict stories*.

Some of the analytical methods discussed come from educational philosophies. **Andrea Quinn** drew on the *Kolbian (1984) traditions* of experiential

learning and **Leanne Dodd** used *Kelly's (1992) theory of personal constructs.*

In addition to drawing on known analytical tools, some inquirers in this collection have developed their own methods: **Toula Gordillo** described *Story Image Therapy* developed in the context of her work with children and teenagers; **Amanda Viviers** described her *Creative Spheres* framework developed through her work with women. **Michael Lissack** illuminated his method of *choice analysis* in a story. **Leanne Dodd** used genre work in her development of *Ficto-Memoirs* and **Birgitt Williams and Rachel Bolton** illuminated their W*hole person process facilitation (WPPF)* used with groups of workers in organisations.

While many of the methods discussed in this collection are based on individual stories and analysis, several authors talk about analysing stories to provide organisational insights. Two different forms of organisational analysis are illuminated. One form examined specific professional bodies such as **Geof Hill's** analysis of research supervisors' stories, **Margaret McAllister and Colleen Ryan**'s shedding light on night nurses' practices, **Elizabeth Gould's** analysis of entrepreneur stories and **Ree Jordan's** exploration into 'Mavericks'.

The other form of *organisational analysis* looked at the overall organisation, as described by **Bob Dick** and **Grace Ann Rosile and David Boje**. These forms of organisational analysis raise the question about who is doing the analysis? Is the inquiry facilitator analysing the stories or do they introduce a process by which organisational employees undertake their own analysis based on their combined stories? One such process is evident in **Birgitt Williams and Rachel Bolton's** discussion of their *whole person process facilitation.*

A common way several authors described working with organisations was to code text in the story. Different theorists inform how an inquirer undertakes the coding. **Lauren Woodlands** illuminated the use of a *coding template devised by the Higher Education Authority;* **Saphiya Rajer** used a bricolage approach which combined *grounded theory and coding*; **Ree Jordan** adopted an approach inspired by *Bourdieu*; and **Geof Hill** illuminated methods that distinguished between *in vivo and ex vivo codes.*

Beyond organisational analysis, two of the examples in this collection speak to use of stories for environmental inquiry: **Andrew Rixon, Bridget Roberts and Rosemary Fisher** illuminated *most significant change*