QUALITATIVE STORY COMPLETION: AN INNOVATIVE METHOD WITH EXCITING POTENTIAL FOR HEALTH RESEARCH

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Aims

This research aims to explore how do everyday individuals (in Aotearoa New Zealand) understand decisions around, and the practice of, ‘healthy eating’? Are dietary guidelines or more restrictive modes of eating evident in common-sense constructions about ‘healthy eating’?

Method

Using an innovative approach called story completion, I collected a sample of approximately 100 stories. Stories were written in response to a cue which read: ‘Chris has decided to eat healthily, but needs clear guidelines to do this. After some online research, and talking to friends, Chris is ready to start...’ Other aspects were left open.

Results/Discussion

The study is underway. Data will be analysed thematically and discursively, and this paper will report key patterns in sense-making around healthy eating. Initial analysis suggests ‘healthy eating’ is constructed in various ways, and as good but effortful, and hard to persist with. I will also discuss how useful story completion is for understanding the everyday worlds people navigate and negotiate around ‘eating healthily’, and thus for thinking about health-oriented food interventions.

EXPLORING NARRATIVES OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND DISABILITY USING STORY COMPLETION

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Background

Disabled people face a multitude of social barriers to leading a physically active lifestyle. These barriers include a lack of knowledge and understanding from healthcare professionals and exercise practitioners, and negative attitudes from others in sport and exercise settings. Thus, there is a need to explore constructions of physical activity and disability and the cultural narratives that operate within sport, exercise and health contexts.

Aims

1. To explore sport and exercise science students’ constructions of physical activity and disability using story completion and
2. to examine the methodological opportunities and challenges of using story completion to identify cultural narratives.

**Methods** Story completion is a radically different approach to collecting qualitative data to explore social constructions concerning a certain topic and the socio-cultural discourses and dominant meanings available to participants. Story completion research involves participants being provided with the opening sentences of a hypothetical scenario – or story stem – and asked to write what happens next. Four story stems were designed and refined based upon a pilot study and feedback from experts in qualitative methods and disability. Ninety UK-based undergraduate sport and exercise science students wrote a story in response to one of the stems, randomly allocated. The stories were subject to a thematic and structural narrative analysis.

**Results** Analysis is underway. The supercivic narrative was the most dominant narrative type drawn upon, with interwoven elements of tragedy and romance from a fairy-tale narrative. The less prescriptive story stems elicited the more diverse and creative stories in terms of length and detail.

**Conclusions** The need for alternative stories of physical activity and disability that challenge the underlying ableist assumptions of the dominant supercivic narrative will be discussed. Reflections of story completion will be provided with recommendations for future use.

**References**

1. Clarke V, Hayfield N, Moller N, et al. (2017) Once upon a time...: Qualitative story completion methods. In: Braun, V., Clarke, V. and Gray, D., eds. (2017) Collecting Qualitative Data: A Practical Guide to Textual, Media and Virtual Techniques. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. ISBN 9781107054974. Available from: http://reprints.uee.ac.uk/29937.

2. WHO Regional Office for Europe (2018) http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/noncommunicable-diseases/mental-health/data-and-resources (accessed September 2018).

**Poster presentations**

**PI NOTIONS OF SAFETY AND RISK IN PALLIATIVE CARE: THE ROLE OF QUALITATIVE HEALTH RESEARCH**

1. Irmgard Tischner, 2Naomi Moller, 2Andreas Vossler, 1H Deggendorf, Deggendorf, Germany; 2The Open University, Milton Keynes, UK. 10.1136/bmjopen-2019-QHRN.36

**Background** Increasing numbers of people struggle with mental health issues in western industrial nations, including the UK and Germany, with about a quarter of the population experiencing mental health problems in the space of a year (WHO/Europe, 2018). In neoliberal cultures, individuals are often positioned as responsible for their psychological (and physical) health. This is evidenced, in part, by the proliferation of resilience, stress management, and similar self-help courses. Such courses and resources focus on teaching individuals how to cope with mental health issues, disregarding potential social, cultural and environmental causes for psychological distress.

**Aims/Objectives** Considering this, we explored how this individualising of mental health plays out in the context of the workplace, in particular in the discourses drawn on in narratives about colleagues who experience psychological illness or distress.

**Methods** We collected data using the method of story completion tasks (Clarke *et al.*, 2017), asking participants to complete the following story stem, with half of participants receiving the stem with a female and half with a male protagonist: ‘Michael/a returns to work after 3 weeks off. In the meantime word had got around that s/he hadn’t been on annual leave, but signed off sick with mental health issues. Please continue Michael/a’s story.’ Participants were individuals working in either Germany or the UK, who completed the task via an online survey platform.

**Results and conclusion** The study is still in the early stages. We will report thematic/discursive analysis around constructions of mental health issues in general, the social perceptions about individuals with mental health issues, as well as their positioning in the context of the workplace reflected in the narratives told. We also reflect on the value of story completion for exploring understandings around workplace mental health.

**References**

1. Clarke V, Hayfield N, Moller N, et al. (2017) Once upon a time...: Qualitative story completion methods. In: Braun, V., Clarke, V. and Gray, D., eds. (2017) Collecting Qualitative Data: A Practical Guide to Textual, Media and Virtual Techniques. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. ISBN 9781107054974. Available from: http://reprints.uee.ac.uk/29937.

2. WHO Regional Office for Europe (2018) http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/noncommunicable-diseases/mental-health/data-and-resources (accessed September 2018).