What is narrative?

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The succession of narratives

• Across media (Brockmeier)
• Across time, space, causality
• With associated social, cultural and historical meanings
• The possibility of ‘delayed’, ‘pensive’ narratives (Mulvey)
Narrative within still images: Cindy Sherman (Krauss)
Narratives of objects: An Akan Drum (MacGregor, Appiah)
Narratives, particularity and exception

- Narrative particularity, theoretical generality

- Narrative research with large data sets: transferability (Lincoln and Guba), pragmatics, heuristics

- Narrative research with life stories, biographies, cases: the importance of variability (Mishler)
Forms of exception

• Illustrative particularity:

The argumentatively useful exception

Remembering the story, reducing the argument
Forms of exception

- Radical particularity:
  unassimilable exceptions
  Limited reach, helpful variability

- Negotiations between narrative convention and exception:
  The importance of incoherence
Exceptions and HIV

☐ Is the pandemic exceptional in terms of scale, effects, stigmatisation? Or:

☐ Is HIV one of many conditions of poor health resources, gender inequity and violence, underdevelopment, postcolonialism?
HIV in the UK: experiences and expectations of support

- 46 interviews (15 repeated) with people living with HIV, 50% gay men, 25% heterosexual women, 25% heterosexual men, 30% of African/African Caribbean origin

- Semi-structured interviews, usually around 1.5 hours, on medical, social, voluntary sector, family, friendship, media and faith support

- Transcripts content-analysed and narratively analysed.
Living on

- Naturalisation narratives: medicalisation, normalisation, marketisation

- Narratives of ‘being left behind’, marginalisation, and exclusion, resistance.

- HIV’s particularity: historical, medical, stigma-related, uncertainty-related
The exceptionality of the ‘cool’ ending

Robert: Yes, I mean, it’s quite funny, because he's someone that I'd seen around for years, who I fancied, and then we got into contact online and then, there's an application on the iPhone, called Grindr, and I messaged him on Grindr, and we were chatting on that and then I thought, ‘right, I'll disclose’, so I disclosed that I was positive, and he said, oh, ‘so am I’, and I went, ‘oh cool’ and he said, ‘those aren't the words I'd use, but I know what you mean.’
• **Dorothy:** She (daughter) still in {country 1} yes um, I tried to bring her but it didn’t work out and then I thought, I thought she was in primary school there going to secondary school so I had not looked for a place for her because I thought it was going to be possible but it didn’t, I had to go back to my sister again and beg her to take her so she took her, and then at one time she beat her up, with um you know the rawhide, you know they put a stick at the other end, she beat her, my daughter never told me, she beat her and she put salt and put chillies, my daughter never told me, I didn’t know about it until she went to visit at her father’s sister, that’s when they saw the scars and asked her and then she told them that my sister had beaten her and she had stolen some money from her, she didn’t want me to send her money but I said when I was going to school my parents used to give me a 50 cents at least you know...I feel I haven’t been there for my children you know and my son died in his sleep and I understand he was fasting, I don’t know what for and er, I dunno they told me at one time he wanted to commit suicide, and I regret having I told him to look after his sister you know, and I regret having told him that, because I don’t know why he wanted to commit suicide you know, seeing the people in Africa who are HIV.