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Multiple text analysis in narrative research: visual, written, and spoken stories of experience

PATRICE A. KEATS
Simon Fraser University, Canada

ABSTRACT Using multiple means of expressing stories about observations, ideas, emotions, and activities can expand a researcher's opportunity to better understand the complex narrative participants construct about how they experience life events. This article includes a description of three types of narrative texts (written, spoken, and visual) and an analysis process that includes a variety of readings for each type of text as well as a relational reading for a combination of texts. A narrative research study is used to illustrate the model. Discussion includes the challenges and benefits of using multiple texts in narrative research and suggests other forms of research design where multiple texts may be appropriate.

KEYWORDS: *counselling psychology, multiple texts, narrative research, visual methods, qualitative analysis, witnessing*

Studying narrative texts aids the researcher in understanding how participants experience, live, and tell about their world. People construct and understand the world through stories (Bruner, 1990; Polkinghorne, 1988), and as Richardson (1997) asserts, narratives are able to act both as a 'means of knowing and a method of telling' (p. 58). In this article, narrative texts can be any type of text where a person relates a story in a particular medium, such as in words, imagery, sound, movement, or any combination of these (Bal, 1997; Bruner, 1990; Polkinghorne, 1988). When stories are told in these ways they attempt to preserve a particular perspective of life or an event in action. With a variety of options available for constructing stories, the narrator's identity, perspectives, and choices form each text and deepen the meaning that they are attempting to convey. For example, events can be ordered in specific ways in a written text, illustrations or photographs can emphasize unwritten details, and discussion can focus attention on key issues of personal importance.

In education, it is common for teachers to use multiple texts to instruct students about a specific topic. The more perspectives students are exposed to, the more likely it will be for them to have a greater accuracy in, and complexity of,

their conceptual understanding of the content (e.g., Boyd and Ikpeze, 2007; Nokes et al., 2007). In a similar way, narrative research using a variety of narrative texts can serve both participants and researchers in gaining a richer and more complex understanding of participants' experiences and generating new perspectives and knowledge. Offering participants multiple means of expressing stories around their observations, ideas, emotions, and activities can also expand a researcher's opportunity to better understand the complex narrative participants construct about how they are living through experiences.

In general, narrative methods focus primarily on single text data, such as transcribed interviews, to understand participants' experiences. Although this approach can be very useful for studies interested in retrospective experience constructed through in-depth interviews, it limits the recording and understanding of complex experiences in real time. Including a variety of participant-constructed narratives in a research project reflects the complexity of life experiences. When a researcher is seeking to understand this complexity, multiple texts are an important option for recording and interpreting meaning for a single participant, as well as within a group of participants. In this article, I present an example from a study using a multiple text method, describe how multiple texts work in narrative research, present options for types of texts used, outline the analysis of multiple texts, and how multiple texts can be presented or represented in reports. Finally, I discuss challenges, benefits, and future possibilities.

Research background

Recent studies on the effects of repeated viewing of trauma events on television find significant psychological and emotional repercussions (i.e., development of trauma symptoms such as increased arousal, recurrent dreams, and psychological distress) (see Davidson et al., 2005; Hamblen, 2001; Pfefferbaum et al., 1999; Propper et al., 2007). If this type of repercussion is evident for exposure to a single medium, what would the experience be if people observed video, spoke with survivors or members of surviving families, engaged in formal and informal conversation with others about what they were seeing, participated in memorials, and looked at artifacts in forms such as photographic images, materials, or buildings? Indeed, the participant would be more intellectually and emotionally involved in the process. Further, the participants in these multiple information or interaction sources are more than audience members to a single medium; the observer becomes a *vicarious witness* (see Keats, 2005) to the trauma event they are seeking to understand.

The concept of vicarious witness was developed from an extensive review of literature where authors' used the terms 'witness' or 'witnessing' in their descriptions. Briefly, the word 'witness' varies greatly in the literature. In law, witnesses are described as having firsthand experience of an event where they *observe* and *report* what they see (Dooling, 1986). In religion, witnesses are seen as *experiencers* of the spirit and *revealers* of faith and salvation (Harding, 1987). In theatre arts,

the 'theatre of witness' (Malpede, 1996: 231) is a place where the audience becomes witness to a re-enacted trauma and is able to experience how a player can be broken, 're-membered,' and emerge again stronger than before. In medicine, professionals *bear witness* when they acknowledge another's experience, respect the teller's truth, and attest to the validity of its reality; *not bearing witness* is a choice not to be present, respectful, or offering testimony for another (Cody 2001a, 2001b). In psychology, witnessing is described in a number of ways. Pearlman and Saakvitne (1995) write about the therapists' *active witnessing* in community advocacy – taking steps against violence within the community (e.g., lobbying for changes in legislation), and *helpless witnessing* as experiencing powerlessness in attempts to heal the sorrows and violation of clients. Weingarten (2000) developed a four-quadrant typology of witnessing for therapist and clients. She attests that witnesses can be *aware* of a trauma situation and *empowered* to act (e.g., therapist as advocate), *aware* and *disempowered* (e.g., client as child hearing abuse and not able to act), *unaware* and *empowered* (e.g., client's abuse hidden from possible helpers) or both *unaware* and *disempowered* (e.g., re-experiencing symptoms with a lack of causal knowledge). These perspectives dictate how one processes and acts in relation to a trauma event. Finally, Westwood (Westwood et al., 2003; Westwood and Wilensky, 2005) includes *witnesses* in his group-based experiential intervention called Therapeutic Enactment. Here, clients re-enact their trauma story within a circle of witnessing participants. Either during or after the completion of the enactment, the survivor hears directly from the witnessing group members about their responses to the trauma event enacted.

On the basis of these varied descriptions a witness is defined as one who has both first or second-hand knowledge of an event, observes, reports, experiences, enacts, bears witness, is active or passive, aware or unaware, and empowered or disempowered. In the study described in this article I use the term *vicarious witness* to take into account the impact of participants' experiences as a result of feeling 'as if' they were taking part in the experience or feelings of another through the multiple means they used to gather information (reading, viewing evidence, images, or film, and participating in conversations, memorials, or rituals), make meaning of what they saw and heard, and take action within their communities after their experiences.

A representation of multiple texts

Interested in exploring people's experience of vicarious witnessing in more depth, I designed a qualitative study that utilized multiple texts to explore the complex processes of how participants made sense of trauma events and the impact of exposure. The research took place in Poland and Germany with a group of five participants who visited numerous Holocaust memorials including four concentration and extermination camps (Sachsenhausen, Treblinka, Auschwitz, and Auschwitz-Birkenau).[1] Participants used spoken, written, and visual texts to develop rich descriptions of their experiences.

Figure 1   *Tombstone wall*

In the example below, a participant has used different types of texts, to help recount her experience of being in a Jewish cemetery that was a memorial to the destruction that took place at that site more than 60 years earlier. She struggled to understand the events behind the evidence she witnessed by creating a number of texts that attempted to convey the impact of seeing the artifacts in the cemetery. Here is an example of the texts she prepared.

TOMBSTONE WALL

In the Jewish Quarters in Kazimierz, the participant saw a wall constructed from pieces of tombstones that were desecrated by Nazis in the Jewish cemetery. She took a photograph of it (Figure 1) because she was particularly disturbed by it and what it represented. She stated that she wanted to remember it and capture the complexity of its construction.

After leaving the site, she wrote about the experience in her travel journal:

> Little pieces of tombstones – pieces, left after the destruction and desecration. People not able to put the memories of loved ones together in a way that makes sense – Nazis destroyed the way they were; a strong image and brutal reminder of Holocaust chaos.

During the post-interview, she and the researcher looked at this photograph as one image that stood out for her during the visit. She described her understanding of the traumatic events that led to the destruction of the cemetery, as well as the impact on her of the reconstructed wall made of the tombstone pieces. As she spoke, she connected it to her journal entry to assist her in building the story of the experience. The theme of order and repair surfaced from her

story. She described the chaos and horror that must have permeated the experience of the Jewish people as the Nazis systematically destroyed, separated, and moved the people from place to place – order and normalcy shattered. For this participant, the tombstone wall became a metaphor of renewed order and protection. She discussed this idea using three short narratives. First, she told about the strength of the Jewish people who survived the destruction by pulling together what was important in ways that were unlike any of their familiar pre-war structures of order. Second, she told about how the wall and its ordered reconstruction represented her own struggle to make sense of the Holocaust as she gathered fragments of information gained through witnessing into an ordered narrative. Last, after a destructive event in her own life, the task of 'pulling the pieces together' gave her renewed strength, structure, and protection as she recovered from her own trauma experience.

Types of texts

There are three main types of texts that can be used in a multiple text method – spoken, written, and visual. As illustrated in the example above, the participant used a variety of texts to record her experiences in her own unique way. She and other participants made the texts work for them by focusing their attention on creating two or more types of texts. For example, the participant above focused on journal entries that included drawings and poetry to record her experiences, as well as photography and conversation. Other participants focused on creating photographs and participating in discussions rather than writing in a travel journal. During the European visit, individual narratives were also stimulated by discussions and conversations with each other about the impact of their witnessing and new understandings and meanings developed as a result. After returning home, focused conversation during a post-interview added to both the participants' and the researcher's ability to make sense of experiences when using the multiple texts. All of these activities point to a complex process of living and working in a multi-text world and the need for a variety of means to record experiences. Below I describe the three main types of texts and their possible influence on one another using the study above as an example.

SPOKEN TEXTS

Spoken texts may include formal recorded interviews, informal conversations, and discussions with the researcher, group members, and others during the research project. Recording these different types of spoken texts for later analysis can be a complex process. Formal interviews may appear to be more easily recorded and transcribed for further analysis; however, transcription is already an interpretation of talk (see Mishler, 1995 for further discussion). More informal types of spoken texts such as group discussions or individual conversations need to be recorded anecdotally as field notes with a focus on other important aspects of the conversations. In this case, there are fewer direct

quotes and more notations about ideas or impressions that arise, interactions between people, or anecdotal notes providing evidence about developing beliefs or attitudes. For example, participants may seek to normalize their responses to what they saw, corroborate on points of view, or direct one another to significant artifacts or particular people for conversations.

Spoken texts often influence written texts. Leander and Prior (2004) note that there is a reciprocal relationship between speaking and writing. Oftentimes writing is initiated and planned in talk, and people also talk about the texts they read. In this way, the narrative texts that participants create can represent what they have talked about – talk can be interpreted in written text. If participants interact together, talk can influence the texts that they construct in the research process.

It is also important to take into consideration the context in which spoken texts takes place. The context can direct and focus the types of issues, ideas, or questions that arise. Informal conversations or discussion at the site of the research may be more spontaneous, restricted, superficial, or focused. People may choose to participate more or less in these conversations and may feel more comfortable with the type of control they have over their disclosures. In more formal interview contexts (e.g., research office) participants may feel more obligated to participate, be led in particular directions in speaking about experiences, or be more cautious in disclosures. Reponses to the various types of listeners (e.g., researcher, friend, peers) may also enhance or limit the flow of talk.

WRITTEN TEXTS

Written texts may include travel journals, poetry, letters, emails, books, articles, and other such texts. The texts that become important in the research process may be created by the participants, the researcher or other authors. Below, I describe how some of these texts might work within the multiple text method.

Even before the research began, participants were already immersing themselves in a variety of narrative texts constructed by others to prepare for the experience of visiting the memorials. Through reading or viewing different types of texts (e.g., books, films), they were forming their ideas, images, and narratives of what the experience would be like once they were at the sites (Bazerman, 2004b). As interview data showed, the texts helped them to know what they wanted to see and assisted them in constructing their future experiences. At the memorials, participants were exposed to myriad texts and artifacts that added to and expanded their preconceptions.

One specific text that participants wrote themselves, during the study above, was a record of their experiences at the memorials and concentration camps. The records were in the form of travel journals, letters to family, and emails. In order to assist them in writing about their experiences, I offered questions or focus points as guidelines for writing (e.g., thoughts, insights, ideas; emotional experiences such as apprehension, fear, sorrow, pleasure; physical responses such as restlessness, loss of appetite, increased fatigue; aspects of the actual

event site including meetings with people, and other experiential aspects including dreams and pertinent stories); in general, participants went well beyond these guidelines. Further, to encourage this type of recording I also offered participants a small unlined workbook to use as a journal (guidelines were glued onto the front cover). The workbook format may have influenced how participants were invited into the writing process; they may have been encouraged or discouraged by this format because it had a schoolish, note taking, coldness about it. In the study above, two of the five participants used the workbook, two used their own journals, and another did not write in the journal at all. In some ways the travel journal may have been considered too intrusive, as participants were always writing to me as the audience. In this regard, one person made a summary of the main points and sent them to me by email and another person wrote a long letter to family members about her experiences and thoughts about the camps and included me in her distribution. The one participant who did not use the travel journal noted that the guidelines for recording her experiences extended her way of viewing the events of the camp visits even though she did not write as an activity of recording.

VISUAL TEXTS

Visual texts can include myriad different objects that are either made or collected or both by participants, or created by others. Some examples are drawings, art pieces, collected artifacts, visual objects, photographs (e.g., taken by participants, viewed in museums, on postcards), videotapes, visual media reports, and other image-based texts. These types of texts are very helpful and useful when participants have difficulty recording emotions, impressions, or aspects that were difficult to put into words. Without a nonverbal means of expression, participants may be limited in how they articulate their experiences. This aspect made photography, drawing, and other visual expression an important type of text to include in this narrative method.

In the study above, I gave participants a disposable camera with instructions to shoot photographs of anything that was important for them to record visually. I processed the photographs taken by each participant, kept a copy for myself and gave copies to each participant. In addition, all participants also took photographs with their own cameras. The photographs were an important means of recording experiences, as well as a means of persuading the viewer of particular aspects of the experience and a focus on the immediacy or reality depicted in the photographs. Of interest is one participant who took only black-and-white photographs. This type of photograph may have been reminiscent of 'traditional black-and-white documentary photography' (Wysocki, 2004: 132) and a representation of past times.

Finally, participants may choose to express themselves through drawings or collecting meaningful artifacts (e.g., ticket stubs, postcards), possibly including them or referring to them in their written or spoken texts. For example, accompanied by a written description, drawings were used as illustrations of objects

or as a means of trying to capture an impression or feeling of what participants experienced. These types of drawings presented a visual means of making meaning of what participants had difficulty describing. These visual texts further illustrated the participant's account and enhanced the developing story of experience.

INTERTEXTUAL RELATIONS

Each text tells its own story, yet all texts share a relationship in documenting the experiences of a single person. In this regard, the texts hold many stories that integrate and influence each other. By analyzing all texts that a participant presents, the researcher may deepen the understanding of what a participant experienced during the research process. During research interviews, to help the researcher understand, participants may connect one text to another by presenting stories about particular incidents or people through the perspectives of their photographic images and journal entries.

Analysis processes

Analysis of multiple texts in narrative research not only assists the researcher in learning and understanding the impact of participants' experiences but also invites participants to learn about themselves. Accessing a variety of texts to help describe the impact of an event or context opens deep and rich narrations. In light of this beneficial opportunity, the methodological challenge is to create a logical analysis process in light of the complexity and diversity of texts that participants may create during a field experience. In this section, I briefly describe theories of narrative analysis for each type of text and then propose a model for multiple texts.

THEORIES OF ANALYSIS

Theories and methods geared towards understanding the meaning of written, visual, and spoken narratives are an important starting place. For written or spoken narratives, ideas about how to analyze their meanings range from various models that privilege temporal ordering and narrative structure, to those that privilege function and context (see Bal, 1997; Lieblich et al., 1998; Mishler, 1986, 1995; Riessman, 1993). For example, Lieblich et al. (1998) describe four types of interpretive models, each of which a researcher would use to understand a particular aspect of meaning. Their types include: (a) *holistic-content* where story content is considered holistically as the researcher explores both explicit and implicit meaning; (b) *holistic-form* where content is considered in terms of formal aspects of story structure such as plot development over time; (c) *categorical-content* where specific segments of story content are counted and categorized into researcher-defined categories; and (d) *categorical-form* where characteristics of style or language use are counted and categorized into defined categories (e.g., frequency of passive utterances).

Similarly, analyzing the meaning of visual texts also takes different forms and diverse perspectives (see Banks, 2001; Rose, 2001; Sturken and Cartwright, 2001). Rose (2001) outlines three sites where the meaning of an image is made: in the production of an image, in the image itself, and the context in which various audiences see images. At each of the three sites there exist three specific modalities: (a) *technological* – a form of apparatus that is designed either to be looked at, or to enhance natural vision (e.g., television, internet), where the technology determines the images form, meaning and effect; (b) *compositional* – an aspect of the image itself such as colour or content; and (c) *social* – the variety of 'economic, social and political relations, institutions and practice that surround an image and through which it is seen and used' (p. 17).

All of these ideas emphasize a multidimensional view of the text and underscores that texts do not stand alone. In this regard, it is important to begin the interpretation of multiple texts with a multidimensional process of analysis. The model should also support a process that best answers the research question as it is reflected in the meaning of the texts created by participants.

A NARRATIVE ANALYSIS MODEL USING MULTIPLE TEXTS
Text records
The model begins with identifying and recording the number and types of texts offered by each participant. This record will allow the researcher to see what type of texts participants used and where their priorities were in terms of constructing the story of their experiences. If participants focused on constructing visual rather then written stories, efforts to understand the visual texts would be most important as the analysis proceeds.

General reading of all texts
As suggested by Lieblich et al. (1998) when reading for holistic content, an initial *general reading* of all texts for each participant would be helpful in allowing the meaning in the texts to arise. In this type of reading, one can record initial and more global impressions of such aspects as unusual features, metaphorical representations, reflexive comments, focused attention, or other aspects of a researcher's interest. In the interview text, it would be important to note any instances when the other texts (such as the journals, photographs, or artifacts) are either highlighted or referenced. Looking at the references that participants make to their other texts (e.g., images, quotes, paraphrases, descriptions), may enhance or deepen the meaning of the participant's story and allow the researcher to focus on the issues or anecdotes that have drawn the participant's attention from multiple perspectives. Specific patterns or themes may arise from this initial reading. Once the general reading is completed, the researcher can focus on two other types of readings that explore the different texts more precisely, a *specific reading* for participant's spoken and written texts, and a *visual reading* for the visual texts.

Specific readings of written and spoken texts

For each of the written and spoken texts, the researcher can explore the parts of each story that contributed to shaping the meaning of the whole. Drawing on the work of Bal (1997) and Arvay (1998), the specific reading can focus on distinct aspects of the narratives that are relevant to the research question. In the study above, I focused on six aspects of the story in this type of reading – *self of the narrator* (e.g., cultural perspectives, unique symbols or references used, identity representations, reflexivity), *perspective* (e.g., narrative viewpoint of experience, unusual perspectives such as secret or puzzles), *issues of attention* (e.g., single or diverse experiences recounted, subjects described), *sequence* (e.g., how events are told, flashbacks, events omitted), *time* (e.g., stretches of time in which experiences are told, summaries of periods of time), and *context* (e.g., place or location). For example, I noted how participants sequenced different events and actions in their stories. The sequence often showed the psychological effects of looking at the evidence of trauma in the camps or at memorials, such as writing about items or issues that triggered personal memories of trauma or oppression and then telling a personal story from their past in the context of witnessing the artifacts in the present.

Visual readings of photographs, artifacts, and visual representations

When participants offer visual texts as a means of expressing their experiences there are a number of ways that they can be analyzed. For example, photographs and artifacts can be analyzed using two different methods: (a) reading for the content of visual texts; and (b) photograph, artifact, or illustration elicitation during interviews. Bal states that it is possible to consider the content and composition of visual images in a similar way that one would look at a written text (e.g., perspective, self of the narrator). In this regard, she suggests ways in which images are a form of interpretation presented by narrators, which can be *read* for aspects of their story using visual, rather than linguistic, signifiers. For example, some visual signifiers for a photograph may include the framing of the image into the photographic space, the movement captured, the organization of the image, and the viewpoint taken by the photographer (e.g., above, below, far left, close-up). For those participants who offer a number of visual texts, (including artistic representations, photographs, or a collection of artifacts) a general record of those pieces should form a part of the participant's file. The record may include copies of participants' photographs and items such as postcards or ticket stubs, and photographs of artifacts. This record will allow the researcher to spend time with the interpretation of the visual texts that participants have used to signify their experiences.

Moving from analyzing the photograph separately from the producer of the photograph, some visual methodologists, such as Banks (2001), suggest that, in conversation with participants, photographic images themselves (whether taken by the participant or someone else) may prompt memories, comments, and discussions about the 'internal narrative' (p. 88) of a photograph's content.

This idea is also relevant for artifacts and artistic representations. I view artifacts as objects or significant fragments of information that participants use to tell stories. Determining the authenticity or regulating the types of the objects participants may have collected should not be a key concern, but rather exploring their meaning and value to participants is more central. Discussions about the meaning can open new ways of exploring the relationship between visual objects and the developing narrative. In the study above, participants and I reviewed and discussed the photographs, artifacts, and artistic representations that they created during their visit to the memorials and concentration camps. Occasionally, participants would present very surprising and unusual artifacts that held deep meaning and significance. Specific questions about the photographs and artifacts were open-ended, such as: What is it about [this photograph] that makes it significant? How does [this artifact] tell about your experience? What makes [this object] important for you now?

Relational readings

A reading for relationships between texts can focus specifically on connections, parallels, and differences between the multiple texts. Bazerman (2004a) suggests that exploring intertextual relations gives the researcher the opportunity to understand how the texts are related and influence each other. Patterns or themes can arise by noting such things as phrases, words, or perspectives that a participant uses frequently. In different types of texts participants may rephrase or reconstruct an idea to justify their perspective, interpret or imagine an event and what it means, or make inferences about the meaning of other's behaviors or evidence witnessed. This type of reading may also expose reflected attitudes, or new meanings expressed by participants.

Two types of relational readings can be explored, *intratextual readings* explore relationships between the texts of the single participant and *intertextual readings* explore relationships between specific types of texts across a group of participants. For example, in an intratextual relational reading of one participant's texts in the study above, the theme that arose in all three texts (journal, photographs, and interviews) was food and starvation. She spoke and wrote about her experience of food and eating while visiting memorials and concentration camps including types of food eaten, quantities available, and meals with others. Her notes also addressed her thoughts, imaginings, and records of photographs of starved camp prisoners. In particular, she noted that food was a central aspect of her experience and found herself overeating and indulging in foods that she would normally not eat. In contrast to this sense of indulgence, she was particularly struck by a photograph taken of her by another participant where she appeared very thin and drawn. She identified her own bodily structure as being similar to the skeletal forms of the camp prisoners she viewed and recorded from photographs in concentration camp archives. This identification was twofold in that she felt strongly connected to the people in the Jewish culture and recognized the deep suffering around the prisoners' starvation.
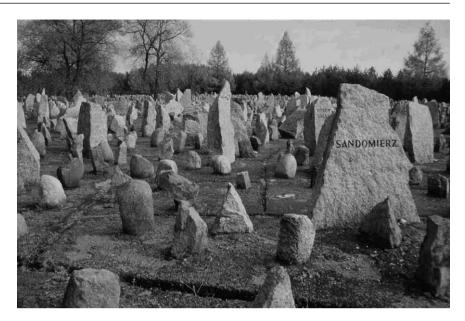
In a narrative study there are usually numerous themes that are shared by a group of participants. In this example of an intertextual relational reading all participants wrote, spoke, or used photographs to describe the experience of *atrocity* at one particular memorial (Treblinka Extermination Camp). Examples of how different participants reported the experience are as follows: in writing – 'Nazis created a train station at the Treblinka death camp that looked like an actual train station because they did not want to create panic among those to be exterminated...the clock was at a perpetual 6:00...it was deception, an atrocity'; in conversation – 'walking out to the cement sections to walk among the stones I felt immediately the sorrow from my boots into my whole body, all in one day, all in one day, 17,000 [murdered] per day, 2,000 every two hours, this way to death...it was atrocious'; and visually (see Figure 2).

Representing and presenting data from a multiple text analysis

There are many possibilities for reporting and representing findings from a narrative study using multiple texts. Primarily, it is important to present participants' narratives and an interpretation of its meaning. A written narrative can be the main text accompanied by visual texts, or the visual text can be accompanied by a briefer written text. Researchers can also be more innovative in this current moment of technological possibilities. For example, in the

study above I developed a public performance from the findings using participants' spoken, written and visual texts in the multimedia production that was presented in three different public venues. This was accomplished by using a large screen that projected visual images, voice recordings of relevant quotes, and participants reading a script that represented the journey to Europe and the impact of a vicarious witnessing in the concentration camps and memorials. Creative researchers are likely to construct even more innovative ways to represent the stories of participants' experiences for any chosen focus of study.

Discussion

As illustrated above, offering participants multiple means of expressing the stories of their observations, ideas, emotions, and activities expands both the participants' and researcher's opportunity to understand the complex narratives of living through specific life experiences. The multiple texts that participants use are unique and carry their own value in terms of the information they offer and the meaning they create for participants. Using multiple texts constructed through writing, speaking, and visual means opens the possibility for creating new realities of meaning and knowledge. The practice of interpreting different types of texts as described above increases the capacity of researchers to understand the complexity of intertextual connections in the storying process. Indeed, as one participant in the study above noted, she would not have been able to experience the memorials and camps in the same way if she had not been invited to record her experiences using multiple texts. She described a process of deconstructing what she saw and then reconstructing it from her own unique perspective by connecting the pieces through these different ways of understanding.

Oftentimes, participants may have a preference for one form of narrative expression over another. Therefore, it is a benefit to offer participants an opportunity to use all types of texts in the context of a study where a research question can be answered using multiple texts. Multiple perspectives enable in-depth analysis, which otherwise would not have been available. This is reiterated by a participant in the study above who stated, 'I am more of a visual rather than a verbal person; it is difficult for me, inwardly, to turn the feelings I have about my experience into words…an important means of delivering the message…is through the art of photography.' Having the opportunity to construct a variety of texts allowed this participant to view her experience from a perspective that worked for her. Photography became a medium for communication where words fell short.

The use of multiple texts and the analysis described above expands available methods used in narrative inquiry. Multiple texts are effective for studies, such as the one above, that require participants to record experiences in real time or over a period of time. Further, using multiple texts would also enrich ethnographic based research where written, spoken, and visual records of the context and cultural aspects are of importance in answering the research question. In this case, adding visual texts would be especially useful as a means

of understanding and illustrating complex contextual issues. In general, the use of multiple texts in qualitative research offers new possibilities for understanding human experience.

NOTES

1.   This study was approved by the University of British Columbia Research Ethics Board.

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PATRICE A. KEATS, PhD is an assistant professor in the Counselling Psychology Program at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, Canada. *Address*: Simon Fraser University-Surrey; Faculty of Education; Rm 15–760, 13450 102 Ave, Surrey BC V3T 5X3, Canada. [email: pkeats@sfu.ca]