

NOVELLA



NARRATIVES OF VARIED EVERYDAY
LIVES AND LINKED APPROACHES

NOVELLA Working Paper: Narrative Research in Action

Combining thematic and narrative analysis of qualitative interviews to understand children's spatialities in Andhra Pradesh, India

January 2014

Natasha Shukla, Thomas Coram Research Unit, Institute of Education,
University of London

Emma Wilson, Young Lives, Oxford Department of International
Development, University of Oxford

Janet Boddy, Centre for Innovation and Research in Childhood and Youth,
University of Sussex



Leading education
and social research
Institute of Education
University of London

Combining thematic and narrative analysis of qualitative interviews to understand children's spatialities in Andhra Pradesh, India

Abstract

One of the foremost questions for any researcher setting out on a qualitative study is which form of analysis to use. There are a diverse range of qualitative analytical methods, each offering different forms of insight. In this paper, we discuss our experience of combining two distinct but complementary analytic methods – thematic and narrative analysis. We provide a worked example that combines the two approaches to analyse secondary data from the Young Lives study (see www.younglives.org.uk), in a project carried out as part of the ESRC National Centre for Research Methods Node, NOVELLA (Narratives of Varied Everyday Lives and Linked Approaches, see www.novella.ac.uk). We reflect on the challenges and benefits that result from our combined approach, aiming to illuminate the ways in which the integration of narrative and thematic analysis can support and enrich understanding of a complex dataset.

Introduction

One of the foremost questions for any researcher setting out on a qualitative study is which form of analysis to use. There are a diverse range of qualitative analytical methods, each offering different forms of insight (Marks and Yardley, 2004). Any one analytical approach offers a particular 'lens' on the data and is subject to particular limitations. There is growing interest in the potential value of mixing methods, for data generation, analysis and offering multiple lenses that enable a more holistic understanding of the phenomena under investigation (Brannen, 2005; Floresch et al., 2010).

In this paper, we discuss our experience of combining two distinct but complementary analytic methods: thematic and narrative approaches. Thematic analysis has been described as a 'foundational method', constituting a 'core skill' for qualitative researchers. It can be flexibly applied to enable both surface (descriptive) and in-depth (interpretative) analysis as required (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p78). Narrative analysis is an interpretive method emerging in the 1970s from a relatively new 'linguistic turn' in the social sciences (Tamboukou et al., 2013). Both can take many forms, and are perhaps best thought of as approaches which encompass a range of specific and specialist analytic methods. The flexibility and diversity of thematic approaches, as well as their long history in social science, means that they are very widely used. Thematic analysis can – and has been – used in conjunction with other approaches such as narrative analysis (Phoenix, 2007; Riessman, 2008), but very often this work is not systematically documented (for an exception see Floresch et al., 2010). Here, we provide a worked example that combines thematic and narrative approaches to analyse secondary data, in order to reflect on how their integration may support and enrich analysis. In doing so, we also aim to extend methodological understanding by reflecting on the benefits and challenges of combining them in the re-analysis of existing interview data.

Thematic and narrative approaches: Commonalities and differences

Research does not occur in a vacuum, but in contexts where researchers are frequently aware of how methodology is discussed. This means that methods of social research change over time, and researchers sometimes adapt elements of other methods for their own purposes. As a consequence, there are frequently commonalities as well as differences

between approaches, which sometimes make it easier to mix them. Both thematic and narrative approaches lend themselves to constructionist paradigms that view experiences, meanings and social structures as mutually constitutive (although they can be used with other epistemological frames, particularly realist/experiential ones). They are also particularly (although not exclusively) associated with the analysis of textual material. In this paper, we focus exclusively on analysis of transcription of qualitative interviews.

Thematic and narrative approaches both take as their analytic object language and meaning, and so it is not surprising that they share many features. Both, for example, attend to the content of talk and texts, to *what* is said, whilst the analyst keeps in mind *how* the data are generated, attending to context to aid interpretation. This analysis of patterns, themes and narratives may be case-based – within an individual transcript or set of interviews – or it may cross cases within a data set. Thematic approaches are particularly useful for looking across cases, highlighting commonalities and differences across a dataset (Braun and Clarke, 2006), while narrative analysis is extremely helpful in the analysis of particularity and setting it in more general contexts (e.g. Squire 2008). Both thematic and narrative analytic approaches have proliferated so that they are diverse. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that thematic analysis is flexible because it is independent of any particular theory or epistemology and there are a range of possible thematic analyses. It is basically a ‘method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail. However, it also often goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic’ (ibid, p79). Narrative analysis is similarly diverse.

Squire (2008, p4) cautions that ‘Since the definition of ‘narrative’ itself is in dispute, there are no self-evident categories on which to focus’. There are different approaches regarding what constitutes narrative – including life stories, stories of events, or personal narratives most broadly conceived as talk over the course of an interview (Riessman, 2002a). But, as Squire (2008, p5) explains, narrative approaches aim ‘to investigate, not just how stories are structured and the ways in which they work, but also who produces them and by what means, the mechanisms by which they are consumed, and how narratives are silenced, contested or accepted.’ They are concerned with narration as an active process of ‘meaning-making, ordering and structuring of experience’ (Georgakopoulou, 2006, p236), and this has

implications for what we consider to be a 'narrative'. Sequences, and progression of symbols or temporal frame are considered revealing of the communicative intent of the narrator (Squire, 2013). Narrative analysis is thus *always* analytically interpretive, while this is not inevitably the case for thematic analysis, which may be interpretive, but can also be applied for the purposes of organising data and generating rich description (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

A key feature of narration is its performative and communicative nature: stories are told in interaction (Riessman 2003). Phoenix (2008) writes that analysis of the 'small story' enables attention to the performative work done by narratives in interview interactions. The stories told within an interview can also provide insights into 'canonical narratives' (Bruner, 1991) – reflecting participants' understandings of (and response to) socially and culturally accepted norms. Within the approach adopted in this paper, we treat narratives as performative, functioning to construct and enact preferred identities in relation to particular audiences (Phoenix, 2008). Hermans (e.g., 2003) argues that the self has multiple potentially contradictory stories: in their telling, they bring to light particular 'I' voices. In the context of the interview interaction, this approach to narrative analysis aims to gain insight into the ways in which identities may be constructed in people's accounts of their lives (e.g., Boddy 2014). As Riessman (2003, p337) observes, 'informants negotiate how they want to be known by the stories they develop collaboratively with their audiences.'

For narrative analysis, this perspective necessitates minute analysis of the 'told' *and* the 'telling' – *how* language is used, by (and to) whom, and in what context (Riessman, 2005). In common with thematic approaches, this might include exploration of recurring content, but narrative analysis may look additionally for patterns in constructions of agency or positioning of characters. As narrative identities are shaped or co-constructed between teller and listener, analysts also pay attention to this interactional context and the wider social and cultural conditions that inflect this (Phoenix, 2008). For successful communication, both the storyteller and the listener must consider the background knowledge of the other (Bruner 1991). A narrative approach thus 'illuminates the intersection of biography, history and society' (Riessman, 2002a, p697).

Combining thematic and narrative approaches

So, what can be gained from combining thematic and narrative approaches? Despite the features they share, the different features of the approaches mean that thematic analysis is better suited than narrative analysis to providing broad overview of a dataset, while narrative approaches allow an extended focus on particularities, including particular cases. The work reported here involved a secondary analysis of qualitative interviews conducted for the ongoing *Young Lives* study (see below), focusing on children's spatialities in Andhra Pradesh as a window into the intersections between families' everyday lives and experiences of the environment. Through a joint analysis, combining thematic and narrative approaches, our work has illuminated the complementarity of these two approaches, and the particular value of mixing analytic methods for a *secondary* qualitative analysis.

Secondary analysis can take a variety of forms, encompassing the use of existing data, collected for the purposes of a prior study, in order to pursue a research interest which is distinct from that of the original work (Heaton 1998, 2004; Coltart et al., 2013). Beyond that over-arching definition, secondary analysis can of course take many forms, but it usually involves some degree of distance from the original data – from the original research questions, and/or from the time and place in which the data were gathered (see Elliott et al., 2013; Morrow, Boddy and Lamb 2014 for a discussion).

(Re)turning to an existing established dataset poses specific methodological challenges – in assessing the suitability of the data for new substantive questions, and in developing contextual knowledge of the data when the analyst lacks embodied experiences of the research context (Haynes and Jones, 2012; Hammersley, 1997). The challenge of contextualisation is further amplified by the risks of misinterpretation when secondary analysts are located in a different social context to the one in which the data are generated (Fossheim 2013; Morrow et al., 2014). Some researchers however argue that, whilst secondary analysts may not share the primary researchers' 'privileged' relationship with their data (and participants), the lack of direct contextual understanding for secondary researchers can be compensated (to some extent at least) by rigorous analytical processes that seek understanding of proximate contexts (Moore, 2007; Haynes and Jones, 2012; Irwin et al., 2012).

In the remainder of this working paper, we discuss our experience of combining thematic and narrative approaches in the analysis of qualitative interviews with eight families who take part in *Young Lives*, an ongoing longitudinal international study of childhood poverty. We reflect on the challenges and benefits that result from this combined approach, aiming to illuminate the ways in which the integration of narrative and thematic analysis can support and enrich understanding of a complex dataset.

The research

Young Lives is an ongoing international longitudinal cohort study involving 12,000 families in four countries: Ethiopia, India (Andhra Pradesh), Peru and Vietnam¹. Starting in 2001-2 as a survey with children, their caregivers and community members, a qualitative component was added in 2006. To date, three rounds of qualitative data have been collected, and a fourth is being developed at the time of writing (see Crivello et al., 2013). The qualitative longitudinal research involves 200 children (and their caregivers) across the four study countries – 48 families in Andhra Pradesh – and includes an older cohort (aged 12-13 years at the time of the first interview) and a younger cohort (aged 6-7 years at the time of the first interview). Qualitative data collection includes interviews with children and young people and their parents/caregivers, as well as visual and group based methods. The interviews follow a semi-structured format that ensures cross-national consistency of methods, capturing participant accounts relating to their daily routines, social networks and life transitions. Young Lives researchers often adopt thematic analytical approaches in their analyses (e.g., Morrow and Vennam 2009; Crivello, 2011). This is increasingly common within life course research in international development, where the subjective life account is generally treated ‘as revealing of wider institutional changes’. This differs from other forms of life course research which tend to place greater emphasis on the narrative account itself (Locke and Lloyd-Sherlock, 2011, p1132).

¹ Young Lives is funded from 2001 to 2017 by UK aid from the Department for International Development (DFID), and co-funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 2010 to 2014. For more details see www.younglives.org.uk

The analysis of Young Lives data that we present here was conducted as part of the NOVELLA (Narratives of Varied Everyday Lives and Linked Approaches) *Family Lives and the Environment* study². This aims to improve understanding of the negotiated complexity of families' lives in relationship with their environments, with regard to meanings of 'environment' in everyday family lives and family practices in India and the UK.

To explore children's lived experiences and everyday lives in relationship with their environments, we drew on interdisciplinary theorisations of everyday spaces as a useful lens to explore the complex interplay between the social and spatial (Massey, 1994; Malone, 2007), and so to illuminate meanings of environment in children's lives and for their identities (Holloway and Valentine, 2000). An examination of children's use of 'everyday spaces' offers a window into children's lived experiences of environment. The ways in which children and young people experience and navigate these spaces also speaks to their positioning as social actors, and the power dynamics that shape their social relationships. However, as Malone (2007, pp15-16) reminds us, 'rather than passive recipients of the environments they find themselves in, children are constantly negotiating and reconstructing spaces in powerful and significant ways, including through acts of resistance'.

The secondary analysis

The Family Lives and the Environment study began with secondary analysis of interviews from eight family case studies conducted in Andhra Pradesh, a state of 85 million people in south eastern India. The analysis examined ways in which experiences and understandings of environment (and environmental concerns) were woven into narratives within family members' accounts of their lives. An additional aim was to develop contextual understanding of family life in Andhra Pradesh in order to inform methodological development for a later stage of fieldwork with a new sample of families in the region. The analysis also aimed to extend methodologies for secondary analysis: to explore the applicability of narrative analytical methods to data not originally intended for such treatment, and to develop further insights into the possibility and benefits of linking

²NOVELLA is an ESRC-funded National Centre for Research Methods (NCRM) Node, which comprises several projects that apply narrative approaches to the study of everyday family lives. For more details see www.novella.ac.uk

narrative approaches with other methods. Addressing this last aim, and building on the cross-institutional partnership, researchers from both teams, Natasha Shukla (NS) from the Family Lives and the Environment study and Emma Wilson (EW) from Young Lives, then conducted further analyses: NS narrative and EW thematic analyses. Both researchers were guided by a substantive focus on how everyday experiences of the environment (including its physical and social dimensions) are interwoven with family life, using data that drew on the perspectives of children and their caregivers in Andhra Pradesh. For the purpose of this paper however we will focus on the perspectives of children while taking into account their family contexts.

The eight cases included in our secondary analysis were purposively sampled in relation to the substantive objectives of the Family Lives and Environment study. Sampling began with a process of contextualisation, to build FLE researchers' understanding of the Young Lives dataset. The FLE team engaged in close reading of Young Lives publicly available resources on methodology³, alongside discussion with the Young Lives researchers in the UK and in India, using data gathering reports which contextualise the interview data and group discussions of analyses. The work was further supplemented with contextual reading of group discussions with children, and interviews with community leaders. This extensive process of contextualisation was embedded in the research design, supported through funding for *Young Lives* researchers' time and formal data access agreements (see Morrow, Boddy and Lamb 2014 for a fuller discussion).

The eight cases were not intended to be representative of Young Lives families, either in India or more generally, but were sampled as cases with the potential to inform our understanding of family practices and everyday lives as they relate to the environment. Environment here was broadly defined to range from everyday local environments – sites for everyday family practices – to major events and concerns, including environmental shocks such as drought. The eight cases included four boys and four girls, living in families in all the Young Lives qualitative fieldwork sites, and so in rural, tribal rural, and urban contexts. Each case consists of three rounds of semi-structured interviews with the index child and caregiver, conducted when the child was 12, 13, and 15 years old. Thus, for each family case,

³ www.younglives.org.uk/what-wedo/research-methods/methods-guide

six transcripts were analysed in depth. This was supplemented with reading of the group interviews with children, and interviews with community leaders.

In the secondary analysis presented here, we began with a cross-case thematic analysis which aimed initially to orient us to the data set, illuminating cross-case themes and contextual understandings, in order to guide a case-based analysis which combined thematic and narrative approaches. In this way, we aimed to ameliorate the risks arising from lack of contextual understanding in a case-based analysis, and so to situate personal narratives within the social and cultural contexts they negotiate, including the interactional context of the interview. In what follows we describe the creation of a dataset for secondary analysis, our theoretical perspective on everyday spaces, and the analytical process. We then present findings from the thematic and narrative analysis together, to demonstrate their complementarity as analytical tools.

Creating a dataset for secondary analysis

We came to data analysis from different vantage points. None of us had conducted the interviews ourselves and we were reading in translation: interviews were conducted in local languages (usually Telugu or Urdu) by Young Lives researchers in Andhra Pradesh. At the time of the analysis, none of us had visited Andhra Pradesh. Both NS and JB have visited the region subsequently (NS for several months of fieldwork), and are working collaboratively with key members of the Andhra Pradesh Young Lives team (Uma Vennam, qualitative lead for India, and Madhavi Latha, a core member of the fieldwork team), as well as the team in Oxford. Although EW has not had direct in-country experience in Andhra Pradesh, her position as a core member of the Young Lives qualitative team brings a much richer familiarity with the *whole* qualitative dataset – within Andhra Pradesh and across all four of the Young Lives study countries. This experience includes previous analytic work with the eight cases sampled for FLE, and working closely with the Young Lives team in Andhra Pradesh, not least as they continue to plan and discuss the next round of qualitative data collection, something that is crucial for ensuring that data are read knowing the context, and that misunderstandings and misinterpretation are avoided (Morrow et al., 2014). In a secondary analysis, it is crucial to take account of the original research aims and design. In

the Young Lives study, qualitative interviewers work with semi-structured interview guides⁴, designed to ensure consistency in data collection across the four study countries, whilst working flexibly so that interviews are ‘conversations with a purpose’ rather than formal structured questioning (Mayall, 2000; Crivello et al., 2013).

For the FLE research team, working closely with eight family cases from the Young Lives dataset, the risks of failing to see the wider context are particularly acute. Boddy (2014) describes the close focus of narrative case-based analysis as akin to working with a ‘macro’ zoom lens: the risk is that one sees the wood in great detail, but fails to see the forest. Tamboukou et al. (2013, p10) similarly warn against a ‘fetishization of narrative language’. To address these risks, close collaborative work was crucial to bring our different perspectives together; a process that led to the mixing of thematic and narrative analysis that informs this paper. We started by doing parallel readings of each case child and their caregivers across three rounds of interviews, with EW taking a thematic approach and NS adopting a narrative methodology.

The analytic process

The thematic analysis was initially conducted at a semantic level. EW focused initially on identifying ‘surface meanings’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006), in order to generate first order codes in relation to children’s use and experience of everyday space within this context. This preliminary thematic analysis identified three ‘everyday spaces’ as particularly significant for these eight case children: home, the outdoors (broadly defined as the surrounding locality) and school. Mapping these three domains we were able to explore the types of activities carried out in different spaces, the meanings attached to these spaces and how these change over time.

NS conducted her narrative analysis examining the ways in which the interviews, as a form of semi-structured conversation, enable the ‘local achievement of identity’ through talk (Cussins, cited in Riessman, 2002a, p701). Narrative analysis usually focuses closely on the particular linguistic devices used in story-telling (e.g., Bauman 1986, Riessman 2003), but close reading and attending to choice of words, for example, may not be warranted when

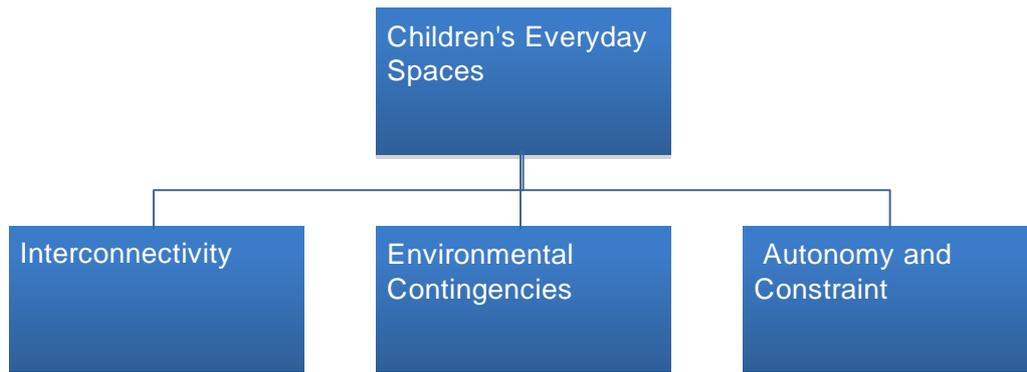
⁴ See www.younglives.org.uk/what-wedo/research-methods/methods-guide

interviews are read in translation, and were not conducted or transcribed with narrative analytic reading in mind. Young Lives interviews in Andhra Pradesh are translated into English (usually from Telugu or Urdu) and, with this in mind, our interpretation was based less on features such as word choice and grammatical structure and more on the articulation of recurring preoccupations, connections between evaluative messages of stories and positioning of actors within narratives (Riessman 2002b).

Many forms of narrative research (e.g. Wengraf 2001, Georgakopoulou, 2006) are predicated on having long passages of transcribed talk to analyse. For example, Wengraf's (2001, 2004) *Biographical Narrative Interview Method* begins the first interview session with 'only a carefully constructed single narrative question': 'Please tell me the story of your life' (2004, p2). For the data analysed here, however, there is a greater frequency of turns between interviewer and interviewee. This makes some forms of narrative analysis inappropriate, but enables analysis of the performative and co-constructed nature of narratives and the exploration of contradictions, shifts and plural positionings in the interactional dynamics of the interview (e.g., Phoenix 2008).

The researchers regularly met in person or spoke on the phone to share and discuss emerging insights and interpretations. They also benefitted from analytical discussions with the wider FLE and Young Lives teams as well as the Young Lives Andhra Pradesh, India lead qualitative researcher, Uma Vennam, who conducted a number of the interviews herself. This was an iterative process in which EW used the findings from her thematic analysis to offer a descriptive picture of the overarching 'spatial landscape' in which NS could situate a case-based narrative analysis. In turn, the narrative focus on the particular case supported development of the thematic analysis from a semantic to a more interpretative level, facilitating the transition from first order, to second and third order coding, and examining the ways in which narratives and themes interact within and across cases. This allowed us to see, for example, how themes that cross cases (e.g., constraints on engagement in education) are constructed or used differently within individual narratives, helping both narrative and thematic approaches to develop cross-case and within-case understandings, and thus aiding both particularity and generality.

Over the course of this transition, the analysts began to draw more on the literature on children’s spatialities, in order to bring a sharper conceptual lens to the data and their emerging interpretations, moving from a purely inductive data-led approach to a more deductive theoretically driven interpretation. EW began to cluster and refine the themes emerging from the cross-case analysis, working closely with NS to identify overarching conceptual themes common to both analyses, as illustrated below:



In presenting the analyses, below, we follow the process of analysis. Thus thematic analysis is brought together with narrative analysis, illustrating the analytic dialogue between generality and specificity and showing how understandings generated from one approach extended, contrasted or confirmed understandings generated by the other. We hope this demonstrates the fluidity of the boundaries between the two approaches, both of which are capable of moving between the general and particular. In the work reported here, our thematic analysis draws on individual cases primarily to represent themes across the sample, while our narrative analysis presents individual cases to understand their particularities. The analysis presented here looks across all eight of the Young Lives family cases sampled for Family Lives and the Environment on which NS and EW worked jointly. In addition, and reflecting the case-centred approach of our narrative analysis, we have also focused in more depth on the single case of a rural school-going girl (Sarada⁵) who faces particular challenges in negotiating the spaces in her life because she has a physical disability. Her (and her family members’) accounts provide valuable insights into the ways in which combining narrative and thematic analysis can help us to understand Holloway and Valentine’s (2000, p770)

⁵ All names given are pseudonyms.

conceptualisation of 'everyday spaces' as where 'children's identities and lives are made and remade'.

Interconnections between children's everyday spaces: Family imperatives

Holloway and Valentine (2000, p775) describe the home as a 'porous space shaped... by its interconnections with the immediate locality and with the wider world'. Our thematic analysis demonstrated how the school, outdoors and home all functioned as porous interconnecting spaces in the everyday lives of children in the Young Lives communities. Spanning (and connecting) all three spaces, a salient theme identified was of family imperatives (of various forms - responsibility, enablement, control) that connect and shape children's interactions with different spaces. In the context of rural (including tribal) communities, livelihoods are mainly structured around agricultural production. Most case families from these sites are either engaged in subsistence farming and/or paid farm work (such as cotton picking) for other landowners. Agricultural activities and practices therefore feature prominently within rural children's and caregivers' accounts of their home life and family relations, both in terms of the roles and responsibilities of family members in maintaining this livelihood, as well as the consequences of this form of work for their subjective well-being.

Rural children's contributions to the household typically involve collecting water and firewood for cooking and other domestic activities, as well as helping their parents on the farm with planting and cultivation. The manner in which family responsibilities and practices extend from the home to the outdoors suggests one way in which these spaces are interpenetrating. Children's capacity to go to school is also negotiated in the context of family needs. While most children combine school and work, some – owing to their family's economic constraints – withdraw from school to take up full-time work.

While recognising the interconnections between children's everyday spaces, the joint thematic and narrative analysis also highlighted the distinct cultural meanings these spaces hold, with different potentialities for children's constructions of identity. Below we look at each space in turn and provide illustrative examples of the various ways in which the two analytical approaches worked together to develop our understanding of the family

imperatives that shape children's engagement with everyday spaces, and the implications for children's sense of self.

School

We begin with the case of Sarada, a rural school-going girl with a physical disability that affects her mobility. At the age of 12 (in the round 1 interview), an important theme in her account of everyday life is her family's enablement of her education. She explains that her parents support her education by not sending her to the fields to work, and her mother does not overburden her with housework:

neither my parents tell me nor do I go (for cotton work), they tell me to go to school and I go.

She positions her parents as unique in their support of her education in contrast to other parents in the village, who, she says, prefer to send their children to the cotton fields because they believe education 'is a waste of time and money'.

Her parents' interviews reinforce this theme – of support for education, but they offer a somewhat different rationale, commenting that they view schooling to be particularly important to securing Sarada's future prospects because she is disabled, and there is some doubt cast over her possibilities for marriage. The importance of education to Sarada is a recurrent theme (and constant refrain) in her interview. From a narrative analytic perspective, we can see how Sarada ties her identity construction (for example in future aspirations for a 'good life') to this theme of the value of education. For example:

I want to get well educated and be in a respectable position.

Despite these aspirations, and support from her parents, Sarada's account positions poverty as a threat to her education, and hence to her future identity. She comments that her parents lack economic resources to support her education. Close analysis of her narrative in the round 1 interview (when she is 12 years old) reveals how she presents the threat to her

education not merely as a fact but as a moral issue and situates herself in relation to this:

Sarada *[My] parents feel, 'if I have own house, agricultural land and tractors, I would have sent my children to school and get them well educated, and they [*she appears to refer to financially well-off parents*] have all these but still they send them [*their children*] to cotton work'. I feel better if I have all these, I would have studied well.*

Interviewer What else do you feel you should have had to feel better?

Sarada without field work, a nice house for all of us, And if we study and get well educated and obtain good jobs, then everybody will have their own job and own house, then you will have the right to education, job / employment. I feel then one can have a good life.

Sarada juxtaposes two framings of the school space – the everyday reality (of schooling) and the abstract ideal (of education). Within this narrative, her and her parent's educational aspirations for her are curtailed by their poverty (relative to others in her community, who have more choice). Instead of school, she says she faces work in the cotton fields – a space which in its binarisation with the desired space of school she seems to frame as inimical to her aspirations for a good life.

Reading just this extract in isolation, one may mistakenly think that Sarada does not go to school presently or has never been to school. She reiterates a sense of diminished educational possibilities for herself a little later in the interview, saying 'if my status was better, I too would have not worked, I would have studied only'. Her apparent ambiguity about whether she attends school and/or works (in the fields or in the home) may be due to discrepancies in translation of temporal tenses. Or perhaps she is bringing into the present, future apprehensions about the fragility of her education under the constraints of poverty. Either way this extract is a discrepant from her overall account in the interview of being free to attend school, showing the multiplicity of narratives possible within an interview. Here, through a personal story apparently informed by a canonical narrative about the constraints

of poverty, Sarada could be seen as performing a collective identity as part of ‘the disadvantaged’.

Sarada’s personal narrative of disadvantage can also be read in the context of a thematic interpretation. Looking across cases, we see that the impacts of climatic disruptions, such as flooding and droughts, are not evenly distributed but instead appear to be mediated by social hierarchies. Wealthier families and higher castes are described as having better resources to develop protective and mitigative strategies against environmental stressors. This includes better access to capital and agricultural infrastructure (such as water bore holes) as well as social and political networks.

From a personal account, Sarada moves quickly to articulating the ideal of education as linked to a positive future which includes job, house and ‘good life’. In various ways, she articulates personal apprehensions within a collective frame – for example, in framing education as a ‘right’ – and the broader thematic analysis is crucial to understand this framing. We might speculate that she does this, in the context of the interview conversation, as a way of building shared reference points with the researcher, an educated woman who could possibly be seen as having access to the political resources needed to secure the ‘rights’ of disadvantaged children like her. A narrative lens can therefore be used to highlight the complexities and contradictions in Sarada’s positioning in the spaces of her everyday life, and the meanings that she makes from these. Her stories of schooling in the round 1 interview complicate the narrative of her parents’ support for schooling, with a counter-narrative about poverty as a constraint on her spatial possibilities.

Outdoors

While children’s everyday spaces are interconnected, they also have distinct cultural meanings with implications for children’s constructions of identity. In relation to the outdoors, rural children often describe negative corporeal experiences of agricultural work. Preethi, a tribal girl who is studying in a residential hostel, recollected the ‘unbearable heat’ she experienced when working in the fields with her family. Sarada associates a number of negative traits with women who go to the fields, such as being tanned and dirty. These accounts highlight the stigmatisation of outdoor work, especially if this becomes symbolic of

a failed educational trajectory and frustrated individual and collective (familial) aspirations for social mobility.

Examining this theme through a narrative lens, we turn to the case of Mohan, a boy from the same village as Sarada. In the round 1 interview, his step-mother reports that he often fails to attend school, and by round 2 we learn that he has left school. In round 1, his step-mother talks of her frustration at his apparent lack of interest in his education and her husband's attempts to push him to attend school. For example:

...if my husband asks him, he says he is not going anywhere. If he is asked to confirm whether he is going to field or school, he says he will go to field. His father scolds him, 'son of ass, you deserve donkey's work'.

In round 1, Mohan himself comments that children with an education 'get jobs' and 'live happily'. In this, he references the same canonical narrative as Sarada (above) about the importance of education for a good life. It is noteworthy here that the canonical narrative or cultural story here also constitutes a theme across the interviews. For Mohan, this narrative sits uneasily alongside his personal experience, at a time when he is said to be frequently missing school. Again, we need to recognise that (like most research participants) he is speaking with an educated researcher (who inevitably, may be seen as someone who values education). So how does he manage this narrative performance of identity within this context? He does this in several ways across the round 1 interview. He constructs a favourable identity as an aspiring student, who understands the importance of education, but suggests that his withdrawal from school is compelled by his step-mother who places demands on him to contribute to family work. For example:

my mother will beat me if I say that I want to study but education is important to achieve to have good life to become teacher.

Later in the same interview, however, he presents ambivalent and apparently contradictory stories about his experience in school, highlighting a distinction between 'education' as an abstract ideal, and the more problematic (for Mohan) quotidian space of school. He refers to

the school itself as 'bad' with regard to the physical space and the teaching, but later in the interview he describes these same things as good, saying, for example, that teachers teach well. Prompted by the interviewer, he describes school friendships, but also tells a small story about being bullied by another boy. Tamboukou et al. (2013) have written about the importance of recognising the 'messiness' of narratives, and Mohan's round 1 interview provides an eloquent illustration of this point. It also shows how the narrative analysis can illuminate the particularity of his identity framing, and how it is negotiated within the theme of autonomy and constraint in spatiality. By maintaining the canonical narrative of the value of education, he can frame his difficulties in attending school in small stories of constraint – in his critiques of the school and of parental demands – so countering the idea presented by his step-mother through his father's reported speech that he is unwilling to go to school and so 'deserves donkey's work' in the fields.

Narratives are of course dynamic, and in Mohan's case we see a shift over time, as in later rounds he takes ownership of his decision to leave school. In leaving school behind, he also leaves a canonical narrative which foregrounds education, drawing instead on another canonical narrative: that of the dutiful son who supports his family, a very typical pattern for boys in Andhra Pradesh. In the round 2 interview, he says of his family, 'I have to take care of them' and later 'I do as my father does'. For Mohan, responsibilities negotiated at and *for* home extend to the outdoors. His narrative illuminates the theme of interconnectivity in children's everyday spaces: home and outdoors can be seen as 'porous' (Holloway and Valentine 2000), operating together as sites for construction of his identity as a good son.

But there are other constructions of the self that the outdoors provides, and thematic analysis highlighted the importance of outdoor space for play and leisure pursuits. For Mohan, for example, space outside the home is where he exercises independence, and his interviews contain small stories of play, including cricket and 'kabbadi' (a popular game involving chasing, in teams), and of going swimming in a local well. As the children in the sample get older however, faced with increasing educational and family responsibilities, these patterns change.

Home

Thematic analysis highlighted the gendering of space over place and time, showing, for example, how the lives of girls in the urban site is more tightly contained within the home compared to rural settings. At the time of the round 1 interview, Sania, a girl living in the city, reported a variety of responsibilities for helping in the home. She speaks of sweeping, cleaning clothes and dishes, but she does not describe any duties that require her to venture into her surrounding locality. This pattern echoes her description of the spatially defined conjugal roles prescribed in her community, as she explains 'She (a wife) works at home and he (a husband) works outside'. Sania's relationship with the outdoors does not offer the same kinds of possibilities for identity construction as it does for Mohan. The identities that these spaces make available are therefore gendered and place-bound. As McGrellis (2005, p517), suggests, spatial 'boundaries not only mark where it is possible to go, but also who it is possible to be'.

Over the span of the longitudinal study, Sania's socio-spatial world contracts and in her round 3 interview she recasts the outdoors as male spaces, out of bounds to her and other girls:

Sania No, I don't go out...I am grown up and no girls come out into the lane.

Interviewer How is it in the lanes?

Sania People will be working and men come to the shops.

Analysing her narratives, we can see (as with other cases) apparently contradictory identities. On the one hand, she sets out an identity as educationally successful, through talk about doing well at school, citing educated role models, and describing aspirations to a career as a doctor. But, as she grows older, her stories of everyday life are increasingly home-based, centred on family responsibilities and learning skills such as cooking and stitching – and (as we saw in the example above) referencing a canonical narrative about appropriate behaviour for girls. Sania does not attempt to resolve the tension between these two accounts of her life, although she fleetingly acknowledges that to gain an education and fulfil her professional ambitions she would need to go against the norms of her community.

Within the overarching theme of family imperatives that shape the interconnecting spaces of children's lives, the thematic analysis identified the home space as a key site, where families shape children's encounters with other spaces, including by negotiating children's contributions to the work of the household. For example, Preethi, a girl from a tribal community who attends a residential school, discussed tensions in returning home from school.

They accuse us at home for remaining idle and for not doing any work. We are asked to do this and that...I only long to go to school. It is a great relief to be in school.

Our narrative analysis built from this thematic analysis to consider how family and home space shape the meanings and identities that children perform in relation to other spaces. We see this in the accounts of Mohan above, as work outside the home is *for* family. Similarly, Vinay - a boy from the tribal community in the study – constructed his educational ambitions as part of his responsibility to his family:

I also want to think about my parents as they are thinking of me and I want to reach their expectations.

By contrast, for Preethi and Sarada, education is presented as a more individual project, that provides self-fulfilment and empowerment. Sarada sums this up when she says, 'because of my education, my ability to make my own decisions made me independent'.

Conclusion

We began this working paper by arguing for the mixing of data analytic approaches, taking the example of combining narrative and thematic approaches. Each offers different forms of insight, but the work we have done highlights their complementarity. The benefits of the combined approach have been particularly important for our research because of the complexity of the dataset. Working with secondary data – especially in translation, and at geographic and temporal distance – the risks of misreading and misinterpretation are substantial. The capacity to work (relatively swiftly) across cases, in the first sweep of

thematic analysis, provided a crucial contextual framing for subsequent case-based analysis. But the thematic work did much more than this, initiating a shift from data-led to theory-led analysis by highlighting the centrality of spatiality in children's accounts of their everyday lives, and taking forward understandings of the meanings of 'environment' within those lives. The narrative analysis reported here has worked within this thematic analytic framework, focusing in particular on the told stories of the interviews and the ways in which spatiality features in young people's construction of identity and agency.

By combining thematic and narrative analytic approaches, we gain an understanding of these complexities, and of the ways in which patterns in the data connect across cases. Thematic analysis has highlighted the interpenetration of key spaces in children's quotidian lives, illuminating the spaces children inhabit, and showing how those spaces are experienced in everyday lives. We see the tension between autonomy and constraint in children's negotiation of everyday spaces – for example, in the multiple meanings of 'outdoors' as a space for family work and responsibility, a space for autonomous play, and a space that poses risk to reputation or wellbeing. These framings are also dynamic and gendered, varying over time and (urban and rural) place, and tied to family imperatives, including aspirations for education as well as the need for children to contribute to families' paid and unpaid work. Experiences of the environment are also contingent on social hierarchies, as affluence and caste affect family resources to develop protective and mitigative strategies against environmental stressors, and thus affect children's opportunities to engage with spaces (notably, educational spaces). We see the porosity and power geometries of children's everyday spaces, and the ways in which children's spaces function in relationship with family, and other people in their lives.

Our combined analytic approach can also capture what Bruner (1991) and others have highlighted as the meaning-making function of narrative – the meanings that are made by the teller, in the telling, for the listener. This helps to make sense of apparent contradictions and incoherence in participants' accounts – for example, to see why, for Mohan, school as a space is both good and bad, desired in theory but troubling in practice (and eventually left behind). In examining the telling of 'small stories', and their positioning relative to dominant canonical narratives (for example, of education and responsibility), narrative analysis can

illuminate the complexities, dynamism and tensions inherent in everyday family lives. By attending to the form of what is said, and to intentionality, within small stories and in their relationship to the progression of themes, it is also possible to see how respondents construct and negotiate individual and collective identities for the interviewer.

Children's narratives show how they may accept, negotiate, reframe or seek to transgress their spatial worlds alongside framings of family responsibility, attachment, control and enablement. We also see how these accounts are used to frame present realities *and* future imaginaries, with some children seeking new spaces to construct preferred identities beyond the possibilities available in their locality. Identities come to life and are re-enacted through the told stories of the interview conversation, illuminating children's mobility and navigation of everyday spaces within the constraints of their daily lives.

But children's narratives are not simply individualised accounts of struggle and agency, and the combination of narrative and thematic approaches helps to take account of the effect of particular narratives within the interview conversation, as well as the societal contexts within which they gain currency. Bruner (1991) has written about the importance of background knowledge in narrative interpretation, highlighting the need for attention to the background knowledge of both the storyteller and the listener, and to the ways in which each interprets the background knowledge of the other. Stories are told within the context of perceived background knowledge, based on a judgement of which understandings might be shared, and what needs to be told or explained or justified. In this context, it is perhaps hardly surprising that children reference canonical narratives of the value of education, for example, in interviews conducted by educated adults (as the vast majority of research interviews are!).

The combining of thematic and narrative approaches allows us to move flexibly between the general (including the historical and societal) and the particular (including the personal and subjective). This is not to situate thematic approaches as general and narrative approaches as particular – both, of course, can address wider framings (cross-case themes, canonical narratives) as well as individual particularities. The overarching aim of the Family Lives and the Environment study is to deepen understanding of the meanings of environment in

quotidian family lives. The analysis presented here begins to demonstrate how combining thematic and narrative approaches can capture the complexity of spatiality in children's everyday lives and environments, and the intersections of the spatial within family practices and identities.

Acknowledgements

The Family Lives and Environment project involves a team of researchers, including Ann Phoenix, and Catherine Walker, and members of the original Young Lives team, including Uma Vennam, Madhavi Latha, Virginia Morrow, and Gina Crivello. The analysis presented here is our own, but has benefited greatly from discussions with team members at all stages of the project to date. Particular thanks are due to Ann Phoenix, Virginia Morrow and Gina Crivello for such constructive advice on earlier drafts. Above all, we are extremely grateful to the Young Lives children, families and community members who collaborate with Young Lives and make this research possible, and to the family members in particular for further agreeing that their data could be shared.

References

Andrews, M., Squire, C. and Tamboukou, M. (2008) (eds) *Doing Narrative Research*. London: Sage.

Andrews, M., Squire, C. and Tamboukou, M. (2013) (eds) *Doing Narrative Research*. Second edition. London: Sage.

Bauman, R. (1986) *Story, Performance and Event. Contextual Studies of Oral Narrative*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Boddy, J. (2014) Stories told in passing? Disclosure in narratives of everyday lives in Andhra Pradesh. In M. Davis and L. Manderson (eds) *Disclosure in Health and Illness. Routledge Studies in the Sociology of Health and Illness*. London: Routledge.

Brannen, J. (2005) Mixed methods research: A discussion paper. ESRC National Centre for Research Methods, NCRM Methods review paper.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3 (2). pp. 77-101.

Bruner, J. (1991) The narrative construction of reality, *Critical Inquiry*. 18, 1-21.

Coltart C., Henwood K., and Shirani, F. (2013) Qualitative Secondary Analysis in Austere Times: Ethical, Professional and Methodological Considerations. *FQS: Forum qualitative social research*, 14, 1. Accessed 3 January 2014: <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1885/3493>

Crivello, G. (2011) 'Becoming Somebody': Youth Transitions through Education and Migration in Peru. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 14, 4, 395-411

Crivello, G., Morrow, V. and Wilson, E. (2013) Young Lives Longitudinal Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers, *Technical Note 26*, Oxford: Young Lives.

Elliott, H., Brannen, J., Phoenix, A., Barlow, A., Morris, P., Smart, C., Smithson, J. and Bauer, E. (2013) Analysing qualitative data in groups: process and practice. Southampton: National Centre for Research Methods Working Paper, NCRM/NOVELLA. Accessed 3 January 2014: <http://eprints.ncrm.ac.uk/3172/>

Floersch, J., Longhofer, J.L., Krank, D., Townsend, L. (2010) Integrating thematic, grounded theory and narrative analysis: A case study of adolescent psychotropic treatment. *Qualitative Social Work*, 9(3), p407-425.

Fossheim, H. (ed) (2012) *Cross-cultural child research: ethical issues*. Oslo: Norwegian National Research Ethics Committees.

Georgakopoulou, A. (2006) The other side of the story: Towards a narrative analysis of narratives-in-interaction. *Discourse Studies*, vol. 8(2): 235-257.

Hammersley, M. (1997) Qualitative data archiving: some reflections on its prospects and problems. *Sociology*, vol. 31(1): 131-42.

Haynes, J. and Jones, D. (2012) A tale of two analyses: The use of archived qualitative data. *Sociological Research Online*, 17 (2).

Heaton, J. (1998) Secondary analysis of qualitative data, *Social Research Update*, 22. Accessed 3 January 2014: <http://sru.soc.surrey.ac.uk/SRU22.html>

Heaton, J. (2004) *Reworking qualitative data: The possibility of secondary analysis*. London: Sage.

Hermans, H. J. M. (2003) The construction and reconstruction of a dialogical self. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology* 16 (2): 89-130.

Holloway, S.L. and Valentine, G. (2000) Spatiality and the new social studies of childhood. *Sociology*, 34 (4), 763-783.

Irwin, S., Bornat, J., and Winterton, M. (2012) Timescapes secondary analysis: comparison, context and working across data sets. *Qualitative Research*, 12, 1, 66-80.

Locke, C. and Lloyd-Sherlock, P. (2011) 'Qualitative Life Course Methodologies : Critical Reflections from Development Studies', *Development and Change*, 42(5),1131–1152

Luttrell, W. (2010) 'A camera is a big responsibility': a lens for analysing children's visual voices, *Visual Studies*, 25:3, 224-237.

Malone, K. (2007) 'Introduction' in Malone, K. (ed) *Child Space: An Anthropological Exploration of Young people's Use of Space*, New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, pp7-17

Marks, D.F and Yardley, L. (eds) (2004) *Research Methods for Clinical and Health Psychology*, London: Sage.

Massey, D. (1994) *Space, Place and Gender*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Mayall, B. (2000) Conversations with children: working with generational issues. In P. Christensen P and A. James (eds) *Research With Children: Perspectives and Practices*. London: Routledge Falmer, pp120-135.

McGrellis, S. (2005) 'Pure and bitter spaces: gender, identity and territory in Northern Irish youth transitions', *Gender and Education*, vol. 17(5);515-529.

Moore, N. (2007) '(Re)Using Qualitative Data', *Sociological Research Online* 12 (3).

Morrow, V. (2013) 'Whose values? Young people's aspirations and experiences of schooling in Andhra Pradesh, India', *Children and Society*, vol. 27, 258–269.

Morrow, V., and Vennam, U. (2009) Children Combining Work and Education in Cottonseed Production in Andhra Pradesh: Implications for Discourses of Children's Rights in India. Young Lives Working Paper 50. Oxford, UK: Young Lives.

Morrow, V., Boddy, J. and Lamb, R. (2014 in press) The ethics of secondary data analysis: Learning from the experience of sharing qualitative data from young people and their families in an international study of childhood poverty. Southampton: National Centre for Research Methods Working Paper, NCRM/NOVELLA.

Phoenix, A. (2007) 'Doing thematic analysis'. *Exploring Psychological Research Methods* – prepared by the DSE212 Course Team, Milton Keynes: Open University.

Phoenix, A. (2008) 'Analysing narratives in contexts', in Andrews, M., Squire, C. and Tamboukou, M. (eds) *Doing narrative research*, London: Sage.

Rao, N. (2010) Aspiring for distinction: gendered educational choices in an Indian village, *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 40:2, 167-183.

Riessman, C.K. (2002a) 'Analysis of personal narratives', in Gubrium, J.F. and Holstein, J.A. (eds) *Handbook of interview research: context and method*, Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Riessman, C. K. (2002b) 'Positioning gender identity in narratives of infertility: South Indian Women's Lives in context, in Inhorn, M.C. and van Balen, F. (eds) *Infertility around the globe: New thinking on childlessness, Gender and reproductive technologies*, London: University of California, pp152-171.

Riessman, C. K. (2003) Analysis of personal narratives, in Holstein, J.A. and Gubrium, J.F (eds) *Inside Interviewing: New Lenses, New Concerns*. London: Sage.

NOVELLA working paper

Riessman, C. K. (2005) 'Narrative Analysis', in Kelly, N., Horrocks, C., Milnes, K., Roberts, B., Robinson, D. (eds) *Narrative, Memory & Everyday Life*, Huddersfield: University of Huddersfield Press, pp 1-7.

Riessman, C. K. (2008) *Narrative methods for the human sciences*, London: Sage.

Squire, C. (2008) Approaches to Narrative Research. ESRC National Centre for Research Methods Review Paper. Accessed 3 December 2013:

<http://eprints.ncrm.ac.uk/419/1/MethodsReviewPaperNCRM-009.pdf>

Squire, C. (2013) From experience-centred to socioculturally-oriented approaches to narrative. In Andrews, M., Squire, C. and Tamboukou, M. (eds) *Doing Narrative Research*. Second edition. London: Sage.

Squire, C. Andrews, M. and Tamboukou, M. (2008) 'Introduction: What is narrative research?', in Andrews, M., Squire, C. and Tamboukou, M. (eds) *Doing Narrative Research*. First edition. London: Sage.

Tamboukou, M., Andrews, M. and Squire, C. (2013) 'Introduction: What is narrative research?', in Andrews, M., Squire, C. and Tamboukou, M. (eds) *Doing Narrative Research*. Second edition. London: Sage.

Wengraf, T. (2001) *Qualitative Research Interviewing: Biographic Narrative and Semi-structured Methods*. London: Sage.

Wengraf, T. (2004) *The Biographic-Narrative Interpretive Method - Shortguide*. Southampton: NCRM Working Paper. Accessed 3 January 2014:
<http://eprints.ncrm.ac.uk/30/>

NOVELLA, Narratives of Varied Everyday Lives and Linked Approaches, is a research study concerned with the everyday habitual practices of families. It is an ESRC funded National Centre for Research Methods node 2011-14.

NOVELLA's six projects are

Parenting Identities and Practices
Families and Food
Family Lives and the Environment
Possibilities for a Narrative Analysis of Paradata
Paradata
Recipes for Mothering
Advancing Paradata

NOVELLA also conducts

Training and Capacity Building

Further Information

Novella is based at the Institute of Education, University of London and collaborates with the Centre for Narrative Research, University of East London, Young Lives at Oxford University and the University of Sussex.

Please visit www.novella.ac.uk for more information.

Thomas Coram Research Unit
Institute of Education
27-28 Woburn Square
London WC1H 0AA

