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Narratives and everyday life

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ABSTRACT

Contributions in this Special Edition reflect on the epistemological and methodological practice of using narratives to understand individual and social reality from a sociological standpoint. They all reveal dimensions of the same concrete reality: contemporary society of Central South Africa. We invite readers to engage with individual articles, each of which provide a brief episode—a vignette—in a larger reality. We also invite you to engage with the entire collection, through which a more detailed and clearer picture of the larger reality will emerge.

This Special Edition follows on the one that appeared in the January 2017 edition of this journal (<http://www.qualitativesociologyreview.org/ENG/volume40.php>). As with the previous Special Edition, each article in this issue opens a window on everyday life in Central South Africa. Except for two, the articles originated from research in the program The Narrative Study of Lives, situated in the Department of Sociology at the University of the Free State in Bloemfontein, South Africa.

These windows on reality display the capacity of the narrative as a methodological tool in qualitative research to open up better understandings of everyday experience. The articles also reflect on the epistemological journey towards unwrapping and breaking open of meaning. Narratives are one of many tools available to sociologists in their quest to understand and interpret meaning. But, when it comes to deep understanding, narratives are particularly effective in opening up more intricate levels of meaning associated with emotions, feelings, and subjective experiences.

Keywords: Phenomenology, Qualitative methodology, Narrative epistemology, Everyday experience, Editorial