

Thematic Dossier “Methodological Challenges in Psychology: Contributions to Academic Practice and Training”

Contributions of Fictional Narrative Research to Psychological Research with Stigmatized Populations

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Abstract: This article aims to present a model of narrative research in conjunction with fiction-based research. For this, we will explain its steps and reflect on its effects for research in psychology, specifically with stigmatized populations, given the interest in broadening perspectives on the same topic. Based on the appreciation of the uniqueness of the experience, narrative research makes it possible to question absolute truths and build alternative meanings to the hegemonic ones. Fiction-based research, on the other hand, can promote affective connection through stories, in addition to ensuring greater confidentiality of information. We describe the following methodological steps for the systematization of this type of research: Choice of fiction-based research, Production of “field texts”, Moving on to “research texts” and Defining the literary style. Such steps are intended to inspire research that considers ethical and aesthetic aspects, as well as the intersection of theory and art.

Keywords: narratives, social constructionism, qualitative research, bisexuality

Contribuições da Pesquisa Narrativa Ficcional para a Pesquisa Psicológica com Populações Estigmatizadas

Resumo: O presente estudo teve como objetivo apresentar um modelo de pesquisa narrativa em conjunto com a pesquisa baseada na ficção. Para isso, explicitamos seus passos e refletimos acerca de seus efeitos para pesquisa em psicologia, especificamente com populações estigmatizadas, visto o interesse em ampliar perspectivas sobre um mesmo tema. A partir da valorização da singularidade da experiência, a pesquisa narrativa permite questionar verdades absolutas e construir sentidos alternativos aos hegemônicos. Já a pesquisa baseada na ficção pode promover conexão afetiva por meio de histórias, além de garantir maior confidencialidade das informações. Descrevemos os seguintes passos metodológicos para a sistematização deste tipo de pesquisa: Escolha da pesquisa baseada na ficção, Produção de textos de campo, Passagem aos textos de pesquisa e Definição do estilo literário. Tais passos intencionam inspirar pesquisas que considerem aspectos éticos e estéticos, bem como o cruzamento da teoria com a arte.

Palavras-chave: narrativas, construcionismo social, pesquisa qualitativa, bissexualidade

Aportes de la Investigación en Narrativa Ficticia a La Investigación Psicológica con Poblaciones Estigmatizadas

Resumen: Este artículo tiene como objetivo presentar un modelo de investigación narrativa con la investigación basada en la ficción. Explicaremos sus pasos y reflexionaremos sobre sus efectos para la investigación en psicología, específicamente con poblaciones estigmatizadas, ante el interés de ampliar las perspectivas sobre un mismo tema. Al valorar la singularidad de la experiencia, la investigación narrativa permite cuestionar verdades absolutas y construir significados alternativos a los hegemónicos. La investigación basada en la ficción, por otro lado, puede promover la conexión afectiva a través de las historias, además de garantizar una mayor confidencialidad de la información. Describimos los siguientes pasos metodológicos para la sistematización de este tipo de investigación: Elección de la investigación basada en la ficción, Producción de “textos de campo”, Pasar a “textos de investigación” y Definición del estilo literario. Estos pasos pretenden inspirar investigaciones que consideren los aspectos éticos y estéticos, así como la intersección teórica y artística.

Palabras clave: narrativas, construcionismo social, investigación cualitativa, bisexualidad

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The aim of this study was to present a model of narrative research in conjunction with fiction-based research.

In the present study, we will explain the steps for composing a narrative research model in conjunction with fiction-based research and reflect on its challenges and potential for research

in psychology. To this end, we present a contextualization of the method of narrative inquiry and fictional research and then propose methodological steps for their development, which are illustrated using the example of research carried out with bisexual women. We conclude by reflecting on the main contributions, limits and challenges of this methodology for research in psychology.

Narrative action occupies a central role in human life. We can place Bruner (1990) as one of the precursors of understanding narrative as an organizer of human experience. According to the author, it is through the narrative itself that the process of constructing reality takes place, including subjectivity. Later, social constructionist authors also contributed to the development of this idea. Gergen (1994), for example, highlights the value of stories presented to us from early childhood as organized expositions of people's actions. It is through structuring events into stories that we organize and give coherence to lived experiences. The author also proposes the conception of narrative *self*, through which identity is understood as an ongoing narrative, which depends on the legitimation made in interaction and dialogue between people.

According to Clandinin and Connelly (2015), narrative inquiry is inspired by the view that human experience is based on stories. Therefore, the narrative action is both the phenomenon of study and the method. It is the phenomenon, as it understands that people build their lives through an interactive and autobiographical process, experiencing life in the form of stories and reconstructing them later. It is also a method, as narrative researchers structure the object of study in the form of stories, construct and reconstruct the stories lived by the participants, and create narratives of the research experience itself (Clandinin & Connelly, 2015).

For Tamboukou (2016), narrative inquiry is interested in singularity and, thus, proposes a rupture with “validation criteria” of results based on transmissibility and repetition. This unique construction through narratives is presented by the author as an important political aspect of narrative investigation, having the potential to question hegemonic discourses and representations, allowing an understanding of experience as multiple, contextual, temporal, and singular.

This research vision is corroborated by the social constructionist understanding of language as action, that is, as a reality producer (Gergen, 2021). Tamboukou (2016) elaborates that stories have a constitutive power in producing realities and identities. This constitutive power is also highlighted by Reigota (2016), who points out that the option of narratives is a political and pedagogical strategy to listen to the voices that are usually silenced and to acknowledge stories that are usually suppressed by a dominant narrative.

In this sense, Caine et al. (2017) highlights that, although narrative inquiry focuses on singularity, it also aims to explore social, cultural, and institutional narratives that have an impact on experience. Through a person's narratives, we can understand the influence of hegemonic discourses on the production of meaning.

Clandinin and Connelly (2015) discuss the different formats that narrative inquiry texts can adopt. The “field texts”, which consist of descriptions of experiences at the moment of interaction with the participants (the construct “with”), go

through a stage of analysis and interpretation in their transition to “research texts”. This transition begins with and depends on questions about the meaning and social relevance of this material. In view of the rich potential of field texts, incessant visits to this production are necessary, guided by the search for narrative lines, tensions and themes, as well as the necessary personal construction of the researcher based on their past experiences. Thus, the texts are continually revised in a process of dialog with other readers or even with the researcher himself at different times (Clandinin & Connelly, 2015).

Regarding the structure of research texts, the authors recognize a myriad of ways of presenting them. For each author-researcher, they recommend a personal analysis and observance of their own tastes and preferences for writing methods, in search of a style that makes the most sense personally and technically (Clandinin & Connelly, 2015). One of the possibilities for narrative inquiry is fiction as a research practice (Leavy, 2020).

For Leavy (2020), fiction is mobilizing and provocative for those who read it. The possibility of access to the characters' private world allows the contact with their meanings and affections. Furthermore, the gaps in the narratives leave room for interpretation and imagination, bringing an important implicative aspect to be valued. Thus, it is possible for the reader to engage in reflective reading, developing self-knowledge and empathy towards the characters and the people they represent; as well as greater social awareness about how the world is and how it can be (Leavy, 2020).

Another relevant point is the potential of narrative and fictional-based research to adopt critical and politically positioned frameworks. For Clandinin and Connelly (2015), the construction of research texts has the intrinsic consequence of positioning the research in the social space. Thus, studies that seek to investigate the experiences of stigmatized populations may find, in narrative inquiry and fiction-based research, the possibility of taking a political position in favor of amplifying the voices of these communities. In this sense, fiction-based narrative research can be understood as part of a strand of critical inquiry, which seeks methodological designs committed to equity and social justice, and which integrates activist stances with a goal of social transformation also through the production of knowledge. (Caine et al., 2017; Denzin, 2017).

Tracing the development of narrative research in recent years, Aimi and Monteiro (2020) observe that publications on this type of method have grown. This increase can be understood as an affirmative movement in the field of psychology towards research methods that propose alternative criteria for the traditional validation based on replication and generalization of data, thus valuing polysemy and singularity.

In the Brazilian context, Kind stands out as an important author in narrative inquiry literature, with organized books (Cordeiro & Kind, 2016; Teixeira & Kind, 2020) and articles on the topic (Amarante & Kind, 2020; Nascimento & Kind, 2018; Souza & Kind, 2017). Such researches were conducted to investigate life narratives of young people with HIV/AIDS, women's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS in heterosexual marital relationships, and violence and suicide attempts in young women, respectively.

Regarding literature on fiction-based research, internationally, the authors Sumerau and Leavy stand out. Their works are analyzed and described relevantly in recent articles (Cannell, 2021; Dwyer, 2019). Sumerau relies on fiction-based narrative to portray experiences around the themes of sexualities, gender, religion and health, from an LGBTQIA+ perspective (Cannell, 2021). Leavy, on the other hand, writes fictional literature about gender, bodies and relationships, from a feminist perspective (Dwyer, 2019).

On the national scene, Reigota is a relevant author, researching topics related to social practices and everyday life. The author proposes a fictional way of presenting narratives, shuffling extracts from individual narratives and transforming them into narratives that are like a “patchwork quilt”. In this way, it is possible to maintain confidentiality in each story, while at the same time important social issues are highlighted (Reigota, 1999).

Even considering these texts, there are still few examples that focus on “how to do it”, that is, how to develop narratives based on fiction in the practice of research in psychology, systematizing its methodological steps. As it is an innovative method, which interacts with interdisciplinary fields, putting its guidelines into practice can be a challenge. Thus, we describe some useful methodological steps for greater systematization of this type of research practice. For teaching purposes, as an illustration, we present examples from a research conducted by us, with the aim of understanding the paths of construction and experience of the sexualities of bisexual women. The research was carried out after approval by a Research Ethics Committee. It is important to note that our report does not focus on the research itself, but rather on the methodological steps that were part of this investigation.

Narrative Research Based on Fiction: Methodological Steps

Step 1. Choosing the fiction-based research

Like in every research, it is important that the researcher has clarity that there is no correct method, but that the methods are justified by their potential to answer the research question. As we argue, fiction-based research can prove to be especially useful for the study of stigmatized populations, where the explanation of unique and contextual experiences is relevant.

In the aforementioned research, we had the following specific objectives: (a) To highlight the effects of cis-heteronormative and monosexist discourses in the process of constructing bisexuality, pointing out approximations and distancing from this sexuality, and (b) To highlight possible experiences of challenges, resources, and resistances to cis-heteronormative and monosexist discourses in the experience of bisexuality. When choosing the methodology, we relied on specialized literature in this area, which considers that the bisexual community, as part of the LGBTQIA+ community, is constantly stigmatized.

We can better understand such stigmatization by analyzing how the categories of gender and sexuality are crossed by hegemonic discourses, standardizing bodies, subjects, behaviors, and ways of life. Named cisheteronormativity and monosexism,

such discourses consist, briefly and respectively, in the construction of the norms of heterosexuality, based on cisgender as the only socially acceptable forms of expression of sexuality; and in the conception that monosexuality, that is, attraction to solely one gender, is natural for all people (Foucault, 1978; Jaeger et al., 2019). Such discourses, in addition to promoting pejorative views about the bisexual population, promote a systematic erasure of this sexuality, suppressing the topic of bisexuality in any context in which it is relevant, such as in culture, in the media, in public and private life (Corey, 2017; Daly et al., 2018).

As a result, we consider that the potential of narrative inquiry to construct realities and senses of self could be an ally in research with the bisexual population by allowing through dialogue with this population new discursive repertoires about this sexuality to be constructed. Furthermore, a narrative investigation of the experiences of bisexual people could also allow an exploration of the social, cultural, and institutional narratives about them, the effects of hegemonic discourses of heteronormativity and monosexism, and other possible discourses of resistance on their trajectories. Moreover, considering the potential impact of fiction-based research, the capacity of evoking emotion and empathy towards the stories could facilitate connection with the experiences of marginalization and erasure, and thus contribute to the reduction of stigma.

As can be seen from this example, the choice of method was made considering its potential to achieve the objectives defined for the research. In other words, a relevant first step for a researcher is to reflect on how compatible the principles underlying this type of method are with the question being investigated.

Step 2. Production of “field texts”

For Clandinin and Connelly (2015), the production of descriptions about experiences with participants, that is, field texts, can be done through different means, such as autobiographical writing, diaries, field notes, letters, interviews or documents. It is necessary to be open to imaginative possibilities in the ways of composing such texts. However, the most important aspect is knowing how to position productions in a time, place and in the social relationships that built them, as this impacts the writing of research texts.

We return to our example to illustrate this step. To understand the experiences of bisexual women, open interviews were conducted. An open-ended question initiated our investigation: “Tell me about the trajectory of your sexuality before and after understanding yourself as bisexual.” Therefore, six interviews were completed with six cisgender bisexual women, ages 20 to 26. The interviews were conducted online using the Google Meet platform. They were recorded in audio and video with the consent of the participants and were used only for research purposes.

Based on the propositions of social constructionism and narrative inquiry, we understand the interview as a dialogical process in which negotiations of points of view and versions of self and experiences occur, positioning each participant during the dialogical interaction. In this way, we consider that the information in an interview is not extracted or

collected, but rather produced relationally in the interaction that is established as part of the investigation (Aragaki et al., 2014; Clandinin & Connelly, 2015). In other words, our field texts were produced when we met these participants, in dialogically structured interview situations. However, as we said at the beginning of this section, other methodological strategies for producing knowledge can be adopted by the researchers, depending on their research objectives.

Step 3. Moving on to “research texts”

The next step is the transformation of field texts into research texts. According to Clandinin and Connelly (2015), a researcher-author composes a research text based on certain aspects. Authors take a retrospective look at the field texts constructed together with the participants, as well as a prospective one, worrying about the results, the contributions, and the audience that will meet the text produced. They also take an introspective position, considering the personal constructions, experiences, and values of the researcher-author themselves; and extrospective, keeping in mind the theoretical field of studies on the topic in question. All of this within a contextual and historical perspective.

In the study mentioned here, after conducting interviews, the next step involved carefully listening to the transcription records while maintaining the colloquial language used in the context of the interview. At this stage, we took a retrospective look and examined the field texts, read them several times to produce themes and plots in line with the research objectives.

The search for plots led us to divide the narratives of the bisexual women participating in our research into two periods which reflect a temporal perspective of the trajectory development: the *Construction* period, which corresponds to the time before the participant described themselves as bisexual,

in which there were discursive negotiations that culminated in this identity definition; and the *Experience* period, which consists of the time after this identity description, comprising the experiences of each participant related to this definition. The choice of this division was due to the understanding that the description as bisexual was seen as a milestone in the participants’ history and in the construction of their sense of self, defining different plots, one before and another after it.

For each of these periods, the elements highlighted in each specific objective were described. For the *Construction* period, we defined the themes: (a) distancing, understood as experiences related to cisheteronormative and monosexist discourses that led to a distancing from the consideration of bisexuality as a possible narrative description of oneself, and (b) approximations, understood as experiences related to discourses outside of cisheteronormativity and monosexism that led to familiarization with bisexuality.

For the *Experience* period we defined the themes: (c) challenges, which comprise difficulties encountered as a result of cisheteronormative and monosexist discourses; (d) resources, which consist of experiences of care and approaching discourses outside the cisheteronormative and monosexist norm that proved to be resources for coping with the challenges; and (e) resistance, which we describe as narratives and practices of resistance to biphobic and LGBTQIA+phobic discourses, such as the creation of narratives of personal empowerment regarding the process of building a bisexual identity.

In order to illustrate the division of the two plots, *Construction* and *Experience*, and the themes produced for each one of them, we bring as an example the organization of the elements of the narrative of a participant (Maria) in Figure 1, which also included the relevant characters in each plot for greater organization of the story.

Figure 1
Aspects analyzed in the period of Construction and Experience of Maria

Aspects analyzed during the Construction period	
Distancing	Exclusive contact with the discourse of heteronormativity
Approximations	Relationship with her boyfriend
	Experience in the apartment she used to live
Relevant characters in the story	The men she had a relationship with
	The friends who lived in the apartment
	The girlfriend
Aspects analyzed during the Experience period	
Challenges	Fear of family rejection
	Her mother’s questioning about her sexuality.
	Grandmother’s rejection
Resources	Relationship with boyfriend
	Experience in the apartment she used to live
	Emphasis on attraction towards women
Resistances	Therapy follow-up
	Discovering pleasure with her boyfriend
	Redefinition of sex
	Sensitivity to intersectional issues
Relevant characters in the story	The father, the mother and the grandmother
	The friends who lived in the apartment
	The therapist
	The girlfriend

Step 4. Defining the literary style: the option for the tale

The next step in composing research texts is choosing the text format. Clandinin and Connelly (2015) point out that there are several possible structures for research texts, such as memorials, collections of photographs, poetry, reports or drama. In an introspective movement, it is necessary for the researcher to look at themselves, their personal stories and textual affinities, which can favor the process. This movement must also be combined with a prospective process, considering who will possibly be the main reader group that will come into contact with this text format, and an extrospective process, having contact with the literature produced in the field of studies.

In the research cited as an example, we chose to create fiction-based narratives, which were structured based on the format of the literary genre of the tale. We consider that the structure of a tale, a brief way of narrating stories based on a linear succession of events that excludes the possibility of developing other secondary plots and characters that are too complex, would be adequate to achieve the research objectives, of narrating the trajectory of construction and experience of their bisexualities.

Step 5. Writing tales: producing fictional narratives from field texts

The transformation of field texts, which consisted of interview reports, into a research text in the format of fictional writing requires a major shift. In addition to the tensions previously listed, writing in this format requires a shift from conventional academic knowledge toward a literary language.

In the research we used as an example, the development of this step required enormous dedication to studying the chosen form of writing. This dedication had three main pillars: creative writing courses, immersion in the writing genre, and time. The first step was to make creative writing courses available online. Becoming familiar with this type of writing requires learning its forms, possibilities, and tools.

After conducting the initial studies, we performed a preliminary experiment involving writing a first story. Experimentation, as proposed by Clandinin and Connelly (2015), refers to provisional texts that lie between field texts and research texts, which form a negotiation between the researcher and the field texts. Through this initial story, we were able to explore the transition from listed points and themes to a semi-fictional narrative.

The next move was to write a first tale based on the story of one of the participants. During the preparation, it was possible to understand the importance of literary resources, the need for inspiration, in addition to technical knowledge of writing. We then turned to the second pillar,

the dedication to literary reading. From that moment until the completion of the last story, copies of classic authors of national and international importance were read, such as Conceição Evaristo, Clarice Lispector, José Saramago, and Valter Hugo Mãe. The works of these authors contributed to present possible reflections based on the trajectories narrated and possible sensitive and aesthetic formats of narrative constructions.

The familiarization with the new writing style also revealed a difference in the pace of production. More time was needed in the construction of each story than in the theoretical analysis. For the difference in the pace, different strategies were adopted which consisted of pauses for the flow of thoughts and creativity. In a cyclical movement between the writing positions, retrospectively returning to the stories that were constructed with the participants at the time of the interviews and moving away from them prospectively, the final tales were permeated, among other things, by the stories and experiences of the researcher herself, with the different literary inspirations and for the theoretical analysis of each point raised. As an illustration, we present how we worked on Maria's narrative in a fictional way. We bring some elements of her story, as produced in the interview (field text) and how it was worked until its presentation in the format of a tale (research text).

As she presented herself in the interview, Maria is a cisgender woman, 25 years old, white, without disabilities, born and raised in Rondônia, Brazil. At the age of 18, she moved to the interior of São Paulo, where she studied and entered a public college. Maria lived without knowing other sexual experiences, other than heterosexual, until she entered college. When she started living with other LGBTQIA+ women, she discovered other relationship possibilities. By living different experiences and having a relationship with a girlfriend, she discovered her bisexuality, which brought difficulties in her family relationship.

To present this transformation, from the interview to the tale, we illustrate in Figures 2, 3, and 4, excerpts from the interview and excerpts from the story, providing examples of important points in her trajectory. Considering her narrative, in relation to the period of *Construction* of Maria's bisexuality, within the element of *distancing*, in Figure 1 we address the process of transformation of the theme of the hegemony of heterosexuality in the life of the participant from the interview to the story.

Continuing in the *Construction* period, within the element of *approximation*, we illustrate in Figure 3 the process of transformation of the theme of experience in the apartment in which she lived.

In the *Experience* period, within the element of *challenges*, in Figure 4 we highlight the transformation of the participant's speech framed within the theme of the grandmother's rejection of her sexuality.

Figure 2

Transformation of an excerpt from the interview into an excerpt from the tale: theme of the hegemony of heterosexuality

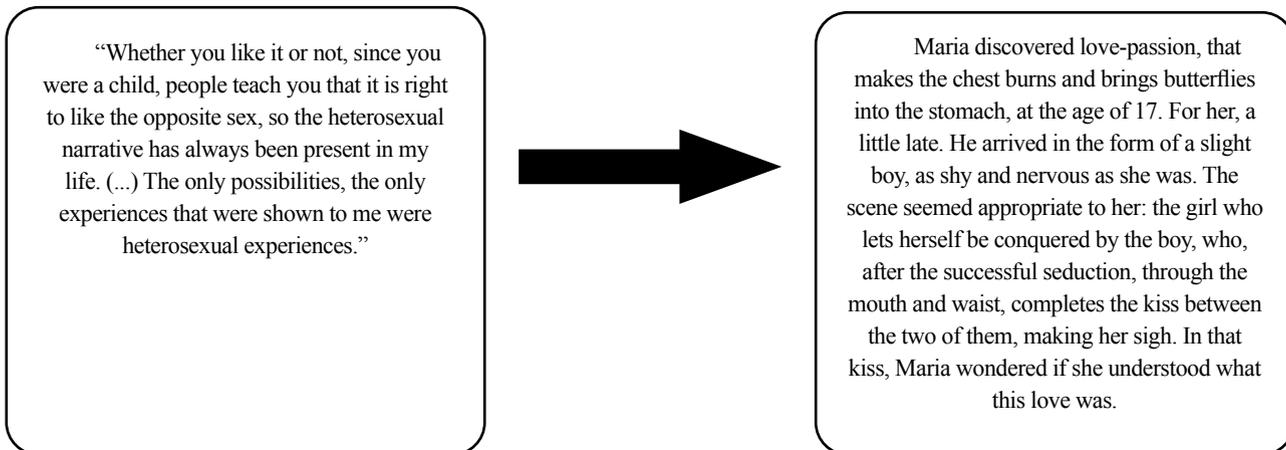


Figure 3

Transformation of an excerpt from the interview into an excerpt from the tale: theme of the experience in the apartment in which she lived

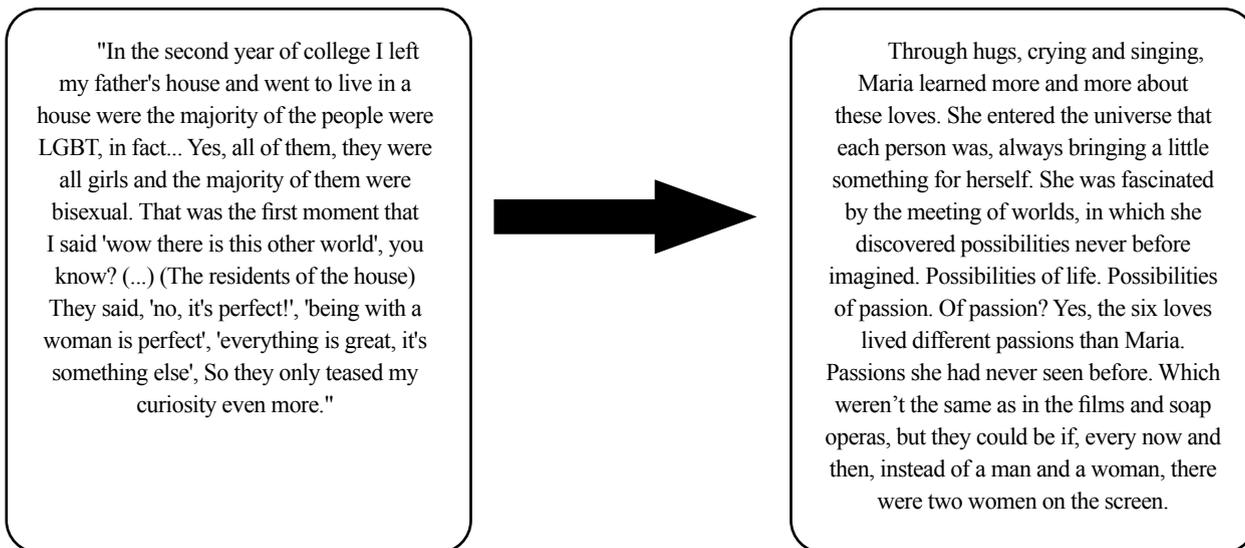
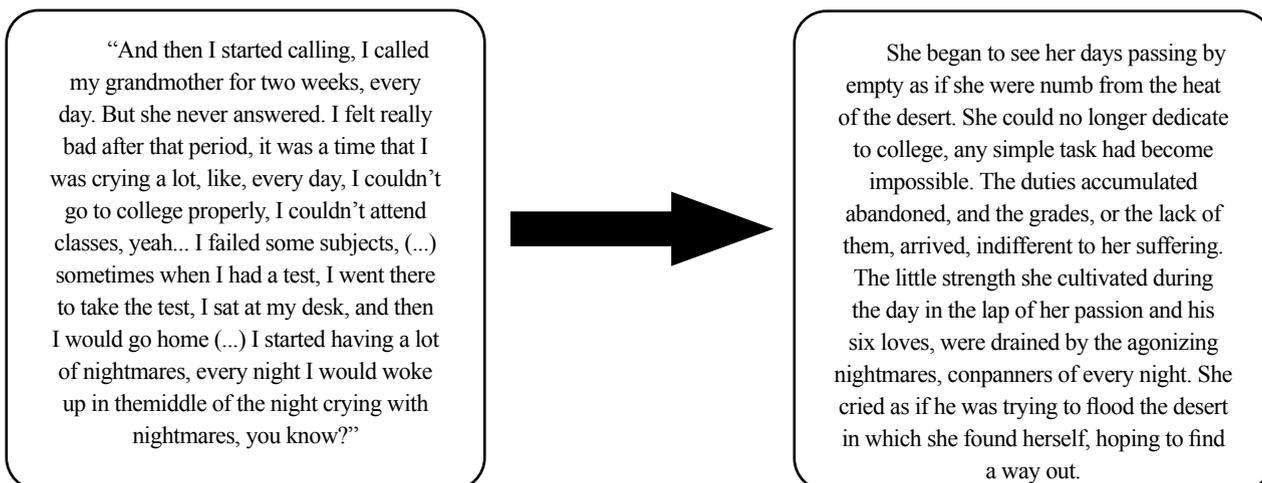


Figure 4

Transformation of an excerpt from the interview into an excerpt from the tale: theme of the experience in the apartment in which she lived



Step 6. The feedback: protagonism and legitimization

Relational knowledge is an important concept, both in the social constructionist research (Gergen, 1994) and in narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2015). It is understood that the process of understanding is the result of an active and cooperative endeavor, of people in relationships. This concept dialogues with the collaborative perspective, presented by Anderson (2017), which understands that the creation process is richer when done together. Considering that people are experts of their own experiences, an attitude of knowing “with” the people we interact with rather than knowing “about them” is proposed. In this way, we present the importance of joint construction of knowledge, seeking maximum involvement and contribution from participants.

The idea of protagonism and collaboration refers to the propositions and precepts of participatory action-research, which focuses on the involvement of researchers and the population in the collaborative production of knowledge. With a focus on working with social minorities in Latin America, the names of Paulo Freire (in the field of education in Brazil), and Orlando Fals-Borda (in the agrarian issue in Colombia) stand out with important contributions. This method, as a form of joint construction of knowledge, has the potential to validate the voice of the researched population and promote social transformation (Miranda, 2019).

Clandinin and Connelly (2015) also contribute to the discussion about protagonism and participation by bringing up the importance of the concept of signature, that is, the identity of both the researcher and the participant in the text. In the narrative investigation, it is expected that there will be a dialogue with participants about their signature in the text. To this end, the authors explain that the question that should guide the return of research texts for participants to read is: “Do you see yourself here”?

In the research that we cite as an illustration throughout this paper, we present the short stories produced for the research participants. The proposal, when planning the research, was for the participants to become deeply involved in the process of reviewing the writing, so that they could give their opinion on how they identify themselves in the points covered in the tale, and that they could suggest aspects that could be incorporated, further elaborated or removed through different modes of writing and metaphors. Thus, after completing a first version of each tale, the material was returned to each participant to the corresponding story, so that they could reflect and contribute to the material. At the end of the changes to each tale, the final version was sent to the participants, so that they could receive feedback on their participation in the writing.

From this dialogue, it was possible to incorporate important suggestions into some stories, which included more than one version of the material, passing through the participants’ approval several times, until the result was agreed by all parties. It was possible to observe that the proposal, however, presented some limitations, differing from what was expected from us. In return for reading the stories, we received mostly direct approvals, without many suggestions for changes, with

responses indicating that they agreed with the material prepared and that they recognized themselves in the tales. This aspect suggests that, although researchers are imbued with the logic of participatory research, the construction of participation in practice can still be challenging, requiring the construction of a greater culture of democratization in science production.

Discussion

Based on the process presented, we propose some reflections on the contributions of the narrative research method based on fiction, its limits, and its potential. The fiction-based research method has proven to be a powerful way of presenting the participants’ trajectories, with the important potential of accessibility. Unlike academic writing, which has specific scientific terms, fiction does not need technical knowledge to be consumed. This method of writing tends to be seen as pleasurable and more inviting.

It was possible to observe that, when faced with the tales produced from their lived stories, the participants reported feeling moved and flattered by the way in which their stories were portrayed. We can resume here the approach to the assumptions of action research, and thus understand that sharing their narratives appears as a form of intervention with this participating population, bringing transformations of meaning and new meanings to their trajectories. In this way, the fiction-based research method stands out as an important possibility of feedback for research participants, for the sensitive way in which their stories are portrayed.

In research on bisexual women, an invisible and stigmatized population, such methods enabled a sensitive look at each trajectory and existence, contributing to the rattling of hegemonic representations and a greater understanding of the experience of bisexuality as plural and contextual. The research methods also allowed, through art, the themes of each interview to be worked on, analyzed, and explained while maintaining the anonymity of the participants, an important ethical aspect.

We can understand that listening to and reconstructing each trajectory and experience through a joint construction, with literary inspirations, also contributed to the creation of new discursive repertoires about bisexuality and new possibilities of descriptions about experiences. Furthermore, from this immersion it was possible to dedicate ourselves to a greater understanding of the effects of the discourses of heteronormativity and monosexism on the experience of each participant, contributing to an understanding of the possible impacts on the construction of meanings and narrative descriptions in the lives of bisexual people.

With this in mind, we present the method of fiction-based narrative inquiry as an important contribution to the study of stigmatized populations in psychology. As contributions, we highlight questioning hegemonic conceptions regarding these categories, contributing to an understanding of plural experiences; expanding on the importance of listening to their own voices and increasing discursive repertoires about their identities and experiences while maintaining the anonymity of

the participants; gaining greater understanding of the effects of hegemonic discourses on the possibilities of experiences and meanings of experiences; and ensuring accessibility and sensitivity in returning the narrative to the participants.

We can observe, however, some obstacles in the construction of dialogue with the participants. As a possible obstacle we can highlight the personal distance between the main researchers and the participants. Despite the intention of having a non-hierarchical relationship between the researchers and the participants, based on the understanding that people are experts in their own stories (an important assumption for the researchers), the conception of a researcher holding knowledge is still the most traditional understanding among the population. Therefore, we can assume that participants who were not close to the researcher felt less freedom and comfort in giving their opinion about the tale writing.

We close this article by highlighting that the steps presented here should not be understood as a protocol. They are intended to serve as inspiration for other research to consider methods that are ethically and aesthetically concerned with the contributions described here, as well as with the intersection of theory with art and more participatory dialogues with participants. The paths of narrative and fiction-based narrative are still little known and deserve to be explored. Studies that dialogue with other literary genres can enrich the literature in the area, as well as provide greater insight into what type of research question benefits from this type of inquiry.

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