

**TEXT AND DISCOURSE:
NARRATIVE STRUCTURE IN
EVERYDAY STORIES***

Paz Hernandez Diaz

ABSTRACT

With the use of narratology, the researcher in this study articulates the narrative structure of real-time stories told by the seven women who participated in the study. The researcher also shows the applicability of narratological analysis and semantic webbing in understanding these real-time life stories. In addition, the researcher follows a methodological procedure for constructing the women's narrative world which other researchers may be able to use in analyzing other stories in a similar manner.

The study shows that a qualitative researcher can come up with ways to understand a narrator's stories and re-tell them as one tale. The new story brings with it a new understanding of the narrator's context, giving new listeners a different perspective of the narrator's life. The stories told by the seven women are the raw materials used by the researcher for narrative construction. With the use of relevant methodologies, data from these stories are organized and re-arranged from an initial to a terminal situation.

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The researcher shows how this re-arrangement can be done and how a qualitative researcher can mark off a segment of time in a series of events in the storyteller's life and link these together to find a unified whole. The narrative's main product is meaning, produced by the dynamic interaction, the communication, between the storyteller and the listener.

The initial situation of each woman in the study is a depressing mixture of being left alone and helpless and of being in dire need of material resources. With children to feed and send to school, each woman is forced to face poverty and do something positive to overcome it. The traditional way of reacting to such problems would be to sit and wait for dole-outs from relatives or friends, or from government agencies. In patriarchal society, this would mean looking for another male figure to help the woman out of her misery.

Instead of throwing her hands up in desperation, each woman handles her problems by negotiating between her roles and what society expects of her in order to come up with a useful solution. Instead of blaming external causes for her lack of material goods, each one takes the risk of starting a business venture, albeit "micro" and informal. Like heroines of old, each one left the comforts of home to face uncertainty in the outside world. Each one overcomes the tests and challenges that crop up along the way in her environment from husbands, relatives, friends, and neighbors, in particular, and from apathetic government institutions in general. Each woman's small business is the key to overcoming her troubles and keeping her family above water.

Although mostly unreported, the economic and social benefits that the informal sector brings about among the marginalized have been found to be substantial. The informal economic sector has shown that it can provide self-employment and income to the poorer members of society. Since informal enter-

prises are able to do away with costly procedures and government regulations, the informal sector can operate profitably, especially in vending, which is what most of the women in the study do.

The women in the study have the positive side of the informal economic sector, something that mainstream economists in government tend to gloss over. Their stories need to be told so that government bureaus, policy makers, and development workers can help people like them help themselves. The inner strength and genuine character shown by the seven women in this study indeed give poor people in the informal sector a good name.

Tested like gold in the fire, each woman comes out victorious, each in her own way. This is the essence of their victory: success is wrapped around their children and their business on the one hand, and closely linked to a supreme being on the other hand. In articulating what is important in their lives, they have become wise women of the streets: creative, effective, and productive. They have acquired new roles as breadwinner, mother, sister, and friend.

They are survivors.