$SAGE

# Exploring Ethical Dimensions Associated with 'Pushing for PINs' and Probing: A Critical Commentary on Key Features of the Biographical Narrative Interpretive Method (BNIM) with 'Vulnerable' and Other Populations

Lisa Moran[1] ⓘ, Lorraine Green[2], and Lisa Warwick[3]

## Abstract

This paper focuses on some potential ethical dilemmas associated with the Biographical Narrative Interpretive Method (BNIM), drawing on existing BNIM literature, other qualitative research literature and insights drawn from the authors' experiences of using the method. There are several ethical issues central to biographical interviewing, including the potential for re-traumatising participants. We argue this potential is heightened when deploying a central BNIM technique 'Pushing for PINs'. In this article we therefore analyse the evolution, philosophical underpinnings, principles and techniques of BNIM. We evaluate BNIM's usefulness and allure, in terms of generating vivid data which can lead to deeper knowledge and improved services for under-researched and marginalised groups, whilst stressing that more attention needs to be devoted to identifying and mitigating ethical dilemmas.

## Keywords

Biographical Narrative Interpretive Method, biographical, ethics, narrative, pushing

## Introduction

This paper offers a critical commentary on potential ethical dilemmas associated with the Biographical Narrative Interpretive Method (BNIM), both generally and with vulnerable persons. We argue 'Pushing for PINs', a BNIM technique integral to inciting detailed life stories, deployed in the second part of the interview, places researchers in precarious, but simultaneously powerful positions, because of its potential to engender extreme emotional distress, rich narratives, or both. Personal Incident Narratives (PINs) are detailed stories of specific life events that regularly generate positive and negative emotions, and sometimes traumatic memories. 'Pushing for PINs' refers to actively encouraging participants to recount precise moments of particular events, as if actually experiencing them. The questions are phrased using the same terminology or sequences of words that the interviewee

previously used in the interview and are repeated when resistance or reluctance to respond is manifested. However, despite PINs' centrality to BNIM, and the growing popularity of the method, extant literature on the ethical dimensions

[1]Senior Lecturer and Head of Department, Department of Social Care and Early Childhood, Waterford Institute of Technology, Waterford, Ireland
[2]Senior Lecturer, Department of Social Sciences, Edge Hill University, Ormskirk, UK
[3]School of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Nottingham, Nottingham, UK

**Corresponding Author:**
Lisa Moran, Senior Lecturer and Head of Department, Department of Social Care and Early Childhood, Waterford Institute of Technology, Waterford X91 K0EK, Ireland.
Email: lisa.moran@wit.ie

associated with 'Pushing' and PINs is sparse. This paper therefore addresses an important omission in the literature.

The BNIM approach espoused by Tom Wengraf is increasingly utilised to investigate multifarious research topics, in Europe, the USA, Australasia and even Asia, across multiple disciplines, including health and social care, social work, education and veterinary sciences. It encompasses a formulaic approach to qualitative data collection, analysis and interpretation, involving structured interview questions and techniques across interlinking subsections (Wengraf, 2001, 2011). Some BNIM studies are personally and politically sensitive and/or involve marginalised or 'at risk' groups. These include pregnant teenagers (McNulty, 2008), survivors of child sexual abuse (Mooney, 2021), homeless people (Curran & Chamberlayne, 2002), older male domestic abuse perpetrators and Holocaust survivors (Rosenthal, 1998). Despite this corpus of research, and BNIM's potential to generate narrations of exceptional depth, we argue that there are insufficient critical analyses of the ethical dimensions of BNIM. In this paper, we focus chiefly on Wengraf's work as the foremost BNIM methodologist, much discussed in recent literature (Flynn, 2019; Mooney, 2021).[1]

Whilst some BNIM proponents argue that participants experience catharsis during PINs (Wengraf, 2011) or that therapeutic benefits could be a 'side product' of biographical narrative interviews (Vajda, 2007), we assert the experience could also be harmful, particularly for those who previously experienced intense emotional distress, linked to physical/mental illnesses, abuse, loss and grief. Some biographical research advocates for the therapeutic effects of telling one's story when injustices, multiple oppressions, fear, stigmatisation and human atrocities are involved (Rosenthal, 2003; Bar-On & Kassem, 2004). Other depth interview research argues the converse, that serious harm may be caused, particularly when specific issues, such as bereavement, are involved (Adler, 1985). There are admittedly analogies to be drawn between therapy and biographical narrative interviewing in that fairly open nondirective questioning and Rogerian counselling techniques, such as expressing warmth and unconditional positive regard, may feature in both activities (Brinkmann, 2013). Furthermore, just bearing witness to someone's narrative, regardless of context or role, may invoke therapeutic gains (Golczynska-Grondas & Grondas, 2013). However, therapy is overtly undertaken for the anticipated benefits to the individual client and may involve many meetings. A research interview is often a one-off meeting which aims to establish rapport purely to gain important information about an issue which may then be used to further theory, policy or practice. Therefore, whether interviews can or should be regarded as 'therapeutic situations' or the converse, potentially traumatising situations, are subject to ongoing debates in biographical research (Kazmierska, 2005, p. 399). We are allied to the view that although there may be some therapeutic by-products of the interview for some respondents, our key ethical precept should be to 'do no harm'

and potentially therapeutic side effects should never be used to justify dubious research methods or techniques. Our participants' responses to BNIM interviews engendered different positive and negative emotions suggesting that re-traumatisation needs to be accorded greater emphasis in BNIM literature. We also show how everyday events in interviewees' lives markedly affected our interactions with some participants, leading to unanticipated distress.

Much BNIM literature refers to general ethical safeguards to minimise emotional distress, such as counselling services for participants and research advisory committees comprised of multiple 'stakeholders' (Flynn, 2019; Mooney, 2021). The potential emotional distress that could be triggered by 'pushing' for narratives due to the 'pressured' emphasis on re-experiencing past events, which could affect both interviewees and interviewers, during or after interviews, has largely remained unacknowledged and un-discussed. We therefore argue that the risks of emotional harm are potentially heightened in BNIM, given its emphasis on 'pushing for PINs'. We critically reflect on 'Pushing for PINs' in two studies, one on care-experienced university students and the other, a study of veterinarian and farmers' emotions. Drawing on research examples, we argue that in these contexts, applying standardised BNIM guidance on 'pushing for PINs' raised significant ethical questions, both with patently vulnerable groups and others who may not be publicly perceived of or view themselves as particularly vulnerable, or who may only experience vulnerability in specific situations.

Initially this paper provides a brief overview of BNIM, its historic development, epistemological and ontological underpinnings, and key characteristics. Following this, we specifically focus on 'pushing for PINs' and trauma, explicating potential and actual ethical dilemmas and outlining potential benefits. We also explore parallels and differences, in respect of ethical quandaries, between 'pushing' in BNIM literature and the more multifaceted and amorphous term of 'probing', often alluded to in qualitative research. We analyse extant literatures referring to BNIM and offer examples from our own research, where 'pushing for PINs' generated interviewee anguish and resistance. We draw on wider biographical research to generate critical reflections on how BNIM training could be redesigned to offset some ethical dilemmas. In our conclusion we discuss the potential benefits and disadvantages of BNIM in respect of some key ethical guidelines associated with social research, including informed consent, privacy intrusion and not causing harm to participants, whilst also considering BNIM from different philosophical positions.

## The Biographical Narrative Interpretive Method: Origins and Development

The Biographical Narrative Interpretive Method incorporates 'conscious concerns and … unconscious cultural, societal and individual presuppositions and processes', enabling in-depth

comprehension of the complexities of individual and collective lived experiences in and across time (Wengraf, 2011, p. 56). BNIM draws on predominant themes in biographical research: temporality, memory, agency and explores participants' unique subjectivities, capturing how interviewees experienced events in the moment, 'future blind', and therefore unaware of later consequences (Rustin, 2000; Froggett & Wengraf, 2004). BNIM can yield narratives of exceptional depth, highlighting the complexity of everyday life experiences and routines that may seem mundane, but which are linked to past, present and future subjectivities (Fenge et al., 2010).

These are several broad similarities between BNIM and other narrative and biographical interviewing approaches: an emphasis on narration, story elicitation, interpretative panels and sequencing (Rosenthal, 2003). However regardless of its emphasis on 'free flowing' narratives, BNIM is paradoxically 'rule bound', with specific protocols regulating research design, interpretation and writing. Critical aspects of BNIM interviewing like 'Pushing for PINs', 'In PINs', 'Experiencing Hypotheses', the Single Question Used to Induce Narrative (SQUIN), and approaches to data analysis, bear some similarity to other biographical approaches (see Rosenthal, 2003), although the term 'pushing' is more commonly associated with BNIM. Whilst similarities exist between 'Pushing for PINs' and 'probing' in qualitative interviews and using one single question in narrative interviews and a BNIM SQUIN, the terminologies and rules that regulate BNIM are somewhat unique. BNIM necessitates 'thinking in a more than usually focused way about situatedness in time and space and subjective experiencing' and is intrinsically linked to individual subjectivities which continually transform in response to interlinked personal circumstances and wider socio-political concerns (Moen, 2018, p. 50). BNIM is often characterised as necessitating inner reflection on researchers' positionalities, epistemological and ontological orientations, representation and participants' voices (Jones, 2003) and is exceptionally well suited to research that explores subjectivities.

BNIM originated in emergent humanist perspectives within Western psychology and sociology after World War II, which gave rise to individual, person-centred approaches including case-studies, biographies and life history research (Squire et al., 2013, p. 3). Other intellectual influences include Fritz Schütze's (1983) biographical narrative interviewing approach, and micro-analytic and objective hermeneutic approaches from Ulrich Oevermann. The 'biographical turn' in the social sciences throughout the 1960s and 70s, and increased recognition that biographical methods reach aspects of people's experiences that cannot 'be tapped through documentary or formal survey sources' provided further impetus (Chamberlayne et al., 2000, p.3). This was followed by more extensive engagement with memory and identity in the 1980s and participants' agency in the 1990s (ibid).

BNIM evolved through synthesising specific dimensions of reflexive methodologies (Cardenal, 2016), and was developed into a particular approach to biographical research within the *Quatext* Research Institute for Qualitative Social Science in Berlin, which specialised in Biographical Methods in the 1990s (Wengraf, 2011, p. 55; Cardenal, 2016, p. 56). Another principal impetus was the closer alignment of two disciplines that remained distinct until the 1980s, psychoanalysis and sociology, and the growing importance of feminism and poststructuralism (Rustin, 2000). In the late 1990s, Dr. Prue Chamberlayne and Tom Wengraf subsequently introduced BNIM to the UK and it became increasingly popular in the Anglophone world, with Wengraf a key proponent and disseminator.

## BNIM Interviewing: An Overview

Typically, BNIM interviews involve two separate interlinking sub-sessions, with an optional sub-session three, similar to a semi-structured interview and often only used, where insufficient data has been generated (Wengraf, 2001). In sub-session one, interviewers ask only one question, a SQUIN, to invite narrative. It follows this precise sequence *'As you know, I'm a researcher who is interested in (phenomena/ topic). Please tell me the story of (the event), all the events that are important to you. Start wherever you like. Take the time you need. I'll just take some notes'*. The SQUIN emphasises the participant's agency in telling their story and non-interruption (Wengraf, 2011). The 'Whole Life SQUIN' aims to elicit the participant's entire life story whilst the 'Partial Life SQUIN' focuses on a certain life event (e.g. going to university, pregnancy or divorce), or a life stage (Mooney, 2021). Sub-session two focuses on 'pushing for PINs', where the participant (ideally) describes in detail, events discussed or alluded to in sub-session one. Whilst participants possess power in relaying their narratives in sub-session one and sub-session three involves co-construction, sub-session two involves the interviewer attempting formulaically to invoke graphic narratives about important personal incidents.

In the second interview subsection, through 'pushing for PINs', participants are actively and sometimes repeatedly encouraged to recount precise moments of particular events, as if actually experiencing them. Interviewers ask only about the topics raised in subsection one, deploying the exact 'cue phrases' participants used, in the precise order they occurred (Cardenal, 2016). Wengraf (2011, p. 50), compares 'Pushing for PINs' to 'truffle hunting', indicating their rarity and value, and although PINs are widely discussed in BNIM literature (Cardenal, 2016; Moen, 2018), detailed ethical analyses about what 'pushing' means are largely absent.

*The Semantics and Ethics of Pushing and Probing.* The notion of 'pushing' conjures up adverse connotations, such as negative touch, intimidation and coercion, reinforced by pejorative terminology such as *'being pushed to the limit', 'pushed around'* or being *'a pushover'*. In interview contexts, 'pushing' suggests the interviewer forcefully dictates the style

and direction of questioning, although pushing can also include gentle encouragement. 'Pushing the boundaries' or 'pushing against' popular opinion can also signify social transformation. In BNIM interviews, 'pushing' implies 'pushing beyond' standard 'question and answer' style interview formats or participants' and researchers' emotional or discursive boundaries, generating novel interpretations of events. 'Pushing for PINs' bears similarities to probing in semi-structured interviews and other biographical interviewing techniques (see Rosenthal, 2003; Szcepanik & Siebert, 2015). However, the sequence and phrasing of 'pushing' is formulaic to incite narrative on the lived life and unanswered questions are repeated, hence the use of the term 'pushing'.

There is little that examines the ethics of probing in the general methodological literature, although different forms of probing are explicated, from the least intrusive silence or non-verbal encouragement prompts, to probes asking for immediate or retrospective clarification or elaboration, or shifting the discussion to a different area. It is also often suggested, as with BNIM, but less formulaic, that the interviewer deploys the participants' own words when probing (Roulston, 2012). Although one might assume that 'probing' is ethically preferable to 'pushing', because there is concern with being attuned to and sensitive to the participants' feelings and emotions, the word 'probing' also conjures up negative images of painful medical examinations and feeling powerless, or meddling uninvited in other people's private business. The apparently innocuous but the perhaps harmful and manipulative nature of some probing is clearly illuminated by 'baiting'. This term refers to an assertion probe whereby the interviewer suggests they understand or know more about something than they actually do, with the intention of the respondent either telling the interviewers they are mistaken or feeling more comfortable about discussing something in detail they were anxious about (Bernard, 2013). Our examination of 'pushing' in BNIM and comparing this to the broader generic term 'probing' has therefore elucidated that probing itself can also be 'pushy' and duplicitous and that 'pushiness' is therefore not necessarily unique to BNIM, although it is more overt. What is of particular concern with 'pushing' in BNIM is the guidance to repeatedly 'push' in spite of resistance, with 'pushing' being justified or offset by claims of catharsis or the therapeutic side effect.

PINs can also be comprised of InPINs, exceptionally detailed PIN narratives about events, people and places which provide clues about how this PIN relates to interrelated life events and the participant's ever-evolving subjectivities. In 'About PINs' participants allude to the PIN indirectly, possibly because of fear, embarrassment, abdication of responsibility, or blocking painful memories. The standard BNIM guidance advocates pushing for more direct PIN narrations, but if an interviewee does not want to speak of an issue directly, is it morally right to push for narrative? Whilst BNIM training manuals underline the importance of ethics, they overemphasise the importance of achieving PINs which could

sway inexperienced researchers, to push harder than they should. The directness of phrasing, when pushing for PINs, may also render participants feeling powerless to opt out of answering questions. Furthermore, if a researcher pushed more than once on the same cue phrase, having not achieved the PIN initially, this could lead to inner reflections about events that participants may have blocked out. In semi-structured interviewing, researchers may probe using direct questions which could have similar impacts. However, probing is usually less formulaic in semi-structured interviews and less direct in phrasing. Moreover, although some participants may not manifest discomfort, this does not mean that they want to respond to PIN probes. If the researcher has less experience and misinterprets or ignores outward signs that participants may not want to answer a question, this can generate ethically problematic situations. Whilst these issues are not unique to BNIM or to biographical interviewing, they should be afforded consideration in BNIM, given its widespread usage with vulnerable groups, the directness of 'pushing', and gaps in the training literature around the potential for causing harm to participants and researchers.

Whilst BNIM generally encourages non-intervention (outside of 'pushing for PINs'), it allows specific generic phrases to signal empathy with distressed participants, such as 'I can see that is still painful for you' or 'it makes you sad to remember that'. These phrases ostensibly enable the participant to 'stay with the emotion' or 'emerge from it in their own time' (Wengraf, 2004, p.8). Wengraf (2011) states that pushing for PINs involve 'the musings and remembering of the interviewee' and is a 'long struggle'. Whilst this can engender deeper participant understandings of the antecedents of and interconnections between specific life events, it can potentially lead to 'darker' emotional territories. Whilst painful emotions can emerge in any interview situation, the term 'pushing' denotes asymmetrical power relations between researchers and participants and suggests the researcher's main objective is to push for narratives. However, we need to question why the participant is not telling us what we think we need to know. Trust in persons perceived to possess authority is a critical factor affecting research with people from so-called 'vulnerable' and 'socially marginalised' backgrounds (Lefevre et al., 2017). Lack of trust, multiple inequalities, oppressions and other life experiences which the participant is unaware of or does not (fully) remember, can therefore affect how and why they choose to narrate their life stories (or not). Furthermore, we may have unrealistic or unfair expectations about our participants. We may not get the level of detail engendered in a PIN but it may be the most detail that interviewees are able to give us without feeling violated.

Prioritising PIN moments through 'pushing' may lead to better quality data and some interviewees welcome opportunities to tell their stories. However, pushing for PINs could be ethically contentious when participants do not want to be probed directly or repeatedly about a life event. Whilst this can happen in semi-structured or in-depth interviews, participants'

and researchers' experiences of pushing require detailed scrutiny. Wengraf (2011) stresses active listening through non-verbal supporting (e.g. eye contact, utterances) that indicate close attention and acceptance. Whilst non-verbal and verbal cues are important in establishing rapport and trust, some situations require less scripted, more flexible communicative strategies than BNIM offers, particularly when interviewees become distressed. Despite claims that BNIM and other biographic approaches are potentially therapeutic (Etherington, 2007) and lead to profound social and individual transformation, they could exacerbate negative emotions causing unnecessary short or long-term mental distress, particularly if participants do not seem vulnerable or are adept at concealing their feelings, due to fear, stigma or interviewer effect (amongst other reasons).

*BNIM Justifications for 'Pushing' and Counter Arguments.* Wengraf (2011, p. 87) states that ethical obligations must 'override personal preferences'. However, much BNIM literature describes ethical safeguards generically, suggesting greater explication with regards to ethics around the responsibilities and roles of researchers on PINs is required. For example responding to a researcher who did not 'Push for PINs' due to shyness and wanting to avoid conflict Wengraf (2011, p. 86) states:

> 'If you don't take their leads towards 'PINs of Suffering', you add to their current suffering, discouraging them… from starting to open up about their personal history to others. This will result in disappointment to yourself and discouragement from them, which in my view is ethically more important'.

Wengraf (2011, pp. 86–87) claims most people's lives are marked by suffering and individuals participate in BNIM because they are consciously/unconsciously aware of difficulties they want to talk through. He stresses if researchers are not 'prepared to learn to cope with narratives of suffering and conflict', this will lead to 'technically-bad interviewing and ethically-bad behaviour and may inflict further damage and suffering' (ibid.). Admittedly, all human lives are marked to some extent by traumas. However, Wengraf (2011) places the onus principally on researchers to overcome personal barriers preventing them from 'pushing' for traumatic narratives, rather than asking whether it is ethically right or wrong to push for PINs on emotionally traumatic events. For example in Xin Guo's (2021) study of shifting intergenerational childrearing traditions in China, she adhered to standard BNIM guidance on 'pushing', reporting trying to 'dig deep' or 'dig out' more information 'by asking [respondents] sometimes repeatedly for more detail'.

Vadja (2007) analysed two biographic narrative interviews with elderly Holocaust survivors in Hungary, who seemed to feel responsible for others' deaths. Vadja recounted that such interviewing was therapeutic for one respondent but seemed traumatic for another. The therapeutically experienced interview that enabled the respondent to reconstruct past events in ways that offered her emotional relief, allowing her to see she was not responsible for others' deaths, was accompanied by virtually no interviewer intervention. In the other interview, repeated attempts to elicit more detail about how the interviewee managed to steal two Nazi guards' uniforms that they were wearing at the time, yielded much defensiveness and resistance alongside incomplete, unbelievable and often incomprehensible responses. Vadja hypothesised this may have been because the man had actually seriously injured or killed the guards to obtain their uniforms.

Although this is only one example, it suggests when respondents feel coerced and pressurised, they may resist, manifesting 'defended subjectivities' (Hollway & Jefferson, 2012) and the research may cause them harm. Conversely when respondents have autonomy in what they disclose and how, this may be beneficial to them and enable a fuller understanding of their story, although of course research may always encounter or tap into 'unknown (or unknowable) sensitivities' (ibid, 28). Distress is also not analogous to causing harm and could lead to either positive or negative, immediate or later effects for individual participants. Therefore, the issue of potential or actual distress should never be a factor by itself which is used to veto certain research projects or stop interviews. Furthermore, participants are not averse to discussing painful or distressing issues if they perceive the research as worthwhile, bringing potential benefits to others (Graham et al., 2007).

As BNIM facilitates detailed case-studies of research participants and subjectivities across time, some commentators argue that failing to uncover negative experiences will only produce partial information, preventing holistic understanding of the participants' lived realities (Peta et al., 2019), thereby upholding the significance of 'pushing'. However, research underlines the fallibility, situated nature and infinite changeability of autobiographical memory (Cohen & Conway, 2004). Therefore, a holistic understanding of people's lives, is not a 'given', but is subject to potentially infinite temporal variations and interpretations. Omitting negativity could perpetuate inequitable power dynamics and oppressions; for example through failing to incorporate people's experiences of traumas, such as domestic violence, into research (Hogan & O'Reilly, 2007). Furthermore, with adults vulnerable to multiple material and/or social inequalities, such oversights could lead to inadequate policy and service delivery, if services are informed by the research. However, none of these claims, although valid in and of themselves, present a logical or suitable ethical defence for 'pushing' if this might engender significant harm to participants. This does not conversely justify the increasing 'ethics creep' either, whereby ethics committees seem increasingly (self) protectionist and paternalistic and are risk averse to supporting research concerning sensitive or contentious issues or involving vulnerable participants who have rarely been given a voice (Helgeland, 2005). Eliciting complex narratives from vulnerable people

could impact adversely in the short/long-term upon participants' mental health and other aspects of their lives, even if they say they want to tell their story, but it is how the interviewer handles the interview and elicits and responds to that story that appears to be the crucial issue. This raises further questions about the role of the researcher during and after interviews, should emotionally disturbing narratives emerge, as well as the process around how those narratives have been elicited.

Some biographical researchers stress the principle of non-intervention and minimal interview response throughout the entire interview. With BNIM the second part of the interview involves 'pushing for PINs' whereby specifics in terms of important autobiographical memory are assertively and repeatedly requested. As ever, a balance must be struck between ethical integrity in relation to the respondent and the quest for wider knowledge. However, some researchers are concerned that a passive mode of interviewing may lead to a doxic opinion-based knowledge whereas more assertive dialectical questioning and dialogue can lead to more informed critical epistemic knowledge (Brinkmann, 2013). Brinkmann therefore suggests that higher quality knowledge may be gained when an interview is interactive and respondents are questioned about and challenged to think through difficult issues, but even if Brinkmann's assertion is correct, then this still does not seem to justify potentially harmful formulaic and repeated pushing.

After the interview researchers can provide details of professional services to participants, or employ counsellors and psychotherapists, although the latter is not always possible due to budgetary constraints. Bearing witness to emotionally traumatic narratives can also impact on the researcher as well as the participant's emotional wellbeing (Moran, 2021). Even when it is ethical for researchers to contact participants after interviews to check on their wellbeing, they may feel emotionally unable to do so. Furthermore, having details of professional counselling services does not mean interviewees will access them, even if in dire emotional distress. Despite some biographical interviews being heralded as potentially healing (Rosenthal, 2003) or cathartic, such claims are difficult to evaluate and substantiate. What may be momentarily experienced as positive relief or validation during an interview, may at a later point in time transmogrify into a complex emotionally distressing situation or vice versa.

Catharsis is a key justification for using BNIM and for 'pushing' (Wengraf, 2011). Whilst 'catharsis' invokes notions of positive emotional 'release' it also alludes to inner struggle, purgation, and sometimes, pity and fear. It is therefore not uniformly positive. We consequently cannot assume that all participants want to talk through difficult issues or find the process cathartic. There does not appear to be any previous research exploring participants' understandings or experiencing of BNIM processes or documenting what initial information participants were given about the researcher's or institute's ethical position and the methodology.

Consequently, some participants may not fully comprehend they will be encouraged to re-live deeply personal, emotional experiences that may impact on their lives afterwards and this is an on-going issue in relation to informed consent with much research methodology as well as BNIM (Allmark et al., 2009).

As neither the researcher nor the participant can predict what will emerge during biographical interviews (Kortocivca and Knott, 2020), researchers should therefore deploy models of continuous or process consent rather than seeing it as a one-off signature prior to the research (Kazmierska, 2005; Allmark et al., 2009). Rosenthal (2003) outlines general features of biographic narrative interviews, arguing that the second interview phase, corresponding broadly to BNIM sub-session II is of 'great advantage to traumatised people' (p. 918) encouraging them to make sense of life phases and situations. However, Rosenthal (2003) further argues that researchers should not battle against protagonists' defences and the probing approach she discusses is less direct than standardised BNIM ('*could I possibly ask you about a time…?*') (p. 919). Whilst there is still potential for discomfort, a more reflexive approach to PINs, attuned to participant's potential traumas during and after interviews, and less reliant on methodological stringencies, therefore seems more ethical.

Whilst 'PINs' and 'InPINs' command substantial attention in BNIM research, albeit in a rather 'descriptive' sense, we are principally concerned with situations where either inexperienced BNIM researchers, or those who rigidly follow BNIM's highly prescriptive protocols could 'push for PINs' too hard, or too many times, with potentially damaging consequences. Standard BNIM training manuals place great emphasis on 'pushing for PINs', claiming that experiencing past traumatic events is cathartic for participants, and culminates in vivid data. Many potential power disparities may come into play between researchers and participants, in relation to gender, age, personality, perceived authority and knowledge, and social and occupational positions. A very real possibility therefore exists, that even if participants do not want to talk about a certain issue, they may feel obliged, even if informed beforehand that they can refuse to answer a question or stop the interview. This becomes more likely if the participant is vulnerable or unconfident and an insensitive or authoritative researcher keeps on 'pushing'.

Although some of our participants reacted well to PINs, 'pushing' potentially suggests authoritative pressure or duress. Pushing, however, can also be conceptualised as a spectrum from 'hard' to 'soft'. Pushing 'too hard' and 'too much' risks evoking highly traumatic memories in participants which may lead to long-term negative repercussions; pushing 'too softly' might mean missing out on important aspects of individual life trajectories. This spectrum approach potentially opens up further dialogue about 'pushing' and ethical dimensions of inciting narratives. In BNIM and other contexts, researchers should use intuition and know-how on when to step back. Intuition, generally understood as a judgement made without conscious awareness or reasoning, and based on instinctive

hunches, gut feelings or sixth senses, is a contested concept in relation to its underlying processes, manifestations and accuracy (Dane & Pratt, 2007). However, it is often linked to past experiences and rapid pattern recognition, manifesting in affective, cognitive and somatic ways (Sadler-Smith, 2008) and is considered useful and often accurate in quick decision-making where there is minimal background information. Using one's intuition about how far to 'push' and respond to participants' narratives acts as a counterpoint or a mediator to very prescriptive and formulaic responses associated with BNIM and may minimise potential emotional distress for researchers and participants.

## Catharsis, Agitation and Threats: The Multi-dimensionality of Participant's Responses to 'Pushing for PINs' in Two Studies

We now draw on selective anonymised interviews from research studies we conducted between 2018 and 2020. One study involved biographical interviews with care-experienced university students in England. These are students who spent some time being cared for by the state as children, often being placed in foster or residential care, largely due to serious parental abuse or neglect. The second was a cross-national biographical study of farmers' and veterinarians' emotions in the UK and Ireland and the emotional labour connected with their interlinked work and family lives. All names are pseudonyms and information which might compromise a participant's identity is omitted. In both studies, BNIM interviews were used alongside other qualitative approaches. However, we draw only on BNIM interviews to illuminate significant ethical concerns around supports for participants and researchers regarding PINs. Despite in-depth information being given to participants before interviews and various institutional ethical clearances and supports, we found that additional consideration needs to be accorded to participants' understandings of what BNIM entails and the risks associated with re-living life events.

Our fieldwork showed that participants' responses to BNIM interviewing were more multi-dimensional than often assumed in BNIM literature which alludes to catharsis as positive release. One care leaver, Susie, said *'it's nice to get that out'*, but she was the only participant who made explicit reference to emotional tension release. Although care leaver students might be perceived as a particularly vulnerable group because of increased exposure to childhood abuse and neglect and (typically) manifesting poor adult outcomes, including unemployment, ill health and relationship instability, farmers and veterinarians are not readily viewed as particularly vulnerable. However, isolation and mental illnesses are highly prevalent among some farmers who face multiple stressors due to financial and environmental uncertainties (Allan, 2005), with both farmers and veterinarians being high risk occupational groups for suicide (Roberts et al., 2013). We were mindful of this and had details of support professionals

that participants could contact after interviews. Participants were informed they could opt out of interviews, stop at any time and they did not have to answer any questions they did not want to. In both studies, our ethical approach was guided by codes of ethics from the British Sociological Association (BSA) and our universities' ethical guidance. Our ethics corresponded closely to previous biographical and ethnographic research on veterinarians' and farmer's lives (Enticott, 2011; McAloon et al., 2017) and extant BNIM research with care leavers (Pinkerton & Rooney, 2014). Participants were informed about the method verbally and in writing; that negative emotions and memories could emerge during the interview and/or subsequently. Despite exercising a high degree of reflexivity and sensitivity to our participants, who all said they understood what was involved, some participants became emotionally upset during interviews.

Despite little evidence of catharsis in our research, in some cases, participants actively wanted to tell their stories, even when this involved previous negative or traumatic events. Some farmers, for example appreciated the opportunity to talk in intricate detail confidentially to a neutral, non-judgemental interested 'outsider'. One English farmer, Jack, said that telling his story was 'vindication'. He described himself as a '*has-been poster boy*' for a farming association. However, after a TB outbreak and the subsequent herd culling, he '*felt ostracised*' by other breeders which led to isolation and severe financial pressures. Jack commented that he '*liked PINs*' because it was the first time anyone ever asked him how he felt since the culling:

> 'I didn't have to ask the result because the vet, outside with her head down and there was no 'how are you?' like normal and we went to the shed in silence and the animals went in the lorry in silence. The breeders contacted me the next day to say the photographer wouldn't be coming. Then I had the bank. We nearly lost the house and at the market, there was silence. It put big pressure on the wife. Nobody wants to hear about the guy who lost it all. They want to see the guy with the great-looking herd. He's someone to aspire to. Nobody ever asked me how I was until you asked' (Jack, aged 48).

However, other fieldwork examples show that 'Pushing for PINs' resulted in participants becoming agitated and distressed. One farmer, Patrick, became extremely angry when the researcher attempted to elicit a PIN about why he '*never looked back*', a defining phrase in his narration.

> 'I don't look to the past. If I look to the past, I might never be able to come back from what I see. There's too much death and loneliness. Too much so I do it on purpose… Not looking back, because I can't' (Patrick, aged 56).

The emphasis on catharsis in the BNIM manuals does not do justice to the emotions displayed above or by other participants in PIN elicitation. These ranged from descriptions of

joyful events (e.g. getting married, having children, positive exam results), to traumatic memories too, including sexual and physical abuse, relationship breakdowns and mental illness. These eclectic emotions appeared in narratives with farmers, vets and care-experienced students, regardless of age, gender or education. The quotation below from a female veterinarian, is indicative of the wide range of emotions generated when we 'pushed for PINs', illuminating the richness of BNIM research. Andrea retells what she called a '*dark and disturbing*' period when she initially qualified as a vet and started working in a large commercial practice which she described as '*money oriented, money, money, like ABBA*'. The practice's professional orientation, relationship breakdowns and several arguments with the practice owner led to '*deep questioning about my life…an existential crisis*' and the re-emergence of mental illness not experienced since adolescence:

> 'I remember the pain and joy at once… It's weird. I felt physical and emotional pain, but I enjoyed the pain. And going back to a particular time I remember feeling like that. I remember getting blotted drunk and sitting outside a fast food place and thinking 'I want to cut myself and I'll enjoy it' and all these people going around looking happy. I was happy for them but also so sad. I wanted to be dead and then I started looking at my Dad in my wallet and I just felt ashamed. He paid for university and here I was drinking all this money, earning shag all and a failure' (Andrea, aged 31).

Some interviewees used very negative terms to describe life experiences in PINs like '*extreme loneliness*' and some expressed anger towards the researchers for asking for PINs about significant events, such as when young people went into care initially and relationships with foster families. Furthermore, events that ostensibly seemed positive in sub-session one, (e.g. a daughter's wedding), later gave rise to negative emotions during a PIN, relating to the interviewee's impending divorce. With one participant, Connor, a farmer, we used the standard BNIM guidance such as '*I can see you're still angry about that*', to which he replied

> 'Of course I'm angry. That's what someone in a university would ask. The thing you all do well is write a report. Do you think I'd want to talk about this? I don't want to talk about this' (Connor, aged 50).

We immediately suggested we could talk about something else or stop the interview altogether. Connor said nothing for 3 min and then asked if we could move on to talk about his daughter because he did not want to '*talk about negativity*'. This example seemed to challenge both the suggestion that using methodologically pre-scripted language and protocols, such as '*I can see you're still angry about that*' elicits PINs, and the assumption that all participants use interviews for personal healing. To ascertain if our hypothesis was accurate, we later asked Connor why he agreed to be interviewed. He

replied; '*I didn't have anything else to do today and you were nice on the phone*'. He was then asked if he felt upset after the interview, or if he did not fully understand what he was being asked to do in BNIM. He said

> 'I knew what you were asking with the information and I knew it was about the farm but I wasn't prepared talking about Sheila, the wife, would bring that up. It was asking about the wedding that stirred it and I didn't think it would. I guess I'm built that way' (Connor, aged 50).

We later reviewed the cue phrases and listened to the recording which revealed that we utilised the BNIM guidance accurately. The following day, Connor contacted us to inquire if we had got back to the university alright and he then explained the significance of a letter that arrived that morning which heightened his PIN response:

> 'I got a letter that morning, real formal one from Sheila's solicitor and I was trying to keep it civil but anyway, she wants more money and another field has to be sold. It was the one with the trees. My daughter wanted to build a house there, so it has to go and she's risking Anna's future. Sorry if I was rude' (Connor aged 50).

During PINs, some interviewees made admissions of previous self-harm linked to feelings that emerged during the interview. Sarah, a female care leaver, spoke of her '*extreme sadness and feeling so low in the depths of what low is*' when discussing her son who is in foster care:

> 'I don't get to see him much. I'm left out because the foster mother tells me nothing. I was on the train to my job and I bumped into a woman whose son was in the same class and she said; 'Jay dyed his hair a different colour. He's blonde now. And he's on the school's football team'. After that I tried to cut myself because we will never, ever live in the same house again and I know so little of who he is' (Sarah, age 29).

The preceding examples indicate the emotional traumas that recalling memories of past lives often has for participants, and these examples all emerged after just one attempt to gently push for PINs. They clearly illuminate the potentially detrimental consequences repeated 'pushing for PINs' could have on participants, as per the normative PIN guidance. The example with Connor further underlines that everyday events, (e.g. a letter arriving), can impact markedly on the participant's outlook on a particular day and that the process of evoking memories in a free flowing way, generates several ethical challenges.

Questions about pushing 'too hard' also emerged in interviews. In an interview with Fergus, an unmarried Irish farmer, we tried to elicit narrative reiterating a cue phrase about loneliness he had previously used, following the standard guidance. Although we deployed a quiet and soft

tone to inquire about Fergus' experience of loneliness, his tone and language changed immediately, and he became angry. He also made an admission of self-harm:

> 'I don't want to talk about it. I tried to kill myself and it didn't work because I thought too much about it and nobody knew so I just want to say what I'll say and that's it' (Fergus aged 58).

We immediately stopped the interview and asked Fergus if he was alright. He said he was and that he wanted to restart the interview, talking about a different topic that he had experienced positively; a religious pilgrimage. Had we continued to 'push for PINs' in relation to Fergus' cue phrase about loneliness, this would not only have been deeply unethical, because he had made it abundantly clear this was not an issue he wanted to discuss, but also because it could have caused him great anguish potentially long after the interview ceased.

On another occasion when a female veterinarian was talking about the emotional toll her work took on her home life, in her initial narration she told us in a relatively impassive way her family called her '*the ice queen*'. A later attempt to encourage her to talk more about this using this phrase culminated in her looking visibly distressed, monosyllabically responding '*no*' and then averting eye contact. We could have 'pushed for PINs' but decided not to, and both agreed in retrospective discussion this was the correct ethical path to take. Whilst these examples are indicative of emotional traumas and stresses that may emerge during BNIM interviews, BNIM has also been used apparently unproblematically by the paper's lead author and other researchers in other situations. However, our examples show that BNIM can sometimes incite extreme negative emotions too and therefore more ethical emphasis on and around the method and PINs is warranted.

## Discussion and Conclusions

There are significant advantages to using BNIM as it regularly yields detailed narratives about the complexity of people's so-called 'ordinary' lives (Roseneil, 2012; Moran et al., 2019) and participants' situated subjectivities which emerge and change across time. Peta et al. (2019) argue that BNIM facilitates 'high profile scholarly dialogues' whilst allowing 'those … at the periphery of society to take part in the creation of knowledge in academic circles'. Furthermore, the nuances and detail generated by some BNIM interviews can substantially improve policy and professional practice with marginalised groups and the opportunity to make sense of certain life events could benefit some interviewees. However, despite assertions that eliciting life stories and 'active listening' can affect deeply powerful emotional healing (Rosenthal, 2003) the evidence-base that this happens specifically in relation to BNIM or PINs is largely absent. Claims that BNIM interviews universally produce 'positive' cathartic effects and that participants take part, chiefly so they can make

sense of painful issues (Wengraf, 2001; 2011) are not well evidenced either. Justifying specific interview techniques on the basis of potential therapeutic outcomes for individuals may also inappropriately muddle services and professions that exist solely to support people, such as counselling and psychotherapy, and a research approach, where the key objective is to generate vivid and in-depth temporal narratives about people's lives. This may prove especially problematic for unreflexive novice researchers who lack the confidence to deviate from training materials and are unaware or fail to reflect adequately upon the potential harms that could emanate from PINs and 'pushing'. Therefore, although the experience of being interviewed may lead to unanticipated therapeutic benefits, we are of the opinion, that no research methodology, not just BNIM but other depth research interviewing too (Allmark et al., 2009), should try and justify or offset any harm caused with potential therapeutic benefits.

Despite similarities with other biographical narrative interviewing approaches (Rustin, 2000; Rosenthal, 2003), and BNIM's extensive use with vulnerable groups, our paper suggests the methodology and the claims surrounding BNIM require more scrutiny. BNIM advocates cannot justifiably defend the method principally on the basis that it generates extremely rich data, if this impacts heavily on participants' emotional wellbeing. We contend that PINs are multidimensional in the range of emotions invoked and are not uniformly positive or negative. Conceptualising PINs as spectrums ranging from 'pushing too hard' to 'too softly' underlines the contextual nature of 'pushing' and how the number of pushes on any one cue phrase should vary according to the specific interview situation and non-verbal and verbal cues from participants. Furthermore, the researcher's intuition in gauging participant's reactions and in operationalizing ethically responsible questions, which may/may not correspond to standardised BNIM training guidance on 'PIN pushing', needs greater emphasis.

Rosenthal (2003) stresses researcher-participant relationships should involve exercising active listening, being nonjudgemental and recognising people and places in the narration where participants feel secure as a means of ensuring that interviewees are not under pressure. Matching novice researchers with experienced biographical mentor researchers, and offering researchers, as well as participants, confidential access to counselling services are exceptionally important in qualitative studies, regardless of methodological conventions. Whilst BNIM offers much by way of theorisation, case construction and revealing temporal and multi-dimensional aspects of everyday life events, detailed ethical guidance for BNIM needs developing, with prioritisation given to ethical care for participants and researchers above attaining more and/or higher quality PINs. Whilst these suggestions do not eliminate the possibility of re-traumatisation entirely, they give researchers more options and flexibility and participants more volition about what they want to discuss and in what depth.

Concepts of 'vulnerability' are contested across the research ethics literature although global commonalities frequently include increased risk of suicide, self-harm and diminished capacities to cope with risks to emotional and physical wellbeing (Bracken-Roche et al., 2017). Early covert or semi-covert, but socially relevant psychological studies, on obedience (Milgram, 1963), sadism and prisoner/guard roles (Zimbardo et al., 1973), and sociological studies on drug dealers and illicit drug use (Adler, 1985), and secretive same-sex sexual encounters in public toilets (Humphreys, 1976), are strongly criticised today on the basis of insufficient/lack of informed consent, duplicity and the harm they could have caused their participants. However, an overemphasis on 'vulnerable' labels, combined with fears about replicating these earlier unethical studies, overlooks power relations, often leading to research ethics committees refusing to authorise research with such groups. The very concept of vulnerability is also more complex, context-dependent and more inclusive than it might seem, as evidenced by some of our research participants who were farmers or vets who would not ordinarily be perceived of as members of vulnerable groups.

Although informed consent is difficult to make absolute in many cases, because research topics involve much complexity and/or because the responses of all participants to being involved in research can never be fully predicted (Kostovicova & Knott, 2020), informed consent, considerations about how much one should probe into people's privacy and personal lives, and preventing harm to participants, are key ethical precepts (Renzetti & Lee, 1993; Kazmierska, 2005). All these issues therefore, should be accorded more dialogue in relation to BNIM, and are particularly important for vulnerable groups. Although a consequentialist/utilitarian approach to research would assert that important findings are of more significance than the methods deployed, most researchers would defer to a more Kantian deontological perspective. This perspective asserts if an action is morally wrong, such as continuing to talk to participants about issues they do not want to discuss, this pertains universally and therefore positive or socially significant results never justify using dubious means to attain them. An 'ethic of care' research perspective would also underline the moral responsibility of care and consideration researchers should show for their participants (Carey & Green, 2013).

Given the dearth of published research on ethical aspects of BNIM, this paper offers hitherto underexplored insights on specific ethical dimensions. Whilst standardised BNIM manuals offer some ethical guidance, this is largely insufficient, particularly when researching with persons who experience significant traumas. Significantly, our interview extracts also underline the importance of considering everyday life events in affecting how BNIM interviews proceed (e.g. 'Sheila's letter') and crucially show that, participants' responses to PIN pushing, even when they do not emanate from a vulnerable group, may invoke enhanced ethical considerations. Given the widespread utilisation of the method

with vulnerable populations, more work on researchers' and participants' experiences, and on ethics associated with specific aspects of BNIM data collection and analysis techniques is consequently urgently required. Extant literature would benefit from research with BNIM scholars on ethical challenges and possibilities of using the method with groups that may be economically and/or socially vulnerable. As with much other qualitative literature, there is also negligible literature on whether BNIM participants found being involved in the research process a positive or negative experience, both at the time and after, and strengthening this aspect of understanding is vital. To conclude, although this paper focused specifically on ethical dilemmas associated with specific BNIM techniques, it contextualised BNIM within wider and more well-known research methodology to elucidate the similarities and differences between them and to show the points made in this article may to some extent have relevance with or be extrapolated to other research methods and methodologies.

## Declaration of Conflicting Interests

## Funding

## ORCID iD

Lisa Moran https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6437-9732

## Note

1. Whilst BNIM has several proponents in the UK and Europe, most were trained by Tom Wengraf and used his approach in published research. See, for example Moran et al., (2020), Cardenal (2016), Jones (2003), Froggett and Wengraf (2004).nquiry

## References

Adler, P. A. (1985). *Wheeling and dealing: Ethnography of an upper-level drug dealing and smuggling community.* Columbia University Press.

Allan, J. (2005). Farmers as learners: Evolving identity, disposition and mastery through diverse social practices. *Rural Society*, 15(1), 4–21. https://doi.org/10.5172/rsj.351.15.1.4

Allmark, P, Boote, J., Chambers, E., Clarke, A., McDonnell, A., Thompson, A., & Tod, A. M. (2009). Ethical issues in the use of in-depth interviews: Literature review and discussion. *Research Ethics Review*, 5(2), 48–54. https://doi.org/10.1177/174701610900500203

Bar-On, D., & Kassem, F. (2004). Storytelling as a way to work through intractable conflicts: The german-jewish experience and its relevance to the palestinian israeli conflict. *Journal of Social Issues*, 60(2), 289–306. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0022-4537.2004.00112.x

Bernard, H. R. (2013). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Sage.

Bracken-Roche, D., Bell, E., Macdonald, M. E., & Racine, E. (2017). The concept of 'vulnerability' in research ethics: An in-depth analysis of policies and guidelines. *Health Research Policy and Systems*, *15*(1), 8. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12961-017-0186-8

Brinkmann, S. (2013). Conversations as research: Philosophies of the interview. In B. C. L Dennis, & P Carspecken (Eds), *Qualitative research: A reader in philosophy, core concepts and practice*. Peter Lang (pp. 149–168).

Cardenal, E. (2016). Biography and story in sociological analysis: The contribution of the BNIM school. *Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas (REIS)*, *155*, 55–72. https://doi.org/10.5477/cis/reis.155.55.

Carey, M., & Green, L. (2013). *Practical social work ethics: Complex dilemmas within applied social care*. Routledge.

Chamberlayne, P., Bornat, J., & Wengraf, T. (2000). Introduction: The biographical turn. In P Chamberlayne, J Bornat, & T Wengraf (Eds), *The turn to biographical methods in social sciences: comparative issues and examples*. Routledge (pp. 1–30).

Cohen, G., & Conway, M. (2004). *Memory in the real world*. Psychology Press.

Curran, C., & Chamberlayne, P. (2002). View from the street: Biographical case studies of homelessness. School of Health and Social Welfare Research Report. Milton Keynes: Open University.

Dane, E., & Pratt, M. G. (2007). Exploring intuition and its role in managerial decision making. *The Academy of Management Review*, *32*(1), 33–54. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2007.23463682

Enticott, G. P. (2011). Ethnographic practices and the practices of biosecurity. In A. Franklin, & P. R Blyton (Eds), *Researching Sustainability: A guide to social science methods, practice and engagement*. Earthscan (pp. 37–53).

Etherington, K. (2007). Working with traumatic stories: From transcriber to witness. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *10*(2), 85–97. https://doi.org/10.1080/13645570701334001

Fenge, L.-A., Jones, K., & Read, R. (2010). Connecting participatory methods in a study of older lesbian and gay citizens in rural areas. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *9*(4), 320–333. https://doi.org/10.1177/160940691000900402

Flynn, S. (2019). Life stories of the economic recession: Biographic narrative interpretive method and the lived experience of disability in times of austerity. *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research*, *21*(1), 58–66. https://doi.org/10.16993/sjdr.594

Froggett, L., & Wengraf, T. (2004). Interpreting interviews in the light of research team dynamics: A study of nila's biographical narrative. *Critical Psychology*, *10*, 93–121.

Golczynska-Grondas, A., & Grondas, M. (2013). Biographical research and treatment. some remarks on therapeutic aspects of sociological biographical interviews. *Przegląd Socjologii Jakościowej*, *IX*(4), 28–49.

Graham, J., Grewal, I., & Lewis, J. (2007). *Ethics in social research: The views of research participants*. Natcen.

Guo, X. (2021). *Shifting traditions of childrearing in China: Narratives from three generations of women*. : Routledge.

Helgeland, I. M. (2005). 'Catch 22' of research ethics: Ethical dilemmas in follow-up studies of marginal groups. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *11*(4), 549–569. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800405276770

Hogan, F., & O'Reilly, M. (2007). *Listening to children: Children's experiences of domestic violence*. Office of the Minister for Children, Department of Health and Children.

Hollway, W., & Jefferson, T. (2012). *Doing qualitative research differently: A psychosocial approach*. Sage.

Humphreys, L. (1976). *The tearoom trade: Impersonal sex in public places* (2nd ed.). Aldine Transaction.

Jones, K. (2003). The turn to narrative knowing of persons. *Journal of Research in Nursing*, *8*(1), 60–71. https://doi.org/10.1177/136140960300800109

Kazmierska, K. (2005). Doing biographical research – ethical concerns in changing social contexts. *Polish Sociological Review*, *3*(203), 393–411. https://doi.org/10.26412/psr203.06

Kostovicova, D., & Knott, E. (2020). Harm, Change and Unpredictability: the ethics of interviews in conflict research. *Qualitative Research*, *22*(1), 56–73. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794120975657.

Lefevre, M., Hickle, K., Luckock, B., & Ruch, G. (2017). Building trust with children and young people at risk of child sexual exploitation: The professional challenge. *The British Journal of Social Work*, *47*(8), 2456–2473. https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcw181

McAloon, C. G., Macken-WalshL, Á., Moran, L., Byrne, Á., Doherty, M., Whyte, P., More, S. J., O'Grady, L., & Doherty, M. L. (2017). Johne's disease in the eyes of Irish farmers: A qualitative narrative research approach to understanding implications for disease management. *Preventive Veterinary Medicine*, *141*, 7–13. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.prevetmed.2017.04.001.

McNulty, A. (2008). *Great expectations: Teenage pregnancy and intergenerational transmission*. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Newcastle upon Tyne.

Milgram, S. (1963). A behavioural study of obedience. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, *67*(4), 371–378. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0040525

Moen, K. (2018). *Death at work: Existential and psychosocial perspectives on end-of-life care*. Palgrave.

Mooney, J. (2021). 'How adults tell: Using a biographical narrative interviewing methodology to explore adults' experiences of sexual abuse in childhood' in Moran. In *Narrating childhood with children and young people diverse contexts, methods and stories of everyday life* (pp. 353–375). Palgrave. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-55647-1_15.

Moran, L. (2021). *Critical reflections on ethical dimensions of the biographic narrative interpretive method (BNIM): The multi-dimensionality of risk and trauma in BNIM panel analysis*. Paper presented at the European Sociological Association Conference, August 2021, Online.

Moran, L., McGregor, C., & Devaney, C. (2020). Exploring the multi-dimensionality of permanence and stability:

Emotions, experiences and temporality in young people's discourses about long-term foster care in Ireland. *Qualitative Social Work*, 19(5–6), 1111–1129. https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325019871607

Peta, C., Wengraf, T., & McKenzie, J. (2019). Facilitating the voice of disabled women: The biographic narrative interpretive method. *Contemporary Social Science*, 14(3–4), 515–527. https://doi.org/10.1080/21582041.2018.1450520

Pinkerton, J., & Rooney, C. (2014). Care leavers' experiences of transition and turning points: Evidence from a biographical narrative study. *Social Work and Society*, 12(1), 1–12. https://d-nb.info/1053806213/34.

Renzetti, C., & Lee, R. (1993). *Researching sensitive topics*. Sage.

Roberts, S. E., Jaremin, B., & Lloyd, K. (2013). High-risk occupations for suicide. *Psychological Medicine*, 43(6), 1231–1240. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0033291712002024

Roseneil, S. (2012). Using biographical narrative and life story methods to research women's movements: FEMCIT. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 35(3), 129–131. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2012.03.007

Rosenthal, G (Ed), (1998). *The holocaust in three generations: Families of victims and perpetrators of the Nazi regime*. Kassel.

Rosenthal, G. (2003). The healing effects of storytelling: On the conditions of curative storytelling in the context of research and counselling. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 9(6), 915–933. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800403254888

Roulston, K. J. (2012). Probes and probing. In L Given (Ed), *The Sage Encyclopaedia of Qualitative Research Methods*. Thousand Oaks: Sage downloaded via https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412963909.n340 last accessed 04 01 2022

Rustin, M. (2000). Reflections on the biographical turn in the social sciences. In P Chamberlayne, J Bornat, & T Wengraf (Eds), *The turn to biographical methods in social sciences: Comparative issues and examples*. Routledge (pp. 33–52).

Sadler-Smith, E. (2008). The role of intuition in collective learning and the development of shared meaning. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 10(4), 494–508. https://doi.org/10.1177/1523422308320065

Schütze, F. (1983). Biographieforschung und narratives Interview. *Neue Praxis*, 13(3), 283–294. https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-53147.

Squire, C., Andrews, M., & Tamboukou, M. (2013). What is narrative inquiry? In M Andrews, C Squire, & M Tamboukou (Eds), *Doing narrative inquiry*. Sage (pp. 1–26).

Szcepanik, R., & Siebert, S. (2015). The triple bind of narration: Fritz schütze's biographical interview in prison research and beyond. *Sociology*, 50(2), 285–300. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038515570145

Vadja, J. (2007). Two survivor cases: Therapeutic effect as side product of the biographical narrative interview. *Journal of Social Work Practice*, 21(1), 89–102. https://doi.org/10.1080/02650530601173664

Wengraf, T. (2001). *Qualitative research interviewing: Biographic narrative and semi-structured methods*. Sage.

Wengraf, T. (2004). The biographic narrative interpretive method: Short guide november 2004. NCRM Working Paper (downloaded via http://eprints.ncrm.ac.uk/30/last accessed 27 05 2020

Wengraf, T. (2011). *Interviewing for life histories, lived situations and on-going personal experiences using the biographical narrative interpretive method (BNIM)*. Downloaded via https://is.muni.cz/el/1423/podzim2014/SOC932/um/Wengraf_manual.pdf last accessed 07 05 2020

Zimbardo, P., Haney, C., Banks, W., & Jaffe, D. (1973). *The mind is a formidable jailer: A pirandellian prison*. New York Times Magazine (pp. 38–60). April 8th.