Participatory Narrative Inquiry
An Introduction with Special Attention to Health Care

Cynthia Kurtz
July 2015
1. What is PNI?
2. Why stories?
3. What does PNI look like?
4. Where do the ideas in PNI come from?
5. What is your history with PNI?
6. What can you do with PNI?
7. What can’t you do with PNI?
8. PNI in health care (with case studies)
9. Questions
What is PNI?

Participatory narrative inquiry is an approach in which groups of people participate in gathering and working with raw stories of personal experience in order to make sense of complex situations for better decision making. PNI focuses on the profound consideration of values, beliefs, feelings, and perspectives through the recounting and interpretation of lived experience.
What is PNI?

Participatory narrative inquiry is an approach in which groups of people participate in gathering and working with raw stories of personal experience in order to make sense of complex situations for better decision making. PNI focuses on the profound consideration of values, beliefs, feelings, and perspectives through the recounting and interpretation of lived experience.
What is PNI?

Participatory narrative inquiry is an approach in which groups of people participate in gathering and working with raw stories of personal experience in order to make sense of complex situations for better decision making. PNI focuses on the profound consideration of values, beliefs, feelings, and perspectives through the recounting and interpretation of lived experience.

participatory, not extractive

using stories to think together, not just collecting them
What is PNI?

Participatory narrative inquiry is an approach in which groups of people participate in gathering and working with raw stories of personal experience in order to make sense of complex situations for better decision making. PNI focuses on the profound consideration of values, beliefs, feelings, and perspectives through the recounting and interpretation of lived experience.

participatory, not extractive

using stories to think together, not just collecting them

everyday anecdotes, not polished performances
What is PNI?

Participatory narrative inquiry is an approach in which groups of people participate in gathering and working with raw stories of personal experience in order to make sense of complex situations for better decision making. PNI focuses on the profound consideration of values, beliefs, feelings, and perspectives through the recounting and interpretation of lived experience.

- Participatory, not extractive
- Using stories to think together, not just collecting them
- Everyday anecdotes, not polished performances
- "What happened?" not "what do you think"
What is PNI?

Participatory narrative inquiry is an approach in which groups of people participate in gathering and working with raw stories of personal experience in order to make sense of complex situations for better decision making.

PNI focuses on the profound consideration of values, beliefs, feelings, and perspectives through the recounting and interpretation of lived experience.

- participatory, not extractive
- using stories to think together, not just collecting them
- everyday anecdotes, not polished performances
- “what happened?” not “what do you think”
- not for preservation or persuasion, but to improve thought and discussion
What is PNI?

Participatory narrative inquiry is an approach in which groups of people participate in gathering and working with raw stories of personal experience in order to make sense of complex situations for better decision making. PNI focuses on the profound consideration of values, beliefs, feelings, and perspectives through the recounting and interpretation of lived experience.

- participatory, not extractive
- everyday anecdotes, not polished performances
- using stories to think together, not just collecting them
- “what happened?” not “what do you think”
- deep exploration, not surface level
- not for preservation or persuasion, but to improve thought and discussion
**What is PNI?**

Participatory narrative inquiry is an approach in which groups of people participate in gathering and working with raw stories of personal experience in order to make sense of complex situations for better decision making. PNI focuses on the profound consideration of values, beliefs, feelings, and perspectives through the recounting and interpretation of lived experience.

- **participatory, not extractive**
- **using stories to think together, not just collecting them**
- **deep exploration, not surface level**
- **people consider their own stories**
- **everyday anecdotes, not polished performances**
- **“what happened?” not “what do you think”**
- **not for preservation or persuasion, but to improve thought and discussion**
Why stories?

- Story
  - Ritual
    - ancient, innate
Why stories?

- Story
  - Ritual: ancient, innate
  - Safety: distance
  - Respect: giving voice
Why stories?

- **Story**
  - **Engagement** draws you in
  - **Imagination** what if
- **Ritual** ancient, innate
  - **Safety** distance
  - **Respect** giving voice
Why stories?

- Safety distance
- Engagement draws you in
- Respect giving voice
- Imagination what if
- Articulation don’t know but can tell
- Ritual ancient, innate
- Interpretation it’s about the story, not me
Why stories?

- Safety
  - distance

- Engagement
  - draws you in

- Respect
  - giving voice

- Articulation
  - don’t know but can tell

- Ritual
  - ancient, innate

- Interpretation
  - it’s about the story, not me

- Imagination
  - what if

- Authenticity
  - ground truth

- Context
  - layers of meaning
What does PNI look like?

Story Collection
100-300 stories

PNI
What does PNI look like?

Story Collection
100-300 stories

PNI

Sensemaking ideally with storytellers
What does PNI look like?

Story Collection
100-300 stories

PNI

Return
stories go back to community

Sensemaking
ideally with storytellers
What does PNI look like?

- **Story Collection**: 100-300 stories
- **PNI**
- **Sensemaking**
  - Ideally with storytellers
- **Return**
  - Stories go back to community
What does PNI look like?

Planning may include pilot project

Story Collection
100-300 stories

PNI

Sensemaking
ideally with storytellers

Return
stories go back to community
What does PNI look like?

- **Planning**: may include pilot project.
- **Return**: stories go back to community.
- **Sensemaking**: ideally with storytellers.
- **Story Collection**: 100-300 stories.
- **Catalysis**: generates questions, not answers.

**PNI**

**Summary:**
- Sensing/ideation to planning.
- Sensemaking.
- Return stories.
- Catalysis.

**Note:**
- The diagram illustrates the process flow of PNI with a focus on story collection.
- The connection between planning and catalysis highlights the iterative nature of PNI.
What does PNI look like?

Planning may include pilot project

PNI

Return
stories go back
to community

Story Collection
100-300 stories

Sensemaking
ideally with
storytellers

Catalysis
generates
questions, not
answers

Intervention
to change the
stories we tell
Where do the ideas in PNI come from?

Participatory Action Research
Research = Action Three Rs

PNI
Where do the ideas in PNI come from?

Narratology
Narrative
Inquiry

Homo narrans

Participatory
Action
Research

Research = Action
Three Rs

PNI

Research | Action
Where do the ideas in PNI come from?

- Narratology
- Narrative Inquiry
- Homo narrans
- Cognitive Science
- Case based reasoning
- Participatory Action Research
- Research = Action
- Three Rs

PNI
Where do the ideas in PNI come from?

- Narratology
- Narrative Inquiry
- Homo narrans
- Cognitive Science
- Case based reasoning
- Cultural Anthropology
- Folklore
- Stories as social phenomenon
- Participatory Action Research
- Three Rs
- Research = Action

PNI

Research | Action
Where do the ideas in PNI come from?

- Narratology
- Narrative Inquiry
- Cognitive Science
- Cultural Anthropology
- Folklore
- Oral History

PNI

Homo narrans

Participatory Action Research

Three Rs

Research = Action

Form

Function

Phenomenon

Case based reasoning

Stories as social phenomenon

Let the people speak

Research | Action
Where do the ideas in PNI come from?

- Narratology
- Narrative Inquiry
- Cognitive Science
- Cultural Anthropology Folklore
- Oral History
- Mixed-Methods Research

Homo narrans

Case based reasoning

Stories as social phenomenon

Let the people speak

Qual + Quant synergy

Research = Action
Three Rs

PNI

Research | Action
Where do the ideas in PNI come from?

**Narratology**
- Narrative Inquiry

**Cognitive Science**
- Case based reasoning

**Cultural Anthropology**
- Folklore
- Stories as social phenomenon
- Let the people speak

**Oral History**
- Mixed-Methods Research
- Qual + Quant synergy

**Participatory Action Research**
- *Homo narrans*
- Research = Action
- Three Rs

**Narrative Therapy**
- We can change the stories we tell

**Research** | **Action**
Where do the ideas in PNI come from?

- Narratology
- Narrative Inquiry
- Cognitive Science
- Cultural Anthropology
- Folklore
- Oral History
- Mixed-Methods Research
- Homo narrans
- Case based reasoning
- Stories as social phenomenon
- Let the people speak
- Qual + Quant synergy
- Research = Action
- Three Rs
- We can change the stories we tell
- Stories can change the world
- Participatory Action Research
- Narrative Therapy
- Participatory Theatre
- Research
- Action
Where do the ideas in PNI come from?

**Narratology**
- Narrative Inquiry

**Cognitive Science**
- Case based reasoning

**Cultural Anthropology Folklore**
- Stories as social phenomenon
- Let the people speak

**Oral History**
- Oral History

**Mixed-Methods Research**
- Qual + Quant synergy

---

**Participatory Action Research**
- Research = Action
- Three Rs

---

**Narrative Therapy**
- We can change the stories we tell

**Participatory Theatre**
- Stories can change the world

**Decision Support**
- Making sense to plan the future
Where do the ideas in PNI come from?

- **Narratology**
  - Narrative Inquiry

- **Cognitive Science**

- **Cultural Anthropology**
  - Folklore

- **Oral History**

- **Mixed-Methods Research**
  - Qual + Quant synergy

- **Participatory Action Research**
  - Homo narrans
  - Case based reasoning
  - Stories as social phenomenon
  - Let the people speak
  - Conflict resolution
  - Decision Support
  - Making sense to plan the future
  - We can change the stories we tell
  - Stories can change the world
  - Research = Action
  - Three Rs

- **Narrative Therapy**

- **Participatory Theatre**

- **Dialogue**

- **Research**
  - Function
  - Form

- **Cultural Anthropology**
  - Folklore

- **Oral History**

- **Mixed-Methods Research**
  - Qual + Quant synergy
Where do the ideas in PNI come from?

- **Narratology**
  - Narrative Inquiry
  - *Homo narrans*
  - Case based reasoning
  - Stories as social phenomenon
  - Let the people speak
  - Qual + Quant synergy

- **Cognitive Science**

- **Cultural Anthropology Folklore**

- **Oral History**

- **Mixed-Methods Research**

- **Participatory Action Research**
  - Research = Action
  - Three Rs

- **Narrative Therapy**
  - We can change the stories we tell

- **Participatory Theatre**
  - Stories can change the world

- **Decision Support**
  - Making sense to plan the future

- **Dialogue**
  - Conflict resolution

- **Complexity Theory**
  - Emergence, self-organization

**Research | Action**
What is your history with PNI?

1986

Started as ethologist
What is your history with PNI?

1986

Started as ethologist

Wrote educational software
What is your history with PNI?

Started as ethologist in 1986.

Wrote educational software.

1999: Knowledge socialization group, StoryML, Guided Exploration.
What is your history with PNI?

- **1986**: Started as ethologist
- **1999**: Wrote educational software
- **2001**: Knowledge socialization group
  - StoryML
  - Guided Exploration
- **1986**: IKM
  - Global Services
  - Dave Snowden
  - Sharon Darwent
  - (and others)
What is your history with PNI?

1986
- Started as ethologist

Wrote educational software

1999
- Knowledge socialization group
- StoryML
- Guided Exploration

2001
- Human augmentation of reasoning through patterns

IKM & Global Services
- Dave Snowden
- Sharon Darwent
- (and others)
What is your history with PNI?

1986
- Started as an ethologist

Wrote educational software

1999
- Knowledge socialization group
- StoryML
- Guided Exploration

2001
- Human augmentation of reasoning through patterns

IKM & Global Services
- Dave Snowden
- Sharon Darwent
- (and others)

Cognitive Edge
SenseMaker

IBM Research

DARPA
What is your history with PNI?

- Started as ethologist
- Wrote educational software
- Knowledge socialization group
  - StoryML
  - Guided Exploration
- 1986
- 1999
- 2001
- Human augmentation of reasoning through patterns
- IKM & Global Services
  - Dave Snowden
  - Sharon Darwent
  - (and others)
- Risk assessment and horizon scanning
- SenseMaker
- Cognitive Edge
What is your history with PNI?

1986
Started as ethologist

1999
Wrote educational software

Knowledge socialization group
StoryML
Guided Exploration

2001
Human augmentation of reasoning through patterns

1986-1999
SenseMaker

2001
DARPA

2009
Risk assessment and horizon scanning

2009
Independent consultancy

IKM & Global Services
Dave Snowden
Sharon Darwent
(and others)

IKM
Global Services

IBM Research

Cognitive Edge

MINDEF
SINGAPORE
What is your history with PNI?

- Started as ethologist
- Wrote educational software
- Knowledge socialization group
  StoryML
  Guided Exploration
- Human augmentation of reasoning through patterns
- Risk assessment and horizon scanning
- Independent consultancy
- PNI textbook

Timeline:
- 1986: Started as ethologist
- 1999: Knowledge socialization group
  StoryML
  Guided Exploration
- 2001: Human augmentation of reasoning through patterns
- 2009: Independent consultancy
What is your history with PNI?

- Started as ethologist 1986
- Wrote educational software 1999
- Knowledge socialization group StoryML 2001
- Human augmentation of reasoning through patterns 2001
- IKM & Global Services Dave Snowden Sharon Darwen (and others) 2009
- Risk assessment and horizon scanning 2009
- Independent consultancy 2009
- PNI textbook 2015

CognitiveEdge
SenseMaker
IBM
IBM Research
DARPA

PNI INSTITUTE
NARRA FIRMA
What is your history with PNI?

80+ projects for corporate and government clients since 1999
What can you do with PNI?

- Find things out: traditional inquiry
- Catch emerging trends: find things you weren’t looking for
What can you do with PNI?

- Find things out
- Help people learn
- Enlighten people
- Catch emerging trends
- Dependence on participation
- Inherent uncertainty

- Higher risk, higher reward
What can you do with PNI?

- Find things out by traditional inquiry
- Make better decisions by making sense of options
- Get new ideas by finding new options
- Help people learn and add experience to information
- Enlighten people by helping them see things anew
- Catch emerging trends by finding things you weren’t looking for
- Dependence on participation
- Inherent uncertainty
What can you do with PNI?

- Find things out
- Make better decisions by making sense of options
- Enlighten people by helping them see things anew
- Get new ideas by finding new options
- Catch emerging trends
- Help people learn by adding experience to information
- Connect people by building community
- Resolve conflicts by seeing through each other’s eyes
- Enlighten people by helping them see things anew
- Help people learn by adding experience to information
- Catch emerging trends by finding things you weren’t looking for
What can’t you do with PNI?

Prove anything conclusively. Why not?
What can’t you do with PNI?

Prove anything conclusively. Why not?

Facilitator of collection session

Person who told story

Person listening to story

Person who wrote questions used to elicit story

Collection session
What can’t you do with PNI?

Prove anything conclusively. Why not?

Facilitator of collection session

Person who told story

Person who wrote questions used to elicit story

Person listening to story

Collection session

Story

Person who repeated story the next week

Person who heard story the next week
What can’t you do with PNI?

Prove anything conclusively. Why not?

- Facilitator of collection session
- Person who told story
- Person listening to story
- Person who wrote questions used to elicit story
- Collection session

- Facilitator of sensemaking session
- Person who repeated story the next week
- Person who heard story the next week
- Person who designed sensemaking session
- Sensemaking session
What can’t you do with PNI?

Prove anything conclusively. Why not?

Facilitator of collection session

Person who told story

Person listening to story

Person who wrote questions used to elicit story

Collection session

Facilitator of sensemaking session

Person who repeated story the next week

Person who heard story the next week

Person who designed sensemaking session

Sensemaking session

Person who repeated story the next month

Person who heard story the next month
What can't you do with PNI?

Prove anything conclusively. Why not? So many intermingled interpretations!
PNI in health care
PNI in health care – case 1

Hospital – retention of nursing and administrative staff

They saw:
- high turnover

They thought:
- staff quit because of stress

They found out:
- Work stress was seen *positively* when it was combined with challenge in an environment of trust and teamwork
PNI in health care – case 2

Pharmaceutical firm – doctor views of representatives

They saw:
- doctors irritated with reps

They thought:
- doctors never want to be bothered by reps

They found out:
- Visits from reps were welcome ("angels") when they helped doctors provide better patient care ("Help me help my patients")
PNI in health care – case 3

Pharmaceutical firm – relationships between patients and doctors

They saw:
- patients and doctors butting heads

They thought:
- power dynamics are inherent in the relationship

They found out:
- Patients with different conditions had different feelings about control, need for information, and views of pharma

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Control of decision making</th>
<th>Asthma</th>
<th>Gastrointestinal</th>
<th>Blood Pressure</th>
<th>Cholesterol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Need help</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand treatment</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know what to do</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who should be in charge</td>
<td>Me</td>
<td>Conflicted</td>
<td>My doctor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Doctors) Opinion of patient</td>
<td>Conflicted</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Conflicted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Doctors) Can patient handle treatment?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfaction</th>
<th>Asthma</th>
<th>Gastrointestinal</th>
<th>Blood Pressure</th>
<th>Cholesterol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treated well</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Badly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion of pharma</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information received</td>
<td>Okay</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ok</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fully heard</td>
<td>Fully</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fully</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fully included</td>
<td>Fully</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not at all</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


PNI in health care – case 4

Pharmaceutical firm – why doctors do what they do

They saw:
- doctors struggling

They thought:
- all doctors face similar challenges

They found out:
- Doctors responded in a variety of ways to terms like ambition, fairness, control, selfishness, validation
- Three distinct motivations: community caretaker, life-saving hero, everyday worker
PNI in health care – case 5

Maker of medical devices – how to design devices for different conditions

They saw:
- six different conditions

They thought:
- what do these people need?

They found out:
- People with each medical condition had varying needs a device should meet (e.g., clarity, reassurance, privacy, reliability).

The most successful anaphylaxis patients depended on others to make decisions.

People with migraines who had the most success in controlling the condition depended least on the decisions of others.
Questions?

Find out more at:
- workingwithstories.org – textbook
- pni2.org – PNI Institute
- storycoloredglasses.com – blog
- cfkurtz.com – web site