

Call for Papers

Narrative-based research in conflict-affected settings

Conflict-affected settings present researchers with inherent methodological and ethical challenges. Periods of mass violence and societal conflict—genocides and related mass atrocities, wars, periods of occupation and repression, systemic racialised abuse and segregation—disrupt communities and social relations in long-lasting ways. The stories told in and about conflicts contain tremendous potential to guide, comfort and warn, as well as to further wound or perpetuate violence. When researchers choose to engage with narratives of conflict, past or present, they must grapple with how their actions and approaches may amplify these potential outcomes. How researchers collect, study, or otherwise circulate narratives of conflict can have both oppressive and empowering consequences, and so the ethics, methods and forms of storytelling in conflict-affected settings require close and careful consideration.

This one-day research symposium aims to bring together a wide community of scholars within the humanities and social sciences from a variety of disciplinary approaches (literature, anthropology, history, journalism, critical discourse analysis, psychology, film studies, politics, etc.) to examine ethical and methodological challenges in narrative-based research in relation to conflict and wide-scale trauma. We welcome submissions from those working on a range of contexts and historical periods and engaging a range of narrative forms and genres (oral; written; artistic and visual narratives). We also aim to bring current doctoral candidates and early career researchers into conversation with senior scholars.

Papers should have a tight focus on the challenges associated with the collection, analysis, representation and/or circulation of narratives from/in conflict-affected settings. We welcome proposals on challenges related, but not limited, to:

- Upholding methodological best practices in challenging and/or dangerous contexts;
- Engaging perpetrator and other “unloved” participant narratives;
- Representing trauma;
- Sharing authority, agency, and choices over whose stories are included, and whose discarded;
- Censorship and dealing with the repression of stories;
- Balancing potential risks and benefits in conflict-affected settings;
- Dealing with worst-case scenarios and catastrophic outcomes;
- In-person and online recruitment of participants in challenging and/or dangerous contexts;
- Privacy, anonymity and “outed” informants;
- Vicarious trauma and other dangers to researchers and research collaborators;
- “insider” vs. “outsider” researcher positionality within conflict settings.

**10 July 2025, University of
Queensland**

Keynote: **Erin Jessee** (Glasgow), leading expert on oral history, genocide, perpetrators & Rwanda.

Submissions should include an abstract (250 words) and a short bio (100 words) for the author/s, to be emailed to Annie Pohlman (a.pohlman@uq.edu.au) by **1 March 2025**. We will edit a special journal issue arising from the symposium; deadlines will be enforced for those wishing to submit an article. Authors will be invited to submit a 7,000-word complete submission in English for initial review one month after the workshop.