ONE

Narrative as Construct and Construction

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Narrative is a fundamental human way of giving meaning to experience. In both telling and interpreting experiences, narrative mediates between an inner world of thought-feeling and an outer world of observable actions and states of affairs (J. Bruner 1986; Carrithers 1992; Mattingly and Garro 1994; Mattingly 1998a). Creating a narrative, as well as attending to one, is an active and constructive process—one that depends on both personal and cultural resources. Stories can provide a powerful medium for learning and gaining understanding about others by affording a context for insights into what one has not personally experienced. By reading, for example, Laura Bohannon's (1966) account of the lively interchange that occurred when she was cajoled into telling a story to a group of Tiv men in West Africa during her field research, we come to share, albeit vicariously and partially, in this experience and the understanding that it engendered. Initially she is confident that Shakespeare's *Hamlet* has "only one possible interpretation" as "the general plot and motivation of the greater tragedies would always be clear—everywhere—although some details of custom might have to be explained and difficulties of translation might produce other slight changes" (1966:28). She views this storytelling occasion as her "chance to prove *Hamlet* universally intelligible" (29). Instead, her telling brings about numerous opportunities for Tiv elders to present alternative interpretations of why the story unfolds as it does, thereby instructing her about its "true meaning" (for, as they tell Bohannon as she nears the end of the

story, "it is clear that the elders of your country have never told you what the story really means" [33]). One of many such instances occurs when Bohannon explains that Hamlet seeks to kill his uncle, who is also his father's murderer, and by this act to avenge his father's death. She recounts:

> This time I had shocked my audience seriously. "For a man to raise his hand against his father's brother and the one who has become his father—that is a terrible thing. The elders ought to let such a man be bewitched."
>
> I nibbled at my kola nut in some perplexity, then pointed out that after all the man had killed Hamlet's father.
>
> "No," pronounced the old man, speaking less to me than to the young men sitting behind the elders. "If your father's brother has killed your father, you must appeal to your father's age mates; *they* may avenge him. No man may use violence against his senior relatives." Another thought struck him. "But if his father's brother had indeed been wicked enough to bewitch Hamlet and make him mad that would be a good story indeed, for it would be his fault that Hamlet, being mad, no longer had any sense and thus was ready to kill his father's brother."
>
> There was a murmur of applause. *Hamlet* was again a good story to them, but it no longer seemed quite the same story to me. (Bohannon 1966:32)

For the listeners, hearing the story sets in motion a search for meaning among possible meanings (Iser 1978). By the end of Bohannon's article, the key events have remained the same, but alternative interpretations of these events have been put forward, recastings consistent with Tiv understandings of the social and moral order. A co-constructed narrative emerges through the push and pull between Bohannon's telling of a story world and the world where the story is told.

Exploring narrative as a theoretical construct provides a broader context for considering what happened in this particular telling, in this particular co-construction of *Hamlet*. The claim that narrative is a fundamental mode of thought has been eloquently put forward by Jerome Bruner. He contends that narrative offers a way of "ordering experience, of constructing reality" (1986:11) that deals in "intention and action and the vicissitudes and consequences that mark their course" (13). Bruner follows literary critic Algirdas Julien Greimas in arguing that a story constructs two landscapes, one of action and another of consciousness. The landscape of action focuses on what actors do in particular situations. The landscape of consciousness concerns "what those involved in the action know, think, or feel, or do not know, think, or feel. The two landscapes are essential and distinct: it is the difference between Oedipus sharing Jocasta's bed before and after he learns from the

messenger that she is his mother" (J. Bruner 1986:14). Comprehending the plot of a story means "therefore to have some notion of the changes in an inner landscape of thought in the participants as well as the outer landscape of events" (Carrithers 1992:84). The meaning one attributes to emplotted events reflects expectations and understandings gained through participating in a specific social and moral world. The Tiv elders make sense of the events recounted in the story of *Hamlet* by filling in what they perceive as gaps and reframing what the main actors must have thought and felt in order to act the way they did. Even though *Hamlet* is a story from another cultural world, it is understood by the listeners with reference to their own involvements with the world. And through Bohannon's interactions with the elders, she comes to better understand the emotional, moral, and social grounding of the Tiv through the version of the story they construct. As a "powerful means of socializing values and world views to children and other intimates" (Capps and Ochs 1995:13), narrative mediates emergent constructions of reality. And, finally, narrative is open to alternative readings, as can be seen in the elder's deliberations quoted earlier, as it traffics in "human possibilities rather than settled certainties" (J. Bruner 1986:26).

From his studies of storytelling among urban youths in the United States, William Labov tells us that the most important narrative question a storyteller must answer (and answer so well that the question is never explicitly raised) is "So what?" (Labov 1972, 1981; Labov and Waletzky 1967). The interventions by the Tiv elders serve to keep Bohannon's rendition of *Hamlet* on track so that ultimately it is judged "a very good story" (Bohannon 1966:33). In contrast, a failed story is one that leaves the audience wondering why anyone bothered to tell it. A story may be well formed from a purely structural perspective, and it may have a clear "point," but if the audience doesn't know why the point matters to them, if the events in the story never touch them, then the story doesn't work.

EMERGENCE OF NARRATIVE THEORY IN ANTHROPOLOGY

This implicit "So what?" narrative question can be leveled at the recent proliferation of narrative studies in anthropology. What is suddenly so appealing about stories, about narrative? After all, there is nothing recent about the entrance of stories into anthropology. Anthropologists are quite accustomed to overhearing, eliciting, and analyzing stories told

by their interlocutors as a standard part of their cultural investigations. They have studied myths, folktales, and proverbs, a culture's repertoire of well-known tales. They have long been interested in stories of personal experience in the form of life histories (e.g., Radin [1926] 1983; Peacock and Holland 1993; Crapanzano 1977, 1984; G. Frank 1996, 2000; Langness and Frank 1981). Linguistic anthropologists and folklorists have also studied naturally occurring personal stories, such as gossip or the "tall tale," which emerge as a casual part of everyday social discourse (e.g., Baumann 1986; Briggs 1996). Although social and cultural anthropologists have always dealt in stories (their own and those of their informants), they have not always explicitly heeded the fact that so much of their data has come in narrative form. With the notable exception of studies influenced by linguistics (e.g., Hymes 1981; Brenneis 1984, 1996; C. Goodwin 1984; M. H. Goodwin 1990; Haviland 1977, 1996; Ochs, Smith, and Taylor 1996; Brenneis and Lein, 1977; Capps and Ochs 1995; Ochs and Capps in press), this neglect has been especially marked when it comes to personal tales through which a teller might couch an experience or recount to an audience important events in the social world. Even when anthropologists have been highly cognizant of the aesthetic qualities of a culture's enduring myths and folktales, they have not always been so keenly aware that the personal stories they were hearing might be more than transparent mediums for communicating significant social facts.

Lately, however, things have changed. Anthropologists are noticing stories everywhere. Furthermore, they are paying increasing attention to the complex relation between narrative form, narrative performance, and referential content. While interest in narrative cannot be described as new, what characterizes the recent surge of attention among a wide range of scholars is the pronounced concern to take stories seriously. With regard to the life history tradition, for example, critiques pointing to the neglect of the life story as text or as oral performance (Crapanzano 1980; Peacock and Holland 1993; Agar 1980; Chamberlain and Thompson 1998) have contributed to a renewed interest and an enhanced appreciation of the complexities involved in representing and analyzing life stories. Overall, anthropologists are less content to treat stories as the accidental form in which the data come—a critical attentiveness that extends to work in medical anthropology. A more extended discussion of this critical attentiveness is offered in the closing chapter.

As part of their exploration of narrative, anthropologists have introduced constructs drawn from a range of disciplines—linguistics, literary

theory, history, cognitive psychology, philosophy—to investigate relations between narrative form and narrative content, between an individual's stories of personal experience and cultural knowledge, or narrative as communicative act. There has been a concern for the pragmatics of narrative, how interlocutors are "doing things with stories," and how, therefore, narratives carry rhetorical weight. Increased awareness about narrative as form and rhetorical practice has also added a critical dimension to anthropological discourse. At the same time, anthropologists have begun to wonder what is and what is not useful in the efflorescence of narrative theorizing that pervades the writing of so many contemporary anthropologists.

This volume has been inspired by the possibilities of narrative, that is, how narratives from healers and patients serve to illuminate aspects of practices and experiences that surround illness but might not otherwise be recognized. It has also been inspired by the possibilities of increased theoretical consciousness with regard to the elicitation and analysis of narratives of illness and healing. What can be learned by taking a comparative look at the range of narrative theories and styles of narrative analysis being used by anthropologists to make sense of their ethnographic data? Do divergent strategies of narrative analysis offer different ways to understand illness and healing? Does the focus on narrative detract from or conceal other, more fruitful, avenues for exploring the experiences of illness and the practices of healing? The essays in this collection, taken together, explore just these kinds of questions and do so by offering a range of answers.

The idea for this volume developed gradually. Our initial collaboration—a symposium organized for the 1990 American Anthropological Association (AAA) meetings—was sparked by our mutual curiosity about the quite different perspectives we each bring to our work on narrative. While we each consider problems relevant to medical anthropology, one of us (Mattingly) is primarily concerned with the relation between narrative and lived experience, drawing extensively on literary and philosophical perspectives, while the other (Garro) is concerned with narrative as a way to relate the study of culture to the study of mind. Many of the papers from this first symposium later appeared in a special issue of *Social Science and Medicine* entitled *Narrative Representations of Illness and Healing* (Garro and Mattingly 1994).

Our enduring interest in exploring alternative modes of narrative analysis germane to medical anthropology led to a second AAA symposium and subsequently to the essays in this book. Chapters by anthro-

pologists predominate, but there are also contributions from individuals trained in sociology, psychiatry, and psychology. In narrative studies it makes little sense to band together in exclusionary disciplinary tribes. There is too much to be gained from cross-fertilizations that draw widely upon the social sciences, as well as literature, history, and philosophy. And, indeed, the essays in this book rely upon a broad range of analytic approaches: phenomenological, literary, critical, cognitive, linguistic, constructivist, hermeneutic, and autobiographical. While these approaches do not represent stable or mutually exclusive systems of thought, they have emerged from various home disciplines that often define narrative in distinct ways.

In forming this collection, we also encouraged contributions from scholars with a skepticism about the recent enthusiasm for narrative. Several of the chapters raise questions about prevailing trends in narrative theory or widespread assumptions about narrative. Some ask how adequately narrative models capture cultural life, social action, or personal experience and wonder what is likely to be neglected by a reliance on a narrative model of social life. We believe these critical voices are essential if narrative analysis is to offer an enduring contribution to medical anthropology and not merely a fashionable gloss on interpretations that gain no analytic depth from being dressed up as narrative theory.

This introductory chapter serves as a backdrop situating these papers within broader trends, trends confined neither to medical anthropology nor to cultural anthropology more generally, but extending into diverse disciplines. The recent emphasis on narrative in cultural studies of illness and healing is part of a very deep and broad contemporary current. One may reasonably claim, as Jerome Bruner does in *Acts of Meaning* (1990, also 1996), that there is now a narrative turn on the horizon of the human sciences. This turn has had a powerful influence in cross-cultural studies of illness and healing.

NARRATIVE IN MEDICINE

The centrality of narrative to some forms of therapeutic practice dates at least to the end of the nineteenth century in the writings of Sigmund Freud. A primary assumption of Freud's psychoanalytic theory is that "the symptom carries a meaning and is connected with the experience of the patient" (Freud 1920:221). Freud is portrayed by Donald Spence (1982:21) as a "master" of "the narrative tradition" who had the ability to take "pieces of the patient's associations, dreams, and memories"

and to weave them into a coherent pattern that integrates and makes sense of "previously random happenings" and memories.

> Freud made us aware of the persuasive power of the coherent narrative—in particular, of the way in which an aptly chosen reconstruction can fill the gap between two apparently unrelated events, and in the process, make sense out of nonsense. There seems no doubt but that a well-constructed story possesses a kind of narrative truth that is real and immediate and carries an important significance for the process of therapeutic change. (Spence 1982:21)

Contemporary psychotherapeutic practices continue to stress the role of narrative in decoding and reframing the past to make sense of the present and provide an orientation for the future. Young (1995) studied a Veterans Administration psychiatric facility specializing in the diagnosis and treatment of war-related posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). A basic assumption of the treatment program is that in order for a patient to recover, the traumatic memory must be recalled and told to others: "The memory/narrative is the Rosetta stone of his disorder. The patient's postwar histories are generally saturated with misfortune and failure. . . . A properly decoded traumatic memory gives the chaotic surface a coherent subtext" (Young 1995:185).[1] Waitzkin and Magaña, writing about their therapeutic work with Central American refugees who have experienced severe trauma, point to "the importance of a patient's enunciating a coherent narrative . . . as a critical component of the healing process" (Waitzkin and Magaña 1997:822).

Taking a somewhat broader sweep, Eisenberg has suggested that the co-construction of a tenable account between the patient and healer is an important part of clinical care and psychiatric practice:

> The decision to seek medical consultation is a request for interpretation. . . . Patient and doctor together reconstruct the meanings of events in a shared mythopoesis. . . . Once things fall into place; once experience and interpretation appear to coincide, once the patient has a coherent "explanation" which leaves him no longer feeling the victim of the inexplicable and the uncontrollable, the symptoms are, usually, exorcised. (Eisenberg 1981:245)

Writing about narrative processes in psychotherapeutic interactions, Capps and Ochs (1995:176) maintain that "telling and retelling experiences" provide the opportunity for collaborations between therapist and client in developing "alternative versions of stories" that "create new understandings" while also conveying "a revised view of self and others that not only reshapes the past but creates new paths for the future."

In recent years there has been increased attention to the processual and hermeneutic nature of psychotherapeutic practices (e.g., Kirmayer

1994; Schafer 1981, 1992; Spence 1982). For example, concern with how a therapist "functions more as a pattern maker than a pattern finder" (Spence 1982:293) has led to research illuminating how the therapist works to shape an emerging narrative with the patient to be compatible with the narrative expectations of preexisting theories or ideologies. Situations in which patients and therapists converge on a co-constructed account, as well those in which they do not, shed light on the interactive dynamics and structural relationships in clinical encounters (e.g., Kirmayer this volume; Waitzkin and Britt 1993; Young 1995).

Despite this recognition of the role of narrative in the clinical specialty of psychiatry, a specialty that is "regarded as marginal by the rest of biomedicine" (Kleinman 1995:2), much of Western medicine can be described as traditionally hostile to connotative discourse. But this legacy is eroding. As Good (1994) points out, a crisis of representation has found its way into the world of the clinic. Narrative has constituted an alternative mode of representation that is somehow more appropriate to certain aspects of clinical experience (M. Good 1995; M. Good et al. 1992; Hunter 1991; Mattingly 1998b; Brody 1987). Clinicians themselves have also recognized the narrative qualities of their work (e.g., Coles 1989; Eisenberg 1981; Sacks 1987b, 1995; Luria 1968, 1972; Zimmerman and Dickerson 1994).

What has drawn the clinical community to narrative? One reason is that narrative foregrounds the human dramas surrounding illness. This is wonderfully expressed by the neurologist Oliver Sacks. Speaking critically of authorized medical discourse, he distinguishes the traditional medical history from narrative proper in which the "human subject" rather than the pathology is the central character. "Such [medical] histories," he writes,

> are a form of natural history—but they tell us nothing about the individual and his history; they convey nothing of the person, and the experience of the person, as he faces, and struggles to survive, his disease. There is no "subject" in a narrow case history; modern case histories allude to the subject in a cursory phrase ("a trisomic albino female of 21") which could as well apply to a rat as a human being. (1987b:viii)

Sacks advocates narrative discourse as a way to bring persons, with their particular experiences of illness, into focus:

> To restore the human subject at the center—the suffering, afflicted, fighting, human subject—we must deepen a case history to a narrative or tale; only then do we have a "who" as well as a "what," a real person, a patient, in relation to disease—in relation to the physical. (1987b:viii)

Through his writings and his therapeutic practices, Sacks, like Luria before him, envisions the possibilities of a "romantic science" that "treats analytic science and synthetic biography of the individual case as essentially complementary" (Cole 1996:346) and can be portrayed as "the dream of a novelist and a scientist combined" (Sacks 1987a:xii).[2]

Much recent work argues the need to get at illness experience through illness narratives (e.g., Kleinman 1988, 1995; Broyard 1992; Frank 1995). Physicians have published accounts of their own afflictions and encounters with the medical profession, typically conveying their hard-won realization that there is more to the story of being a patient than can be captured by a medical synopsis or charted medical history. Such "wounded healers" have written about how their experiences have significantly affected or transformed the way they think about their broader lives as well their understanding of the medical profession and its practices (Hahn 1995:254; for an insightful review of a number of accounts written by physicians, see Hahn 1995:ch. 9; for a case example of a "wounded healer," see Kleinman 1988:211–13). An important thread in the literature which has emerged from or is directed toward the clinical community and aspires to reorient medical practices in society, is the need to distinguish disease, as phenomena seen from the practitioner's perspective (from the outside), from illness, as phenomena seen from the perspective of the sufferer. Writing as both physician and anthropologist, Kleinman (1988:3) turns to illness narratives to impart "the innately human experience of symptoms and suffering."

WHAT IS A STORY?

Before looking more closely at the implications of this narrative shift in medical anthropology, we attempt to come to grips with what is meant by a story and then to explore some of the different uses of the narrative form. In ordinary speech and in much scholarly writing, there is a certain tendency to treat a story as a "natural" object that needs no explaining, which one can somehow just point to. Yet it is plagued by a kind of pervasiveness, an unboundedness. It is as common as air. When are we not telling or hearing stories? More diffusely, if identity itself is essentially a narrative matter, as many have suggested (e.g., MacIntyre 1981; Polkinghorne 1991; Gergen and Gergen 1997), is there anything in human life that is *not* a story? Are we always living out stories? Some would argue that even science itself is essentially a storytelling enterprise (Landau 1997; MacIntyre 1980). Provocative as these claims are, the far

reach of narrative means that rather than having any stable meaning, this term is flung far and wide.

Without attempting to offer anything too precise, we propose a few remarks about the nature of stories that hold generally true across cultures and analytic traditions and turn out to be significant when we try to understand why narrative analysis has become so powerful in studies of illness and healing. If we begin, very simply, by noting that stories seem to offer some fundamental way to make sense of experience, this already suggests that there is some basic form which we call "a story," that underneath the extreme variability of kinds of stories, functions of stories, and situations of telling, there exists a shared core, a fundamental "storyness" belonging to all particular stories. French structuralists, following the Russian formalists (notably Propp 1968) who studied fairy tales, have been energetic advocates and explorers in the search for fundamental narrative form. This exploration has come under serious attack, even by its own early enthusiasts. Roland Barthes, one of those early narratologists, later offered one of the most succinct criticisms in literary theory of the whole enterprise. He opens *S/Z* with this:

> There are said to be certain Buddhists whose ascetic practices enable them to see a whole landscape in a bean. Precisely what the first analysts of narrative were attempting: to see all the world's stories (and there have been ever so many) within a single structure: we shall, they thought, extract from each tale its model, then out of these models we shall make a great narrative structure, which we shall reapply (for verification) to any one narrative: a task as exhausting (ninety-nine percent perspiration, as the saying goes) as it is ultimately undesirable, for the text thereby loses its difference. (1974:3)

No tight formal model of story may actually exist, or, if it can be constructed, it may turn out to be a foolishly empty category, a useless abstraction, as Barthes suggests. Although there may well be no fundamental narrative structure to uncover, nor any simple and consistent notion of "story," this does not mean that less ambitious structural endeavors are fruitless or that creating a language in aid of such an enterprise is foolish. And, as it happens, a few things about the nature of stories can reliably be noted. Most basic, stories concern action, more specifically human or humanlike action, even more specifically, social interaction. They offer us "dramatistic" forays into social life (Burke 1945), exploring the meaning of events by linking motive, act, and consequence. Some would even claim that in this chaining they offer causal explanations of events (Fisher 1997; Mattingly 1991a, 1998b), a claim

made compellingly by Aristotle (1970), for whom narrative plot was a form of moral argument.

Stories also concern events as experienced and suffered through by quite specific actors. They allow us (the audience) to infer something about what it *feels like* to be in that story world, that is, they give form to feeling (Langer 1953). Telling a story is a "relational act" that necessarily implicates the audience (Linde 1993:112–13). Stories are intended to be evocative and provocative. Story language is very often image-dense, connotative rather than denotative (Jakobson 1960). Furthermore, following a story, especially one rich in metaphor and featuring highly charged human dramas, provokes an experience in the audience. Put another way, following a compelling story is no mere abstract matter; it involves an imaginative journey into a story world.

A story, an effective one at least, not only is about something but also *does* something. This is what John Austin (1962) designates the perlocutionary and illocutionary functions of language. Austin speaks of two ways in which words do things. One, much more thoroughly discussed by anthropologists, he labels the "illocutionary function." This involves saying something in a conventional situation (say, a ritual), in which the saying is a performance of a cultural act, for instance, baptizing a child or marrying a couple. Inefficacy of an illocutionary act is a public matter, a matter of infraction of some socially agreed upon conventions. But a perlocutionary act is much less clear or predictable in its outcome. Because efficacy depends upon the rhetorical power of words to persuade and influence the listener, the audience plays an active role in the creation of meaning. It works, as an action, if it can engender certain effects in the listener. In telling stories narrators moralize the events they recount and seek to convince others to see some part of reality in a particular way. But whether this occurs depends upon what sort of contract the listener is willing to make. Stories are very often acts of this particularly vulnerable kind.[3] If they have power as actions, this only comes through developing a particular kind of relationship between teller (or text) and audience, one in which the listener comes to care about the events recounted.

Telling stories allows narrators to communicate what is significant in their lives, how things matter to them (Rosaldo 1986:98). Narratives offer a powerful way to shape conduct because they have something to say about what gives life meaning, what is inspiring in our lives, what is dangerous and worth taking risks for. Compelling stories move us to see life

(and to act out life) in one way rather than another. Interestingly, this is not because stories tell us about the usual round of affairs. As Rosaldo (1986:98) points out: "Narratives often reveal more about what can make life worth living than about how it is routinely lived." This very focus on the singular can reveal what is worth risk and struggle, what situations matter enough that actors are "in suspense" about what will happen next.

THE NARRATIVE CONSTRUCT: TERMINOLOGICAL MATTERS (AND MUDDLES)

Some, like Wikan in this volume, question whether anything at all is added by the construct of narrative that is not already contained in "story." And indeed, when one begins to examine narrative studies, the welter of confusing categories can prove daunting and even obfuscating. For something that starts out to be such an intuitively obvious act (telling a story), the specialized vocabulary that has grown up around it can appear to mask more than it illuminates. In this chapter and throughout this volume, narrative and story are often used interchangeably. In some schools of narrative analysis, however, the terms have come to designate two quite distinct phenomena—though what these entities are depends upon which school of analysis one turns to. As well, other terms have been advanced either to be consistent with preexisting positions or to stake out new terrain. Despite such semantic confusion, there are several specific theoretical grounds for elaborating terminology which make it possible to distinguish different sorts of narrative phenomena.

In much of literary theory, maintaining a narrative construct that is separate from story serves to mark the artifice of the text where *narrative* or *discourse* refers to the discursive rendering and 'story' (or 'fabula' or 'histoire') to the underlying events that the narrative recounts. Scholars draw upon this distinction to portray the aesthetic reworkings of sequential time, which are an integral part of creating a compelling plot. The literary critic Culler notes the importance and prevalence of this convention within structuralist literary theory, stating that "if these theorists agree on anything it is this: that the theory of narrative requires a distinction between what I shall call 'story'—a sequence of actions or events, conceived as independent of their manifestation in discourse—and what I shall call 'discourse,' the discursive presentation of events" (1981:169–70). This convention underscores that any narrative that as told (or written) necessarily changes the structure of the original events,

which literary critics often take to be a simple chronology (Bal 1985). In literary circles, this differentiation expresses a view not only that there is a gap between narrative discourse and life as lived but also that any narrative text (whether purportedly true or not) is a "distortion" of the events recounted (Gennette 1982; Forster 1927; White 1980). Thus the convention belongs to a literary movement associated with both modernism and postmodernism in which representation itself becomes an object of study and one is never allowed to forget that any representation colors our view of the world portrayed.

Others, working within linguistic traditions, may follow Roman Jakobson's (1971) work and distinguish "narrated events" from "narrative events." The folklorist Richard Bauman argues that both narrated events and narrative events emerge in the process of performance itself: "The narrated event, as one dimension of the story's meaning, evoked by formal verbal means in the narrative text, is in this respect emergent in performance, whatever the external status of the narrated event may be, whether it in some sense 'actually occurred' or is narratively constructed by participants out of cultural knowledge of how events are—or are not, or may be—constituted in social life" (1986:6). In this differentiation, there is no prior chronology of events that exist in some way outside the story performance. There is nothing "out there" waiting to be narrated.

Along quite different lines, scholars have differentiated between individual stories and their underlying hypothesized organizational principles, structures, or patterns. For instance, a prevailing construct in cognitive theories across various disciplines is that of a schema (D'Andrade 1992). Schemas are interpretive processes, integral to the constructive nature of cognition, which mediate our understanding of the world. For both teller and audience, schemas organize the hearing, telling, and remembering of stories. Schemas are involved in conveying the specifics of a given story but also supply the narrative structures that characterize stories more generally. General-level story schemas or story grammars have been proposed by cognitive psychologists (e.g., Johnson and Mandler 1980, Mandler 1984, Mancuso 1986; for an anthropological application, see Mathews 1992). From such a perspective, it thus becomes possible to explore how any given oral story or text is "shaped by implicit theories of narrative and narration" (Neisser 1994:9).[4]

That these implicit narrative theories are culturally constituted is explicitly acknowledged by some psychologists. Bruner and Feldman note that the "facts" of the past, by themselves, "do not supply the pattern-

ing or schematic structure of narrated reports." They maintain that such narrated reports "must be constructed of cultural material." To shape one's past experiences, for example, "meaningfully into a public and communicable form," it is necessary to draw upon "narrative properties like genre and plot type that are widely shared within a culture, shared in a way that permits others to construe meaning the way the narrator has" (1996:293).

Within a culture, this two-level distinction—with particular instances of storytelling differentiated from but also linked with more general culturally based narrative patterns or properties—provides a way to theorize about what is shared across stories without disregarding the uniqueness of individual accounts. Holland and Kipnis (1994), in their analysis of stories of embarrassment in American culture, found that over 90 percent of the stories they collected were consistent with a four-step "prototypic event sequence" for embarrassment.

Along somewhat similar lines, Arthur Frank, a medical sociologist, uses *story* when "referring to the actual tales people tell" and *narrative* when discussing the general structural types that comprise various stories" (A. Frank 1995:188 n. 5). According to Frank: "A narrative type is the most general storyline that can be recognized underlying the plot and tensions of particular stories. People tell their own unique stories, but they compose these stories by adapting and combining narrative types that cultures make available" (A. Frank 1995:75; cf. Schank 1990; Bruner and Feldman 1996). Drawing on stories of illness in principally North American settings, Frank points to three underlying thematic types—"restitution," "chaos," and "quest" narratives—and explains that different narrative types can be present in the same story.

A final illustration of the value of differentiating between underlying narrative structure and the particularities of an individual story comes from research carried out by Allan Young at a U.S. Veterans Administration psychiatric unit specializing in the treatment of service-related PTSD. Young (1995) examines how treatment staff (referred to as "presenters") relate case histories at diagnostic sessions for discussion with other staff members. In analyzing the presenter's opening accounts about individual patients and the applicability of the PTSD diagnosis, Young found that while the *content* of the narrated accounts changes from case to case, the *structure* remains constant. He notes:

> Listening to a presenter's opening account, it is easy to get the impression that narrative structure is intrinsic to the details provided by the interviewees, and that the structure of a presenter's narrative is also the structure of his inter-

> viewee's life. In practice, the structure of these narratives exists prior to their content. Even before an interviewer has begun to collect his statements, the organization of this account is already in place, embedded in the composition and clustering of the questions making up his protocols. Even before his audience has heard all the details, they know, in a general way, what is coming next and how it all fits together: the structure of the account is presupposed in their knowledge of the account of PTSD provided in the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III)*. (Young 1995:169–70)

Young's findings suggest that attending to underlying narrative structure may allow a researcher to see more clearly the imprint of institutionalized practices and ideology.

Yet another slant and terminology have been developed by scholars wishing to describe narrative patterning across stories told by the same individual at temporally discontinuous occasions or within extended discourse, for example, in research interviews, where what comes to be referred to as the individual's story is not necessarily bounded as a unit. The heterogeneous literature on self-narrative life history, or life story (see discussion in Peacock and Holland 1993 and Mishler 1995:95–96) brings together groupings of stories told by the same person, usually at different points in time. According to Linde (1993), the life story is a "particularly important" type of everyday discourse (3) as "every normal adult in this [American] culture engages in telling a life story in a more or less elaborated form" (43). A life story consists of "a set of stories that are retold in various forms over a long period of time and that are subject to revision and change as the speaker drops some old meanings and adds new meanings to portions of the life story" (219–20; cf. Fitzgerald 1996:369; Barclay and DeCooke 1988:120; Capps and Ochs 1995:14–15; Price 1995). Linde examines the variety of ways coherence is created and how the life story relates to the "internal, subjective sense of having a private life story that organizes our understanding of our past life, our current situation, and our imagined future" (11). According to Peacock and Holland (1993:374), life stories are "likely important in self-formation and self-expression, though not perhaps in all cultures."

As intimated in this last statement from Peacock and Holland, questions concerning the comparability of narrative forms or underlying narrative structures across cultural settings are likely to remain the subject of debate for some time to come. Linde, who provides an assessment of life histories in anthropology (1993:47–48), concludes that "the notion of a life story itself is not universal, but is the product of a particular