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# 3

## Narratives and Stories

### Collecting and Analyzing Stories

This chapter focuses on the storied qualities of qualitative textual data, that is, the ways in which social actors produce, represent, and contextualize experience and personal knowledge through narratives and other genres. We do not make elaborate distinctions between stories and narratives. There are many definitions and discriminations in the research literature, and for some purposes, such definitions may have value. As Riessman (1993) points out, however, the variety of narrative styles, on one hand, and the variety of analytic distinctions, on the other, defy summary definition. We concentrate therefore on outlining a simple approach to "doing research with first-person accounts of experience" (Riessman, 1993, p. 17).

For some purposes, it makes sense to use narrative and narrative analysis as inclusive categories, restricting the use of "story" to those genres that recount protagonists, events, complications, and consequences. We cannot present a comprehensive review of the field, and we do not therefore attempt to describe all the varieties of narrative per-

formance that can be identified (see Riessman, 1993). We use this chapter to explore how, as qualitative researchers, we can collect and analyze the stories and narratives of our informants. In the recent past, storytelling and the creation of literary and narrative accounts have been utilized by qualitative researchers (from differing perspectives) as mechanisms for collecting and interpreting data. In this chapter, we concentrate on the identification and analysis of narratives in interview and similar data. In Chapter 5, we pay particular attention to how we can utilize the literary ideas of stories to produce texts of our research endeavors.

We argue that thinking about stories in our data can enable us to think creatively about the sorts of data we collect and how we interpret them. Using examples drawn from our anthropology data, we try to emphasize that stories our informants tell can be seen, on one hand, as highly structured (and formal) ways of transmitting information. On the other hand, they can be seen as distinctive, creative, artful genres. In presenting and exploring some of the ways in which we can interpret and analyze stories or narratives, we are not overly inclusive. Our ideas about the ways in which narratives can be analyzed should not be seen as the only ways of approaching the task, nor should they be seen as prescriptive. The ideas we discuss here should be seen as points of departure toward more detailed analytic tasks.

The collection of stories and narratives in qualitative research extends what Riessman (1993) calls the "interpretative turn" in social science. Denzin's (1989) description of interpretive biography provides a framework with which we can contextualize a narrative account. Denzin describes a narrative as a story of a sequence of events that has significance for the narrator and her audience. The story (as do all good stories) has a beginning, a middle, and an end, as well as a logic that (at least) makes sense to the narrator. Denzin (1989, p. 37) also suggests that narratives are temporal and logical:

A story . . . tells a sequence of events that are significant for the narrator [the respondent/social actor] and his or her audience. A narrative as a story has a plot, a beginning, a middle and an end. It has internal logic that makes sense to the narrator. A narrative relates events in a temporal, causal sequence. Every narrative describes a sequence of events that have happened. Hence narratives are temporal productions.

We should make it clear here that, while concentrating on the genre of storytelling, we are not suggesting that there is only one form of story or narrative.

Narratives and stories can be collected "naturally"; for example, by recording stories as they occur during participant observation in a research setting. Alternatively, they can be solicited during research interviews. Mishler's (1986) work in particular considers interview responses in terms of the stories they embody. As Riessman (1993) notes, during research interviews respondents often hold the floor for lengthy runs and organize their responses into stories.

Precisely because it is a form of discourse that is known and used in everyday interaction, the story is an obvious way for social actors, in talking to strangers (e.g., the researcher) to retell key experiences and events. Stories serve a variety of functions. Social actors often remember and order their careers or memories as a series of narrative chronicles, that is, as series of stories marked by key happenings. Similarly, stories and legends are often told and retold by members of particular social groups or organizations as a way of passing on a cultural heritage or an organizational culture. Tales of success or tales of key leaders/personalities are familiar genres with which to maintain a collective sense of the culture of an organization. The use of atrocity stories and morality fables is also well documented within organizational and occupational settings. Stories of medical settings are especially well documented (Atkinson, 1992a; Dingwall, 1977). Here tales of professional incompetence are used to give warnings of "what not to do" and what will happen if you commit mistakes.

Similar tales have legendary status in the oral culture of schoolchildren (Delamont, 1989, 1990, 1992; Measor & Woods, 1984). Urban legends about the transfer from primary to secondary school, folklore about the evil (or gay) teacher, the rat dissection, the big bullies, and the head down the toilet on a birthday provide particularly memorable examples. The story genre also has been used to understand the culture of teachers within school settings. In particular, the use of the life history method has enabled the collection of rich teacher narratives (Casey, 1993; Goodson, 1992; Sparkes, 1994). Narratives are also a common genre from which to retell or come to terms with particularly sensitive or traumatic times and events. Riessman (1993) provides several key studies of how narratives and storying can be used as an approach to the

study of trauma and traumatic life course events, such as divorce or violence.

To summarize, the storied qualities of qualitative textual data, both "naturally" given or research driven, enable the analyst to consider both how social actors order and tell their experiences and why they remember and retell what they do. The structuring of experience can hence be analyzed alongside meanings and motives. What follows in this chapter is a discussion of how, as analysts, we can approach the exploration of these stories that we may collect as part of our qualitative research endeavors.

### Formal Narrative Analysis

Narratives have rather specific, distinct structures with formal and identifiable properties. Propp's (1968) quasi-algebraic (Manning & Culum-Swan, 1994) analysis of the Russian fairy tale provides an important early example of this form of analysis. Propp proposed that fairy tales could be understood using four structural principles: The roles of characters are stable in a tale, the functions/events in a fairy tale are limited, the sequence of functions is always identical, and fairy tales are of one type with regard to structure. Propp's argument is that tales unfold linearly in terms of a number of functions. The characters and patterns of events are relatively stable within a structured format. Propp's main emphasis is that stories convey meanings in standard structural forms.

Labov (1972, 1982) developed a sociolinguistic approach to narratives and stories that, to some extent, built on this idea. Labov has argued that narratives have formal, structural properties in relation to their social functions. These formal structural properties have recurrent patterns that can be identified and used to interpret each segment of narrative. A number of analysts have applied this type of approach to narrative analysis. For example, Cortazzi (1991, 1993) systematically applied Labov's analytical framework to the study of occupational (teacher) narratives. Riessman (1990, 1993) also considers narrative analysis as a formal methodological approach and has applied such approaches to a study of personal relationships.

Riessman's work goes beyond searching for formal structural properties, but she does suggest that the unpacking of structure is a significant

early stage in narrative analysis. By beginning with the structure of the narrative, Riessman argues that researchers should avoid reading simply for content. Attention to the structure of the narrative might include looking at how the story is organized, how the tale is developed, and where and how the narrative begins and ends. Riessman suggests that this can be done as the transcriptions of the narratives are read and worked, and she provides one way of beginning to find a focus for analysis.

There are various specific approaches to the organization of narrative, and it is not our intent in this section to review them all. Here we outline and exemplify one of the most basic of those approaches, one that captures some of the more general characteristics of this style of analysis. As is apparent, the interest here is not solely in the formal analysis per se but also in using the structures to identify how people tell stories the way that they do: how they give the events they recount shape; how they make a point; how they "package" the narrated events and their reactions to them, and how they articulate their narratives with the audience or audiences that hear them. We will base our discussion on the model outlined by Labov, which has been called an "evaluation model" (see Cortazzi, 1993). Labov identifies a number of elementary units of narrative structure. The elements can be viewed as answers to the audience's implicit questions. They are summarized below (adapted from Cortazzi, 1993, p. 45):

<i>Structure</i>	<i>Question</i>
Abstract	What was this about?
Orientation	Who? What? When? Where?
Complication	Then what happened?
Evaluation	So what?
Result	What finally happened?
Coda	[Finish narrative]

Labov himself suggests that such narrative elements occur in an invariant order, although there may be multiple occurrences embedded and recurring within a single narrative. For our purposes, it is not necessary to maintain Labov's strong claims for the pervasiveness of the elements and their sequencing; rather, the point is to see how the identification of such structural units can help us think about our data, in order to facilitate more general and more sociological kinds of analysis.

We will try to illustrate this principle with an extract taken from the anthropology interviews. Narrative analysis can lend itself to certain kinds of interview data anyway, as the conversation exchange of the research interview often implicitly or explicitly invites the informant to recount stories. Our interviews with graduate students and supervisors contained various storylike features, but we should not exaggerate their presence in this particular corpus of data. The research interests of the research team were not focused specifically on the anthropologists' "tales from the field" (fascinating though that topic is), but in the course of their personal accounts, it was inevitable that some of them produced narrative responses to particular questions. Given below is an extract from an interview with a graduate student, in which she retells her experience of anthropological fieldwork.

Well the first year was trying to sort out the questions, really, that I needed to ask, and so I started my fieldwork in eighty-five, and had envisaged doing a year of fieldwork and then writing up for a year afterwards and that being that. But then I got pregnant in eighty-five, which in many ways was a good thing, particularly with my main informant, because she was just pregnant and I was just pregnant and that really meant our relationship changed a lot and became much deeper as we were going through the same thing, we could talk about things that perhaps I wouldn't have thought about before. But I also had problems with the pregnancy and had time off, so apart from having maternity leave anyway I also had time off because I couldn't work after the fifth month. And then other things happened as well. I had a miscarriage and my father was ill, then I was pregnant again and had more maternity leave, so I had various reprieves from the ESRC [Economic and Social Research Council—a government-funded council providing funding for postgraduate research].

So in real terms I'm now coming up to the end of my fourth year as defined by ESRC. So the fieldwork got really punctuated and I could add it up if I went back to the books, but it was off and on, off and on, and once I'd had Ben I went back and did more fieldwork and then had another break and went back, and so obviously that caused problems. Because I was known in the clinic it wasn't a problem of establishing myself. I could turn up whenever I knew there was a room free and that side of it was fine. But in terms of what was happening in the news changed. I mean IVF [in-vitro fertilization] was very much in the news then and that did actually change the course of what I studied in the end, or how I approached it—trying to get at people's ideas of procreation through their understanding of new reproductive technologies and so on. And I mean, I suppose if I'd done my fieldwork in a block then a lot of those issues wouldn't have been around, and people wouldn't

have read so much about them, and so it was something they were more familiar with. But it meant that the background to the research was shifting quite a lot, so it was elongated, really.

Turning to Labov's structural units, we can see how they might be applied to this data extract. Labov suggests that the abstract is optional, and there is not a separate one in this instance. Typically, when the abstract occurs "it initiates the narrative by summarizing the point or by giving a statement of a general proposition which the narrative will exemplify" (Cortazzi, 1993, p. 44). (In interview data, the interviewer's question normally elicits the narrative, and the informant may feel no obligation to provide such a prefatory statement, which normally has the function of establishing the opening of the story and claiming a narrative-like turn in the conversation.) It is clear, however, that the anthropology student's narrative begins by giving an orientation. She establishes the situation (the fieldwork), the time (the first year of her doctorate, 1985, the year she started her fieldwork), and the person (herself). This occupies the first sentence.

Orientation is followed by complication, which normally carries the major account of the events that are central to the story. It comprises the bones of "what happened." In other words, complication consists of the narrated events. In this particular example, the events are the student's pregnancies, periods of maternity leave, and father's illness, as well as how they were related to the progress of her fieldwork. In accordance with Labov's analysis, they are recounted in the simple past tense. They narrate turning points, crises, or problems, and how these were made sense of by the teller.

Evaluation in this particular case is closely linked with the result. The evaluation typically highlights the point of the narrative, while the result, which follows either the complication or the evaluation, describes the outcome of the events or the resolution of the problems. Starting from "And I mean, I suppose if I'd done my fieldwork in a block," the student provides an evaluation of her fieldwork experiences and gives the audience a sense of the outcome. The result is emphasized in the final clause: "it meant that the background to the research was shifting quite a lot." Her evaluation was that if she had done her fieldwork in an uninterrupted block of time, her ideas would not have developed in the way that they did. She implies that her fieldwork benefited from her pregnancies and related experiences.

In the same way that an abstract is optional, narratives may finish with a coda. The coda marks the close or end of the narrative, returning the discourse to the present and marking a possible transition point, at which the talk may revert to the other parties to the encounter. (In interview talk, it may indicate closure of a response to a question, indicating that the interviewer may follow it up with another prompt or a fresh topic.) The anthropologist's story does end with an abbreviated coda: "so it was elongated, really." This final clause takes the story full circle, back to the issues of how long the fieldwork took and why. It is of interest that at the outset of the story, there is an implied or projected story of what did *not* happen, that is, the simple version of events that the student had predicted and that was overturned by the complications and resolution of what actually transpired. That too has its implied coda: "that being that." This finishes the implied or projected narrative and moves the narrator on to the actual story being told.

We do not wish to suggest that Labov's categories map onto this narrative, or to all narratives, with perfect regularity. We also wish to avoid creating the impression that all analysts of such data need to search obsessively for the equivalent narrative units and their defining characteristics. There are other ways of looking at the data, and other analysts identify different structural features. It is worth noting, however, that even with our simplified treatment of Labov's analytic framework, and with our fairly restricted data, we can identify some issues of potential significance. The framework provides us with an analytic perspective on two things: It allows us to see how that narrative is structured, and it offers a perspective from which to reflect on the functions of the story. Drawing on these closely related aspects, we now have a sense of what the key themes and issues are and how the student constructs the story in order to convey her point. We can see how the informant's personal narrative of lived experience is organized into a narrative form. Although the reported biographical events may be unique to the individual, they are structured according to socially shared conventions of reportage.

It clearly would be unproductive merely to examine large numbers of narratives—whether or not derived from interviews—in order to demonstrate that they have the same underlying structure. We are not suggesting here that the qualitative researcher should mechanistically submit all narratives to analyses based on Labov's formal schema. It is useful to be able to identify recurrent structures, but that is not the whole

story. We can also look for characteristic uses or functions of narratives, as well as for distinctive types or genres.

### Narrative Forms and Functions

As we indicated earlier, as well as thinking of narratives as formal structures with identifiable properties, we can also think of them in terms of functions. The analysis of narratives can also focus on the social action implied in the text. This can involve taking a slightly less systematic and structured approach to narrative analysis, deriving more context-dependent infrastructure and focus to explain the effect (intended or unintended, implicit or explicit) of the story or tale. This emphasizes the idea that individual narratives are situated within particular interactions and within specific social, cultural, and institutional discourses. For example, in the narrative extract used in the previous section, rather than concentrating on the structural properties, we could think about the possible functional qualities of the story. The story serves to illustrate the relationship between planning and luck in the research endeavor and the negative and positive effects of forced breaks on fieldwork, for example. The emphasis shift here is not a strict or rigid one. In analyzing structure, we alluded to the functional qualities. What we are suggesting here is that the idea of function can be brought to the fore and used as a principal analytical unit.

Anthropological perspectives on narratives in different cultures have revealed a range of variation in the functions of narratives. For example, Preston (1978) suggests that a main function of Cree narratives in Canada is to define and express basic cultural categories in the sharing of individual experiences. Toelken (1969, 1975) provides an example among the Nvago narratives of moral functions. Similarly, folkloristic approaches to occupational narratives (Cortazzi, 1991, 1993; Dingwall, 1977) also reveal that stories can have functional qualities within the occupational culture. Cortazzi (1993) gives examples of functional types of occupational narratives such as cautionary tales of accidents and disasters (whose function is to teach learners to avoid them) and organizational sagas, which function to give a collective understanding of the rationale of an organization and a rationale for workers' commitment. Cortazzi's evaluation of teachers' narratives revealed that teachers' stories

have functions of self and cultural identity, entertainment, moral evaluation, and news. They provide media for reflecting teachers' cultural context in the work they do.

To illustrate the functional properties of narrative, we have chosen two particular forms. These by no means exhaust the possibilities, but they provide some indication of the general analytic strategy. Using data from the interviews with anthropology graduate students and supervisors, we explore how narratives can be analyzed in terms of content and function. The two forms we use to illustrate this are stories that present a moral fable (of either success or of failure) and stories that are told as a way of chronicling an individual's life experiences.

#### SUCCESS STORIES AND MORAL TALES

The story with a moral or a point has a long tradition within the realms of children's stories and fairy tales. Endings of "and they all lived happily ever after" pull together a tale and present the end result as one of success. Similarly, the moralistic tale, which often presents a sad or unfortunate story, serves as a collective reminder of what not to do or how not to be. These stories also provide the reader with an ending, this time along the lines of how to avoid the fate described in the story. Stories of our own and others' experiences are often told with a point in mind. Such narrative accounts of atrocity and of success can be analyzed both in terms of what they tell us about the individuals or the research setting and in terms of how the stories are developed and built up.

To illustrate these ideas, we can turn again to our anthropology data. Dr. Teague of Southersham University describes doctoral students he has supervised.

#### *Extract 1*

Anyway, this person had done an MA by coursework, then went on to a PhD, did fieldwork in Newfoundland in a fishing community—the PhD was on Newfoundland fisherman. That was good, because although I don't have any experience of Icelandic fishermen, we were interested in the same areas of anthropology. The difference between the first person I mentioned and the second, was that the first one—I got to supervise her in the first place because one of my interests at the time was supposed to be on ethnic minorities,

because I'd done fieldwork on Canadian Inuit, but I had no particular knowledge about ethnic minorities in Britain, so—in that case it didn't really matter because the student had strong enough opinions of her own; in the second case it was different because I felt it was someone who was interested in the same sort of issues as I was, and that worked out very well, he was a good student, and he's now the leading anthropologist in an Icelandic university. He's trained up a whole series of anthropologists who are now in various places in the United States, Canada and here, so now we're getting students in this department that he's trained. He's written a couple of books, so he's doing fine.

### *Extract 2*

Number four was an ESRC funded student. She did an MA here first of all for which she got a grant from a fund for the daughters of vicars! That got her through her MA year, then she got the ESRC grant. She went to study Francophone separatists in a town in Quebec and again, in my area, which was nice, she coped with the fieldwork, which everybody had told her would be impossible, she coped very well and wrote her thesis on time, in fact she got the thesis written before the grant finished, which was a record, and it was a very competent thesis, which was supposed to be a book, and should be coming out at any moment, and after that she married a Thai research student who was here, and went out to Thailand for a while, but then things went wrong with the marriage and she came back here and had a research job. So those were the four.

These “vignettes” can be thought of as serving a purpose. A recurrent theme in the two extracts from Dr. Teague is the overcoming of difficulties and the achievement of success. This is similar to the story retold by the PhD student in the previous section. Like that student with her pregnancies and her father's illness, the students described by Dr. Teague had also expressed difficulties in the course of their fieldwork. Dr. Teague quantifies success—locating the student in the first extract as a leading anthropologist in the University of Iceland, as a successful “supervisor” in his own right, having trained and placed a whole series of anthropologists, and as a productive author. The story is one of a magnitude of success that goes beyond the supervision and the PhD topic.

The second extract is about the scale of success in the face of some difficulties and adversities. The story begins with success—the funding of the student's MA and PhD. The student was told by “everybody” that

her fieldwork would be impossible; however, she “coped very well.” Again Dr. Teague presents tangible measures of success in the form of a thesis written ahead of time, perhaps to become a book. The student’s marriage and its subsequent failure also is presented as an adversity that the student surmounted to come back (to research and a job).

Both stories focus on key turning points, both difficulties and successes. The supervisor highlights fieldwork as a key part of the doctoral program, emphasizing the centrality of this aspect of anthropology. Dr. Teague also indicates what is viewed as important and significant in the junior anthropological career—publications, jobs, and students of one’s own. The extracts give us some insight into the cultural organization of anthropological work and the signifiers of success.

Anthropology supervisors also tell less hopeful stories of graduate students. There are stories that tell of things going wrong or being too difficult, and of failure. These also serve particular purposes, giving indications of what does not work and what students (and supervisors) should not do.

*Extract 3 (from interview with Dr. Dorroway, University of Kingford)*

Another thesis I examined, it makes an anecdote, and there’s a point to it, I think, a long time ago, in Masonbridge, a Sudanese student, whose supervisor had wanted it to be an MPhil thesis because he felt it wasn’t up to scratch, but the guy insisted on presenting it as a PhD, and it wasn’t PhD standard and it wasn’t passed. About a month later the guy died of a liver disease, but the story went round in Khartoum that it was because of disappointment at not getting his PhD. There’s a moral in that that supervisors shouldn’t have their arms twisted.

*Extract 4 (from interview with Dr. Feste, University of Kingford)*

Yes, this is the woman I’m seeing through to the end, who’s actually been supervised as far as I can tell, by everyone else in the department. . . . Well, she started with not a very coherent idea with Jeremy Styles, I think—she’s doing ideas of procreation and birth—and it wasn’t coherent when she started out, and she was moved on to both Ian Felgate and Ralph Dorroway, both of whom she did not get on very well with, and she seems to have been through several other people, and ended up with Carolyn Brackenberry after seven or eight years—it’s been a long, drawn out saga, and Carolyn’s managed to get her through to the point where she’s almost ready to submit.

Everything's just about ready in draft, and she had to go on leave, so rather than saying "take another nine months" she arranged to bring her to me, so that she would finish by June 30th. Which is the ESRC deadline, although she's missed it by several years, as far as I can tell. The department had more or less written her off, and it's quite clear from her fieldwork material, as Carolyn Brackenberry pointed out, that she was not adequately supervised at various points, so that questions the supervisor would have said "Have you asked your women this?" particularly as she was right here in London, are missing from the material, because there was no one there to suggest things, so there were gaps, which even if you're in the field, you write to your supervisor and get a letter back saying "Try this" etc. And she's had great blanks of supervision where she was on her own so it has been a problem.

Extract 3 contains both anecdote and rumor but appears to be told to some (explicit) purpose by the supervisor. The story links the failure of the doctoral thesis to a student's failure to take the advice of a supervisor. There is, of course, a parallel moral for supervisors that they should "not have their arms twisted" and should stick to their convictions. The story is told, however, as the student's fault. The failure is clearly seen as the student's, in that he did not take the supervisory advice he was offered. We could use this insight to elaborate on the nature and importance of the supervisory relationship in the (successful) pursuit of a doctorate, at least in anthropology. The (poor) supervisory relationship is identified as the problem. How this is manifested—failure to listen, lack of respect—could form a wider analysis of what makes a good or bad supervisor and supervisory relationship.

Extract 4 expands on this central part of the PhD experience, presenting a protracted tale of a student's relationships with several different supervisors. The moral tale begins with the student's lack of clarity over her research topic and then continues with a number of supervisors with whom she did not get along. The supervision by Carolyn Brackenberry is presented as somewhat successful: The student finally got to the point of being almost ready to submit. The story continues with a missed deadline, which the department seems to be ignoring, and the belief of Dr. Feste that she will finish eventually. This story contains further data that we can feed into our analysis of the nature and significance of the supervisory relationship. The "moral" of the tale seems to be a warning about multiple supervisors and blanks in supervision. This is prefaced by a description of a difficult, incoherent student. The structure of the

narrative itself thus helps to deflect potential blame from the supervisor and the department by locating it implicitly with the student.

Here we begin to explore how anthropology supervisors make sense of and justify supervisory relationships, as well as looking at PhD successes and failures. It seems to be that supervision is important and, if done well, produces good students. The exact effects of supervision, however, are presented as rather less determinate than that. Students sometimes achieve success in spite of, rather than as a result of, supervision. Similarly, even with supervision some students fail.

These success stories and moral tales are useful starting points for a more thorough analysis. They provide a mechanism for exploring how social actors frame and make sense of particular sets of experiences. In considering the supervisors' extracts, we can begin, as we have indicated, to develop ideas and questions about the work of anthropologists and the nature of the supervisory relationship. For example, we have mentioned measures of anthropologic success, the overcoming of adversity, good and bad supervisory practice, and explanations for success and failure. These are all analytic points of departure from which we could re-read and explore our data set in more detail.

It is worth mentioning here that we can continue to think of these stories as having certain structural properties. In particular, with "moral tales" social actors tell their story with a purpose. With that in mind, we can also think about the ways in which the stories are organized to give their delivery impact. Biographical details are used to contextualize stories, and comparisons with other events and theses set up a story. Some tell the listener that "there is a point," and so on.

The extract about the Sudanese student offers an example of a story structured to give impact. It is relatively short and to the point. The opening gives the impression that there might be a long story to tell. The impact therefore comes with the "and then he died" scenario. The forms that stories take can provide insight into how experiences are structured and how information is transmitted to give the desired impact. Some stories "rev up" and provide a detailed and drawn out account; others hit you early with the punch line. Some tell you the purpose at the beginning. Others add mystery and suspense by delaying the point to the story. In terms of analysis, our point is that stories that have meaning and purpose relay their context in morally contextual and socially acceptable ways. Stories are discursive structures that reflect cultural

norms. We can consider how stories are told to full purpose as well as why they are told.

The next section follows this theme, moving our discussion to the autobiographical qualities of narrative. Structural concerns with the formal properties and social functions of narrative are only some of the ways of thinking about stories in an analytical way.

#### NARRATIVE AS CHRONICLE

As social actors, we are all involved in retelling our experiences and lives. In doing so, we chronicle our lives in terms of a series of events, happenings, influences, and decisions. Narrative, as autobiography, describes the way in which people articulate how the past is related to the present (Richardson, 1990). Time is placed into a personal history, where the past is given meaning in the present. Social actors organize their lives and experiences through stories and in doing so make sense of them. This chronicling of a life, or part of a life, often starts from a point of "how it all happened" or "how I came to be where I am today."

Analytically, a recognition that social actors organize their biographies narratively provides a potentially rich source of data. How social actors retell their life experiences as stories can provide insight into the characters, events, and happenings central to those experiences. How the chronicle is told and how it is structured can also provide information about the perspectives of the individual in relation to the wider social grouping or cultural setting to which that individual belongs. The data extracts that are drawn upon in this section are the narratives of anthropological faculty recounting how they came to be anthropologists working in particular institutional settings. An initial analysis of these narratives suggests that they can reveal a number of different characteristics and events central to the anthropological career. The concept of career has long been of interest to social scientists, in particular, to sociologists.

As a concept, "career" is both retrospective and often narrated. All of us have stories about our careers, as students, or teachers, or parents, or academics. Career is most often associated with a notion of a working life, an occupational career. In sociology, the concept also has been applied to other social roles, allowing insight into the careers, for example, of parents, children, and patients. Our understandings and explorations into the concept of career have allowed distinctions to be made

between objective and subjective careers (Evetts, 1994) and between notions of personally and structurally oriented or enforced career paths. Careers are both individually constructed and structurally determined. Social actors have their own stories to tell and their own perspectives on what has gone before and what is to come. These stories are mediated by structural dimensions and social arrangements that at least seem outside the control of the social actors (Acker, 1994). The following chronicle illustrates how these individual, collective, and structural factors are all present in the retelling of a career.

*Interview With Dr. Talisman (Southerham University)*

My first degree was at Cambridge, 1975-1978, in archaeology and anthropology, specializing in anthropology. After that I had a year off because I didn't know what I wanted to do next, and then decided after a year that nothing interested me as much as carrying on in university and doing some research of my own. And in my year off, before going up to Cambridge, I'd spent time on a kibbutz in Israel. I very much liked the farming and the outdoor life, and the community of the kibbutz as well. I felt rather alone in Cambridge, and I liked the togetherness of the kibbutz. So I thought I'd do some research on a kibbutz, combining something academic with a style of life that I liked.

So I decided to go to Manchester to do a PhD, because with Max Gluckman, the previous professor, there'd been a strong link with Israel, and lots of research projects started from Manchester. His field of interest was Manchester, but he was a South African Jew, and when his family left South Africa, he was the only one who came to England, the others went to Israel, and I suppose he knew how to get money to do research in Israel. There was a man called Bernstein who funded a lot of projects, and Gluckman's links with Bernstein were such that he was able to fund a lot of research projects in Israel.

So I went there rather than stay in Cambridge or go somewhere else, and was really pleased to go there. It was a small department, very together, intimate, and I thrived, I really liked it. I really liked the anthropology there, it was more individualistic, less emphasis on social structure, more on the flux of social life, the creativeness of social life, really relating to my interests in the self and the individual. So I did my PhD there and I finished in February 1983, which was just over three years. Then I went to Australia, on a postdoctoral fellowship in Western Australia, and ended up spending two and a half years there altogether. It turned out that my first research wasn't in Israel, the professor who was in charge there at the time, Emrys Peters, was quite keen to alter the focus of the department. He was an Arabist himself,

worked in Libya and the Lebanon and convinced me that the kibbutz was old-fashioned to study, and I was also very interested in Europe, so I ended up doing my PhD on a small French farming village in the Normandy, looking at communication, worldview, perception, interaction, how the farmer saw the world.

In Western Australia, where I did my second piece of research, I looked at how people talk about violence or why people talk about violence so much, it sort of took the place of the weather in English conversational exchange, and wrote a book on the nature of urban interaction—I was doing fieldwork in the only real city in that part of Australia—and doing covert participant observation in the university itself, and in bars, and hospitals and courts of law. Anyway after three and a half years there I'd had enough. I wanted to move back to England, but jobs are very scarce here still—that was 1987—so after a year as a fellow here at Southersham, doing some work as a tutor, I got a lectureship in Israel in 1988, and went out to Israel. . . . I was teaching there and also doing some research on a new town in the middle of the desert, looking at why the American immigrants who were there had come and whether what they'd come for they'd found. After a year there I managed to get a lectureship here in Southersham, and I started in October 1989. So I've been here an academic year.

This extract recounts a section of an anthropologist's academic career. The biographical experiences told in the process of the story can be analyzed on a number of different levels. The story maps the anthropologist's past (and his biography) along a particular time frame. The listener is taken chronologically through the anthropological career, beginning with the first degree and ending with the present academic post. Key events are related to this career: a year in an Israeli kibbutz, the decision to change institutions between first degree and higher degree, a fellowship in Australia, the publication of a book, a move back to England, and a lectureship in Israel. Key social actors also are related to this career: Professor Max Gluckman, Bernstein, and Emrys Peters.

These key events and actors are signposts on the career path of the anthropologist in the informant's own terms. The narrative reveals the actor's own "story" of why he is where he is today. The narration also embeds a more general story about the development of the anthropological discipline. As well as mapping the individual career, the events and actors described provide insight into the development of anthropology as an academic discipline. We get a sense that different sorts of anthropology are done at different institutions, that anthropology is

institutionally structured. The move toward studying the familiar and the local also is charted as a significant moment with the discipline. Furthermore, we are given the names and stories of key characters in anthropology—for example, Gluckman and Bernstein—and the individual anthropologist's relationship to these figures. The narration also reveals the focus and orientation (and how they have shifted) of different, key anthropological departments.

The story also can be analyzed in terms of the accounts and explanations that the social actor uses to make sense of his career. The biography is peppered with turning points and conversions. The year off in an Israeli kibbutz altered the perception of the style of life he wished to have, and Israel provided a source of possible PhD fieldwork. The decision to go to a different institution to study for a master's degree marked a key turning point in the sort of lifestyle and the kind of anthropology that was desired. Emrys Peters provided influence that converted the subject studied; this in turn influenced future work in Australia.

Alongside the turning points is the tension between career and life planning, on one hand, and circumstances and luck, on the other. The chronicle is told as a planned and ordered set of experiences but is one that also turns on luck. The kibbutz experience came about because of indecision about the future and became a critical point in shaping future career decisions. Similarly, the lectureship in Israel almost seemed to come about because there were few jobs in England, yet it was a key point in the anthropologist's career.

To summarize, then, this particular autobiographical narrative can be analyzed in terms of what it reveals about the individual's career, the anthropological discipline, key characters and events, key turning points, and influences. It also can be considered in terms of how the social actor tells the story, the sorts of vocabularies and rhetorical devices used, how present and past experiences are contrasted, and the different institutions and people discussed. We also can use the story to explore how the tensions between luck and judgment or intent are told and explained.

If we were to develop this analysis, we might look for other narratives of career among the anthropologists, picking out the key characters and events and the ways in which the story is constructed, told, and framed. The data extract below demonstrates how we might build on our initial analyses.

*Extract From Interview With Dr. Telpher (Southerham University)*

I started in Engineering at Ohio State University. At the end of the first year when I'd enjoyed myself very much, I was asked to leave, because I hadn't done very well in my engineering exams. But we had to do courses outside, and I'd done English, and I'd done extremely well at English, and they thought that perhaps I was ill-suited to the course that I had chosen. Anyway I'd run through my money as well, so I transferred to another university, which was closer to home, so I could work and support myself, and I still continued with science subjects, I was doing physics and maths, and in the course of that I was in a programme where we were streamed and the upper 5 percent of the university was put into what was called an honours college and we had special classes where we were taught by special members of staff, and the standard of teaching was much higher.

And in doing that I was still doing science subjects and the head of the programme called me in one day and said "Why are you doing all this stuff?" And I said "Well that's what I want to do professionally." And he said "This is probably the only chance in your life you'll have to try something else, so why don't you do something different?" I thought why not, and said "What do you suggest?" and he said "You could do some philosophy, or English, or anthropology." So I thought "Alright." So I took a course in symbolic logic, thinking I wasn't risking very much, and I did a course in anthropology, and I thought they were fantastic. I loved them both.

So I finished in that line, and by the time I graduated I was doing almost nothing in the physical sciences. I almost completely changed over to the arts and social sciences. By that time I'd decided I wanted to go on and do something in sociology and social anthropology so I applied to graduate schools in the States and I was given a fellowship in Northeastern University in the African Studies programme. And I was in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, so I went there. When I first went to Northeastern Paul and Laura Bohannon were both there on the African Studies Programme, and the first year I worked with Paul Bohannon, and was completely bowled over by British social anthropology which I was encountering for the first time. The clarity of the vision and the way in which problems were phrased seemed quite strikingly different from American anthropology which I'd got acquainted with up to then. And I thought "Yes, that's what I want to do."

Unfortunately the Bohannons left, at the end of my first year, and there was virtually no one around to do anthropology. But because of an arrangement at University I was able to go over to Harvard and I had two seminars, one with Tambiah on religion, and another with Darryl Ford who was visiting that year on African religion, and that confirmed my previous experience with Bohannon, that it was the kind of social anthropology that I wanted to do. How this all relates to what I'm doing now—there is a connection, and that is that the head of my department at Northeastern was Gary Joplin, a

sociologist who'd done fieldwork in Turkey, and he had a project in which he'd invited two Turkish scholars to come to Northeastern to do community study techniques, and they needed a dogsbody to work with the Turks and help them with their interviews and all their statistical apparatus, and as it happened I had the most experience in maths and statistics by far, most of the other students being innumerate, and I was given by Joplin to work with the Turks on the project, to teach them a little bit of statistics and do the results.

And as a result of that I was invited to go to Turkey at the end of this project and do some research when I got back home, and again they wanted someone to come and help them train interviewers and do the practical aspects of the data process. So I was invited to Turkey and spent the summer there, five months, working with the Turks. Having had no interest or training in that part of the world previously, that was the summer of the Anatolian earthquake, and it was in Anatolia that I was working, and the earthquake put an end to that project, and I had to leave because of the earthquake. I was moving to the University of Lockport which had just started a little PhD programme in social anthropology. It was a complete unknown, I was going in as one of the first of their postgraduate students, but having looked around at other universities I decided that I preferred to do something that was unknown in social anthropology, rather than something that was more mainline American university anthropology. That wasn't what I wanted then, though it meant taking quite a gamble.

It turned out to be excellent, one of the few good choices I've made in my life. The programme was very well taught, an awful lot of energy went into the training of my students. I thought on the basis of my African Studies experience in Northeastern that I wanted to do fieldwork in Africa. But that seemed to be increasingly unlikely because of political problems then between the U.S. and Uganda where I was thinking of doing my fieldwork. A friend of mine from Northeastern days, working in Uganda, was sending back frantic letters about the difficulties he was having getting permission to do fieldwork. So the head of my department at Northeastern said I should look around for some other place to do work. And I thought about going to Central Brazil to work with Lewis, but that seemed like hero stuff, and I didn't think I was quite up to that. Then there was the possibility of going back to Turkey, and it was really on the spur of the moment after dithering for months that the head of the department called me in and asked where I wanted to do my work and I said "It's very complex, because on the one hand . . . on the other hand . . ." and I outlined all the complexities, and he said "I know all the complexities I just want to know where you want to do your work." I said "It's extremely difficult to answer that" and he said "I know, but where do you want to work?" and I said "I can't answer that" and he said "That's alright, you've got a half hour to make up your mind, I just want to know before you go out of that door." And I blurted out "Turkey."

That was the summer of '63. It was a five-month project, a sociology project—that was the first time. My own fieldwork was done from '67 to '68, I think. The dates are a bit hazy without having a c.v. to refer to. Then I was back again in 1970. So that's a long answer to how I got into my training. . . .

While I was a student at Lockport, Freddie Bailey was a member of staff for a year. Vic Turner, who was at Cornell, came to Lockport, for a term, and he gave the Morgan lectures. Max Gluckman was in the country and he came to Lockport for a time. I went to Cornell to attend a couple of his seminars. So the Manchester School as it's known, was very much at the forefront of my consciousness, and I knew that it was a very interesting department. And then when I first started teaching, I was teaching in a small college in upstate New York, and one of my first undergraduate students went to Manchester as a postgrad. So I was aware of what was going on in the department through him. And I always fancied my chances of going there. And several years later I was at Carnegie Mellon University, working on a project that was coming to an end, so I was looking around for something else, and there was a job going there at Manchester, so I thought, "If I don't put in for it I'll always wonder what might have happened" so I decided to put in for it, and lo and behold I was offered the post. It only lasted two years, though, while one of the permanent staff was away on fieldwork, so I came on here to Southerham.

This autobiographical chronicle displays many of the analytical points we drew from the previous autobiographical abstract. The narrative here also talks in terms of key anthropological figures, key turning points, and the influence of particular academic departments. The relationship and balance between decisions and luck is also highlighted. Key anthropological influences are featured, including social actors such as the Bohanons (a married couple of anglicized American anthropologists), Joplin, Bailey, Turner, and Max Gluckman again. The story is replete with turning points: doing poorly in engineering examinations, the interview with the head of the department, the relationship at Northeastern, and the invitation to Turkey. The tensions between planning and luck show perhaps even more strongly in this material: running out of money, being a "dogsbody" to visiting Turkish scholars, the earthquake, and getting to know Manchester through coincidental contacts. These are all told as luck but all had an influential impact on the life course and career of the social actor. This extract also is replete with contrastive rhetoric, particularly in how the respondent compares anthropology in the American and British traditions. We get a sense of the different approaches to anthropology and different people and places associated with those approaches.

In pursuing such a line of inquiry, we find ourselves explicating how actors construct their biographies and careers. We see how the past is shaped by narrative form. Simultaneously, we see how key events and other social actors are represented through the narratives of experience. We thus start to explore what Denzin has described in terms of "interpretive interactionism" (Denzin, 1989): the relationship between social processes and personal lives. Sociologists and anthropologists have become increasingly interested in the production and analysis of lives. This has included the investigation of whole lives, for example, through the collection of oral and life histories, as well as the investigation of key life events.

Well-established sociological concepts can be viewed in terms of their relevance to a concern with the biography or life story. For example, we have well-developed sociological interests in concepts of the self, the life course, and the career. Indeed, there has been a recent resurgence of interest in (auto)biography in sociological inquiry. The turn to textuality and a concern with intertextuality has led many to question the distinction between biography and autobiography, between representations of reality and reality itself. Central to this theoretical and empirical interest is the place of the narrative—as biographical producer, account, and framework within which to locate the telling of lives. In other words, an attention to narrative forms and functions allows us to develop aspects of our data in particularly useful ways. We can explore not only the elementary structures of narrative but also how they are used to perform particular kinds of account.

### **Ethnopoetics, Oral Performance, and Voice**

We have so far treated narratives as unproblematic, in that we have said very little about the contexts in which they are produced or how they may be encountered in the course of fieldwork. By illustrating our argument from our interview data, we do not mean to imply that social science interviews are the only occasions in which personal narratives are produced or from which such data may be culled. Stories are told, experiences are shared, and similar kinds of performances are enacted as part and parcel of everyday life. Work, leisure, bureaucracies, and indeed the entire range of social institutions and occasions are full of

stories. The narratives of everyday life are used to construct and to share cultural values, meanings, and personal experiences. They also express—and indeed enact—the social conditions of power and influence in everyday life. Talk—and stories form part of everyday talk—is selected and performed to an audience. As such, talk can be contextualized in terms of it being an oral performance.

The data on which we draw in this book do not lend themselves especially well to analysis in terms of oral performance. The stories that are told are located within an interview format and are prompted, to some extent at least. As such, the performance quality is to some extent bounded by the answers to prompted questions. Even here, however, the anthropologists “told” their stories in certain ways and gave a performance of sorts to the interviewer. More lengthy (and in-depth) history interviews and the observation of naturally occurring speech lend themselves rather better to an analysis of the oral performance of the narrator and its poetic qualities. Our point here is that we can think about how actors orally “perform” and what that reveals about the social and cultural setting.

We can think of this concern with oral performance as a concern with the *ethnopoetics* of everyday life. Attention to the performance element in oral traditions and events is summed up by Bauman (1986, p. 3) who describes performance as

a mode of communication, a way of speaking, the essence of which resides in the assumption of responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative skill, highlighting the way in which communication is carried out, above and beyond its referential content.

Thinking about how stories are performed enables us to think about analysis in terms of how social actors self-present to a public or an audience, and how that presentation is achieved. How are relatively standardized verbal forms manipulated and performed to capture audiences, whether familiar or strange? Related to this is how successful or competent the social actor is in the performance. Why are some social actors better than others at getting their story across? Oral performance also can be a way of thinking about the competencies of performing (and therefore of individual social actors). Crocker (1977) suggests the significance of this by arguing that the “many details of visual life” are the

result of social audiences witnessing skilled oral performances. Similarly, a noncompetent oral performance is not greeted readily by the audience: "[T]he joke may fall flat, the poet's writing remain so obscure as to exasperate his [*sic*] readers, the actor is booed off the stage, the content is ignored" (Crocker, 1977, p. 45).

In terms of analyzing social interaction and "oral data," then, one can look at how oral performances are acted and performed by social actors. As well as looking at the skills of performance and the tools of performance (voice tone, actions, nonverbal communication skills), there is also interest in the success or competence of the performer and the relationship between performer and audience. Oral performances capture "ethnopoetics of everyday life." That is, attention to the performance enables the qualitative analyst to consider both the social and cultural world of the individual social actor as well as the situated and institutional context of those performances. On one level, each oral performance can be viewed as unique and emergent, a display of individual and cultural personality. On another level, one can look toward identifying conventionalized, patterned organizations of performances, the ways in which such performances are consistent (or not) with local understanding, situationally and institutionally contextualized. Performances then are fundamentally social and situational, or as Bauman (1986) suggests, situated social accomplishments of people engaged in the practice of social life.

Analyzing oral performances requires consideration of the structure of the performance event and how the situational factors feed into the event. These include the performer and the performed to (or audience), the expressive skills employed by the social actor in creating a performance, the norms and strategies used in performing, how performances are interpreted and evaluated by the audience, and how performance is sequenced to create a complete performance. By considering all of these, in the context of looking at the telling of the narrative we are able to recognize that oral data have form as well as content, art as well as science, creative structure as well as means. We are also reminded that qualitative analysis is as much about "how things are said" as about what is said. What we are concerned with here is a recognition that storytelling is culturally situated and relies for its success on culturally shared conventions about language and the hearing of stories.

In analyzing qualitative data from interviews alone, we are not in a position to report directly on the full range of oral performances in which

anthropologists and their graduate students may engage. There are many occasions when they perform. A full ethnography of our academic departments and their doctoral training programs would provide plenty of opportunities to observe and record such events, among them seminar presentations, debates and disputes, and oral examinations. On the other hand, there is little doubt that our interview data have close affinities with more "natural" performances. There is, for example, every likelihood that the kinds of stories that were produced in our research interviews (genealogies, reminiscences of field research) had been and would again be recounted in other settings. Although one must always be mindful of the fact that research interviews are particular social contexts and that extrapolation from them is always problematic, one should also recognize that the narratives and reminiscences that are produced in the interview are not necessarily unique to that context. Many will have been rehearsed, either as part of a private repertoire of recollections or as part of a collectively shared stock of narratives. Many stories are worked up and are recounted on repeated occasions. Often the research interview provides an additional situation for their telling rather than a uniquely novel encounter. Moreover, there are normally cultural expectations that actors will have appropriate recollections and stories to share. Members of an occupational subculture have shared expectations about such stories; oral performances about anthropology and anthropologists are certainly not confined to research interviews. We should be alert, therefore, to those occasions—including interviews—when oral performances are enacted and shared. We can examine not only the content and form of such performances but their functions as well. Among other things, we should pay close attention to the ways in which social actors construct their self-presentations and negotiate their identities vis-à-vis their fellow actors. The researcher may sometimes provide just such an audience.

It is perhaps important at this point to say something about the nature of the narratives that we collect as social researchers. Goodson (1995) makes the distinction between stories of domination and oppositional stories. That is, stories can be used to relay dominant voices or can be appropriated to "give voice" to otherwise silenced groups and individuals. Goodson suggests that stories prolific in the cultural heritage of a particular society or the occupational culture of a particular group are often carriers of dominant messages. That is, stories relay messages of

dominant sectors. There are oppositional stories that also may be part of a cultural storytelling, but Goodson argues that these are often in a minority form and are less powerful as agendas. Goodson makes this distinction to argue that as social researchers we should be reflexive about the stories and accounts we collect. We would not want to argue strongly that the anthropologists' stories are dominant, yet they do carry messages about which are the accepted leading figures and moments in anthropology as a discipline. The extracts we used in this chapter are matched by much of the rest of the data in providing a united picture of who was and is influential in forming the discipline, what types of anthropology and academic departments are more acceptable, and so forth. Goodson suggests that in analyzing such stories we should give some attention to whether social actors are transmitting a dominant message and how these messages manifest themselves in the storytelling. The anthropologists do not question the messages they are giving in the stories, yet they could perhaps be said to reveal a *dominant* picture of what anthropology is and to say who does it and where it is done best. The caveat here is that we should be sensitive to the kinds of stories we collect and the influences on the recollection and telling of the story. That is, in any cultural or social setting, storytelling voices are differentiated and stratified (Becker, 1967).

Such attention to the voices of storytellers and other social actors is of profound significance to various contemporary perspectives on social research. By giving due analytic weight to the nature of personal narratives, we can help ourselves to avoid subordinating otherwise muted voices. Various feminist and postcolonialist critics have argued for the presence of voices of women, people of color, and other oppressed people in the studies that so often make them the object of scrutiny. Commitment to a dialogic methodology, for example, implies the representation of actors' own narrated lives (cf. Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

The stories that are collected during social research are subject to and are part of literary and cultural norms about the form of the story. Although storytelling is ubiquitous, it is not therefore naturally occurring but is part of the representation of social reality as text. Storytelling is subject to conversational norms and structures (Atkinson, 1990, 1992b). Stories are not naturally occurring in this sense but are part of a set of culturally specific mechanisms for the constructing of textual representations. In other words, narratives cannot and should not be divorced

from their location as social constructions within power structures and social milieux (Emihovich, 1995; Goodson, 1995). That is, narratives are not "naturally" occurring in that they are shaped, formed, and told according to connections and cultural understanding. As Passerini (1987, p. 28) argues, "When someone is asked for his life story his memory draws on pre-existing story lines and ways of telling stories, even if these are in part modified by the circumstances." This should not distract or discourage us from collecting and analyzing stories. Rather, it urges us to be reflexive in our collection and critical in our analysis.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, we have shown how narrative analysis is an especially valuable approach to the analysis of qualitative data. It complements and counteracts the "culture of fragmentation" (Atkinson, 1992b) that is so characteristic of data analyses based on coding and categorizing. We already have outlined the importance of that approach, especially as it facilitates the exploration of content in interviews, fieldnotes, and the like. We also have noted, on the other hand, that such fragmentation does little to preserve the *form* of qualitative data. Naturally occurring interaction and explicit exercises in data collection are often grounded in storied sharing of personal experience. It is, therefore, essential to remain sensitive to those narrative forms and genres. We do not wish to imply, however, that there is anything uniquely privileged about personal narratives. It is not the case that ethnographic interviewing, or the collection of life histories, grants us privileged access to private experiences or to the essential identities of individual actors. On the contrary, and as we have noted, narrative forms are as conventional as any other form of individual or collective expression. In being so constructed, they are equally susceptible to cultural conventions of language and to dominant forms of expression. There are no formulae or recipes for the "best" way to analyze the stories we elicit and collect. Indeed, one of the strengths of thinking about our data as narrative is that this opens up the possibilities for a variety of analytic strategies. Such approaches also enable us to think beyond our data to the ways in which accounts and stories are socially and culturally managed and constructed. That is, the analysis of narratives can provide a critical way of examining not only key actors and events but also cultural conventions and social norms.

## Suggestions for Further Reading

- Bauman, R. (1986). *Story, performance and event: Contextual studies of oral narrative*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.  
*A valuable introduction to the study of narrative and other performances in their cultural contexts.*
- Cortazzi, M. (1991). *Primary teaching, how it is—A narrative account*. London: David Fulton.
- Cortazzi, M. (1993). *Narrative analysis*. London: Falmer.  
*A useful, complementary pair of books. The first presents and analyzes teachers' accounts of everyday life and work in schools. The second is an especially useful summary of a range of analytic strategies for narratives and accounts.*
- Heyl, B. (1979). *The madam as entrepreneur: Career management in house prostitution*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books.  
*A particularly telling use of the life history method. Based on personal narratives gained from multiple interviews with a key informant.*
- Kleinman, A. (1988). *The illness narrative: Suffering, healing and the human condition*. New York: Basic Books.  
*Examines how illness (especially chronic illness) is understood and expressed through personal narratives and suggests that narrative renders suffering meaningful.*
- Mishler, E. G. (1986). *Research interviewing: Context and narrative*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.  
*Stresses the importance of narrative in a critique of standardized survey interviewing, which Mishler argues does violence to the narratives of personal experience.*
- Myerhoff, B. (1978). *Number our days*. New York: Simon and Schuster.  
*An especially engaging and sympathetic exploration of talk and narrative among elderly Jewish Americans.*
- Plummer, K. (1995). *Telling sexual stories: Power, change and social worlds*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.  
*Explores a number of genres of personal, sexual narrative. Examines in detail the coming-out narratives of lesbians and gays, rape stories, and accounts of recovery. Places narrative in a wider framework of contemporary culture and in the tradition of symbolic interactionism.*
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (1988). *Narrative knowing and the human sciences*. Albany: State University of New York Press.  
*An important general statement of a narrative approach in contemporary cultural disciplines.*

Riessman, C. K. (1990). *Divorce talk: Women and men make sense of personal relationships*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Riessman, C. K. (1993). *Narrative analysis*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

*An especially useful pair of monographs. In the first, Riessman demonstrates an approach to narrative analysis that is based on detailed empirical research and owes something to Mishler's general approach. In the second, she outlines a rationale and a variety of approaches to narrative analysis.*