7 Discourse Analysis and Narrative

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0 Introduction

Narrative has been one of the major themes in humanistic and social-scientific thought since the mid-twentieth century. The essence of humanness, long characterized as the tendency to make sense of the world through rationality, has come increasingly to be described as the tendency to tell stories, to make sense of the world through narrative. In linguistics, narrative was one of the first discourse genres to be analyzed, and it has continued to be among the most intensively studied.

We begin in Section 1 by discussing research on narrative in the structuralist tradition. After a brief description of structuralist narratology, which was the immediate context for discourse analysts' work on the syntactic and semantic structures of narrative, we turn to some of the most influential work on the linguistics of narrative, that of Labov and Waletzky (1967, 1997; Labov 1972: 354–96). We then sketch work on the structure of narrative by linguistic anthropologists and scholars interested in information-processing for computational purposes. Section 2 turns to research on narrative in its interactional context, asking how narrative is shaped by, and helps to shape, the particular interactions in which it arises. After briefly describing earlier research that suggested the need to study narrative in its conversational context, we turn to recent work in the tradition of Conversation Analysis, research on "small stories," and research on narrative and identity.

In Section 3 we explore how narrative is embedded in and constitutive of more durable, replicable sociocultural practices. We touch on how children are socialized as narrators and how shared narratives and shared uses of narrative create and reinforce communities. An overview of research on narrative in institutional settings and in the media highlights the connections between narrative practices and power. We end the section by arguing for research that attends to the details of narrative as social

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practice in particular communities and activities. The final sections of the chapter discuss the current state of narrative study across the humanities and social sciences and sketch some directions in which new work is going, with a particular focus on multimodality and issues of identity and ownership.

1 Structural Approaches to Narrative

Two related but somewhat different approaches to the structure of narrative became known in the West beginning in the mid-1950s. One was that of the Russian Vladimir Propp (1968). Propp's fundamental claim, originally proposed in the 1920s, is that all folktales have the same deep-structure sequence of "functions" or meaningful actions by characters. Similarly, French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (1955, 1964, 1966) claimed that traditional narrative around the world, though superficially varied, all deals with a limited number of basic themes. Several French philosophers and literary theorists adapted Propp's and Lévi-Strauss's ideas to the analysis of literary narrative. Among the best known are Barthes (1966), Genette (1966), Greimas (1966), and Todorov (1967). (See Culler 1975: ch. 9 for an overview of structuralist theory about literary narrative.) These structuralist approaches to myth and literature all shared two assumptions. One was that there are abstract levels on which structures and meanings that seem different superficially are really the same. The other was that narrative analysts should distinguish between the story as a series of events (the *fabula*) and the story as told by the author (the *syuzhet*). Both these ideas were current in American linguistics and literary theory of the 1960s (the former most obviously in transformational/generative grammar), and, as Hopper (1997) points out, both were taken into the first American work on narrative discourse.

In "Narrative analysis: oral versions of personal experience" Labov and Waletzky (1967, 1997) proposed a "formal" approach to personal experience narrative. Their goal was to describe the invariable semantic deep structure of personal experience narratives, with an eye to correlating surface differences with "social characteristics" of narrators. According to Labov and Waletzky, a clause in a personal experience narrative can serve one of two functions: referential or evaluative. Referential clauses have to do with what the story is about: events, characters, setting. Evaluative clauses (and evaluative aspects of referential clauses) have to do with why the narrator is telling the story and why the audience should listen to it. In other words, evaluative material states or highlights the point of the story. Any narrative, by definition, includes at least two "narrative clauses." A narrative clause is a clause that cannot be moved without changing the order in which events must be taken to have occurred. If two narrative clauses are reversed, they represent a different chronology: "I punched this boy / and he punched me" implies a different sequence of events from "This boy punched me / and I punched him." For Labov, "narrative" is not any talk about the past, nor any talk about events; it is specifically talk in which a sequence of clauses is matched to a sequence of "events which (it is inferred) actually occurred" (Labov 1972: 360).

A "fully developed" narrative may include clauses or sets of clauses with a number of functions. Each of these elements of a personal experience narrative serves a double purpose, making reference to events, characters, feelings, and so on that are

understood to have happened or existed outside the ongoing interaction, and at the same time structuring the interaction in which the story is being told by guiding the teller and the audience through the related events and ensuring that they are comprehensible and worth recounting.

The *abstract* consists of a clause or two at the beginning of a narrative summarizing the story to come. The abstract announces that the narrator has a story to tell and makes a claim to the right to tell it, a claim supported by the suggestion that it will be a good story, worth the audience's time and the speaking rights the audience will temporarily relinquish. *Orientation* in a narrative introduces characters, temporal and physical setting, and situation. Orientation often occurs near the beginning but may be interjected at other points when needed. *Complicating action* clauses are narrative clauses that recapitulate a sequence of events leading up to their climax, the point at which the suspense is resolved. These clauses refer to events in the world of the story and, in the world of the telling, they create tension that keeps auditors listening. The *result or resolution* releases the tension and tells what finally happened. Often just before the result or resolution, but also throughout the narrative, are elements that serve as *evaluation*, stating or underscoring what is interesting or unusual about the story and why the audience should keep listening and allow the teller to keep talking. Evaluation may occur in free clauses that comment on the story from outside ("and it was the strangest feeling") or in clauses that attribute evaluative commentary to characters in the story ("I said, 'O my God, here it is!' "). Or evaluation can be embedded in the narrative, in the form of extra detail about characters, suspension of the action via paraphrase or repetition, "intensifiers" such as gesture or quantifiers, elements that compare what did happen with what didn't happen or could have happened or might happen, "correlatives" that tell what was occurring simultaneously, and "explicatives" that are appended to narrative or evaluative clauses. At the end of the story, the teller may announce via a *coda* that the story is over, sometimes providing a short summary of it or connecting the world of the story with the present.

Labov's illustration that reference is not the only function of talk, that a great deal of what speakers and audiences do serves to create rapport and show how their talk is to be understood, was part of the move during the 1960s away from the Bloomfieldians' completely referential view of language, a move that is reflected in almost every chapter in this volume, and it contributed to a conception of discourse and narrative capable of incorporating their emotive, subjective, and experiential aspects. However, Labov's model of the structure of narrative also generated a great deal of criticism, and dissatisfaction with his formal approach laid the foundations for more interactionally and communicatively oriented theoretical and methodological trends.

Although Labov's work on narrative has been particularly influential in discourse analysis, Labov was by no means alone in his interest in exploring the underlying formal and semantic structure of narratives and stories. Around the same time as Labov and Waletzky's analysis was conducted, anthropologically oriented linguists began comparing narrative syntax and semantics across languages. In his work on "text-building" in Southeast Asia, Becker (1979) shows, for example, that Javanese shadow-theater plots are made coherent through spatial co-occurrence, as characters in different substories set in different eras come together in the same place, rather than chronologically, via rising tension leading to a cathartic climax. In a set of studies that involved

showing a short, wordless film, Chafe (1980b) examined how people from various places, speaking various languages, put what they had seen into words. Clancy (1980), for example, found differences between Japanese speakers and English speakers in how nominals were used in the introduction of characters. Tannen (1980) found that Greeks tended to narrate the film in a more dramatic, storylike way than Americans, who tended to aim for referential completeness and accuracy in their retellings.

Hymes's work on Native American "ethnopoetics" (collected and re-published in Hymes 1981) was aimed at recovering the structure of the myths and folktales that earlier ethnographers had written down in Western-style paragraphs. Since many of these narratives could no longer be experienced in actual performance, Hymes used close reading, attuned to iterations of words, sounds, and structures, to uncover the patterns that made visible the normally implicit, presupposed cultural categories and relationships that had circulated through performances of the stories. Other analyses of the structure of oral narrative as it is actually performed were proposed by Chafe (1980a), Sherzer (1982), Tedlock (1983), and Woodbury (1987). Line-based transcription systems arising from these scholars' observation that oral discourse is not produced in paragraphs have been widely adopted in narrative research.

Other research in the 1970s and 1980s aimed to produce completely explicit models for how people (and other information processors, such as computers) produce and comprehend stories. This included, for example, work by van Dijk and Kintsch (Kintsch and van Dijk 1978; van Dijk 1977, 1980) describing semantic "macrostructures" and the "macrorules" that model how stories are understood, as well as work on "story grammar" by de Beaugrande (1982), Fillmore (1982), Rumelhart (1980), and others. Another set of questions that has been asked about the structure of stories has had to do with linguistic features characteristic of this discourse genre. The use of the English simple present tense in narrative in place of the past, traditionally referred to as the historical present, is the focus of analysis by Johnstone (1987), Schiffrin (1981), Wolfson (1982), and others, who connected this usage with the marking of evaluative high points and the characterization of social relations. Other narrative framing devices, strategies by which narrators and audiences negotiate transitions between the "storyworld" of the ongoing interaction and the "talerealm" in which the narrated events are located, are discussed by Young (1987) and others.

2 Interactional Approaches to Narrative

The most widespread criticism of Labov's model has come from scholars who attend to narratives as they actually occur in everyday contexts. Labov's model of the structural components of personal experience narrative has to do exclusively with clauses produced by the storyteller. Although the basic idea underlying the model is that personal experience narratives are designed for audiences, in interactions, Labov's analyses do not consider actual contributions by the audience and other participants or details about the interactional context in which the narratives were performed. Labov and Waletzky's work was about relatively monologic narratives collected in

sociolinguistic interviews, and they did not claim that the model would be equally useful for all narrative genres. Subsequent applications of the model did, however, tend to privilege a view of narratives as "texts" without contexts.

Research in the interactional framework examines how the structure of stories reflects the fact that stories perform social actions (Schiffrin 1984, 1996) and how audiences are involved, directly or indirectly, in their construction (Norrick 1997; Ochs, Smith, and Taylor 1996). Polanyi (1985: 63–74) shows, for example, how in one case the responses of a story's audience made the teller completely change the point of her story. Watson (1973) articulates Labov's work with Burkean (Burke 1945, 1950) rhetorical theory to suggest a way of describing how the structure of stories is affected by the social contexts in which they are performed.

In particular, work in Conversation Analysis has provided an alternative view of narrative as highly embedded in surrounding talk and deeply sensitive to different participation roles. According to a famous description by Sacks, "stories routinely take more than one turn to tell" (1992: 222). Indeed, everyday and conversational stories usually need to be introduced, closed, and generally tailored to the context of talk and its participants; thus, they require conversational work. Therefore, conversation analysts have emphasized the importance of end points – that is, story prefaces and closings (Jefferson 1978) – and of sequential embedding in the analysis of stories, showing how narratives display links with both preceding and following talk. Another point to which conversation analysts have drawn attention is the pivotal role of participation frameworks in the design, management, and reception of stories. As Goodwin (1984) illustrated, storytellers design their stories with their audiences in mind and may privilege certain conversational participants over others. Thus, interactionally oriented analyses of storytelling have illustrated how participants may influence the telling of a story in fundamental ways, for example by acting as co-tellers (Lerner 1992), by negotiating evaluations (Ochs and Capps 2001), or by demonstrating appreciation (Mandelbaum 1987).

Interactionally oriented narrative analyses have also pointed to the reductive nature of models of storytelling that focus exclusively on monologic narratives told in interview contexts, without considering the richness and complexity of narrative genres and of telling formats both in everyday and institutional contexts. Ochs and Capps (2001), for example, proposed a flexible framework for analyzing stories that takes into account different parameters contributing to narrative form and function. These parameters, which include tellership, tellability, linearity, embeddedness, and moral stance, account for differences between types of narrative. And indeed, post-Labovian research has demonstrated that there is a great variety of narrative genres both in everyday conversation and in more formal contexts. For example, Schiffrin (1990) discussed argumentative narratives – that is, recounts of experiences used to back up positions in argumentative sequences. Carranza (1998) described habitual narratives, which are characterized by the absence of punctual events, illustrating how they can serve the purpose of making a point about the significance of past experiences. Baynham (2003) pointed to the existence of generic narratives, or tales describing prototypical sequences of events with no specific protagonist, showing how they contribute to strengthening stereotypical gender roles in migration accounts. Holmes (2006) discussed anecdotes, illustrating how they contributed to workplace interaction, while De Fina (2009) described accounts as narratives told in response to interviewers' questions. Finally, a

great deal of attention has also been devoted to various forms of retellings (Norrick 1997; Schiffrin 2006).

Another interactionally oriented alternative to the Labovian approach that emerged in the 2000s is the so-called "small-stories" paradigm (see Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008; Georgakopoulou 2007). Proponents have chosen the term *small stories* to describe a gamut of under-represented narrative activities, such as tellings of ongoing events, future or hypothetical events, and shared (known) events, but also allusions to (previous) tellings, deferrals of tellings, retellings, and refusals to tell. Thus, the focus is on storytelling as an activity that can take different forms, some of them involving minimal actual storytelling if compared with prototypical instances. Examples of small stories are "breaking news" – that is, tellings of very recent events like those that Georgakopoulou (2007) found in a study of adolescents in school during class time. These stories concerned small incidents, for instance seeing a boy on a webcam, that were constructed around descriptive and affective elements rather than around sequences of events, and represented quick breaks from current business (i.e., classroom activities) while at the same time being highly embedded within the frame of classroom talk. The focus on smallness is meant to emphasize the need for narrative analysts to sharpen their tools in order to be able to capture the variety of forms and functions that narratives display in different social-interactional contexts.

Interactionally oriented approaches have also greatly contributed to our understanding of the interconnections between telling stories and building social identities (see De Fina and Georgakopoulou 2011 for a thorough discussion). Identities in narrative have been studied, for example, through the analysis of self-presentation and self-expression. Schiffrin (1996) showed how storytellers created and negotiated different presentations of self, depending on whether they reported actions or feelings and beliefs, and how their identities emerged from the interactions between these selves. Johnstone (1996) discussed self-expressive reasons for individuals' storytelling styles. De Fina (2003) analyzed differences between collectively and individually oriented self-presentations in narrative.

Many studies have also looked at how narratives contribute to the construction of gender identities (see Talbot 1999: ch. 4 for an overview). Scholars have found differences in plots, strategies, and participation structures in narratives told by women and men. For example, Johnstone (1993) found that men and women construct different worlds in their stories via different plot types and different use of constructed dialogue and detail. Coates (1996), among others, showed that women have a tendency to tell self-deprecating narratives. Work on peer groups in schools also pointed to differences between girls and boys in storytelling style and content (Kyratzis 1999). A great deal of research has also described narratives as the occasion for the performance of gendered identities through the reproduction of roles that are socially sanctioned (see, e.g., Kiesling 2006; Menard-Warwick 2007; Ochs and Taylor 1992).

Some scholars claim that personal narrative is the outcome of an "autobiographical impulse" (Rosen 1988), the urge to make our lives coherent by telling about them. According to Linde (1993), "in order to exist in the social world with a comfortable sense of being a good, socially proper, and stable person, an individual needs to have a coherent, acceptable, and constantly revised life story" (3). But social constructionists (see De Fina, Schiffrin, and Bamberg 2006) argue that there is no "true self" emerging through storytelling and that coherent and stable personae are the fruit of interactional

presentation. They point to identity as a process rather than a product that is always negotiated in concrete social occasions and to identities as plural and often contradictory and fragmented. The construct of positioning (Bamberg 1997; Wortham 2001; see also Gordon, this volume) has emerged as one of the most popular tools for studying identity construction in narrative. Michael Bamberg (1997) has proposed to look at three levels of positioning in order to account for the way identities are communicated. The first level involves positioning in the tale-world – that is, it examines how the narrator is positioned as a character in a story world vis-à-vis other characters. The second level looks at positioning as an interactional process in which the narrator positions him- or herself toward interlocutors and is in turn positioned by them in an ongoing dialogue. The way identity emerges in this context is therefore related to the negotiations going on in the here and now of the storytelling. Finally, the third level seeks to provide an answer to the question of "Who am I?," attempting to define the teller's self as a more or less stable entity holding above and beyond the current storytelling situation.

In sum, the work reviewed in this section has in common an emphasis on interaction as a fundamental locus for the study of narratives and a focus on the dialogic and positional nature of storytelling.

3 Narrative in Sociocultural Practice

Narrative is embedded in social activity both on the level of interaction and on the level of discursive and social practice. Stories arise in the context of repeatable activities such as chat, courtship, and the socialization of newcomers, among many other things, and narrative serves different functions in different sociocultural settings. As they acquire cognitive and linguistic abilities, children are socialized into the forms and functions of narrative in their communities. Among the best known studies of this process is Heath's (1982, 1983) work with families in two working-class communities in the southern United States. Working-class white children in "Roadville" were taught to tell "factual" stories that ended with morals about what they had learned; working-class African American children in "Trackton" were encouraged to entertain others with fantastic tales. This and other differences in preschool socialization have implications for children's success in school, where, for example, white children may already know to tell "sharing time" stories the way teachers expect but African American children may not (Michaels and Collins 1984; see also McCabe and Peterson 1991).

Scollon and Scollon (1981) claimed that, for Athabaskans, experiences and stories about them are the primary source of knowledge, as reality is socially constructed through narrative. This claim has been made more generally about "oral" cultures by scholars such as Goody and Watt (1968) and Ong (1982). Blum-Kulka (1993) compared dinner-table storytelling in American and Israeli families, finding that middle-class American families tended to ritualize the telling of stories about the day, particularly by the children, while in the Israeli families storytelling was more collaborative and more evenly distributed among family members. Etter-Lewis (1991) described the specificities of personal storytelling by African American women, and Riessman (1988) compared narratives by an Anglo-American woman and a Puerto Rican, pointing out

that social class as well as ethnicity is a factor in the women's different experiences and different recountings.

Shared stories, as well as shared ways of telling stories, constitute an integral part of the life of communities, contributing to their cohesion. Among the earliest work by ethnographers of communication were studies of the functions of narrative and speech events in which narrative was central. For example, Kirschenblatt-Gimblett (1974) described the functions of narrative in Eastern European Jewish society, and Darnell (1974) showed how a traditional Cree (Native North American) narrative performance was structured and what it accomplished. Ethnographers have continued to explore the uses of narrative in various parts of the world. Basso (1986), for example, talked about the functions of quoted dialogue in Kalapalo (Native South American) narrative. Patrick and Payne-Jackson (1996) described how "Rasta talk" functions in Jamaican Creole healing narrative. Bauman (1986) showed how stories and storytelling events contribute to the negotiation of social relations in a community of dog traders in Texas. Johnstone (1990) explored how storytelling creates community and a shared sense of place in a city in the American Midwest. Shuman (1986) examined how stories contribute toward structuring the social life of urban adolescents.

This work on the uses of narratives in the lives of particular groups has contributed to a recent shift away from the project of linking narrative structures and functions to predefined demographic differences such as gender, nationality, or ethnicity, and toward a more nuanced view of storytelling as a type of practice embedded within other practices that define particular communities describable only through ethnography (see De Fina and Georgakopoulou 2011: 73–5).

Narratives are also embedded in and accomplish a variety of functions in contexts such as institutional encounters, the mass media, and online social networks. Attention to contexts like these highlights the connections between storytelling and power. Indeed, as shown by work on narratives in court (Trinch and Berk-Seligson 2002), police interviews (Johnson 2008), asylum-seeking procedures (Maryns and Blommaert 2001), and even interviews (papers in De Fina and Perrino 2011), telling rights are often institutionally regulated and the content and form of narratives tightly controlled. For example, Walker (1982) shows that witnesses in court proceedings, bringing with them their knowledge about the necessity of evaluation in everyday storytelling, find themselves repeatedly cut off and corrected for interpreting as they narrate. Discourse analysts who study news stories (Jacobs 2000; van Dijk 1991) demonstrate that the way events are emplotted and the emphasis given by newscasters to certain descriptions of protagonists may contribute to the reproduction of prejudice and stereotypes.

4 The Narrative Turn across Disciplines

Narrative has come to seem important to people throughout the humanities and social sciences. Beginning in the late 1970s, new, narrative ways of understanding history and humanity and doing research have become more and more prominent, leading to the so-called "narrative turn." Theorists who have contributed to this approach have underscored the centrality of narrative as a mode of thought and apprehension of reality (Bruner 1986; MacIntyre 1981). For example, the observation made by Hayden

White (1981) and others that history can only be selective storytelling about the past helped give rise to a way of imagining the historical enterprise that is sometimes called the "New Historicism" (Cox and Reynolds 1993). As Miller (1990) pointed out, each contemporary theoretical framework for literary and cultural studies – deconstruction, feminism, Marxism, psychoanalysis, reception theory, Bakhtinian dialogism, and so on – makes significant claims about narrative.

Many "narrative turn" analysts have also asserted the fundamental role of narrative in the constitution of the human self, seeing the telling of life stories as the locus for the creation of coherent identities (McAdams 1993; Polkinghorne 1988). The "narrative study of lives" (Josselson 1996) also challenged the methodological hegemony of quantitative research paradigms in psychology, and narrative-based studies have flourished in all fields of the social sciences, including sociology (Riessman 1991), psychology (Oatley 1999), anthropology (Rosaldo 1993), education (Cortazzi 1993), and social research in general (Elliott 2005).

Critics of the "narrative turn" have noted that using narrative analysis as a tool to investigate how people construct themselves and their experiences is not the same as proposing that narrative is a mode of knowledge that is fundamental to human beings. They have also complained about what they see as an excessive glorification of narrative experience (Strawson 2004). Analysts of the narrative turn have also been criticized for equating identity with self-disclosure (Atkinson and Delamont 2006). However, the impact of narrative research on the social sciences has been generally positive, as it has opened the door to more in-depth, qualitative-oriented analyses of social issues.

5 Current State of the Field

As scholars across disciplines have become more and more interested in narrative, the study of narrative has become more and more interdisciplinary and the field is experiencing exponential growth. Volumes and articles devoted to narrative continue to appear not only within discourse analysis but also within fields such as English, rhetoric, communication, education, comparative literature, psychology, nursing, political science, sociology and social work, history, art, philosophy, marketing, and organizational behavior. The journal *Narrative Inquiry* is entirely devoted to the study of narrative, and other scholarly journals in linguistics, linguistic anthropology, and discourse studies also regularly feature articles on narrative or publish special issues on the topic. All of this illustrates the continuing and growing interest in this field of studies (see also the forthcoming *Handbook of Narrative Analysis* edited by De Fina and Georgakopoulou).

Current research suggests several ways in which work on narrative may continue to develop. Although there still is a great deal of interest in trying to understand and develop models of narrative structure, there is also a heightened sense of the need to place structure and function within contexts and practices. Thus, much work is presently devoted, and will very likely continue to be devoted, to studying how narratives are embedded within different kinds of practices, how they are shaped by but also shape those practices, and what kinds of new narrative genres emerge in them.

Central to such developments is research on multimodality. Multimodal narrative analysis captures the need to account for new forms of communication and the affordances of different types of media and technologies. Thus, multimodal narrative analysts have extended the study of narrative to a variety of media (such as television and the Internet) and to the interaction of different semiotic resources (such as sound, print, image, animation) in mediated storytelling contexts. They have explored an entirely new set of narrative texts and contexts: from hypertext fiction (Laccetti 2011) to fan fiction (Thomas 2011) to comics (Herman 2008) to narratives in social media (Page 2011). Multimodal narrative analysis seems destined to grow in importance (as does multimodal discourse analysis in general) because of the central place occupied by new media in contemporary life. Multimodal narrative analysis poses new challenges to narrative analysts: for example, it brings to light the impossibility of ignoring fundamental methodological issues such as the question of transcription and representation of text, talk, and other semiotic systems. It also poses essential questions about definitions of narratives, authorship, and participation. As noted by Page (2011), "The perceived monomodality of existing narrative theory, and specifically the dominance of verbal resources, is challenged profoundly by multimodality's persistent investigation of the multiple semiotic tracks at work in storytelling" (11).

Indeed, multimodal analysis shows the limitations and affordances that different media and contexts impose on the structure and content of narratives, but it also problematizes the notion of narrative as produced by a single author, illustrating participative modes in which different people can contribute to a story and stories are not owned by any of their tellers. Multimodal analysis also critically interrogates the relation between storytelling, time, and space, showing how space gets incorporated and modified in and through narrative but also how not only story internal but also story external time affect the way narratives are processed and understood.

Issues of identity will most likely continue to occupy center stage in narrative analysis, as shown in the heated debates among "big" and "small story" theorists (for a discussion see Gregg 2011) but also in the increasing number of articles focused on the analysis of strategies used in narratives to construct personal, social, and collective identities and on the interactions between local and more portable identities. Questions of identity go hand in hand with issues related to authorship and responsibility, and discourse analysts have started reflecting on the implications of story ownership, asking questions such as, "Who has the right to tell which stories to whom?" or "Who controls story ownership?" (on this point see Shuman 2005). As the borders between private and public become more and more blurred in late modern societies, the importance of these issues cannot be underestimated.

As we continue to think about the uses of narrative in human life, we are paying increasing attention to the political effects of narrative, seeing storytelling not only as a way of creating community but also as a resource for dominating others, for expressing solidarity, and for resistance and conflict; a resource, that is, in the continuing negotiation through which humans create language, society, and self as they talk and act. We see narrative more and more as a way of constructing "events" and giving them meaning, as we pick out bits of the stream of experience and give them boundaries and significance by labeling them. Like all talk and all action, narrative is socially and epistemologically constructive: through telling, we make ourselves and our experiential worlds.

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