The narrative turn in the social sciences represents an epistemological shift from a scientific perspective which values abstract experimentation and generality toward a narrative paradigm which gives primacy to human experience and subjectivity (De Fina and Georgakopoulou 2011). This turn has affected numerous disciplines from psychology to medical anthropology as researchers are beginning to focus more on analyzing narratives and the function of narratives in social contexts. As a result, methods of narrative analysis have developed based on the theoretical perspectives and research interests of those who use them. These methods continue to include quantitative and experimental approaches as well as qualitative ones and range from technical linguistic analysis of documents to ethnographic investigations of the social functions of storytelling. Given the proliferation of approaches, the lack of cohesion among perspectives can leave a somewhat justified impression of narrative analysis as a disparate collection of methodological approaches. However, this same diversity demonstrates the far reaching potential of narrative analysis and provides a fertile ground for innovation to those willing to consider a range of perspectives.

Narrative Research in Historical Perspective

The use of narratives in social science research has a long history, such that the
"narrative turn" might be seen more as a re-emergent interest or ongoing process rather than a distinct point in time. At the beginning of the 1900s, Chicago school sociologists collected life histories to study the reflection of social change, and anthropologists collected narratives as a way of preserving cultural data (Chase 2005). The liberation movements of the 1960s also influenced narrative interest in the social sciences (Riessman 2008). As previously disadvantaged groups questioned the positivist assumptions of conventional research, narratives allowed new voices the authority of subjective experience. This shift is particularly associated with the feminist movement and its concern with challenging androcentric assumptions and giving voice to women as social actors rather than distant objects of study. However, it also incorporated the civil rights movement and renewed interest in slave narratives (Chase 2005) as well as gay and lesbian identity movements (Riessman 2008).

In the mid-1960s, William Labov and Joshua Waletzky (1967, 1997) published an analysis of oral narratives that proposed a system of identifying narrative clauses and assigning them functions. According to this system, oral narrative structure includes elements of an abstract (summarizing the story to come for the listener), orientation (providing information on characters or setting), complicating action (moving the plot forward chronologically), evaluation (providing information on the narrative's meaning), resolution (providing results of actions) and a coda (drawing the audience back to the present). Although some of these elements are not present in every narrative, the identification of orientation, complicating action and evaluation segments has formed the basis for many structural analysis approaches to narrative (Riessman 2008). While anthropologists should be wary of expecting narratives in every culture to conform to this structure, Labov and Waletzky’s contribution has additional significance for the field of narrative analysis since it drew attention to oral narratives as a form of discourse, thus inspiring others to pursue this object of study (Chase 2005).

The early 1980s also saw an increased interest in narrative methods and analysis across the social sciences as scholars explored ideas of narrative as a mode of thought, contrasted against the logico-scientific mode of understanding reality through hypothesis testing (De Fina and Georgakopoulou 2011). While this renewed interest may mark a significant shift in understanding and approaching narratives and a broadening use of narrative analysis throughout the social sciences, it has certainly been informed by early perspectives on narrative analysis and does not constitute an end point for developing interest. By 2005, Susan Chase still considered narrative inquiry to be "a field in the making" (2005: 651).

Jerome Bruner’s (1986) discussion of narrative as a mode of thought contrasts it with the logico-scientific or "paradigmatic" mode of thought. The paradigmatic mode relies on observable evidence and hypothesis testing; it uses categorization, identifies logical relationships and extracts general propositions. The narrative mode creates meaning by situating individual events or observations within a temporal and social
context. As Donald Polkinghorne explains, "Narrative meaning is created by noting that something is a part of some whole and that something is the cause of something else" (1988: 6). Thus narratives provide contextual explanations by integrating events into a plot in contrast to the categorical explanations provided by the paradigmatic mode. Polkinghorne illustrates this difference with the example of a man purchasing life insurance. The paradigmatic mode explains this behavior by placing the man in a category based on age, gender and race with a greater statistical tendency to buy life insurance whereas the narrative mode explains the man's behavior by telling a story that forms connections between a series of events and individual reflections to situate the purchase of life insurance within the context of the man's life history.

The narrative mode does not represent a new epistemology; it is one that appears to be pervasive in human experience (Polkinghorne 1988) and perhaps precedes the logico-scientific epistemology as a mode of human sense-making. However, the very pervasiveness of narrative thought may have caused it to be overlooked and devalued in academic spheres. Bruner (1986) suggested that the paradigmatic mode had been studied in depth, while little academic attention had been given to the narrative mode. Dell Hymes has also noted a tendency among social scientists "to depreciate narrative as a form of knowledge, and personal narrative particularly, in contrast to other forms of discourse considered scholarly, scientific, technical, or the like" (1996: 112). Because paradigmatic thinking is closely related to academic and scientific disciplines, it is taught in schools as part of the established curriculum whereas narrative as a mode of thought is learned socially as part of cultural and communicative competence. Narrative sense-making seems natural to those who have achieved this competence and therefore may have attracted less academic attention and prestige. However, as schools become more culturally diverse due to greater transnational mobility and globalization, educators are also recognizing the cultural specificity of narrative forms and giving greater attention to the development of narrative competency (Riessman 2008).

The epistemological shift of the narrative turn can be seen as part of a larger postmodernist shift reacting against the positivist frameworks associated with realist epistemology, modernist globalization, enlightenment, and western European colonial dominance (Riessman 2008, Canagarajah 2012). The 1980s also saw a discourse-centered movement in linguistic anthropology (Farnell and Graham forthcoming) representing a shift away from structural focus towards practice as well as a reflexive turn in cultural anthropology. For the reflexive turn, Clifford and Marcus's 1986 publication of Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography was instrumental in drawing attention to asymmetric power relations between ethnographic researchers and their informants (James, Hawkey and Dawson 1997). The traditional authoritative realist and objective style previously used in ethnographic accounts failed to incorporate the voices and perspectives of disadvantaged and underrepresented
populations. While the paradigmatic approach emphasized statistical and objective generalities which dehumanized the objects of study, the reflexive turn emphasized a concern with humanizing ethnographic representations. Narrative epistemology addresses this humanizing concern by contextualizing individual experiences.

In the field of psychology, Polkinghorne (1988) describes his concern with a growing discrepancy between academic research and clinical practice. While academics approached research from a logico-scientific paradigm, clinical practitioners were using narrative sense-making to help clients work through difficulties. In addition to this division within the field, Polkinghorne found a growing skepticism toward the usefulness of psychological research. Within a paradigmatic framework, scientific research could provide statistical information about problematic phenomena, but did not provide a framework of meaning needed to propose solutions. Polkinghorne suggested that these concerns were affecting the availability of funding for researchers and recommended the development of complementary approaches to social science research that addressed humanist concerns and incorporated the narrative knowledge being used by clinical practitioners.

Another particularly poignant instance of this shift has been in the field of medicine where narrative research emphasizes a patient-centered perspective rather than a doctor-centered one (De Fina and Georgakopoulou 2011). Cheryl Mattingly and Linda Garro have noted the effect of illness experiences on physicians who are transformed by the realization that "there is more to the story of being a patient than can be captured by a medical synopsis or charted medical history" (2000: 9). As various disciplines become more interested in the individual human experience, the interest in narrative (as a mode of sense-making) will naturally increase.

Some of the interest in narrative may also be distinctly tied to cultural values and trends. Just as the culture and personality emphasis in anthropology developed as an American tradition, the interest in narrative as a way of addressing subjective individual experience may be an expression of American individualism. Kristin Langellier (2001) particularly noted a memoir boom which reflected a popular interest in personal stories alongside the development of therapeutic culture and "identity" movements in the U.S. which encouraged the exploration of individual selves as contemporaneous with the narrative turn in the social sciences.

Understanding narrative as a mode of thought in contrast to the logico-scientific mode helps to explain influences of the narrative turn as well as general trends and concerns of narrative analysis. However, since the narrative turn has affected so many diverse fields, methods of analysis have not followed a cohesive trajectory of development. A variety of perspectives, theoretical orientations and research objectives have been applied to the realm of narrative analysis, including quantitative methods, which reflect logico-scientific concerns.

Roberto Franzosi (2012) demonstrates an application of quantitative analysis by
parsing newspaper articles down into "story grammar" units based on subject-verb-object sequences. These sequences are entered into a computer database along with relevant attributes, and a special data analysis software program created by Franzosi allows researchers to assess the frequency of characters, actions, and attributes which are then used to generate graphs to compare the frequency of particular sequences. This technical quantitative analysis allows researchers to process large sections of data, but remains largely dependent on the analytical software tool and the researchers' transposition of newspaper text into appropriate story grammar units. Nor can it address the subjective significance of details in the context of each story.

On the other end of the spectrum, Arthur Frank (2012) describes a qualitative approach, which he calls “discursive analysis.” Rather than providing a sequence of methodological steps, this perspective provides a set of principles which inform this approach. The goal of discursive analysis is to set narratives in conversation with one another, so they are left intact to speak for themselves as the researcher weaves them together through an analytic commentary. Questions suggested by this approach focus on the dialogic context of narratives and the voices they represent. The researcher’s familiarity with the broader body of data allows him to select material appropriate to represent the discussion, a process which Frank terms “practicing phronesis.” This perspective also emphasizes a lack of conclusive presentation since published analyses should continue and inform an ongoing conversation of narratives rather than finalize it.

While Franzosi and Frank appear to represent opposite ends of a methodological spectrum, within the realm of narrative analysis they share some methodological choices, including the choice to focus on narratives as objects of study. Although Frank emphasizes questions of context and voice, his example of applying dialogic analysis to illness narratives focused on developing thematic categories to identify the narratives. Even Franzosi’s quantitative analysis focuses on questions of content, which he deals with by restructuring the texts of newspaper articles into the strictly defined story grammar units, which can be analyzed by the computer program. This focus on thematic concerns and narratives as an object of study is not shared by all narrative researchers. Not only can objects of study expand beyond narrative text to the interactional processes and social phenomena which surround it, the definition of narrative itself may be called into question.

Problems of Narrative Research

Although much of narrative analysis has focused on personal accounts gathered through interviews or observed in conversations, the definition of narrative can be quite broad. Chase noted that among qualitative researchers "any prosaic data (as opposed to close-ended or short-answer data)" might be considered narrative (2005: 651). Polkinghorne also contested the equivocal use of "narrative" among social scientists,
emphasizing in his own work a definition of narrative as "texts that are thematically organized by plots" (1995: 5).

Narratives might include short anecdotes about characters or events, extended accounts of significant life events, or entire life histories. They may be oral or written, as well as implicit or researcher-constructed. They may be elicited intentionally through interviews or appear in responses that fail to conform to interview expectations. They may occur naturally in everyday conversations or exist as specialized performance events. This definitional inclusivity has contributed to the wide variety of methods of narrative analysis. As narrative researchers articulate a narrative definition suitable for their research purposes, they also determine the type of data they will use and appropriate methods of collection. These methods in turn reflect the interests and biases of the researchers. While it may be tempting to suggest that a single definition of narrative be applied in all cases of narrative research, excluding broader definitions from the field may also exclude creative applications of narrative research.

Martha Feldman and Julka Almquist (2012) present two methods of narrative research that use narrative as an analytical tool rather than an object of study. In one method, “rhetorical analysis” identifies unstated assumptions by identifying oppositions and constructing syllogisms in institutional narratives. In this case, the text itself does not necessarily begin in a narrative state, but researchers identify an underlying narrative as part of the analysis. Likewise, their “narrative network analysis” takes action processes (such as parking a car at a state park), describing it in narrative form and then generating a visual representation of these actions via a network chart. Researchers then use these charts to consider implicit values and assumptions of the process and draft possible alternatives. This method relies on a loose definition of narrative as a chronological ordering of events to achieve a goal, eschewing the character-driven intentionality and emotional involvement which others have identified as key components of narrative (De Fina and Georgakopoulou 2011). However, by using narrative as a tool of analysis rather than an object of study, they demonstrate the sense-making use of the narrative paradigm. Anthropologists might also find this method of narrative network analysis useful in understanding cultural rhythms and process patterns observed during ethnographic research.

The definition of narratives is only one of many factors that narrative researchers must consider in their methodological approach. Anna De Fina and Alexandra Georgakopoulou (2011) recommend identifying approaches by considering the methodological choices researchers must make, including the (1) object of analysis, (2) quantitative or qualitative orientation, (3) methods of data collection, (4) types of data, and (5) focus of analysis. All of these choices are interrelated and will be determined based on the researcher’s theoretical orientation and research goals. They also reflect the larger research process surrounding narrative analysis.
Working with oral narratives of personal experience, Catherine Riessman (1993) suggests that the narrative process begins with an experience that becomes narrative through noticing, reflecting and telling. The narrative must then be recorded, transcribed, analyzed, and presented for publication. The narrative researcher may not be able to include the noticing and reflecting activities within their methodological scope, either because they are not present for these events or because they choose to study narratives which do not rely on personal experience. Instead, the researcher’s process of analysis begins with decisions regarding the object of study and definitions of narrative. From there, researchers must determine whether to elicit data in interviews, record it in natural contexts or locate it in other sources such as memoirs, published articles, media interviews or internet forums.

The technology available for collecting narrative data may also affect trends in research as they draw attention to new aspects of narrative data or facilitate particular orientations. Brenda Farnell and Laura Graham (forthcoming) suggest that the use of new tape recording technology influenced the development of the discourse-centered movement. When researchers no longer had to collect data by manually writing transcripts, asking narrators to stop frequently and repeat their exact words, they were able to give greater attention to the context and interaction of natural narrative and discourse forms. As new technologies develop, narrative research will also expand its scope to make use of new media.

Francesca Polletta (2012) analyzes the use of narratives within web forum contexts to consider their use in supporting arguments. As a new medium of study, internet forums have the advantage of providing text-based data which does not require transcription, yet functions in a dialogic interaction. This allows researchers to assess not only the narrative text itself, but also its function within the context of the larger discussion to see when it is used and what reactions its use receives. In addition, forums such as the one which Polletta studied often have search features that researchers can use to identify relevant posts based on key words. Polletta used this function to search for references to stories so that she could analyze discussions about stories as well as the narratives themselves. Thus her analysis considered not only the content and function of narratives identified within the forum through thematic coding and context analysis, but also analyzed the cultural perception of narrative and its epistemological value based on other comments.

For elicited data, the structure of interviews and the types of questions asked will affect the narrative production. Although researchers may need to shift their interview styles to rely more on open ended questions, Chase (2005) notes that sometimes narrative data results not from questions asked but from unanticipated interruptions to the interview processes as the interviewee provides a longer story in response to a short answer question. Narrative researchers should prepare to recognize such moments and encourage them rather than attempt to draw narrators...
back to the prepared topics. Even when interviewers attempt to elicit longer narratives, they must be sensitive to the interviewee’s expectations regarding appropriate interview responses and appropriate narrative constructions. Greater familiarity with the interviewee's culture or social group can also lead researchers to better insights on how to engage available narrative resources and cultural expectations to elicit narrative production. Researchers must also recognize their own biases and assumptions in regards to appropriate narrative production which can affect the type of narrative they attempt to elicit, as well as their openness to recognizing the value of narrative productions which do not fit the expected patterns.

Once data has been collected, researchers must also prepare material for analysis by determining the boundaries of narrative units. These choices may depend on narrative definitions to identify the initial and final markers of narratives. However, the object of study and narrative lens used will also affect the extent to which researchers attend to situational context of narrative production. Transcriptions can be used to show or hide interactions which surround and infuse the narrative act, reflecting whether the researcher perceives the interview and narrative elicitation as an interactive event or focuses on a de-contextualized data set. As researchers transcribe recorded materials for analysis, they inevitably lose aspects of context and performance. Thus, Riessman (1993) emphasizes the importance of transcription choices which will affect the resulting analysis. These choices also affect the presentation of narrative data in ways that can further limit or enhance the "voice" of the original narrative. For example, arranging a transcription into lines and stanzas based on prosodic features can demonstrate order and create sense that otherwise might be lost.

Researchers have significant power to control the presentation of narratives as well as their interpretations for readers. Given the emphasis among narrative researchers on the value of the subjective and particular, approaches to presentation should reflect this concern. Chase (2005) addresses this concern with her discussion of "voice", noting three approaches that researchers have taken in writing about narrative work. Many researchers present data through an authoritative voice as they interpret narratives and discuss underlying meanings. In some cases, this may diminish the subjective authority of the original narrator as a researcher paraphrases and summarizes narratives rather than allowing them to speak for themselves. In other cases, the authoritative voice may add useful context and articulate insights about the narrative while sections of the quoted narrative allow readers to form possible alternative interpretations (Chase 2005, Riessman 1997). Other researchers use a supportive voice as they provide some contextual information and description of research procedures, but ultimately emphasize the voice of the narrative itself. This approach reflects the larger interest in subjective authority by using narrative research to empower participants. Finally, Chase (2005) describes the interactive voice of
researchers who engage in reflexive analysis by incorporating their own stories alongside those of research participants.

Concerns with narrative voice reflect the value given to the subjective and particular which narrative epistemology suggests. Likewise, methods of data collection, preparation, and analysis will reflect the analytical paradigms of researchers just as much as their object of analysis and the types of data they choose to utilize. While some methods pay more attention to these concerns than others, they represent a dominant perspective within the narrative turn and affect other choices made throughout the research process.

Categories of Narrative Methods

In order to provide a framework for understanding the methodological relationships between different approaches to narrative analysis, previous publications have created a number of categorical systems. Riessman (2008) divided approaches into thematic, structural, and dialogic/performance methods. Thematic approaches focus on narrative content to reflect social or individual meanings, while structural approaches focus on narrative construction, breaking transcripts down into clauses and stanzas to identify their function and organization. Dialogic/performance analysis draws from both thematic and structural methods, but focuses more on the context and social function of narrative acts. Riessman's distinction between thematic and structural approaches reflects a choice of focus of analysis while dialogic/performance analysis adds a distinction of object of analysis. Thus, Riessman's categories are useful for distinguishing between some of the methodological choices made in narrative analysis, but do not necessarily encompass the whole spectrum of narrative methods.

Chase (2005) provided another categorization by identifying five lenses which inform narrative approaches: (1) narrative as a form a discourse, (2) narrative as verbal action, (3) narrative as a dependent variable of social context, (4) narrative as socially situated interactive performance, and (5) presentation of research as narrative. Since these lenses do not represent distinct methodological approaches, Chase also described five major approaches: (1) a psychological approach concerned with the relationship between individuals' life stories and their psychosocial development, (2) a sociological approach concerned with identity work accomplished through narrative performance, (3) a sociological approach centered around intensive interviews concerned with the interactional process of sense-making and self-presentation, (4) an anthropological narrative ethnography which approaches narrative as human encounter by incorporating the reflexive perspective of the researcher, and (5) an autoethnographic approach focused on narratives about the researcher.

The psychological approach can be illustrated with Dan McAdams' (2012) discussion of thematic methods relevant to the field of psychology, using personal
narratives to examine aspects of individual identity and personality. This method takes an experimental approach where narratives are elicited through interview and coded for thematic data (including elements of topic and plot) before hypotheses are tested by correlating thematic patterns with other psychological assessment tools. While the methods discussed include qualitative studies to develop initial hypotheses and quantitative studies to test those hypotheses, these stages fit within a cohesive experimental process. This approach exemplifies Chase’s (2005) description of the psychology approach to narrative analysis by pairing narrative analysis with psychological assessment tests to determine relationships.

Several examples illustrate the sociological concern with identity work and the interactional sense-making process. Michael Bamberg (2012) presents a narrative practice perspective based on the premises that narratives are interactive, are performed with expressive body language, create referential worlds, follow culturally recognized patterns, have a purpose within the interactive context, and reveal identity claims of the speaker. Bamberg’s example of analysis focuses on identity navigation and the cultural expectations that shape identity narratives. Rather than analyzing a narrative text, his example centers on a process of attempting to create an identity narrative in the context of media interviews and FBI interrogations with a man who did not remember his childhood. Because of the lack of memory, the man’s responses did not conform to the socially expected form of identity narrative, and the interview transcripts demonstrate the efforts of journalists and investigators to compensate for this lack and assist the man in creating an appropriate narrative. Thus the analysis is less about the narrative itself and more about the cultural expectations for narratives revealed through the failed narrative and the process of attempting to elicit an acceptable narrative.

Amy Shuman (2012) analyzes narrative interaction surrounding trauma narratives using the example of a Cameroonian woman who sought political asylum in the United States. Like Bamberg’s narrative practice perspective, this analysis centers on the process of creating an acceptable narrative. However, this approach focuses more on the use of narrative to establish footing and to achieve the desired goal. Shuman attends to issues of tellability, narrative ownership, authority, and footing, highlighting the competing perspectives of narrator and audience to show how each aspect advances or hinders the narrator’s purpose of achieving asylum. The analysis looks at elements of content such as use of genres and reported speech, as well as contextual factors such as the supporting intertextuality of other accounts that enhance the believability of the Cameroonian woman’s positioning.

The main difference between the two sociological approaches Chase suggests seems to rely on the context of the narrative interaction and the topical focus. One approach focuses on the way that social context and social institutions shape narrative form and content, such as the way domestic violence support groups create formula
stories that reflect the organizational values. The other approach uses intensive interviews focused on specific aspects of experience to understand how individuals perform identity and make sense of experiences. The examples from Bamberg and Shuman both discuss concerns with meeting cultural or institutional expectations for narrative forms and both also emphasize the interactional process of creating narrative and shaping identity. Since neither uses the broader sampling suggested in Chase’s examples, so categorizing them within Chase’s suggested approaches might be inappropriate.

The example of Tamar Katriel’s (2012) analysis of personal stories in public forums such as museum tours, call-in radio shows and political action projects in Israel may also reflect the sociological approach focused on social context. Her analysis focuses on the interaction between personal stories and cultural narratives, showing how they support or challenge one another. To accomplish this, Katriel approaches narrative from an ethnography of speaking perspective. This approach views storytelling as speech acts that can be analyzed based on Dell Hymes’ (1972) heuristic framework with attention to elements of the SPEAKING acronym: Setting, Participants, Ends, Act, Key, Instrument, Norms and Genre.

Anthropologists may find the narrative ethnography used by Ray Cashman (2012) appealingly familiar. Cashman uses an ethnographic approach to discuss the role of storytelling within a particular social context. This approach describes a typical social event, drawing on a broader knowledge of interpersonal relationships, cultural values, and social rhythms as well as broader political affiliations and context to explain the use of storytelling to challenge, compete and even alleviate tensions within the social group. Cashman also demonstrates the reflexivity Chase describes by discussing the effect of his own assumptions and actions on the stories told during an interview.

Andrew Sparkes and Brett Smith discuss embodied narratives through autoethnography, which the authors briefly describe as using “evocative forms of representation to produce highly personalized and revealing texts in which they tell stories about their own lived experiences” (2012: 57). Their content focuses on concerns regarding the role of researchers’ physical and emotional reactions within the research process, which they view as a tool for understanding participant narratives. Because the body expresses experiences which the researcher has not consciously articulated, authors discuss the need for reflection during fieldwork to remain in tune with these reactions and the effect they might have on research. Because of its use of autoethnography, this example also represents the self-reflexive lens discussed by Chase (2005) where narrative researchers themselves become the storytellers and their accounts open to analysis. As with Frank’s (2012) discursive analysis perspective, autoethnography often leaves accounts of the researchers’ experiences open-ended rather than providing a conclusive analysis, a trend to which Sparkes and Smith
Although Chase’s lenses and the approaches she describes provide an additional perspective and framework for understanding various practices of narrative inquiry, they are not intended to be comprehensive or exhaustive. Understanding methodological frameworks can help to sort through the plethora of methodological options, but these should be understood as guides rather than strict categories. Some examples of narrative research may not fit exactly within one approach while others may use different analytical tools to address similar goals.

From a linguistic perspective, Michele Koven (2012) focuses on identifying three speaker roles within conversational narratives transcribed from interviews. These roles include the "narrator" which reports events, the "interlocutor" which evaluates those events, and the "character" which performs reported speech. Roles may overlap in segments to form dual roles, such as character-interlocutor which uses reported speech to provide evaluation. Bolded, italicized, or underlined text shows the division of roles within the transcribed text. Clauses can be tallied with respect to the speaker roles they represent and compared in quantitative analysis as well as qualitatively assessed as Koven discusses the narrator’s intentionality in using these various roles. Similar in its concern with interaction and self-presentation to the sociological perspectives, the reliance on linguistic textual analysis is reminiscent of the Labovian model. Koven’s model also incorporates aspects of both qualitative and quantitative analysis and falls within Riessman’s dialogic/performance category due to its emphasis on the social function of the narrative performance.

In contrast to the general focus on personal stories and individual identities, Donileen Loseke (2012) analyzes formula stories that create culturally shared typifications or archetypes which function as templates for understanding and interacting with unfamiliar individuals. Formula stories appear in the public domain and include stories of individuals used to represent or typify larger groups as well as non-narrative forms such as character descriptions and lists. Analysis requires understanding of the social context which determines the narrative’s purpose or intent; close reading of texts with attention to characters, plot, morals, emotions and audience; categorizing character descriptions; and analyzing the symbolic and emotional codes which allow members of a shared culture to make sense of and relate to formula stories.

Elinor Ochs and Lisa Capps (2001) proposed 5 dimensions for narrative analysis: tellership, tellability, embeddedness, linearity and moral stance. With respect to these dimensions, the personal experience narratives traditionally studied from the psychological perspective tend to feature one active teller, high tellability, detachment from context, linear temporal and causal organization and a constant moral stance. However, in other contexts narratives may have multiple co-tellers, low tellability, embedded relationships to social context, open temporal and causal order and
uncertain or fluid moral stance. For anthropologists dealing with other cultures or nontraditional narratives, attention to these 5 dimensions may better reflect the reality of narrative creation and use. Researchers can also use these dimensions to analyze the effect of social context and cultural conventions on narrative construction and performance and vice versa. Ochs and Capps particularly emphasize the collaborative creation of conversational narratives, seeing these narratives as not only a sense-making tool but moreover a social activity which builds community.

A Collection of Interdisciplinary Perspectives

In order to demonstrate the diversity of approaches to narrative analysis, James Holstein and Jaber Gubrium (2012) collected perspectives from the fields of psychology, folklore, sociology, linguistics, communication, health sciences and public management. In this collection, they applied a loose system of organization based primarily on the general object of study: "Analyzing Stories" focuses on the narratives themselves as objects of study, "Analyzing Storytelling" shifts the focus of analysis to the context of social interaction, and a final category of "Analyzing Stories in Society" focuses on the broader cultural assumptions and social influences which surround narratives. Within these general categories, they juxtaposed examples which emphasized the diversity of approaches available to narrative analysis, allowing each perspective to stand on its own with its own theoretical background and methodology.

Examples of the "Analyzing Stories" section generally fall under Riessman’s category of thematic analysis (2008), including Frank’s dialogical narrative analysis, Franzosi’s quantitative narrative analysis, McAdams’ psychological approach, and Sparkes and Smith’s autoethnography (Holstein & Gubrium, 2012). In contrast, the second section on "Analyzing Storytelling" correlates best with Riessman’s dialogic/performance analysis category with its focus on the context of social interaction. From this perspective, narratives are constructed within social settings and used to achieve particular goals. Therefore, these methods of analysis pay particular attention to the interactions and intentions that surround the process of narrative production. These include Bamberg’s analysis of narrative practice, Shuman’s analysis of narrative interaction, Koven’s concern with speaker roles, and Cashman’s ethnographic approach.

The final category, "Analyzing Stories in Society" focuses on the relationship between narrative and its cultural context. In some cases, the content of the narratives is used to analyze the society they reflect, while in others analysis focuses on the way that cultural narratives and values shape the creation and use of individual stories. The cultural emphasis of this section may be particularly interesting to anthropologists. However, this section also contains some of the least traditional definitions of narrative in its analyses. It includes Feldman and Almquist’s (2012) rhetorical analysis and narrative network analysis along with Loseke’s analysis of formula stories, Polletta’s

Narrative research is not new to anthropologists. Sociocultural and linguistic anthropologists have attended to narratives since the early 1900s when anthropologists collected life histories and mythologies as sources of cultural data. As anthropologists such as Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict became interested in culture and personality, attention shifted to individual personalities developing within a cultural context and life histories were used as a way of accessing the insider’s perspective (Chase 2005). Chase emphasizes the connection between anthropologists and reflexive approaches to narrative research through methods of narrative ethnography and autoethnography which explore the intersubjectivity between researchers’ and participants’ narratives. However, Mattingly and Garro (2000) suggest that the current narrative turn in the human sciences has influenced anthropology by bringing more attention to the form and context of narratives, how they function and how they create meaning for those who use them. True to the subjective emphasis of the narrative turn, narrative interest among medical anthropologists may reflect a humanizing process in the medical field through which researchers bring individual people as characters to the center of stories rather than diseases.

Narrative as a sense-making paradigm has great potential for research applications in the social sciences as evidenced by the wide variety of methods already developed for narrative analysis. While the diversity of methodological approaches may be intimidating, understanding the choices being made with regard to object of analysis, orientation, data collection, focus of study, and narrative lens can help us recognize trends in narrative analysis and identify useful methods. Narrative analysis draws its strength from the potential breadth of application. While Holstein and Gubrium (2012) caution researchers against attempting to mix and match methods without careful consideration of the theoretical background, their strategy of juxtaposing diverse approaches alongside one another can inspire researchers to learn new techniques or understand familiar methods in new ways. Greater interdisciplinary dialogue and collaboration surrounding a common interest in the value of the narrative paradigm will continue to encourage a pooling of diverse perspectives and a creative environment for developing research. Anthropologists especially can contribute to narrative methodology by challenging ethnocentric assumptions about narrative construction and social function. Simultaneously identifying core cross-cultural elements of narrative can also provide usable frameworks for analysis similar to Ochs and Capps’ (2001) suggested narrative dimensions.

The concern for understanding the world through the lenses of the subjective and particular, which narrative studies represent, is already prevalent in anthropological research. As we continue to pursue familiar methodological approaches and
paradigms, awareness of similar trends in other disciplines should challenge our thinking and encourage us to share insights with our academic neighbors.

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