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I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Barbara Frances Beier entitled "A Phenomenological Study of the Experience of Having Family Stories Told About Oneself." I have examined the final copy of the dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Psychology.

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We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the Council:

Associate Vice Chancellor
and Dean of The Graduate School

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE EXPERIENCE OF HAVING FAMILY STORIES TOLD ABOUT ONESELF

A Dissertation

Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Barbara Frances Beier

August 1994

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my major professor, Dr. Howard R. Pollio, for his guidance, encouragement, and patience. I would also like to thank the other members of my committee, Dr. Charles P. Cohen, Dr. Allen R. Dunn, and Dr. Jack M. Barlow, for their assistance. In addition, I would like to express my thanks to all of the members of the University of Tennessee Phenomenology Laboratory for many hours of spirited discussion both on this project and the other projects we have worked on together during my five years in Knoxville.

ABSTRACT

To describe and gain an understanding of adults' experiences of having stories told about themselves by other family members, twenty participants were interviewed and asked to relate stories they had heard family members tell about them. This request initiated a lengthy, non-structured interview during which the stories and information about the context in which each story was told were gathered. Interviews were then analyzed to categorize story plots as well as to develop a thematic structure of the experience of having stories told about oneself. Results revealed that nine plot categories encompassed all 79 stories told. The thematic structure included four focal themes; that is, themes most figural or prominent in the immediate storytelling experience. In addition, five themes were found to describe the family context in which stories were told. Focal themes describing what participants reported being aware of when listening to such stories were: (1) the Storyteller, (2) Me, (3) How It Felt and (4) Then/Now. The five family themes concerning the family context (i.e., Family themes) were described as involving an awareness of: (1) History, (2) Relationship Patterns, (3) Distinctiveness, (4) Attitudes, and (5) Values. Stories related by participants varied widely in richness and detail; two participants, in fact, produced no complete stories providing, instead, only repetitive patterns or descriptions they reported other family members had used to describe them. The

majority of participants reported that their family often told stories, that they enjoyed swapping stories in their families, and that they found stories told about themselves meaningful and important.

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CHAPTER I

THE ROLE OF NARRATIVE IN CONTEMPORARY PSYCHOLOGY

People have told stories since before recorded history and it can be argued that this ability to create, tell and understand stories or narratives is one of the capacities that sets human beings apart from animals. Although literary theory and criticism have been interested in the nature of narrative since the time of Aristotle, academic psychology, with the exception of psychoanalysis, has largely ignored this field until the past two decades. With the emergence of the idea that psychology is a "human science" capable of studying phenomena that are qualitatively different from the physical, material and physiological realms which have been successfully studied using experimental methods derived from logical positivism, psychologists, philosophers and sociologists have been searching for other methods of study and other global metaphors to use in describing and understanding human experience.

Recently attention has been directed towards the study of narrative or "story telling" as a way to understand human experience and human meaning. This interest is reflected in the publication of numerous books by psychologists dealing with narrative as well as in the founding of the Journal of Narrative and Life History in 1991. Sarbin's (1986) edited book Narrative Psychology: The Storied Nature of Human Conduct presents studies from several areas of

psychology, including cognitive, developmental and clinical psychology, all of which explore the ways people experience, explain, and retell events (including random events involving only non-sentient entities) using narrative forms. Cognitive psychologists have studied the structure of narrative and how it is used heuristically to explain and understand experience (e.g. Robinson and Hawpe, 1986). Mancuso (1986) presents an overview of evidence that the "typical person who has passed through late childhood imposes story structure on all varieties of input" (p. 106). Developmental psychologists have studied the development of narrative competence, or of the ability to tell and understand stories during childhood.

Narrative processes are used in several ways in applied psychology (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 178). Organizational development psychologists use interviews and written materials, such as memos and statements of purpose, to help client organizations understand the narrative schemes they use to interpret events. If various members -- for example union and management -- use different "plots" in their stories, misunderstandings and attributions of improper motives to the other group are likely. Consultants use the discovery of discrepant stories as a diagnostic tool in evaluating organizations; further, they can foster the fashioning of new company narratives that are more inclusive than previous ones.

Throughout life, each person tries to understand events that happen in order to make them meaningful. Polkinghorne (1988) states that "narrative is a scheme by means of which human beings give meaning to their experience of temporality and personal actions" (p. 11). He also argues that narrative is applicable to the human sciences including psychology. Polkinghorne points out that narrative is used extensively in psychotherapy. Sometimes, merely telling one's story is therapeutic; in group therapy or support groups it helps build group cohesion. The goals of using narrative in psychotherapy varies. It can make the latent narrative manifest as in psychoanalytic psychotherapy or, alternatively, "it can reconstruct a more useful and coherent interpretation of past events and future projects than the client's present narrative" (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 178).

Even more behavioral forms of psychotherapy may be seen as incorporating some aspects of narrative. In their introduction to Cognitive Therapy of Depression, Beck, Rush Shaw and Emory (1979) approvingly quote Adler that

> We do not suffer from the shock of our experiences -- the so-called *trauma* -- but we make out of them just what suits our purposes. We are *self-determined* by the meaning we give to our experiences; . . . Meanings are not determined by situations, but we determine ourselves by the meanings we give to situations (p. 14).

They then list three major cognitive patterns observed in depressed people: (1) depressed individuals endorse negative views of themselves as inadequate and defective; (2) they interpret ongoing

experience in negative ways; that is, the world is seen as making excessive demands on them and they are stymied by insurmountable obstacles; and (3) they view the future as negative and expect suffering to continue forever. One way of characterizing this pattern is to note that the depressed person's personal paradigm is a story that incorporates extreme suffering and hopelessness. Cognitive-behavioral therapy uses various techniques to challenge this (negativistic) story line by critically examining, with the patient, the veracity of what the client uses as data to support his or her negative views. One of the goals of such therapy is to enable the person both to think and to act differently; thus the client obtains data that negates the hopeless plot, eventually replacing it with a personal story line having a more realistic and hopeful one.

Narrative as a Root Metaphor for Psychology

Sarbin (1986) argues that narrative (or story) can be viewed as the root metaphor or basic analogy for all of psychology. The root metaphor in any discipline constrains what kinds of questions can be asked, which kinds of observations will be recognized as germane to the discipline, and which kinds of classifications, interpretations and explanations are acceptable; in other words, it configures the philosophical and scientific model(s) used by that discipline. Presently, mechanism is a dominant value in our culture and the physical sciences have adopted the root metaphor of the machine with its reliance on strict determinism and causal explanations. Experimental psychology, in turn, has adopted the mechanistic root

metaphor from the physical sciences and seeks to discover context-free, machine like laws of human behavior.

> Polkinghorne (1988) points out that since the 1870's
>
> psychological research has been based on the ideal that a single scientific method could be used by all disciplines -- that is, all reliable knowledge is generated by exactly the same epistemological principles (p. 8).

He then goes on to note that these principles were derived from logical positivism and are embodied in the experimental method which requires that (1) data and conclusions must be derived from public perceptions that are either directly available or can be made so through the use of instrumentation; (2) data must be generated by experiments; and (3) general laws which explain causality are the only proper objects of science. Such methods have served the biological and physical sciences admirably, but seem to have been less successful in understanding and solving human and social problems.

Polkinghorne (1988) views human existence as a "stratified system of organized realms of reality -- the material realm, the organic realm, and the mental realm," (p. 1) and argues that each realm constitutes a different kind of reality. As new realms have developed during the course of evolution, so too have different types of reality arisen; each "higher" or more complex realm is autonomous and irreducible to less complex realms, although these necessarily are substrates for the development of the more complex ones. Likewise the explanatory theories and laws sufficient for a less

complex realm cannot explain the reality of a more complex one. Thus, organic life cannot be completely understood using mechanistic explanations which suffice for the material world; nevertheless, mechanistic explanations are valid for those aspects of the organic realm to which they apply; for example, an animal's body obeys the law of gravity. If it is accepted that human existence is not directly reducible to physical, organic and physiological realms, it then follows that the study of human experience necessitates different methods than those used in those realms.

It has been argued by phenomenological psychologists, such as Giorgi (1971), and Romanyshyn and Whalen (1989), that if psychology is to be a science of human being, human experience and human meanings, it is not well served by an exclusive adherence to a methodology which emphasizes the experimental method. In addition to this, Giorgi (1971) also proposed the use of phenomenological methods to study human experience and meanings in their lived context. Since the time that suggestion was made, a number of psychologists have attempted to apply the principles of hermeneutic interpretation to issues and problems in psychology. What characterizes such an interpretive form of existential-phenomenological psychology is an openness to the experience of the phenomenon by an individual: as "it is given to him, and not to pre-judge it nor to see it through any specific perspective simply because of previous knowledge about the phenomenon" (Giorgi, 1971, p. 9).

Phenomenological psychology of this type also stresses that events occur in particular contexts. Contextualism is a world view whose root metaphor is that of the historical event which continues to be alive in the present; that is, history re-presents events making them live again. Sarbin (1986) continues

> The imagery called out by the historical event metaphor is that of an ongoing texture of multiply elaborated events, each leading to others, each being influenced by collateral episodes, and by the efforts of multiple agents who engage in actions to satisfy their needs and meet their obligations. Contained in the metaphor is the idea of constant change in the structure of situations and in positions occupied by actors. The texture of events does not require linearity (p. 6).

History is not merely the a chronicle of events, but a constructed narrative that includes and explains co-occurring and sequential events. Narrative is a form of discourse featuring emplotment that describes and relates events in an explanatory and meaningful way. Thus narrative and history have similar intellectual structures. Sarbin cites Gergen's (1973) argument that theories of social psychology reflect contemporary history and tend to change as culture and society changes; therefore, social psychology is a form of historical narrative in its structure. If psychology is redefined to exclude sensory and physiological areas, Sarbin argues that the remaining areas of psychology share a historicity with social psychology and that the root metaphor of psychology must be narrative.

Narrative In Psychotherapy

Many areas of psychology can be understood in terms of the narrative metaphor. A good argument can be made for using

narrative as a root metaphor for social psychology, although it is unlikely it will become the sole metaphor of all of psychology. The present study focuses on family stories which resemble the narratives which commonly arise in psychotherapy. In both instances, the narratives purportedly describe the individual in question (a participant in this study, a patient in psychotherapy) as well as the context within which that person lived at the time of the story; in addition, the stories seem to help make sense of the person's experience and are open to reinterpretation. In order to provide a context for the discussion of the results of this study, the remainder of this chapter will explore the relationships between narrative and psychotherapy, specifically psychoanalysis which can be viewed as the paradigmatic form of psychotherapy. This discussion will draw heavily, but not exclusively on the work of Ricoeur, Spence and Schafer.

1. Ricoeur

In Freud and Philosophy, Ricoeur (1970) states that he is dealing "with Freud and not with psychoanalysis" (p. xi). He

> situates Freud as a figure of major stature within the Western philosophical tradition, and seeks to demonstrate that psychoanalysis possesses sufficient internal cohesion as a hermeneutic discipline to hold its own against either positivist or phenomenological critique (Clark, 1990, p. 59).

Ricoeur points out that reflective philosophy is not an intuitive philosophy of immediate self-consciousness but that "reflection must become interpretation because I cannot grasp the act of existing

except in signs scattered in the world" (p. 46). These "signs" appear in the text of culture in language which is from the start, equivocal. Words do not have a single definable meaning, but are symbols in the sense that they point to multiple meanings. Hermeneutics is needed to discover and interpret such meanings. Ricoeur views Freudian psychoanalysis as a hermeneutic discipline; in turn, Ricoeur applies hermeneutic interpretations to the corpus of Freud's psychoanalytic writings.

Freud used case histories which were also masterful narratives to illustrate his theories, persuade readers, and to show by example how psychoanalytic treatment proceeds. In his interpretations of free associations and dreams, he employed what Ricoeur (1970) called a "hermeneutics of suspicion." The objective of such interpretations was to strip away illusions, allowing the analyst and patient to arrive at true, albeit primitive, childlike, and animalistic desires driving behavior, thought and dreams. The practice of psychoanalysis entails a form of hermeneutic interpretation which serves to point to the true motives of behavior which Freud showed to be childish and instinctual. Freud believed these instincts had a physiological basis and that they would eventually be reduced to a purely material realm. This belief and goal was in accord with the empirical methods used to study the nervous system then being developed to parallel the experimental method of physics and chemistry. One of Freud's earliest writings, the "Project for a Scientific Psychology" declared his faith that future science would

eventually discover the physical substrate for his proposed concepts. Although on at least one occasion Freud described himself as a "psychologist," he never completely abandoned the hope that knowledge of the brain and nervous system would eventually allow cathexes and neuroses to be located in the brain.

Ricoeur (1970) points out that there are two styles of hermeneutic interpretation. The first -- which might be called a hermeneutics of suspicion -- seeks to strip away false meanings to arrive at the hidden truth. It seeks to remove illusions and to demystify. The second, which owes much to religious exegesis, is a revelatory hermeneutic that seeks to recover or restore the original meaning hidden in the text and make it manifest. Ricoeur points out that like Marx and Nietzsche, Freud's hermeneutics was largely one of suspicion. Nevertheless, even such analysis leads to an enlargement of the field of consciousness:

> What Freud desires is that the one who is analyzed, by making his own the meaning that was foreign to him, enlarge his field of consciousness, live better, and finally be a little freer, and if possible a little happier (p. 35). Consciousness is not a given but a task (p. 44).

Freud's writings contain physical-mechanical explanations using the economics of energy, forces, neurons, cathexes and the constancy principle: that the amount of energy in any closed system is constant. Freud considered the psyche such a closed system. This explanation is based on the principles of physics and physiology as known at his time. On the other hand, psychoanalysis also deals with the relations of meaning, it is a hermeneutics directed towards

representations -- dream-texts, cultural productions including literature and art, and the productions of free association. Ricoeur seeks to demonstrate that these two strands of discourse, the economic and hermeneutic, imply rather than exclude one other. He traces how consciousness is a lacunary text; the assumption of the unconscious is justified by regarding it as the result of the work of interpolation which introduces meaning and connection into the "text" of consciousness. Although the instincts are never known directly in their biological reality, and must remain on the level of postulate, Ricoeur (like Freud) holds that "the language of force can never be overcome by the language of meaning" (p. 149). Ricoeur than traces how Freud's study of culture eventually necessitated the introduction of a genetic model and later of a death instinct.

After Freud postulated the death instinct in Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Ricoeur (1970) claims that Freud completely recast his theory. At this time, he shifted from a quantitative mental physics to an almost Romantic mythology: "under the coating of a scientific surface there arises the Naturphilosophie remythicised in the contemporary guise of metabioloby" (Clark, 1990, p. 71). The theory of the stages of psychosexual development attempts to narrate a history of desire in terms of object choice which necessitated both renunciation and the mourning over lost objects.

Ricoeur (1970) admits that psychoanalysis does not satisfy the requirements of a scientific theory if positivist criteria are used. First, the Freudian energy theory with its use of the constancy

principle is incapable of empirical verification or refutation. Second, there is no clear definition of the conditions under which an interpretation is valid: are they valid if acceptable to the analysand, or because the patient's condition improves, or because it is objectively coherent? Since psychoanalysis involves the intersubjective relationship of patient and analyst, with the attendant transference and countertransference, it is impossible to satisfy the scientific requirement that independent observers have access to the same data as the analyst and patient, or that the psychoanalytic situation be standardized as a laboratory experiment.

Ricoeur (1970) examined attempts to operationalize psychoanalysis and concluded that although an operationalized psychoanalysis has common ground with other schools of psychology, such operationalization forced psychoanalysis to renounce its distinctiveness. Unlike positivistic psychology, psychoanalysis stresses an entropic model, insists that instinctual effects may have priority over learning and experience, and refuses to give priority to the adaptive functions of the ego. Such operationalization cannot "furnish an equivalent of relations of signifier to signified that place psychoanalysis among the hermeneutic sciences" (p. 358).

In psychoanalysis an adequate interpretation or explanation must "comply with the conditions of being a plausibly stated motive for the patient, for a third party plausibly reported; for the analyst, plausibly causal; and receiving a final acceptance from the patient"

(Clark, 1990, p. 77). Ricoeur respects the "hybrid character of psychoanalysis" (p. 347) and situates it as a interpretive, hermeneutic discipline while at the same time preserving its force as a causal explanation. He also points out that the analyst does not observe, but interprets. Ricoeur refuses, however, to eliminate Freud's energy concepts completely in favor of hermeneutic interpretation because these energetics provide plausible causality. In Ricoeur's Kantian critique of the concepts of psychoanalysis, he justifies the realism of the unconscious as legitimate and respectable. The metapsychology determines the field of investigation; there is a grammar of psychic configurations which have a limited number of possible combinations and which require mechanistic laws governing the unconscious. "The reality of the topography constitutes itself within hermeneutics, but in a purely epistemological sense, existing relative to the rules of deciphering; the necessary interposition of the intersubjective relation with the analyst; and the singularity of the relation of transference with the analyst" (Clark, 1990, p. 82-83).

Although Freud used the metaphor of archeology to describe his seeking of causes in the past and stressed the revelation of the archaic as well as the stripping away of illusions, Ricoeur (1970) argues that archeology has a dialectical relationship with the concept of teleology. This parallels his interest in the dialectic between the hermeneutics of suspicion and that of revelation. For example, the father-complex and superego resulting from the Oedipus conflict,

have both progressive aspects -- the renunciation of infancy and the incorporation of social standards and ideals within the superego -- and regressive aspects -- narcissistic identification with the father, withdrawal of libidinal cathexes from the mother and the primitive punitiveness of the superego. Ricoeur argues that like Hegel's Phenomenology, which overtly thematized teleology but contained an implicit archeology, Freud's psychoanalysis emphasized archeology but contained an implicit teleology. He argues that the self is produced by a progressive synthesis of both past and future possibility.

For Ricoeur (1970), Freud's psychoanalysis offers an ethic of interpretation. "One cannot overestimate the amazing audacity of . . . treating intersubjective relationship as technique" (p. 406) involving the analyst's interpretations, the gaining of insight by the patient, and the revealing of the mechanisms of neurosis. Psychoanalysis becomes a collaborative hermeneutic enterprise and a unique and irreducible form of practice. In a later paper Ricoeur (1977) discusses the nature of the psychoanalytic situation and what counts as "facts" and what constitutes proof in Freud's writings. He begins by outlining the salient criteria of the psychoanalytic situation: only what is capable of being said to another person is counted as data; he notes that facts in psychoanalysis are not the same as the facts of observable behavior; they are reports -- for example, dreams and symptoms enter the analytic situation only as they are reported not

as they occurred. With regard to what is told the analyst, transference plays a crucial role,

> transposing the drama involving several actors which generated the neurotic situation onto a sort of miniature artificial stage. Thus it is analytic experience itself that forces the theory to include intersubjectively within the very constitution of the libido and to conceive of it less as a need than as an other-directed wish (p. 839).

Psychoanalysis also deals with psychical reality, not material reality; psychical reality is not observable and may not be "real" but presents a coherence comparable to material reality. With respect to "external" reality, what is relevant for psychoanalysis is not observed facts, but the meaning these events assume for the analysand; likewise with respect to fantasies, what the analysand makes of them is more relevant than their content per se. Last, "the analytic situation selects from a subject's experience what is capable of entering into a story or narrative" (p. 843). Thus. case histories constitute primary texts in psychoanalysis. Remembering involves not just the recollection of isolated events, but also the formation of meaningful connections to other events that are part of the life story. Memories and impressions of past events assume new meaning and efficiency when remembered; that is, many memories only become traumatic when a later event triggers their recollection. Often at the time they occurred, they could not be fully integrated into a meaningful context; later events or situations then precipitate the remembrance and reworking of the earlier event. "Thus in the Wolf

Man, it is a second sexually significant scene which after the event confers upon the first scene its effectiveness" (p. 844).

The investigatory procedure of psychoanalysis has a strong affinity to other disciplines of textual interpretation and so gives preference to relations of meaning among mental productions. On the other hand, psychoanalysis as a treatment gives preference to relations of force between systems; theory functions to integrate these two aspects of psychical reality, namely meaning and energetics. Ricoeur (1977) notes that the meanings of dreams and symptoms are difficult to decipher because of "the imposed distortion mechanisms between the manifest and the hidden meaning" (p. 847-8). He points out that Freud used a host of quasi-physical metaphors, including repression, displacement and condensation, to describe the transformations effected by these distortions. Thus "analytic praxis calls for a theory in which the psyche will be represented both as a text to be interpreted and as a system of forces to be manipulated" (p. 849). Ricoeur admits that Freud's metapsychology is unable to integrate meaning and force into a single unified structure. Like Habermas (1971), Ricoeur argues that the distortions of interest in psychoanalysis are not accidental but systematic, and that an adequate theory must explain the mechanisms of distortion as well as the meaning of the mechanisms that distort the texts. Because of this, economic metaphors, such as resistance, cannot be replaced by philological ones, nor can economic metaphors replace textual ones. At the same time, Ricoeur

reminds the reader that energetics is a metaphor and not to be taken literally; while the unconscious is not a thing, the economic model preserves something essential, "that man's alienation from himself is such that mental functioning does actually resemble the functioning of a thing" (p. 853). "The becoming unconscious requires a specific explanation so that the kinship of meaning between conscious and unconscious contents may be recognized" (p. 855). Psychoanalytic explanation "brings into view motives which are causes and which require an explanation of their autonomous functioning" (p. 855)

Ricoeur (1977) next discusses the nature of the truth which psychoanalysis claims to provide. First, it claims to increase the patient's capacity for authentic self-recognition by helping the patient overcome distortions that lead to self-misunderstanding. Second, the patient misunderstands other persons less and his ability to use symbolic process in communications is enhanced. Third, in psychoanalysis, fantasy no longer alienates the person from himself and the other, but becomes the "symbolic as founding both individual and collective identity" (p. 860). Fourth, psychoanalysis entails a narrative commitment; that is, it seeks the creation of a understandable narrative that integrates what were isolated phenomena into a single unified sequence of events. This narrative includes causal connections, generalizations and psychoanalytic hypotheses regarding mental functioning among its explanatory elements. Such causes, generalizations and hypotheses "constitute

the non-narrative structure of psychoanalytic explanation" (p. 864). Thus psychoanalytic understanding includes both a narrative and an explanatory (causal) component that takes its postulates, laws and explanations from Freudian theory.

Ricoeur (1977) concludes by listing the criteria for good psychoanalytic explanation. First, it must be coherent with Freudian psychoanalytic theory or with some other psychoanalytic theory. Second, it must satisfy the procedures of interpretation that apply to decoding the text of the unconscious; in other words, the new text must be self-consistent and take into account as much of the information generated by the psychoanalytic situation (dreams, associations, fantasies, slips, etc.) as possible. The results from a patient's psychoanalytic exploration may support and may be supported by the theory, but when results are incompatible with theory, modification of the theory may be necessary. Third, the explanation must satisfy economic terms; in other words it must be incorporated into the patient's working-through and be a factor of amelioration. Last, the explanation must raise the case history to the level of narrative intelligibility expected from a good story; the "story" should be followable, that is, self-explanatory.

2. Spence

Spence (1982) also has discussed the nature of psychoanalytic knowledge and was concerned with the fact that psychoanalytic theory and discourse had not really advanced since Freud's time; instead different ideas seemed to come into vogue only to be

displaced by other incompatible ideas. Spence points out that arguments are rarely "settled" one way or the other but that ideas come into vogue based on sketchy case reports given as evidence for a new phenomenon such as "therapeutic alliance." Psychoanalysts postulate such concepts in journal articles and provide supporting evidence in the form of fragments of case histories. When another analyst reads the article, Spence argues that he or she forms his or her own private idea of the concept at hand using his or her private store of psychoanalytic data and associations and believes that he or she "understands" and recognizes the phenomenon.

Beginning with Freud's case studies, a narrative tradition has been important to psychoanalytic discourse. While Spence (1982) concedes that "a well-constructed story possesses a kind of narrative truth that is real and immediate and carries an important significance for the process of therapeutic change" (p.21), he also notes that Freud had assumed that each effective interpretation contains historical truth and refers to actual past events. Spence further points out that Freud strove for historical truth in his case histories. This was due both to his view of himself as a dispassionate scientist and to his need to defend psychoanalytic interpretation from the charge of suggestion. It is evident in reading his case studies, however, that the narrative tradition strongly influenced Freud and that conviction or belief in interpretation "emerges because the fit is good, not because we have necessarily made contact with the past" (p. 32).

A search for narrative continuity and meaning has affected how analysts listen to patients; instead of "evenly hovering attention," analysts listen for underlying themes, actively constructing and reconstructing what is heard to fit some coherent whole. Written case reports do not present the original data that led to an analyst's interpretation and historical discoveries but, instead, are stylized constructions that suppress the welter of confused detail in favor of a more coherent literary narrative. Not only is the patient's original data lost, but the analyst's data, which include his or her associations, the precise context in which he made an intervention and how he arrived at that particular intervention at that moment, is also lost. Each reader is required to fill in the missing data with what he or she believes the author meant; this "filling in" will partially consist of the individual analyst's version of theory as well as idiosyncratic associations and experiences. Spence argues that since the original "data," which would include the patient's productions as well as the analyst's assumptions and associations, is never published, it is impossible for the reader to judge the adequacy of an author's reasoning from data to conclusion. This makes real progress impossible in the field of psychoanalysis. He argues that publication of complete case histories including the analyst's view of theory, personal associations, and reasoning leading to his interpretations would open psychoanalysis to more objective scrutiny, and fruitful discussion based on more complete data would then lead to an advancement of psychoanalytic theory.

Spence (1982) discusses the difference between historical truth and narrative truth. For Spence, historical truth describes events as they occurred and implies a veridical reconstruction. As opposed to many other writers, when Spence refers to historical truth, such veracity is all he implies; history is a straight forward account of what occurred with no interpretation implied. A narrative account by contrast brings out connections between events, and seeks to incorporate the meaning these events have for the relevant participants. Historical truth is not sufficient for an effective psychoanalytic interpretation or narrative. Instead, the pieces must be fitted together into an understandable Gestalt; this fitting and forming of a coherent, complete, meaningful and persuasive story constitutes narrative truth. Nevertheless "narrative truth could not be maintained if all pieces of the narrative were fabricated (zero historical truth)" (p. 180). Thus Spence views both kinds of truth as important to psychoanalysis.

Spence (1982) points out that there is no clear line between the reconstruction of historical truth and the construction (or creation) of something new in psychoanalytic interpretations. The analyst can never make contact with the actual event or dream.

> We have seen that ours is an archeology of descriptions, not of images, and that language is always getting in the way between what the patient saw or felt and the way this experience appears (variously transformed) in the analytic conversation (p. 286).

To compound the difficulty, any event can have multiple causes. He concedes that an interpretation is "an artistic and pragmatic

creation that is always oriented toward the future" (p. 287) and, therefore, that one cannot speak of the historical validation of an interpretation. He also points out that interpretations arise in the context of discovery during an analysis; such interpretations are not necessarily sufficient for justifying a given fact or theory. A given discovery may apply to a specific patient without being generalizable to a psychological law. During analysis, the analyst and patient construct a single narrative that helps the patient make better sense of his or life and which then allows the patient to alter future actions and thought.

In his introduction to Spence's (1982) book, Wallerstein points out that the fuller explication of the nuanced data of psychoanalysis advocated by Spence is an extremely problematic undertaking, given the arguments Spence himself makes in the book. It is doubtful that any analyst is fully aware of his or her preconceptions, both theoretical, learned, and idiosyncratic, and what he or she brings as a result of life experiences or previous experience as a therapist. It is doubtful that any analyst could reconstruct exactly how he or she arrived at a specific intervention in the best circumstances and, even more doubtful, that this could be remembered at the end of the session or later when he or she would have the opportunity to write detailed process notes.

In a later article Spence (1986) distinguishes two types of "narrative smoothing." Level I smoothing, which takes place during the psychoanalytic session, consists of things the analyst does,

consciously or unconsciously, to lead the dialog towards certain conclusions. Such smoothing can be characterized as undue influence of the analyst on the patient. It includes leading suggestions, supporting certain kinds (e.g. "psychoanalytic" or "object relations") of explanations over others, pressing certain interpretations more than other ones. Spence concedes it is possible that such activities on the analyst's part might result in the analysand complying with the analyst to produce a "confirming" memory or assenting to the interpretation even when he or she really did not accept it. Evidence of undue influence on the analyst's part can be detected in the transcript of the session. Analysts must be vigilant and take precautions to prevent such influence; the norms of the psychoanalytic method, including neutrality, minimal comment and relative silence of the analyst, tend to minimize the possibility of overt suggestion. Moreover, a thorough analysis of the transference will uncover apparent compliance to suggestion and analyze its motives. For the above reasons, Spence considers Level I smoothing to be less dangerous than Level II smoothing discussed below.

Level II smoothing occurs when a case report is written or presented to others; at this time, the analyst tries to make his or her report conform to the current standards for reporting case histories. Case histories are largely narrative accounts that tell coherent stories by including only facts and interpretations consistent with the point the writer is trying to make. This format usually includes

only a few brief incidents and does not allow the reader access to the original data or to even a complete account of the analysis; therefore, the reader is prevented from evaluating the data and from using his or her own reasoning to draw possible alternative conclusions.

There are two types of omissions in Level II smoothing: (1) Very few incidents are included in the finished case report and these are chosen on the basis of their illustrative power and ability to further the author's argument; other incidents, including mistaken interpretations and "blind alleys," are omitted. (2) Other omissions result from the assumption that what is clear to the author and treating analyst is clear to the reader. Spence argues that Level II smoothing is particularly pernicious because it prevents others from knowing to what extent Level I smoothing occurred and thus how much "damage" was done by such smoothing. It also prevents the reader from knowing exactly what the treating analyst did technically, instead fostering the impression that all analysts use similar techniques; namely, those espoused by Freud.

Spence (1986) also points out that narrative smoothing tends to obscure the hermeneutic nature of clinical psychoanalysis. He states "there is every reason to believe that hermeneutic principles are used every day in the process of clinical discovery" and that analysts do "not function in a hypothetical-deductive fashion" (p. 218) in arriving at interpretations. Rather the analyst's task is to understand rather than explain and, most importantly, to

understand the patient's meaning. For this reason, Level II smoothing turns a

> hermeneutic adventure into a staid, pseudoscientific account which gives the impression that all interpretations are overdetermined, that all surprise has been accounted for (if it ever existed), and that the received theory is entirely correct. Level II smoothing manages to eliminate alternative readings of the material (p. 229).

3. Schafer

In his early book A New Language for Psychoanalysis, Schafer (1976) challenged the necessity of using Freudian metapsychology in psychoanalysis. He proposed substituting an action language, with its emphasis on the patient himself being author of his thoughts, dreams, deeds, or omissions. Actions are broadly defined to include "every psychological process, event, experience, response, or other item of behavior" (pp. 363-364). He denied the necessity of using Freud's "mixed physicochemical and evolutionary biological language" (p. 3). Nevertheless, Schafer's theoretical position remained recognizably Freudian; although he discarded many metaphysical concepts, he recast others into action language. For example, he avoids speaking of resistance substituting the locution resisting and notes that the analysand, not some internal force or entity such as the ego or id, is doing the resisting although he may not be aware that he is "resisting."

All actions are goal directed although the individual may be unaware of the goal. Any given action can be viewed from many vantage points and there is no one description of a human action

which is the only true one, although many may be false. He gives the example of a male student reading a book. This action may be described as studying, preparing for a test, complying with his parents' wishes or adhering to the norms of his class. In psychoanalysis, the strategy of interpretation seeks to identify a network of actions having intelligibility where previously they seemed disconnected and meaningless; this process expands the patient's experience of his or her life with the goal of developing an intelligible history of that life. Causality and determinism are not consistent with such psychoanalytic explanations; however, actions have reasons or redescriptions that make the actions more comprehensible to the actor or listener.

The terms of Freudian metapsychology -- forces, energies, functions, structures and mental apparatus -- are those of natural science, specifically of a physicalistic psychology. Such terms are inconsistent with intentions, meanings, reasons, choices and subjective experience with which psychoanalysis, as practiced, is concerned. Schafer (1976) wryly points out that the practicing analyst does not consider himself or his patient to be a mechanistic psychic apparatus but to be persons. Psychoanalysis will have to abandon the natural science model and give way to another model -- an "historical, experiential, intentionalistic model" (p. 192) closely related to the humanities

> in that its raw data are meanings and subjective experience, and its methods are those that promote the clarification and organization of meaning and experience

> along certain lines. Psychoanalysis is a special form of knowing about human existence and history (p. 25).

During analysis, another version of the life and mind of the analysand is created; this one contains a more comprehensive, unified and intelligible past and present than was previously available and one which provides some possible outlines of the future. This new version is a joint product of the analyst and analysand and, therefore, would likely be somewhat different with another analyst. Because of this variability, Schafer concedes that this newly created history is neither absolute truth nor fictive, but that it is nevertheless closer to the truth if the analysis were successful.

Although Schafer (1976) does not stress the term "narrative," the seeds for a narrative approach to psychoanalysis are evident. He views

> actions historically, that is, as following one another in a sequence that is intelligible in a number of related ways; the sequence is more than a chaotic chronicle whose only organizing principle is the passage of time. In this respect psychoanalysis is an historical approach to lives (p. 232).

He also stresses that the "term experience refers to the person's giving meaning to somatic and environmental happenings" whether personal, interpersonal, present, past or anticipatory. "Experience is the construction of personal or subjective situations" (p. 368). Since experience is never unmediated, the patient's description is never unmediated and, therefore, psychoanalytic interpretations can only be interpretations of patient interpretations.

Schafer continued to modify his views and by the time he wrote The Analytic Attitude (1983), he freely referred to the narrative function in psychoanalysis describing psychoanalysts as

> people who listen to the narrations of analysands and help them to transform these narrations into others that are more complete, coherent, convincing, and adaptively useful than those they have been accustomed to constructing (p. 240).

He describes his version of psychoanalysis as hermeneutic, an interpretive discipline that deals in language and its equivalents rather than in natural science. The psychoanalyst listens to the analysand's narratives, examining their presuppositions and aims using methods and theory consistent with the particular version of psychoanalysis that particular analyst practices.

In 1983, Schafer declared that analysis does not produce a single life history, but a series of life narratives. In part, this occurs because the patient gains insight during the analysis and so the history becomes more complete and self-consistent having a greater sense of relevance with respect to issues -- such as sexual and defensive activities -- that are crucial to psychoanalysis. It also occurs because the major questions being asked by the analysand and analyst change and the result is a set of coordinated accounts of the patient's life history. Two kinds of history are generated. The first is the history (or histories) of the analysis itself; the second involves constructions or reconstructions of the analysand's biographical past.

These reconstructions and conclusions about the early past are more provisional than the interpretation of the analysis as it unfolds

in the present. "Primary psychoanalytic knowledge consists in the psychically real histories of individual psychoanalyses" (p. 207). In interpreting, the highest priority goes to arriving at as full an understanding of the psychoanalytic encounter as possible; the goal is to understand what happens during the analyst's and analysand's joint attempt at understanding. In the process of trying to explain how the analysand got to be "that way" in the present, the patient and analyst continue to find out exactly what "that way" is, characterizing it and its meaning and thus continually redefining the problem to be analyzed even while analyzing it. This process parallels Gergen's (1973) argument that when social psychologists study a phenomenon and that knowledge becomes widely known, the phenomenon then changes irreversibly.

As mentioned earlier, Schafer (1976) pointed out that since psychoanalysis is a joint effort by the analysand and the analyst, an analysis carried out by a different analyst with the same analysand might produce a somewhat different narrative, even if the two were ostensibly from the same school of psychoanalysis. Now he (1983) declares that contrary to Freud's contention, there is no such thing as objective, autonomous or pure psychoanalytic data. Instead the data of psychoanalysis are inseparable from the analyst's pre-critical, personal and theoretical assumptions concerning the origins, coherence and intelligibility of anyone's actions. What the analyst hears and counts as data is unavoidably intermingled with his or her own preconceptions; there is no sharp split between subject and

object. Schafer (1983) points out that each theory has its own primary narrative structures; for example, one of Freud's major storylines concerned the child as a beast (id) being tamed by frustration in a hostile civilization. Other theories, or story-lines, were developed by Kohut in his self-psychology and by the British Object Relations school. During analysis, the analysand tells stories about him or herself and others. Interpretations consist of the analyst's retelling of these stories, accentuating some features over others and relating features that previously seemed unrelated. The retelling is always along the psychoanalytic lines of the analyst's favored storyline or theoretical persuasion. Thus, Schafer's narratives are specifically Freudian retellings cast in "action language." The analyst's retellings in turn influence the stories told by the analysand and in this way the end product of the interweaving of texts is a new, jointly authored narrative.

In his recent book, Retelling a Life, Schafer (1992) continues to develop the argument that psychoanalysis is a narrative enterprise, using specifically psychoanalytic storylines. He defines a storyline as the

> set of guidelines and constraints for telling a story that conveys what convention would certify as having a certain general kind of content. These guidelines and constraints may be derived from one or more symbols, metaphors, similes, images, themes, or dramatic scenes, or some combination of these (p. 29).

The storyline serves as a template for the retelling of other stories in its terms. The story line establishes the facts of the case, which facts

are significant, and how these facts are to be situated in the narrative account of the situations, events and actions being discussed.

Schafer (1992) argues that self-concepts, self-images, and even the so-called "self" can be viewed as a set of narrative strategies, storylines or plots each person follows to develop a cognitively and emotionally coherent account of his or her past and present life. He cites Freud's (1899) discussion of screen memories in which Freud pointed out that it is questionable whether we have any actual memories of our childhood; instead memories relating to our childhood may be all we have. These memories do not show us the childhood as it was but as they appeared us at later periods when memories were aroused. Schafer (1992) then argues that all life-historical material may be approached as a "series of tellings and retellings constructed and reconstructed over the course of development -- indeed over the course of the analysis itself" (p. 35). Even contemporary events, as described in analysis, are not exactly the same event as it occurred; they are "filtered" through the analysand's present self-descriptive story line; "we are always and only dealing with implicit or explicit narrative presentations of reality and never with reality pure and simple" (p. 51).

In a similar vein, Schafer (1992) points out that any event or action may be described in a multitude of ways depending on the "analytic observer's aims and on the context of method and attribution of significance that has been established by, or in keeping with those aims" (p. 44). Narrative priority is given to one particular

description, rather than to any of the alternatives, only after the context of aims, conventions and practices are either spelled out (so there is no ambiguity) or when there is adequate reason to assume that the audience knows the context well.

Although many accounts or narratives are possible, Schafer (1992) does not propose that every account is as acceptable as any other.

> Some accounts are judged to be better or closer to the truth than others on the basis that they show a higher degree of consistency, coherence, comprehensiveness, and common sense than the others. . . . we cannot count on incontestable proofs of superiority and we resort to, or submit to, rhetorical, ethical, and esthetic persuasiveness to decide what is better or best (p. 56).

Schafer (1992) argues that language is not transparent, as Freud believed, but is bound to person, time, place, culture and specific conventions; there is no "neutral" language. "Language is seen as that which makes the world that it tells about" (p. 148). For this reason, he argues that analysts (and other writers) should abandon the

> convention of writing as if it were possible, in areas of weighty social controversy, to be an utterly disinterested, value-free psychoanalytic observer of mental and behavioral phenomena. We may no longer claim that these phenomena are 'out there in Nature,' phenomena with a fixed essence waiting to be discovered and univocally described once and for all by an objective investigator (p. 133).

Each person's observations are unavoidable biased by his or her personal, familial, social and cultural context and as far as practical he or she needs to take these into account.

Likewise, every version of psychoanalysis is "situated in a personal context that in turn is linguistically situated in a historical and ideological context of dialog" (p. 151). According to Schafer (1992), Freud's fundamental contribution, which applies equally to alternate psychoanalytic systems such as Kohut's self-psychology, was that he created a new form of dialogue that served to make it possible for "therapists and patients to engage in consequential forms of transformational dialogue that had never existed before" (p. 156). Such dialog alters the patient's consciously narrated presentation of self and his or her past history of relations with others by destabilizing, deconstructing and defamiliarizing it. Since life narratives are stabilized by the analysand's defenses, analysis of the defenses destabilizes established stories. Deconstruction is the process of focusing on internal contradictions in the stories and on hidden hierarchies of value in conventional polarities, such as active-passive and male-female. Such deconstruction makes possible the construction of new and sounder narratives which in turn may be subjected to deconstruction. Lastly, defamiliarization is accomplished during the analytic dialogue as the analyst

> begins to retell insightfully, roundedly, and empathically much that the analysand initially has told and is telling naively, abjectly, seductively, or aggressively, and, in any case, defensively. By introducing new or revised or unexpectedly interdependent story lines as major amendments to the analysand's narrative or as

> supplements to them, the analyst begins the process of defamiliarizing them and here, too engages the analysand in the process (p. 158).

In all of these processes, the analysand is an active partner to the analyst.

Schafer (1992) points out that critical theorists have argued for some time that all interpretation, including psychoanalytic interpretation, is inherently ambiguous, contestable, and context-dependent. If psychoanalysis is taken to be an interpretative discipline in which the "text" includes the analysand's words, actions, facial and bodily expressions, demeanor as well as the responses both spoken and unspoken of the analyst, the question arises as to which line of interpretation the analyst should take or which analytic story line should be used in guiding the analyst's listening and interpretation. He points out that "texts" interpreted during psychoanalysis evolve out of the analysand's and analyst's interpenetrating contributions. If one agrees that analysts interpret interpenetrated and cohabited texts, then both constructivism and perspectivism have an essential place in psychoanalysis. Constructivism is an epistemological position that claims that reality is constructed according to (usually) implicit rules common to a culture and hence what is nominally termed "reality" is not an objective entity. Likewise, perspectivism claims that one cannot observe reality plainly or objectively, but can only observe "reality by means of a perspective." If these are accepted, then the claim that

psychoanalysis is (or can be) an objective science is placed in jeopardy.

Schafer (1992) points out that Freudian analysis, Kohutian self-psychology and object relations theory are but three possible psychoanalytic story lines. He disdains eclecticism and makes it clear that his choice is Freudian psychoanalysis subject to modifications implied by his "action language" including the jettisoning of references to forces, energies and other natural science events. He does not give the reason for this choice although he seems to argue that some schools of psychoanalysis are "truer" than others. Since each school of psychoanalysis defines improvement or personal change wrought by its form of analysis differently, "improvement" in patient functioning cannot be used to evaluate different schools.

Unlike Ricoeur, Schafer (1983) sees no need for a mixed energetics:

> In sharp disagreement with Ricoeur (1977), I would assert that there is nothing in the analysis of resisting that necessarily leads beyond this narrative framework into the one structured in terms of psychic forces or other processes of desymbolization or dehumanization (p. 234).

Ricoeur preferred the language of forces and energetics because he realized that there was no way to discover solely from the text the particular ways the text is distorted. Such distortions are not random distortions usually encountered in exegesis but are lawful or "rule bound," and psychoanalysis seeks to understand why and how

any text is distorted in particular ways. Ricoeur uses "energetics" to provide the "rules" and reasons; they are thought to possess a reality external to the text. On the other hand, Schafer, not bound solely to the text, uses the Freudian storyline to explain such distortions. Schafer freely admits to using a given narrative plot -- Freudian psychoanalysis -- as his preferred storyline to structure analysands' narratives and to explain the genesis and laws of textual distortion.

Wyatt (1986) points out that an emphasis on the narrative function in psychoanalysis coupled with the realization that the patient's past is "reconstructed" by the analyst and patient together creates fundamental problems for psychoanalytic epistemology. The belief that the repressed or forgotten is preserved only waiting to appear again is suspect, and has been replaced by the notion that the past is being constructed when it is "reconstructed" in the present. If reconstruction replaces recovery of an actual past, the theory of psychoanalytic treatment and what is effective must be reworked. A related question is what would the actual past really be like if it could be reconstructed. Historians attempting to reconstruct and explain past events have long realized that even the report of eyewitnesses to events is based on their social, cultural and personal contexts. Likewise the existence of artifacts of a past people does not necessarily help us understand that group until we place the significance of the artifacts into a narrative context. Thus even for historians only small bits and pieces of the past can be retrieved and

these are put together to form a unified, consistent, coherent narrative.

Wyatt (1986), like Schafer, argues that psychoanalytic experience is acquired with and guided by psychoanalytic theory. The analyst expects that the theory will manifest itself in the analysand's stories as well as in connections between recurring themes in these stories. The analyst's listening has two contradictory goals; on the one hand it should be unprejudiced (evenly hovering attention) and open to all data; at the same time, it must be vigilant to hints, similarities and correspondences in an attempt to relate these to established psychoanalytic theory. Another aspect of psychoanalytic listening, is that it is an expectant listening, conveying the demand that the patient tell stories.

According to Wyatt (1986), the overall concern of the listening analyst is to allow the elements of the unfolding tale to emerge and become articulated as freely as possible. The function of the psychoanalytic setting is to provide an ambiance that will facilitate the telling of stories; the analyst's job is to help the stories attain momentum and depth. The eventual goal is for the analysand to recognize and claim his or her own tale. The person comes to know him or herself through telling, and thus hearing his or her own story out loud. Wyatt points out the importance of insisting on obtaining the analysand's own story since the analysand also will have invented a story for himself, a "personal myth," whose goal is both deception of the other and self-deception; the patient will defend this myth

even after it has outlived its usefulness. The goal of analysis, which is only partially reached, is to replace such personal myths with the closest approximation to one's authentic story as possible at that time.

Critique of the Narrative Position

Eagle (1984) has argued against the narrative construal of psychoanalysis. He points out that Spence in his writings asserts that constructing coherent, meaningful, persuasive narratives is therapeutically effective but that he neither provides empirical data to support this claim nor does he suggest an approach to prove or disprove such assertions. This cannot be denied; none of the authors discussed speaks much about how their assertions could be proved or disproved. Spence (1982 and 1986) explains why it is very difficult or impossible for anyone other than the treating analyst to understand the process leading to a particular interpretation. He provides specific suggestions for increasing the analyst's awareness of this process as it is happening and for promptly capturing a full rendering of that process in written form. This would allow other analysts more complete access to thoughts and associations leading to that interpretation. Spence believes that fuller reporting would allow others, both analysts and non-analysts, to view the raw data of interpretation and thereby to follow the analyst's thought processes. Fuller reporting would also allow others to formulate alternate explanations and to judge whether the analyst arrived at a reasonable explanation and whether there are superior explanations. Since

these explanations would be judged as much on the basis of their narrative truth as on their "historical" truth, the criteria used would be those of hermeneutics and not those of natural scientific causality. Therefore, fuller explication of the analytic process would allow analysts to evaluate each other's work and advance psychoanalytic knowledge, but it would not completely satisfy Eagle's desire for empirical validation in the natural science model.

Another difficulty involved in any attempt at validating psychoanalytic narratives is, as Schafer (1992) points out, that various schools of psychoanalysis view personality change in different ways and strive to bring about different kinds of changes. Thus

> change alone cannot be used to validate clinical interpretations, for the final account of change, far from being theory-free, is shaped and presented in the terms of the methods, the storylines, and the interpretations of one or another psychoanalytic perspective (p.180).

Despite these difficulties, the question of the efficacy of a narrative approach to psychoanalysis needs to be pursued. It is unlikely that traditional methods will be able to approach such questions effectively. It may well be that more descriptive methods are necessary; for example, patients could be interviewed and asked what they found effective and ultimately helpful.

A second argument against a narrative view of psychoanalysis is that such an approach might alter or ignore facts that could potentially spoil narrative coherence and persuasiveness. Eagle (1984) suggests that events could be invented or created and then included because they enhanced the narrative; thus blatant untruths

could be incorporated into the psychoanalytic narrative. He argues that if narrative coherence and meaning is more important than veridicality, it logically follows that analysts would ignore inconvenient facts or create more congruent "facts" or lies.

While careless or unscrupulous analysts could seriously distort such facts as they have, this does not necessarily have to occur. Neither Spence nor other advocates of a narrative approach to psychoanalysis argue for constructing narratives that neglect facts and both Eagle and Spence would agree that therapeutic narratives need to include all known factual events. An account that omits or denies "inconvenient" events to be more coherent or pleasing is counter to the psychoanalyst's commitment to truth. The commitment to historical truth is a value commitment and a very important one; the organizing scheme or plot must fit the facts (Polkinghorne, 1988). Nevertheless it is important to realize that facts only partially determine an organizing scheme; several schemes, plots or stories can account for the same set of facts and each such story will give those facts different meanings. Spence (1986) and Schafer (1992) both argue that it is important for the analyst to know and to be continually aware of his or her bias and theoretical presuppositions. Spence (1986) quotes Gadamer's description of how to approach an unfamiliar text:

> A person trying to understand a text is prepared for it to tell him something. That is why a hermeneutically trained mind must be, from the start, sensitive to the text's quality of newness. But this kind of sensitivity involves neither "neutrality" in the matter of the object nor the extinction of one's self, but the conscious

> assimilation of one's own fore-meanings and prejudices. The important thing is to be aware of one's own bias, so that the text may present itself in all its newness and thus be able to assert its own truth against one's own fore-meanings (Gadamer, 1984, p. 238).

Such awareness of one's own prejudices will help the analyst to be aware of and open to material or facts that violate expectations. This should prevent the analyst from force fitting the patient's material to the Procrustean bed of any given theory.

Seen from another perspective, this issue provides one way of viewing what makes the patient a patient. Each person constructs a narrative of his or her life; this narrative includes past events combined with their interpretations and meanings. From such a narrative, the individual has also formulated a world view containing expectations about what can be expected from other people, institutions and the world. The individual then acts in such a way as to make these predictions come true; should discrepant events occur they are either ignored or distorted and misinterpreted to fit the prevailing narrative. The future patient's narrative serves to limit what he or she can apprehend and severely constricts future possibilities open to him or her; thus this person has created and lives by a narrow, distorted narrative.

During the process of psychoanalysis, the analysand is made increasingly aware of his or her present narrative and how he or she uses it as a storyline to distort, discount, or ignore discrepant data. In addition, the analysand is helped to understand how such a narrative was constructed and the purpose it served and continues

to serve. This process, of becoming more aware of such distortions, makes the analysand aware of the inadequacy of past narratives. As more is learned about the past and present situation and as more information is accumulated through the transference, new narratives are constructed; such narratives would seem to be closer to the present truth for that particular analysand and to expand the range of future possibilities. The purpose of psychoanalysis (or psychotherapy) is to create a more encompassing narrative for the patient. If the analyst deliberately misconstrues or distorts the patient's data, he not only fails the patient by providing an inauthentic narrative, he also violates the ethical values of psychoanalysis.

Eagle (1984) also objects to a narrative approach to psychoanalysis on the basis that current happenings and the current relationship with the therapist should take precedence over the interpretation of past events whether known or merely inferred. He questions the relevance of narrative to current happenings reflected in the transference. Schafer (1983) agrees to this view; namely, that the primary psychoanalytic narrative is indeed that of the analysis itself. The data for this narrative is contained in the day by day encounter between the analyst and analysand which is manifestly present to both parties in the transference. The historical narrative, based on the less secure data of the analysand's memories, is of secondary importance. Psychoanalysis assumes a continuity between past and present and hence present relationship patterns both

reflect and repeat past ones. A satisfactory set of psychoanalytic narratives would include both types of narratives but would give precedence to the narrative of the analysis itself.

Regarding the issue of whether reconstructions of the past are veridical, Spence (1986) concedes that the constructive, narrative approach to psychoanalysis cannot prove that a given past event really happened; the best that can be done is to increase the patient's awareness of the meanings of past events and fantasies. The quest for absolute truth must be abandoned in favor of a more hermeneutic approach which declares that such subjective meanings are more important than the literal reality of events.

Although there are differences among the viewpoints of Spence, Ricoeur and Schafer, they share much in common. All three see psychoanalysis as a hermeneutic discipline that stresses the importance of interpreting the text provided by the patient. They also agree that these data are rooted in the context of the psychoanalytic situation, which differs greatly from the public data of the traditional natural science experiment. Spence (1982) would prefer to open up more of that data to scrutiny by others, while Ricoeur and Schafer acknowledge that full revelation is impossible. While Ricoeur (1977) limits the meaning of text to that which can be put into words, both Schafer and Spence would permit non-verbal data to be included. Schafer broadens the "text" to include the contributions of the analyst since he considers the text of an analysis to be ultimately co-constructed by the analysand and analyst. All

three stress the importance of the narrative function in psychoanalysis noting that in analysis a new narrative is constructed which provides the analysand with a more complete, coherent and persuasive account of his or her past and present, and which opens up increased future possibilities. All three writers acknowledge that absolute truth cannot be known, and that an interpretive discipline can only hope to approach the truth at a given time and place.

CHAPTER II.

THE NATURE AND MEANING OF FAMILY STORIES: A REVIEW OF THE RELEVANT LITERATURE

When family members get together they often tell stories about recent happenings involving themselves or other family members thereby keeping everyone informed of family news. In many families, members also pass around stories about "notorious" family members, both living and dead as well as about past events important to the family, such as how they survived the depression. With repeated tellings, these stories become part of the family's heritage and over the past twenty years, folklorists have recognized family stories as a type of folklore and have begun collecting them and discussing their significance (Zeitlin, Kotkin and Baker, 1982). In this literature, family stories are defined as specific stories told about other family members, both living and dead, and are viewed as constituting part of a family's narrative. Personal family stories, as a subset of family stories, may be defined as stories that family members tell about a specific individual.

To date, there has been little psychological interest in personal family stories. Although such stories have been discussed occasionally, they usually are related to other psychological phenomena, such as "early recollections" and "family myths." The use of early recollections or early memories as an assessment tool is most often associated with the Adlerian school of psychology, and

what a person provides as his or her first specific remembered incident is posited to reveal much about his or her approach to life (Mosak, 1977). Personal family stories also are viewed as potentially revealing aspects of the person's familial relationships. A family myth, another Adlerian concept, is defined as an integrated set of beliefs shared by all family members which concern each member and their relative positions within family life (Ferreira, 1963). Family stories may be used to describe an individual's role in the family myth and to keep that person in that role. This chapter provides an overview of the early memory literature, the family therapy literature that pertains to family stories, and a brief consideration of family stories in the folklore literature.

Early Recollections

Freud (1899/1959) noted that adults possess only fragmentary recollections of their earliest years; continuous memory generally does not occur until about seven years of age. Freud cites work of V. and C. Henri that showed many early recollections are of events that aroused powerful emotions, including terror, shame, and physical pain; or of events recognized as important at the time of occurrence or soon after; for example, the death of a family member, fires, the birth of a sibling and so on. A number of early memories, however, are of everyday, indifferent and even banal events such as having a meal. Freud found that among his patients, early memories were predominantly of indifferent events and he assumed that such memories, called "screen" memories, functioned to screen or

conceal other, presumably more traumatic, memories from an individual's awareness. Moreover, events recounted in early recollections were often "falsified" in that the time or place of occurrence was inaccurate or the people mentioned in the event could not have been present. Freud attributed such "falsification" to mechanisms of displacement and condensation in an attempt to replace the memory of a highly charged event with that of another more "innocent" event associatively linked to it. For this reason, Freud believed that early recollections were not to be relied upon to tell the analyst anything about actual events of the patient's childhood and should not to be taken at face value although useful information could be obtained from them if analyzed in the same manner as dreams.

Members of the Adlerian school took a different view of early recollections. Conceding that such memories may not be accurate, and may even be complete fabrications, Adler (1931/1958) argued that the veracity of the memorialized event was relatively unimportant and that the "memory" and its meaning for that individual encapsulated his or her approach to life. The earliest memories limn, in highly condensed form, the "story of my life." They contain an individual's long-range goals, the cautions and warnings he or she holds for the self, and reminders of his or her limits (Adler, 1931/1958; Mosak, 1977a). Early memories provide a picture of how the person views the self, other people, life in

general, one's goals, and what the person expects to happen in life (Gushurst, 1971).

In addition, they are thought to provide information about the emotional climate surrounding the informant during childhood. Early memories are selected and retained on the basis of consistency with the individual's life style or characteristic pattern of living; they are not causal, molding one's life, but reflect and express one's approach to life (Mosak, 1958/1977). Verger and Camp (1970) further stress that the goal in using early recollection is to discover an individual's current view of life.

Life style is defined as the person's characteristic pattern of movement or "unique method of perceiving, conceptualizing, behaving, and striving towards a subjectively determined goal of power" (Croake, 1975, p. 514). Life style is thus seen to express the central theme by which one's behavior is to be understood; as such, it provides a framework through which the individual interprets, controls and predicts experience (Mosak 1971/1977). Croake (1975) points out that the individual begins to develop a unique life style at an early age through social interaction. The child repeats whatever behavior he or she finds helpful to attaining a sense of belonging. Once a pattern has been selected, new experiences tend to be interpreted in keeping with that life style, and similar responses are tried. As the child matures, the life style may become rigid and restrictive, particularly if the range of experiences available to the child is narrow. When the individual encounters a difficult

situation, the life style and its rigidity is more easily seen than when life is going smoothly.

Adlerian therapists often collect several early memories by asking the client to describe in detail the first specific incident he or she can visualize, together with related feelings and thoughts. Mosak (1958/1977) points out that "recollections" or stories which others have told the client cannot be interpreted as early memories. The client is then asked for additional early memories, if available, and these are recorded verbatim for later interpretation.

Mosak (1958/1977) interprets early recollections as projective data similar to the Thematic Apperception Test; he points out that like dreams they are completely unstructured since there is no external stimulus for these stories. Since early recollections are regarded as prototypical of fundamental attitudes, they are first interpreted thematically and then with respect to details. Characters in the memories are treated not as specific individuals but as prototypes; the individual's characteristic attitudes and outlook is elicited rather than his or her characteristic behavior. All recollections gathered from a client should be consistent with each other; if contradictions appear they "exist only as surface phenomena which can be reconciled interpretively" (p. 63). Sometimes an apparent contradiction reveals different responses to differently perceived conditions. Mosak (1958/1977) gives the example of two "contradictory" recollections given by a woman.

> ER - I remember that I was under three and the lady next door picked me up over the fence to take me home.

> ER - My uncle gave my sister ten cents to kiss him. Then he made me the same offer. I ran out the back door and all the way home.
> Interpretation - In the first ER people are depicted as supportive while in the second, they appear to be threatening. Actually the contradiction is resolved when one observes that the supportive person is a woman while the threatening one is a man. Thus, this woman only has a place in the woman's world. The masculine world, especially because it involves sexual behavior, is threatening and she must avoid it (p. 66).

Early recollections describe individual life style; since each person is assumed to behave self-consistently, early memories can be used to predict the relationship a patient will establish with the therapist. In Freudian terms, knowledge of early memories allows the therapist to anticipate what the patient's transference will be like. Mosak (1965/1977) describes two cases in which predictions from early recollections were consistent with the attitudes the patient later exhibited towards the therapist.

Unlike later recollections of events that occur after the age when memories become continuous, early memories are fixed and do not change with current mood (Mosak, 1958/1977). Saul, Snyder, and Sheppard (1956) point out that early memories change if there has been significant change of the attitudes as a result of psychotherapy or other life experiences. In these cases, the individual may produce new memories, "forget" former early recollections, furnish the same memory but now accompany it with a different emotional tone, or reproduce the original memory with additions and deletions, so that while the basic incident remains

constant, the message it provides is different (Mosak, 1958/1977). In support of these assertions, Eckstein (1976) published a case study in which the patient's early recollections changed markedly as a result of therapy.

Although Adlerians initially popularized the use of early memories as a way of describing an individual's "life style," with the rise of ego psychology in the United States, orthodox psychoanalysts became interested in the possibility that analysis of the manifest content of early memories would reveal the functioning of the ego in both its defensive and integrative modes (Burnell and Solomon, 1964). Saul, Snyder, and Sheppard (1956) argue that unconscious motivations select childhood memories in much the same way as the interplay of emotional forces that generate dreams select particular day residues for expression of unconscious wishes. While early memories may consist of a mixture of reality and fantasy, they reflect both the current emotional make-up of the person and the major emotional experiences of childhood; as such, they symbolize historical reality. Since early memories are assumed to reflect character structure, they remain stable over time unless there is a change in the balance of psychic forces such as may occur in psychotherapy.

Levy and Grigg (1962) view the early memory given upon request as a product of preconscious ego processing manifesting the synthetic function of the ego. They examined a large number of early recollections and, using ego psychoanalytic theory as a basis,

developed a set of themes common to these memories that could be used to analyze further early memories. The major qualitative scales included Dependency-Independency or oral themes, Destructive Aggression-Constructive Aggression or anal themes, and Sexuality or Oedipal themes. Each scale was comprised of nine to eleven subsidiary themes which were arranged in order from the most regressed to the most advanced.

Using this schema, Levy and Grigg (1962) then tested the predictive value of earliest memories against therapists' dynamic formulations of patients. One experimenter scored the earliest memories to arrive at a thematic configuration using the scales and themes outlined above whereas the other experimenter interviewed the patients' therapists to obtain a dynamic formulation after ten weeks of therapy; once obtained, formulations were then scored in the same way as memories. The authors then attempted to match thematic configurations obtained from earliest memories with those obtained from therapist formulations. Each researcher correctly matched 11 of 21 patients; this was a significantly greater number of matches than expected by chance. In those cases where matching failed, denial was a prominent defense; that is, content of earliest memories were vague and contained few scorable themes. Results suggest a reasonable degree of correspondence between earliest memories and the thematic content of therapy sessions for patients whose prominent defense operations do not include denial.

Burnell and Solomon (1964) investigated the hypothesis that earliest memories are expressions of ego functioning and reflect both current emotional stressors as well as underlying characterological conflicts. Military basic training was viewed as a stressful experience that might be expected to exacerbate typical late adolescent issues, such as separation and relationship to authority. Burnell and Solomon sought (1) to examine the predictive value of early memories in discriminating success and failure in basic training, (2) to explore the significance of thematic content of earliest memories, and (3) to evaluate intuitive versus systematic approach to the psychodynamic interpretation of the memories.

Subjects in this study were recruits who were unable to complete basic training and now were patients at a mental health clinic; controls were an equal number of recruits who had successfully finished basic training. Social histories and early memories were collected from both subject groups. Three experienced therapists evaluated one set of early memories intuitively. The same therapists evaluated a second batch of early memories using systematic criteria developed by one of them.

Aggression was found more often in the patient group's themes whereas those of the control group contained more scene memories thought to screen repressed aggression; such repression indicated successful adaptation to the stresses of basic training. Female control subjects had significantly fewer aggressive themes than male control subjects. Sexual themes were less common among

both groups of women than men. No significant differences were found between groups with respect to progressive versus regressive tendencies in themes. Intuitive analysis of memories was more successful in predicting recruits' ability to finish basic training than systematic analysis for one judge reputed to possess exceptional intuitive talent; the other judges' performance improved when given specific criteria to use in evaluating early memories. The study concluded that earliest memories taken under stress could predict coping ability.

> Langs (1965a) views the recall of first memories as a
>
> concentrated expression of cognitive style, in which precipitates of drives; superego promptings; and ego functioning, particularly defensive operations and modes of adaptation; and the person's view of reality and the self, are to be found (p. 379).

First memories of 48 professional actors were scored using a manual previously developed by Langs. Sixty items that had previously been found in early memories were selected for study and scored for each early memory. Ten concerned population counts; that is, direct counts of people present in the memory with respect to gender, age and family status. The remaining fifty included complex and thematic items, such as roles and perceptions of the environment. A series of hypotheses linking aspects of personality to scores on these items was generated; for example, correlations were expected between themes of separation and loss in early memories and aggressive trends, manipulative attitudes, and both depressive and masochistic tendencies. These predictions were compared

statistically to independent assessments of personality measures obtained from a clinical interview, Rorschach Test, Thematic Apperception Test, Wechsler-Bellevue Test, and an autobiography. A significant relationship between the manifest content of the first memory and other measures of personality was found for many of the items.

In a second study, Langs (1965b) computed correlations between early memories and four characterological diagnoses: obsessive-compulsive, inhibited obsessive-compulsive, hysteric and narcissistic. The manifest content of early memories was scored in the same way as in the earlier study (Langs, 1965a), and early memory scores for the four diagnostic groups were compared with one other using chi-square. Early memories of the two obsessive-compulsive groups contained several distinguishing features that attained statistical significance. First memories of obsessive-compulsive subjects showed a paucity of people and little activity whereas those of inhibited obsessives showed significant traumatic and destructive content as well as the presence of persons who lose control. Memories of hysteric subjects were notable for movement by the subject and the presence of women whereas those of narcissistic subjects contained themes of travel and separation. These findings are consonant with clinical observations and provide some support for the hypothesis that early memories may reflect and predict current functioning and personality.

Mayman (1968) has argued that early memories are not autobiographical truths, but retrospective inventions that express psychological rather than objective truths about a person's life. They express important fantasies around which a person's character-structure is organized; they also conform to and confirm ingrained images of the individual and other people. The themes and specific "actors" in early memories define the nuclear relationship-patterns which the individual is likely to replicate in a wide range of other life situations. In short, Mayman (1968) proposes

> that a person's adult character structure is organized around object-relational themes which intrude projectively into the structure and content of his early memories. . . Consequently, one may sift the stories a person tells about himself and extract those intrusive interpersonal themes which define that person's enduring view of himself and his enduring expectations of others (p. 304).

Early memories can be analyzed as projected fantasies, much like Thematic Apperception Test stories. When Mayman does this, he finds that analyzing a patient's early stories provides information about his or her ability to form relationships, the psychosexual level of these relationships, and the transference resistances likely to be exhibited during therapy. Mayman has classified themes implicit in early memories collected from a wide variety of subjects, ranging from normal adults to psychotic patients, and has organized them into oral, anal, phallic, Oedipal and latency configurations. In therapy, Mayman (1968) requests patients to provide a wide range of early memories: (1) the earliest and next-earliest memories; (2)

earliest and next-earliest memories of the mother and father; (3) the happiest and unhappiest early memories; (4) stories the family tells about the patient as a child, whether or not he or she remembers the incidents. Mayman thus uses personal family stories as well as memories as one way of understanding the patient's self-image and interpersonal expectations.

Mayman and Faris (1960) proposed extending the procedure of collecting early memories to members of the patient's family and found that parental memories of the patient revealed factors significant to the interpersonal matrix surrounding the patient during childhood. Mayman and Faris (1960) discuss a case presentation in which early memory data was collected from a 24 year old man and his parents. The patient provided early memories as well as stories each parent told about him whereas each parent provided memories of the patient as a young child. The data from the three sets of memories and stories were used to analyze the character structure of the man and its links to each parent's personal traits and identities. Results revealed data from early memories and personal family stories was quite useful in elucidating present and past relationship patterns; they also were able to predict transference issues.

Carlson (1981) presents a case study in which Tompkin's formulation of script theory was used to interpret the early memory of a middle aged woman. Briefly, in script theory a family of affect-laden scenes is assembled to give structure and meaning to

experience; eventually a script is formed which the individual uses to interpret and respond to later events. Material laden with negative affect is magnified by the detection of similarities in widely divergent experiences.

Within this context, Carlson (1981) viewed the early memory as a possible candidate for a nuclear scene around which scripts may be built. In this case, five aspects of one early memory were selected for psychological magnification: "good things turn bad"; seduction and betrayal; disorientation in space; shame and anger; and the actions of withdrawal and inhibition. Case material was organized to show how these themes were magnified in the subject's life. For example, in her early memory, the subject had first been told to sit on the couch and then angrily dismissed after doing so; the scene was spatially disorienting to her. In later life, she had difficulty learning to drive; she sharply distinguished safe or private space from dangerous or public space; and a common theme in her dreams involved traveling, becoming disoriented, and fear of getting lost in an unfamiliar place. Script theory provides an approach to studying the reciprocal influence between the individual's interpretation of early memories and later life events.

Young (1987) conducted a phenomenological study of early memories. Earliest and next earliest memories were collected from twenty mental health professionals using a semi-structured interview. After each memory was given, follow-up questions were used to define further the context of the memory and its significance

and meanings in both the past and present. Both manifest content and the thematic structure of both memories were analyzed.

The content of the earliest and next earliest memories was encompassed by three broad categories: (1) External focus on the event itself; examples include traumatic incidents, special occasions, first experiences and especially pleasurable experiences; (2) Internal focus or self feeling; examples include experiences of mastery, security, shame, isolation, and vulnerability; (3) interpersonal focus involving the self and other(s); examples include competition, fighting, cooperation, being with someone, and being cared for. The most common earliest memory content was a traumatic, frightening experience closely followed by vividly pleasant experiences and mastery or competence experiences. Overall pleasant and unpleasant experiences were equally represented. The most common next-earliest memories included illness, injury and accident followed by conflict and fighting; traumatic, frightening experiences; and cooperation or playing together. Next earliest memories with negative connotations outnumbered those with positive connotations.

Turning to thematic analysis, three major structural aspects emerged: Orienting to the memory, Recalling and retelling the memory, and Reflecting on the memory. Orienting refers to preparation for talking about the memory and locating it within life experience. Recalling and retelling is the immediate, here-and-now experience with the memory; focus is on the "reality" of the memory itself and whether it is relived or reported objectively.

Reflecting involved talking about what was remembered, including its current meaning. Each memory was evaluated for the presence or absence of seven thematic categories that defined the three major aspects.

Orienting included three themes: Priority, History, and Source. Priority refers to the certainty that the memory given is actually the respondent's earliest one; 85% expressed some degree of certainty that the memory was the earliest event they could remember. The theme History refers to whether or not the individual reported knowing their earliest memory for many years; 65% reported an earliest memory they had been aware of for several years or more. Twenty percent reported memories that they had thought of over the years, but which had not been identified as their earliest memory until the time of the study. Finally, fifteen percent reported earliest memories they first recalled during the interview. The third theme was Source or whether the individual experiences the memory as an event he or she actually remembers or whether it was conveyed to the person by someone else. All earliest memories were reported as having the self as source; that is, as being remembered directly.

Recalling and retelling the memory was composed of two aspects: Temporal stance and Reality. Temporal stance refers to whether recalling evoked an experience of reliving the event or whether events were described in the manner of looking back on the past from the present; 35% of memories seemed to be relived,

at least briefly, during the retelling. Reality refers to whether or not the memory contained some aspect of the prelogical, magical view of the world or whether the perceptions were childlike, such as seeing adults from a "child's eye" view. Only four earliest memories contained some aspect of magical thinking or childlike perception.

Reflecting contained two themes: Significance and Meaning. A memory was described as significant if the respondent could articulate why that event stood out from other events to be memorialized; 85% of the earliest memories were scored as significant. The manner in which memories were found to be significant fell into three categories: dramatic or striking content was cited by 20% of the respondents, contrast with overall childhood experience was cited by 30% of respondents, and 35% reported finding the memory significant because it expressed a characteristic or repeated pattern or theme. Meaning, the remaining theme, was noted if the respondent reported currently using the memory in the service of greater self-understanding; 75% reported that the memory was meaningful. For some respondents, the meaning of the memory has remained constant over time; for others, meaning has evolved over time reflecting the person's increased self-understanding.

Family Therapy and Family Stories

Fiese and Sameroff (1989) propose that the family regulates a child's development through a consensual family code that dictates the behavior expected of the child and of other family members in a

variety of situations. The family code can be viewed as consisting of three highly interconnected components: the family paradigm, family stories and myths, and family rituals. The family paradigm includes the core assumptions, convictions and beliefs each family holds about its environment and serves to regulate how individuals interact both within the family and outside of it. Family paradigms dictate the family's view of the relative safety and stability of the external world, the extent to which the family experiences it as novel, and the family's conviction regarding its treatment of the family as an integrated unit or as a collection of unrelated individuals (Reiss, 1989).

Family stories and myths transmit values and define the family to itself as both similar to and different from other families (Fiese & Sameroff, 1989). Family stories are defined by folklorists Zeitlin, Kotkin and Baker (1982) as stories told repeatedly about present or past family members; such stories often are passed from generation to generation. As such, they constitute a form of family regulation by instructing children what it means to be a member of a particular family and provide a context in which children learn family values and family roles. The prominence of particular stories and their interpretation will change as the family's needs change (Stone, 1988).

As defined previously, a family myth is an integrated set of beliefs shared by all family members which concern each member and their relative positions within family life. Although these beliefs

may imply serious distortions of reality, they are not challenged (Ferreira, 1963). Ferreira (1967a) points out that family myth does not refer to how the family appears to the outside world but how the family views itself and its inner workings. It also describes how "family members describe and explain their behavior vis-a-vis each other, and their verbalized views of the relationship" (p. 224). Distortions in family myths are usually obvious to outsiders although they may be rigidly held by the family; even when challenged, each member will work to keep the myth going (Ferreira, 1967b).

A family ritual is a symbolic form of communication, repeatedly acted out in a systematic fashion over time (Wolin & Bennett, 1984). Rituals include celebrations, traditions and patterned family interactions during which times members learn family rules and the family's beliefs about its history. Family celebrations are occasions that are both widely practiced in the overall culture and special to each family; examples include rites of passage such as weddings and annual celebrations such as Christmas or Passover. Family traditions are more idiosyncratic for each family; examples include family councils and the specific way the family celebrates birthdays; for example, by allowing the honoree to choose the dinner menu. Patterned family interactions are the most frequently enacted of the family rituals but usually are least consciously planned or articulated; examples include bedtime rituals and the discipline of children.

These three components of family life are highly interconnected, and in specific instances, may shade into each

other. For example, family stories often express the family paradigm or explain how a particular ritual began. Family rituals may include the telling of family stories at certain times such as Christmas or Thanksgiving meals. Idiosyncratic family rituals also serve to integrate family members and to define (and differentiate) the family from other families.

Ferreira (1963, 1967b) stressed that family myths are designed to maintain homeostasis in the face of crisis or challenge. To this end, he presents a case study in which the therapist readily discerned that, contrary to the myth of family happiness, individual family members were not happy; his challenge to that myth was met by a rigid defense of the myth in which all members participated. Family myths can be viewed as similar to individual defense mechanisms with the proviso that family myths are group defenses against disturbances or changes in the relationship. Ferreira (1967b) presents two case studies in which the psychotic behavior of one member could be characterized as an exaggeration of the family's habitual mode of interacting. In both cases, psychosis of one family member served to maintain the family myth; any improvement on the part of the psychotic patient would have challenged the family myth and threatened its homeostasis.

Price (1990) suggests that the maintenance of the family myth of a good family in the face of abuse and/or neglect may contribute to the development of borderline disorders. In this model, the child who later develops the disorder is neglected and/or abused by one

or more members of the family, although this abuse is either denied or the victim is accused of causing it. The myth of familial goodness is maintained both within the family and in the family's presentation to the external world. Double-binding messages prevent the victim from stepping outside the family to obtain disconfirming information. Eventually, Price suggests, the child distorts and denies the reality of abuse by using splitting to deny that the abuser is bad; in addition, the experience may be dissociated leading to the development of amnesia for the experience. As a result the child views the self as bad and the parents as good and never comes to form an integrated sense of self and other.

Pillari (1986) studied the development of family myths and their maintenance over the family life cycle. A semi-structured interview was carried out with twenty five elderly residents at a county home; the interview covered each respondent's life from early childhood to the time of the study, including family of origin, marriage(s), children, and important losses including those due to death and divorce. Each respondent was asked about his or her notions about marriage and relationships with spouses, children, and in-laws. The goal of each interview was to discover family myths among these men and women. In addition, four respondents were interviewed for about 14 hours to obtain a deeper understanding of their specific family myths and life-styles. Family myths were apparent in both the past and contemporary lives of all individuals interviewed, with such myths serving to define roles and to limit

choices perceived as possible by each individual. Even as adults, respondents continued to fulfill roles their parents had created for them. Personal family stories about the individual as well as family stories handed down from previous generations were used to support these myths.

In Pillari's (1986) study, family myths were followed from childhood to old age. Myths exist in all families and function to maintain the coherence of that family. Each individual is accorded a particular role depending on the needs of the family, and the role is maintained well past separation from the family of origin, the death of the parents, and sometimes into old age. Although the myth limits each individual's possibilities, and may make it impossible for the family as a whole to deal openly with certain issues such as anger, it is maintained to protect the family from perceived internal and external dangers. The family myth represents a compromise from which each member gets some satisfaction, however meager. Myths can be viewed as more or less toxic; less toxic myths tend to appear as taboos, such as a refusal to discuss a brother's homosexuality, are at least partially conscious, and are mingled with an avowed desire to sustain the family as a unit. In more toxic myths, the family system is extremely rigid and there is a total unawareness of the myth; such myths are associated with a shared theme that is completely avoided and cannot be acknowledged. Although myths may be shaken by events, or circumstances may occur leading to their modification, Pillari found that certain myths are carried over several generations.

Although myths often are problematic, they function to hold the family together, to defend it from painful confrontations with aspects of the past, and to protect it from outsiders.

According to Byng-Hall (1982), family mythology consists of a complex set of self-perceptions and stories that maintain the family's sense of identity. Among family stories are legends which are told and retold across generations. Such legends often are moral tales that transmit the rules and obligations of family life; they are edited by the narrator to fit current versions of the family myth. As long as the family system is unchanged, family stories and legends remain static and help prevent change. Family legends are condensed history encapsulating a scenario in a single incident and standing for a process that may have taken years to unfold.

Byng-Hall (1982) describes a case involving the effects of a family legend regarding an ancestral admiral falsely accused of cowardice. During Byng-Hall's youth, he recalled being preoccupied with the question of whether or not he was a coward; on one occasion he swam towards a group of sharks in an attempt to dispel that label. When he had the opportunity to enter military service, he chose the navy despite living and growing up hundreds of miles from the ocean. Realizing the adverse effects of the family legend on himself, he sought historical data regarding the battle during which his ancestor, Admiral Byng, had allegedly refused to engage the enemy. Evidence exonerating the admiral and showing how he had

been scapegoated by his country's leaders was found, allowing him to edit the family legend both for his sake and that of his son.

Byng-Hall (1982) also wondered if his family were unique in the power of its legends, and began to explore family legends with client families, colleagues and trainees. In one procedure he asked participants first to imagine some current unresolved issue; after getting a clear picture of the conflict, participants were asked to think of the first family story that comes to mind. Anecdotally, Byng-Hall found a strong relationship between the story and the unresolved conflict. When working with families, he uses the genogram as a format for exploring family legends. A genogram is a structural diagram of a family's multigenerational relationship system; family members spanning three or four generations are schematically depicted in family-tree fashion noting pertinent data such as gender, age, year of marriage, offspring, current marital status, and year of death (Goldenberg and Goldenberg, 1985). Instead of asking what each ancestor was like, Byng-Hall (1982) asks for a story about each or for a story about how two family members got along. The story is written down so that any editing that occurs during the course of therapy will be noted. Re-editing family legends or stories involves exploring their context as well as revealing other interpretative possibilities that may serve to explode old myths.

In assessing family life style, Nicoll and Hawes (1985) advocate completing a genogram for three or four generations. At that time the client is asked to recall, from his or her perspective as a child,

how the family viewed each individual including the client, whether he or she was a positive or negative role model, and to relate stories told in the family about that individual. This procedure reveals strong family values about who or what the client should be in order to obtain position or status within the family.

Gustein (1987) describes the use of family stories during short term crisis interventions with families. Often reconciliation with an adolescent is a goal of the intervention, and one component of the process involves gathering relevant members of the nuclear and extended families for a marathon family session. Members are encouraged to share experiences, such as telling humorous incidents that have bonded family members in the past. Family stories are used to establish a sense of family heritage and togetherness. When the crisis involves an adolescent, uncles and aunts are encouraged to recollect experiences in which their siblings are portrayed as less than perfect. Stories also are used to explore past crises and their resolution. Additional enactments are used to explore and then later bring about some form of reconciliation that both accepts the differences among family members and promotes the strength and unity of the kinship system.

Sherman (1990) describes a pilot study in which family narratives were elicited during a structured family interview with parental couples. The author had previously noticed that families undergoing divorce proceedings recalled few family stories involving themes of love or intimacy. In the context of a genogram interview,

eight couples were asked to relate stories in two areas: (1) stories that each parent had heard about himself or herself as a child, and (2) family identity stories, that is, stories that answer in some way the question of what it means to be a member of that family. Identity stories focus on such topics as family heroes, villains, alleged family traits or how the family handled a difficult transition or crisis.

Sherman (1990) reported that emotional themes in the personal family stories of parents paralleled emerging themes in their own children's relationship patterns. Four parents, one mother and three fathers, could not recall any stories that had been told about themselves. The mother's mother had been mentally disturbed and the present mother had previously been rated as the mother in the study least able to "read" her infant's emotional signals. The three fathers in this group were having considerable difficulty establishing a role for themselves as father and caretaker of their first child. Two mothers and three fathers were unable to recall any family identity stories; in each case, it was noted that either the family of origin was quite fragmented or that past conflict had split the family into factions. Sherman noted that maintenance of confidentiality prevented his giving any examples of family stories. He also lamented the fact that the very characteristic that made such stories valuable clinically -- their unique expression of a family's prominent emotional themes -- made it difficult to develop coding schemes for their use in research.

Folk Literature and Family Stories

Folklorists Zeitlin, Kotkin and Baker (1982) collected family stories, sayings, and customs from over two thousand family members visiting the Smithsonian's Festival of America Folklife from 1974 to 1977. They point out that families frequently choose only a few incidents to pass on to succeeding generations and these often come to represent the totality of the family's heritage and past both remembered and unremembered. Over the years, these incidents are creatively transformed into family stories and sayings that express the family's common past. The transformation of raw experience into family stories involves codification into forms that are easily recalled and often entertaining. In family stories, the family's past is made accessible even as it is being reshaped according to the family's current needs and desires.

Family stories are defined as any incident retold by one family member about another over a period of years (Zeitlin, Kotkin and Baker, 1982). Often such stories concern out-of-the-ordinary events that harbor conflict and excitement or tend to dramatize significant family transitions. Unlike histories, they make no attempt to cover the family's past systematically nor are they very concerned about times, places and dates. They organize the family's past into eras, giving events meaning and significance that extend generations beyond the time of occurrence. Members of a family generally believe these stories to be true; often they are based on real incidents that

have been elaborated over the years. Even if a story is untrue, it may be historically important in shaping future events in the family.

Zeitlin, Kotkin and Baker (1982) discuss two broad principles in American family stories. First is the character principle; stories often describe incidents that portray an individual's character and simultaneously stereotype it. Stories thus highlight characteristics of family rogues and heroes. A second characteristic of such stories is termed the transition principle; that is, family stories describe episodes that mark upheavals or sharp transitions in the family's history, tending to retain incidents surrounding radical changes, such as migrations or catastrophes. These stories integrate disasters and disruptions into the family fabric. In some cases, seemingly insignificant incidents mark important transitions. Since a complete family history is symbolized by a few dramatic turning points, and complex individuals often reduced to a single telling episode, family stories provide each family with a compact and private communication that holds it together. Storytelling is often part of a family's rituals; it promotes healthy family interaction, influences the behavior of family members and serves as a channel through which culture flows from one generation to the next. Stories make even disturbing or tragic breaks in family rituals part of the ongoing life of the family.

Stone's (1988) book Black Sheep and Kissing Cousins recounts some of the family stories told her in the course of interviewing over one hundred people and the conclusions she has drawn from them.

Family stories encapsulate the family's unique norms and mores regarding issues such as marriage, illness and the relative importance of money; they say what issues really concern the family. They foster family self esteem by presenting its history in a favorable light and allow family members to believe their family is special. Family identity stories express beliefs the family holds about itself. Teaching stories, on the other hand, tell members about the outside world and provide coping strategies. Stone points out that while stories may be interpreted in multiple ways, the family chooses its present meaning thereby suggesting the family has a shared idea of what its stories are supposed to mean.

Stone (1988) describes the functions of family "legacies," stories told to an individual about that individual (personal family stories). A story about a child's action becomes a family story when it hits a particular family nerve, confirms a family value, or is taken as an omen of what the family wishes or fears that child will become. Children are shaped by the family's notion of their identities; stories about the child provide one vehicle of identity formation. The earliest stories told about a child provide a record of parental fantasies, hopes and fears.

Part of the impulse to create stories is to provide a place for the child and to define and identify him or her; occasionally such stories precede the child's birth. Stone (1988) notes that in our culture, sons are preferred to daughters and that family stories about sons often indicate that the family regards him as special. On the

other hand, stories about a daughter's birth often are suffused with disappointment. Women more often recall family stories describing incidents where they were "left behind," say at a store. Although such stories are usually told in a jovial manner, Stone points out that they may indicate the family's hidden feelings of disappointment or ambivalence towards the daughter. Stories about girls define what femininity means; that to be beautiful is useful and desirable, and that girls should be good, unselfish, and not troublesome. Stone found few stories defining masculinity but states that stories about boys affirm their specialness. Stone points out that

> Now and then our legacy of stories is exactly what we need. This is especially true when it comfortably serves as a prologue to the life we have freely chosen for ourselves. But more usually our family stories about ourselves are passed along to us without special regard for whether we want them or not. Often, it seems . . . it is not at all what we wanted but a burden we either live with uncomfortably or struggle later on to get rid of (p. 195).

Stone (1988) further notes that the narrative heritage given the child about himself or herself is mixed; some stories are helpful while others are hurtful. The collection of stories are not internally consistent and different stories may exhibit contradictory attitudes. For example, as a child a woman may have heard many stories that stressed stereotypical femininity, but at the same time heard a few stories about "strong women" in the family; these serve as a "subversive" legacy which, as an adult, she may use in defining or redefining herself. As adults, individuals struggling for personal change may actively search for family stories that provide alternate

role models among their ancestors to the ones they had long been familiar with and had adopted for themselves; an example is the case study by Byng-Hall (1982). Family stories are reinterpreted and refashioned in creative ways to serve the individual's present needs; the imaginative tailoring of family stories to fit one's own sense of self and the development of one's story may serve to free one from the previous limitations and strictures imposed by the stories. Family stories become part of one's personal narrative.

While ordinary people and folklorists have long been aware of the power of family stories, including personal family stories, psychologists and family therapists have only recently begun writing about, and researching, such stories. One reason for this lack of concern may be the difficulty inherent in studying such stories empirically; Sherman (1990) mentioned how difficult it would be to develop a reliable coding scheme for such stories. On the other hand, coding stories in terms of formal and linguistic characteristics may deprive them of the very meaning that makes them interesting objects of study. A more promising approach would seem to be one that interprets family stories using methods similar to those used by Adlerian psychologists in analyzing the manifest content of early recollections or to use phenomenological methods such as those employed by Young (1987). These strategies would seem to have the advantage of allowing researchers to study individuals' experience of family stories and the meanings accorded them.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

This chapter consists of two parts. The first portion of the chapter introduces the reader to phenomenological psychology as a paradigm for the study of human experience. To this end, it begins by briefly describing the characteristics of a natural science methodology and by then presenting a somewhat more detailed description of current phenomenological approaches to psychology. The second portion of the chapter describes in detail the specific phenomenological research procedures used in this study.

Phenomenology as a Paradigm for Psychology

Psychology has existed as a distinct discipline for slightly over one hundred years. Traditionally, historians of science have marked its emergence as a separate academic discipline with the establishment of Wundt's laboratory at the University of Leipzig in 1879 (Chaplin & Krawiec, 1979). Dating the beginnings of psychology as an academic discipline as coinciding with the establishment of the first experimental laboratory makes evident the assumption that psychology has been defined as an experimental science in the tradition of the other natural sciences. Chaplin and Krawiec (1979) point out, following Ebbinghaus, that while psychology has a short history, it has had a long past during which time it was considered part of philosophy. The adoption of natural science methodology served to separate psychology from philosophy and to confer scientific respectability on the fledgling discipline.

Thus early psychologists adopted the methodology of natural science that had succeeded so admirably in the physical sciences.

Characteristics of Natural Science Methodology

Traditional experimental psychology can be characterized as an approach, a method, and a content with method being most important (Giorgi, 1971). Somewhat schematically, the method is the experimental method in which all variables are held constant except two: the "independent variable" which is systematically varied and the "dependent variable" on which the effects of the independent variable are carefully observed and measured. Results obtained are clear, quantitative, unambiguous and replicable.

Giorgi (1971) identified and listed the central characteristics of this approach as follows: (1) empirical; that is, behavior is studied by controlled observation and therefore the variables to be manipulated and measured must be perceivable by the senses either directly or by the use of instrumentation; (2) positivistic; speculative concepts must be dismissed or translated into known empirical procedures or laws; (3) reductionistic; phenomena are made equal to their operational definitions; (4) quantitative; (5) deterministic and predictive; every phenomenon is assumed to have a discoverable cause or causes and if the cause(s) are present, the phenomena will occur; (6) certitudinal; established facts are certain and immutable; (7) analytic; a phenomenon can be studied and understood by breaking it down into its component elements which can in turn be studied individually; and (8) independent of observer; the

experimenter must work in such a way that the data are not influenced by his or her idiosyncrasies.

The content matter of experimental psychology includes sensation, perception, learning, the physiology of emotions, and motivation. Giorgi (1971) points out that what all of these areas have in common is that they can be studied using the experimental method; thus, this method has largely determined and limited the content of traditional psychology to phenomena that are amenable to that approach. While experimental methodology has generated much useful knowledge, especially in the physical and biological sciences, it has had less success in psychology. While some argue that this is merely due to the youth of scientific psychology, others (Giorgi, 1971 and 1975; Colaizzi, 1978; Polkinghorne, 1988; Valle, King and Halling, 1989) argue that the nature of the experimental method prevents it from fully studying human experience.

Giorgi (1971) argues that the experimental method has claimed a privileged and absolute position in psychology; this occurred as a result of the argument that if psychology is to be a science it must use the methods of science, meaning the methods of natural science. What this argument fails to take into account is that scientific methods are not limited to those of the natural sciences; for example, Giorgi (1987) argues that what many view as essential characteristics of scientific process are in actuality "historically contingent specifications of scientific practice contextually related to the subject matter, purpose of research, and theories of science"

(p. 14). It could be said that the nearly exclusive reliance on the experimental method in psychology is an "historical accident."

Shortcomings of the Natural Science Methodology For Psychology

One of the characteristics of the experimental method as listed above was that it was "certitudinal"; that is, the facts discovered must be true over time. It is known, however, that what constitutes human experience changes over time. Aries (1962) shows how family life and the nature of childhood have changed over the centuries. Likewise, van den Berg (1983) argues that although scientific psychology is predicated on the assumption that human nature does not change, it, in fact, has changed over the centuries. He proposes that past human life is "essentially different" from modern life and that an historical psychology is necessary to explore these differences, their causes and to "consider why and how psychology itself has changed in the course of the years" (p. 8).

Gergen (1973) argues that social psychology "deals with facts that are largely nonrepeatable and which fluctuate markedly over time" (p. 310). He points out that if the knowledge generated by psychology is widely disseminated, individuals may then choose to act differently than they would without such knowledge. For example, knowledge of the factors leading to social conformity may insulate individuals from the future efficacy of those factors. He also cites research showing that the factors motivating political activism

changed over the course of the Vietnam war. Gergen (1973) concludes that

> the continued attempt to build general laws of social behavior seems misdirected, and the associated belief that knowledge of social interaction can be accumulated in a manner similar to the natural sciences appears unjustified. . . . We are essentially engaged in a systematic account of contemporary affairs. We utilize scientific methodology, but the results are not scientific principles in the traditional sense (pp. 316-317).

He also states that "prediction and control need not serve as the cornerstones of the field" (p. 317) and that social psychology need not conform to experimental science's ideals of immutability, prediction, and control.

One of the hallmarks of experimental science is quantification and measurement. Lyons (1963) points out that "quantification involves the special use of a preexisting structure to which the data of a science are projected point by point" (p. 126). Content that cannot be broken into units cannot be measured or studied. Quantification assumes both prior knowledge of the structure of the phenomena to be measured and what categories are possible for the data. The questions asked in an experiment presuppose a restricted class of answers, and such an approach may prevent the researcher from being open to aspects of the phenomena that do not fit such a preconceived scheme.

When an experiment is conducted, the scientist assumes that what is being studied has no history; that is, the object is what is at a particular time by virtue of forces operating independently of the nature of the object (Lyons, 1963). In addition, it is assumed that the

history of the experimenter has no influence on the object or on the results of the experiment. These assumptions are not problematic when the object of study is inanimate. Animate objects, however, possess a history in that they "can independently maintain a direction of activity through time" (p. 141). Although the fact that an animal has a history is not likely to be a problem in studying lower organisms, it becomes more of an issue as scientists work with animals higher on the phylogenetic scale. Many scientists view rats and monkeys as capable of forming hypotheses and contend that they attempt to solve problems by using cognitive maps. When the "object" of study is a person, however, both researcher and subject are historical beings and it is much more likely that their histories become intertwined during the experiment. As such, this could prevent the experimenter from maintaining strict objectivity.

One way to prevent such intertwining is to adopt the set that the other is a thing, denying that his or her actions are determined by anything outside of the experimental situation. This is the stance taken in the usual psychological experiment. Thus the experimenter decides in advance what constitutes relevant information, arranges the experiment in such a way so that only this information is obtained, and any data that does not correspond to these restrictions is ruled out as irrelevant or contaminating. The researcher maintains his independence from his human subject and objectivity is maintained. Such an independent stance severely limits the methods available to the researcher.

For example, interviews must be "standardized" so that each subject has the same questions. This prevents the researcher from following interesting leads unless they are included in the preset sequence of questions. In contrast, during a psychotherapy session, both participants "freely admit and display the fact that each has a history" (Lyons, 1963, p. 143). Although the session is conducted for the benefit of the client, and it is expected that he or she will change as a result, the therapist is also open to both his or her and the client's humanness and must thereby be open to change; that is, the therapist's and client's histories are linked at least for the duration of the session.

Polkinghorne (1988) points out that since the 1870's

> psychological research has been based on the ideal that a single scientific method could be used by all disciplines -- that is, all reliable knowledge is generated by exactly the same epistemological principles (p. 8).

Such an assumption would be valid if all knowledge were reducible to a single set of principles, such as the laws of atomic physics. Polkinghorne (1988) calls this assumption into question. He views human existence as a "stratified system of organized realms of reality-- the material realm, the organic realm, and the mental realm" (p. 1) and argues that each realm constitutes a different kind of reality. As new realms have developed during the course of evolution, so also different types of reality arose; each "higher" or more complex realm is autonomous and irreducible to less complex realms although these are necessary substrates for the development of more complex ones. In a similar way, the explanatory theories and

laws that are sufficient for a less complex realm cannot adequately explain the reality in a more complex realm. Thus mental life cannot be completely understood using the physiological explanations which may suffice for the organic realm; nevertheless, physiological explanations are valid for those aspects of the mental realm to which they apply. If it is accepted that human existence is not reducible to the physical, organic and physiological realms, then it follows that the study of human experience requires different methods from those used in those realms.

In summary, the experimental method was originally adopted from the natural sciences as the only valid way to study psychological phenomena; and this was largely an historical accident. This methodology cannot adequately account for the changing nature of human nature. Its objective stance only permits the study of overt behavior or "behaviors" such as thoughts and feelings that can be made public; say by the use of questionnaires or physiological measurements. Such objectivity eliminates human experience, a crucial dimension of human existence, from its study resulting in a "psychology of the third person" (Pollio, Henley & Thompson, in press).

Polkinghorne (1988) also points out that experimental psychology is reductionist and assumes that human behavior and experience are reducible to that of animals or machines. This assumption overlooks human experiences of intentionality, choice and awareness. In addition, experimental psychology cannot account

for human meanings; meaning is often ascribed to certain behaviors or inferred from them on the basis of one theory or model or another. Without the possibility of dialog with the person whose experience is being studied, however, it is impossible to determine the correctness of that inference or to understand the meaning that events or behaviors have for him or her. True dialog would violate the principles of objectivity and hence is not allowed. Under a natural science methodology, experimental psychology would be unable to study a good portion of human experience and human meaning.

An Alternative to Natural Science Psychology

Giorgi (1987) presents an alternative definition of science, stating that scientific knowledge is methodical, critical and systematic.

> Methodical means being aware that one has adequate access to the phenomenon and that one can organize the access according to a plan. Systematic knowledge means knowledge that is interrelated. Critical knowledge means that one does not simply accept a given datum as such, but rather one considers it in the light of alternative possibilities to be sure that one's claims about it are in line with the reality (p.17).

He argues that this definition of science will allow a more open and comprehensive study of human phenomena. In addition to the experimental method, Giorgi (1971) proposed using a phenomenological approach to study human experience and meanings in relevant, lived contexts. Valle, King, and Halling (1989) discuss the application of existential phenomenology to psychology and note that existentialism "address(es) itself to the concrete

existence of the individual person and attempt(s) to elucidate the fundamental themes with which human beings invariably struggle". Phenomenology entails "the rigorous and unbiased study of things *as they appear* so that one might come to an essential understanding of human consciousness and experience". Thus existential-phenomenological psychology "seeks to explicate the *essence, structure,* or *form* of both human experience and human behavior as revealed through essentially *descriptive* techniques including disciplined reflection" (p. 6).

In phenomenological psychology, all events including memories are viewed as "perceived" or "experienced" events, and the goal is one of discovering the meaning of that event for the individual in the specific context of his or her current situation. The "real" event is no more important than the meaning of that event for the person at the present time (Thompson, Locander and Pollio, 1989). The goal of phenomenological psychology is neither prediction nor control, but the description of behavior and experience as a coherently-lived personal patterning of the individual and his or her life world.

During the 1960's, a group of researchers at Duquesne University began applying the principles of hermeneutic interpretation to issues and problems in psychology (Giorgi, Fischer & Von Eckartsberg, 1971); since then this approach has spread and presently a modest number of psychologists now characterize themselves as phenomenological psychologists. What characterizes

such an approach to psychology is an openness to the experience of the phenomenon exactly as "it is given to him (sic), and not to pre-judge it nor to see it through any specific perspective simply because of previous knowledge about the phenomenon" (Giorgi, 1971, p. 9). The various methods used in phenomenological psychology are determined by the phenomenon to be studied in conjunction with the specific questions being asked of it by the researcher (Colaizzi, 1978).

Although phenomenological psychologists have used various methods to collect their data, only the dialogic interview and its analysis will be discussed in this chapter. This method is preferred by many researchers for several reasons (Polkinghorne, 1989). As Strasser (1969) has pointed out, phenomenological research needs to include the experience of other individuals to overcome solipsism and the meaning and content of experience does not occur within the person, but between persons.

The individuals interviewed are chosen primarily on the basis of their having had experience with the phenomena being studied and their willingness to discuss it with a researcher (Colaizzi, 1978). Each person being interviewed is considered to be an "expert" on the topic being investigated. The goal of the interview is to attain the co-participant's description of the phenomenon. Therefore, after an initial question, the course of the dialog is largely set by the co-participant. The initial question is usually brief and is used to frame the topic to be discussed and to launch the conversation. Subsequent

questions, statements and summaries by the interviewer serve the purpose of evoking further or fuller descriptions of the chosen topic; they also are used to clarify the co-participant's experience, ensuring that the researcher comes as close as possible to apprehending the other's experience from the point of view of the other (Kvale, 1983; Polkinghorne, 1989; Thompson, Locander and Pollio, 1989).

Before the first interview is conducted with a co-participant, the researcher carefully chooses the question that will be used to launch the discussion. In the University of Tennessee Phenomenology Research Group, the proposed topic of research and the question are first discussed and formulated within what is called the interpretive group. The purpose of this discussion is to fashion a question that will successfully elicit first-person descriptions of the experience as lived rather than as reflected upon in some abstract sense. One criterion used is whether other members of the research group who have had experience with the phenomenon are able to use the question as a starting point for a discussion of their experiences.

During both the interviews and the subsequent analysis, the researcher endeavors to allow the phenomena to emerge without being directed by his or her presuppositions, belief systems or theories. Members of the University of Tennessee Phenomenology Research Group customarily perform a "bracketing interview" to help sensitize themselves to their own biases. During the bracketing

interview, the primary researcher is interviewed by another member of the research group on the topic of research, usually using the same question as is to be used with co-participants. This interview is transcribed and analyzed by the research group with the purpose of thematizing the experience of the principle investigator as revealed in the interview. The researcher also becomes aware of his or her preconceptions concerning the topic and is thereby alerted to the possibility of imposing his or her biases on future participants.

It is important to acknowledge that the researcher can never fully eliminate his or her perspectives or biases (Merleau-Ponty, 1962); and he or she cannot avoid having a vested interest in the research (Colaizzi, 1978). Topics are chosen precisely because they are of deep personal concern to the researcher. Polkinghorne (1989) points out that the extent to which the researcher deepens his or her understanding is related to a willingness and ability to reflect on his or her pre-understandings or "biases." In a more philosophical context, Gadamer (1975) argues that any interpreter inevitably brings his or her presuppositions to the text; these are a function of the person's cultural and personal background and life experiences. One's awareness of and willingness to question one's assumptions are more important to successful text interpretation than are the (impossible) efforts to eliminate them. When the researcher has difficulty with a portion of text, he or she may ask what presuppositions are interfering with the understanding of the text.

The attempt to identify one's presuppositions is referred to as bracketing; it is used to identify interpretations that have been co-opted by non-phenomenological suppositions; for example, by a Freudian metapsychology. Several aids to bracketing have been developed by the University of Tennessee Phenomenological Research Group. First, as mentioned above, the researcher is interviewed on her or his own topic and this interview is analyzed by the research group. Second, interpretations and themes are rendered using the words and terms used by the co-participants rather than in the more abstract language of the social sciences. Third, at least some of the textual interpretation is conducted in a group setting (Thompson, Locander and Pollio, 1989; Pollio et al., in press). The group acts in a critical capacity; each group member is encouraged to question the adequacy of any proposed description of interview data. Group members are in a position to notice theoretical presuppositions that the principle investigator has not been able to recognize. In addition, group members provide alternate perspectives; discussing the relative adequacies of alternative interpretations reduces the likelihood that the text will be described in a stereotyped way. The group also provides a public test of whether a given interpretation is supportable by the text. If neither the person proposing the interpretation nor another group member can point to a specific segment of the text supporting the proposed interpretation, it is very likely to be overly abstract and/or idiosyncratic.

Since the goal of phenomenological psychology is to describe the experiential patterns that emerge in a given context (Thompson, Locander and Pollio, 1989), text interpretation attempts to be theory-free. Interpretation of transcribed protocols relies heavily on the principles of hermeneutics with the goal of obtaining a valid understanding of the meaning of the text (Kvale, 1983). The transcribed interviews are viewed as a "text" with complex internal relationships among its various parts such that no single aspect of the text is to be understood independently of the text taken as a whole.

In interpreting the text, the reader engages in a continuous back and forth movement among the parts of the protocol and between parts and the whole. This principle of interpretation is referred to as the hermeneutic circle (Gadamer, 1975, 1988; Kvale, 1983; Valle, King and Halling, 1989). During this process

> the meaning of the separate parts is determined by the global meaning of the text as it is anticipated. The closer determination of the meaning of the separate parts may come to change the originally anticipated meaning of the totality, and this again influences the meaning of the separate parts (Kvale, 1983).

During this process, the researcher moves gropingly towards a deeper understanding of the text (Polkinghorne, 1989). Although this process is in principle an infinite one, "it ends in practice when one has reached a sensible meaning, a valid unitary meaning, free of inner contradictions" (Kvale, 1983).

During the analysis of interview transcripts, the logic of a hermeneutic approach is implemented in three ways: group interpretation, idiographic interpretation, and nomothetic interpretation (Pollio et al., in press). During group interpretation, an interview transcript is read aloud with frequent pauses; during these pauses, plausible meanings are discussed and inter-relationships among the various meanings and parts of the text are proposed. The group reading orients the researcher and group members to the nature of the protocol and alleviates some of the difficulty a researcher often has in beginning to organize and interpret interview data. After one or two interviews have been interpreted in the setting of the research group, the primary researcher usually attempts to interpret the remaining transcripts by herself or himself. Later the researcher will bring the group tentative idiographic descriptions of individual interviews and tentative nomothetic thematic descriptions. The group and the primary researcher together evaluate whether these descriptions are supported by the data and whether the descriptions are clear and clearly related to participant experiences.

The process of idiographic interpretation entails a second implementation of hermeneutic interpretation (Pollio et al., in press). A single transcript serves as the text from which a case study description is prepared. The focus of the case study is the description of the individual participant's experience. Each case study provides a summary of the descriptive interpretations,

prominent meanings, and patterns among meanings present in that interview.

The development of nomothetic thematic descriptions involves a third implementation of the hermeneutic circle (Pollio et al., in press). The scope of interpretation is broadened to include all interviews, with each interview interpreted in the context of all other interviews. By examining the diverse set of experiences available in the complete set of interviews, experiential patterns common to diverse situations emerge. Themes provide formal descriptions of these experimental patterns. Usually several interviews are enough to allow the researcher to identify preliminary themes. The researcher, either alone or with the interpretive group, then continues to assess whether the developing thematic structure fits each remaining transcript; the thematic description is modified only when a later protocol provides evidence of experiential uniqueness. Each modification is also evaluated relative to previously analyzed protocols.

The final product of existential phenomenological interpretation is a specific thematic structure that takes all of the experiential patterns and their interrelations into account (Pollio et al., in press). Thematic structures are presented in verbal and/or diagrammatic forms. The verbal description includes a listing of the individual themes and a lengthier description of each theme and their inter-relationships. A diagrammatic figure provides the

configuration of the themes, and their inter-relationships so as to form a single gestalt.

Although the data and results of phenomenological research differ from those common to more traditional psychology, phenomenological psychologists strive for rigor, precision and validity. Interviews provide systematic descriptions of the phenomena being studied. The methods of analysis and interpretation are specifiable, and carried out in a disciplined manner to minimize the effects of researcher bias. The conclusions or thematic description are designed to be consistent both within and between protocols, and the process of arriving at these descriptions is open to public scrutiny (Thompson, Locander and Pollio, 1989).

Phenomenological psychology does not employ statistical analyses available to other psychologists to judge reliability and validity, instead proposing alternate criteria for judging their research. Giorgi (1975) proposed that the key criterion of qualitative research be "whether a reader, adopting the same viewpoint as articulated by the researcher, can also see what the researcher saw, whether or not he agrees with it" (p. 96). Applied to phenomenological interpretation this (reliability) criterion becomes whether a reader, who adopts the researcher's articulated world-view, is able to see evidence in the texts that supports the given interpretation and whether a first-person understanding was successfully given.

Pollio et al. (in press) and Polkinghorne (1989) propose a different approach to evaluating the validity of phenomenological research. Polkinghorne (1989), for example, asks whether the conclusions inspire confidence because the arguments leading to them have been persuasive. In other words, "Is there convincing evidence for believing that the thematic description affords insight into the experiential world of the participants?" (Pollio et al., in press) Such evidential support must be evaluated both methodologically and experientially. The methodological issues concern whether the procedures are rigorous and competently applied, and whether they are appropriate both to the phenomenon being studied and to the specific question being asked of it. The experiential issue is whether the interpretation provides insight to the reader. Insight includes issues of plausibility and illumination. Phenomenological conclusions are plausible when the reader sees the relationship between the data and the interpretation. Illumination allows the reader to see the phenomenon being studied in a different light and affords new understanding. Pollio et al. (in press) proposes that a phenomenological study be judged valid only if it satisfies all four criteria: that the methods are both rigorous and appropriate, and that the results are experientially plausible and illuminating.

A related question concerns the extent to which the results of a given study are generalizable; that is, how applicable the findings are to individuals or groups not included in the original study. Since

the experiences of the individuals interviewed constitute the data of a phenomenological study, identical repetition is impossible; no two interviews are ever exactly the same. As Kvale (1983) points out reinterviewing the same respondents does not necessarily reproduce situations and meanings identical to those of the first interview; the respondent may have obtained new insights regarding the phenomena being studied as a result of intervening life experiences or the first interview itself. The "raw" data of phenomenological psychology cannot be repeated, but the more pertinent question is whether the thematic structure is replicable. The factual details and individual situations given in the data are significant for what they reveal about the meanings of the phenomenon being studied; if the analysis has been done properly, the meanings derived are not likely to change although the ways in which the phenomena appear may vary (Giorgi, 1971; Kvale, 1983; Wertz, 1986). Instead, a wide diversity of experiences allows essential themes to emerge from concrete examples and to be recognized by the researcher. Although another researcher replicating a phenomenological study would not necessarily produce identical descriptions as the first researcher, it is expected that the two sets of themes would be similar enough to be understood as encompassing the same meanings.

Sometimes, however, different meanings or themes may be explicated by different research groups studying the same phenomena. Such discrepant interpretations are welcome as long as

they can be shown to emerge from the data. Such differences may reflect the limitations of perspective and judgment of one or both researchers (Kvale, 1983). The various meanings are "not blind to each other or to the data" (Wertz, 1986, p. 199); reflectively assessing the relationships among the various interpretations reveals partial or mistaken understandings and may yield a more comprehensive and internally consistent description of the meanings of the phenomenon (Wertz, 1986). In phenomenological research, discrepant results do not prove a study is unreliable but, instead, may lead to fuller and more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon at issue.

Returning to Giorgi's (1987) proposed definition of science -- as methodical, critical and systematic -- it is evident that phenomenological studies are indeed scientific in this sense. Moreover, since phenomenological psychology employs dialogic methods and provides nuanced descriptions of human experience and human meanings, it may serve as the basis for an alternative psychological paradigm. This is not to say that psychology should abandon natural science methodology, but that phenomenological psychology provides an additional way to do research that may be more appropriate to many issues. The experimental method will continue to be used for questions that naturally lend themselves to quantitative investigation.

Procedures Used in The Present Study

The present study explores the experience of retelling personal family stories; that is, stories about a person that had been told to that person by family members. Since little has been written about this experience, the researcher chose a phenomenological approach to avoid limiting the study to preconceived notions about this experience; openness to all aspects of the experience was sought.

The recollection and telling of stories one has heard about one's self involves a complex interplay between the past and present. In this study, participants were asked to retell stories that were told about them. This task would seem to involve remembering the stories as told in the past and of then telling them in the present to an interviewer who is not a member of the participant's family. Such retelling may involve juxtaposition of past and present attitudes towards the story, self, family and storyteller. The present study was designed to examine the experience of telling stories that family members have previously told about the person. A phenomenological approach was used in gathering and analyzing the relevant information with the goal of producing a description of this experience in terms of its essential features and structures.

Bracketing Interview

As noted, it is customary in phenomenological research for the researcher to be interviewed using the same research question and interview format that will be used in the study. During the

"bracketing interview," the researcher explores his or her experience with the phenomenon being studied. Analyzing this interview alerts the researcher to his or her preconceptions about the study and its results. The bracketing procedure does not eliminate preexisting biases or preconceptions but serves to alert the researcher to their existence.

The present researcher was interviewed by another member of the phenomenology research group using the same introductory remarks and question she planned to use in interviewing study participants. The text of the resulting interview was then read and analyzed in the same manner (to be described below) as was the case with participant interviews. The only difference was that the results of the bracketing interview were not included either in the categorical listing of stories nor in the full thematic descriptions of the phenomenon.

Participants

Participants were recruited both from graduate students in psychology and from a sophomore-level psychology class taught in the evening school at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. In this way articulate participants of varying ages and backgrounds were obtained. To recruit evening school students, the researcher visited such a class and briefly explained the study and the procedures to be used; information sheets outlining the goal of the study and the procedures to be used also were handed out at that time. Names of students interested in participating in the study were collected;

these students were called shortly thereafter and appointments made for the interview. Students in the evening school class were given extra credit for their participation. Students in the psychology department were recruited directly by the researcher.

Fifteen women and five men were interviewed. Age ranges are tabulated below. Participants included 2 African-Americans, 17 Caucasians and one Asian. Five were psychology graduate students; five were undergraduate student athletes and one was a full-time undergraduate student. An additional eight participants were part-time students and one was a college instructor.

Age Range	Number
19-24	7
25-29	5
30-34	0
35-39	4
40-44	2
45-49	2

Interview Procedure

On arriving for his or her interview, each participant was asked to read and sign the first consent form reproduced in Appendix A. By signing this form, the participant agreed to be interviewed and to allow results of the interview to be used in public descriptions of the material; i.e., in research reports and subsequent publications. It was made clear that the participant could withdraw from the study at any time; in that case the data would not be used. All questions about the study were answered, and demographic information including age, gender, and marital status collected. Each interview was audio taped for later transcription.

The researcher opened each interview by stating that the purpose of the study was to study family stories; that is, stories that the family tells about the participant at family gatherings such as reunions, weddings or times a girl(boy) friend was introduced to the family for the first time. Participants were told that each story would be discussed in detail and that information such as when it is told, who tells it, and the participant's feelings and attitudes about it would be sought. If more than one story was told, the participant also was asked for the most liked and most disliked story.

Participants were free to tell as many or few stories as they wished. After each story, the interviewer requested any of the following information that was not already covered by the participant's telling of the story: who told it, the circumstances surrounding the telling, the participant's feelings when it was told, whether the participant viewed the story as accurate, and, if not, how it was inaccurate.

Each interview was transcribed removing personal names and identifiable place names. Each transcript was next mailed or given to the participant with a cover letter soliciting any further comments or corrections, and offering a second meeting to discuss the transcript if desired by the participant. Each participant also was provided with a second consent form to sign; this form is reproduced in Appendix B and allowed the complete transcript or quotes from it to be used in publications based on the study. All

subjects signed and returned the second consent forms. Further analyses were conducted from typed transcripts.

Analysis of Interviews

Two independent analyses were performed on all of the stories collected: (1) a content analysis of the plots or content of the stories, and (2) a thematic analysis of the meanings of the stories for the participants. For the first analysis, each story was read carefully to determine what it was about on a manifest level, and a brief (phrase or short sentence) statement of the basic plot line for each story was written. All "plot lines" or themes were then examined and sorted according to manifest similarity of themes. It was found that most stories could be assigned to a small number of plot categories. Stories which contained more than one plot theme were assigned to the category that seemed to be most central or figural in the story; each story was only assigned to a single category. This grouping of similar plot lines is intended to answer the question, "What types of events or incidents are featured in family stories" in an intuitive way. It is not, nor is it intended to be, a formal or literary analysis of plot. This analysis was carried out separately from the thematic analysis described below and no specific relationship is posited between the two sets of results.

The goal of the second analysis was to obtain a thematic structure capable of describing the meanings each story held for the participant. Each protocol was read carefully, paying particular attention to statements that explicated the meaning of the story for

the participant (and/or for other family members) and to statements that indicated how the story fit into the structure of the participant's family as revealed during the interview. After reading each protocol, the researcher wrote a summary "case study," which briefly described the story, the participant's experience of having stories told about himself or herself, and the meaning of this experience for the participant.

Four of these protocols as well as the initial bracketing interview were analyzed by a phenomenologically sophisticated research group working together; the balance were analyzed by the researcher working alone. The procedure for group analysis was identical to that described above. Typed copies of the interview were distributed to each member of the research group. The protocol was read out loud slowly, with the researcher reading the part of the participant and a second group member taking the part of the interviewer. Reading was stopped at the end of each story or whenever it was apparent that the interview was moving to a new idea or topic. The just-read portion of the interview was then discussed by the group. Members of the group contributed their views of what they thought the participant was experiencing and/or feeling; in addition, they attempted to describe the meanings the story held for the participant. Other group members were then encouraged to present alternative interpretations or to challenge those already offered. Discussion continued until a consensus about the experience or meaning was reached; conclusions were not

accepted unless and until the supporting evidence could be cited in a specific portion(s) of the transcribed protocol. After group interpretation, the researcher wrote a summary or case study in a format identical to that used for interviews analyzed alone.

Each protocol was then reread in order to determine whether its summary reflected all meanings and experiences discussed during the interview. Summaries were edited as needed to include additional nuances brought out by subsequent readings. This process of reading the interviews and editing the summaries continued until it was evident that all relevant material was included in them.

After all twenty protocols were analyzed, the meaning statements described above were grouped as homogeneously as possible to form a set of preliminary themes; these preliminary themes were construed as falling somewhere between the categories of a content analysis and the themes of a more complete interpretative analysis. These preliminary themes were next analyzed both by the researcher alone and in conjunction with the phenomenological research group in order to arrive at a set of general themes. The protocols were reexamined to be sure that the themes thus derived included all pertinent material. If this examination made it clear that the themes did not adequately include all data concerning the participant experience of having stories told about one's self, the themes were altered or amended to encompass the material more fully. This comparison of themes to protocols was repeated until the researcher and the

phenomenological research group felt that the themes adequately encompassed the participants' experiences of having stories told about them by family members.

The results of the thematic analysis are presented as a textual description and in a diagrammatic form intended to summarize the results within a single figure. The textual description describes and explicates each theme at some length whereas the diagram is meant to present the themes and their interrelationships as a single gestalt. The figure also may be used as a mnemonic device in which each theme is presented in a single word or phrase. While both figure and text are intended to capture the results of this study, and it is hoped readers will find both helpful, some may find one mode of representation more understandable than the other.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of two separate analyses, and begins with a categorical description of the manifest content of all 20 protocols. This description includes a categorization of story plots and is intended to answer the question "what are family stories about?" It also includes other qualitative features observed in the protocols including mention of preparation for the interview, variability in the narrative qualities of the stories, and mention of documentation of the stories by other family members. These two analyses were carried out independently, and no relationship was sought or posited between the two sets of results. The second analysis was designed to yield a thematic structure of the experience of having stories told about the self by family members. As such, it includes themes relating to the participant, to the one who tells the story, and to the family context in which the story occurred and was preserved by repeated retelling.

Categorization of Stories Told by Participants

Each interview was read carefully and the gist of each story recorded using a few words designed to indicate the main idea of the story. During the course of this analysis, it was noted that stories varied in their degree of elaboration. In some cases, the participant was careful to place the story within the context of the family's situation and then to narrate the story much as a storyteller would, striving to maintain the listener's attention and interest. In other

instances, the participant told the story in a briefer form, outlining only the main points, telling "how the story went" rather than narrating it. The first of these response patterns was termed Story, the second Incident.

A third type of response consisted of a briefly narrated pattern or grouping of incidents. In this type of response, the participant reported that another family member alleged that the pattern described the participant but related no specific story or incident. For example, a woman said that her mother talked about how the participant always cleaned house without being asked, and a man said that his mother always talked about how he was a big eater because he swam; neither, however, told a specific story that provided an example of that behavior. Although these aggregated incidents do not constitute a story, they were coded as "Patterns" for purposes of the study.

An example of a story, incident and pattern is presented below; each is taken from a single interview. In all interview segments, P. stands for participant and I. stands for interviewer.

STORY

> P.: We [participant and her husband] came to Michigan in February of '89 -- '88, February of '88. And I've always wanted a horse, and we couldn't afford it in Germany because they're really expensive. So we went -- we went to live with his brother, who lived out in the country on a farm. He had the room. And he said "Oh, you can buy a horse because you can keep it here on the farm." So we set out to buy a horse. And we called this place up and the guy said, "Oh, yeah, sure. I have a really nice horse down here that'll take an experienced rider." I said, "yeah. I'll go. I'll look at it." We went down; there was a really pretty horse running around the pasture. And he

said, "Well, you want to ride it," and I said "Sure." "You want to ride it first?" And I said, "No, that's okay. I can handle it." And he put the saddle on him and everything. And I said, "You sure you don't want to ride him first?" And he said, "No, I'm not getting back on him." I said, "Okay, I'll ride him." So I went down one side, turned around and came back, lost control and went boom, straight on my upper back, and the air just went ooof, out of my lungs, on the frozen ground. There was snow on the ground and it was frozen solid out there.

And the way my husband tells it, as I was going down he was thinking, "She's going awful fast on a horse she doesn't know." And as I came back he said he could see my eyes and my eyes were about as big as saucers and he realized I wasn't doing it on purpose. I had lost control. And I did and I fell off hard and I hurt myself and he loves this story. He goes into great detail.

In this story, the participant is careful to specify when and where the event occurred including details such as why she had not previously bought a horse. She describes it fully, detailing the conversation she had with the owner as well as her actions and feelings. In addition, she implies that her husband includes additional details when he tells the story.

INCIDENT

P.: I will start off when I was little. I must have been about five or six. And my mom loves to tell this story because she thinks that my brother and I should have a better relationship, I think. And it's a story about how I saved my brother from drowning. He supposedly went down -- I don't remember this. But he supposedly went down in the water and uh sat on the bottom, and I jumped in and grabbed him and pulled him back up.

Although the participant calls this a "story," she relates it schematically, providing little context except her age and her understanding as to why she thinks her mother tells it. Questions by

the interviewer elicited additional feelings about the story, although the participant did not add any detail to the event described.

PATTERN

> P.: There's all these stories my mom loves to tell about all the stupid boyfriends I had. She loves to tell this to my husband. All the boyfriends I had before, she'll tell him about how I brought them home and what this guy did and what that guy did, and that doesn't make me feel too good.
> I.: Can you relate one of the stories that she tells?
> P.: Um, there's this guy I was dating before I met my husband, and uh he wasn't too bright but he was a sweetheart. But she didn't like him . . .

In this instance, the participant did not tell a complete story about a prior boyfriend and herself even when invited to do so by the interviewer, nor did she describe an incident, mentioning only that "this guy . . . wasn't too bright but was a sweetheart."

Of the 20 participants interviewed, two related no stories or incidents producing instead seven responses that were coded as Patterns. In addition, Patterns predominated in the interviews of two other participants accounting for nine more entries in this category. Most interviews, however, included a mixture of Stories, Incidents and Patterns; eleven participants produced more Stories and Incidents than Patterns whereas five produced only Stories and Incidents.

Table 1 presents a summary of the categories or situations described in both Stories and Incidents in order of decreasing frequency; the number of times a given category appeared in a pattern is also noted. The relative distribution of Story and Incident plots is quite similar, although somewhat distinct from that of

Table 1. Situations Described in Participant Stories, Incidents and Patterns

SITUATION	Story	Incident	Subtotal	Pattern
Cute/funny things participant did	20	11	31	3
Conflict with "parent"	8	4	12	6
Sibling relations	4	6	10	5
Potentially Serious Accidents	4	4	8	0
Cooperation	3	3	6	3
Interesting things that happened to participant	3	1	4	0
Achievements	3	0	3	2
Embarrassing incidents	2	1	3	3
Miscellaneous	1	1	2	0
Personal patterns	0	0	0	10
Compare/contrast	0	0	0	4
Totals	48	31	79	36

Patterns; that is, the rank ordering of plot themes found in Stories is very similar to that found in Incidents and dissimilar to that found in Patterns. This implies that Stories and Incidents incorporated similar plot themes supporting the notion that Incidents may be viewed as abbreviated Stories whereas Patterns are qualitatively distinct from both Stories and Incidents. Stories and Incidents most frequently involved cute, special or funny things the participant (or storyteller in the interviews) did when young. Examples include cute mispronunciations, such as "kwenty minutes," drilling a hole in the back of a closet to see Christmas gifts, and (from inside the car) waking her father when a bear is standing over him.

The second content category involved conflict between the participant as a child and a parent or parental figure. Example include stories about running away, parents' attempts to get the participant to quit thumb sucking, failing school and being punished for falling asleep at an aunt's funeral. Relationships with siblings constitute the third category. A story involving a conflict between the participant, her siblings and other children was included in this category because the story seemed typical of that among siblings. Most of the sibling relationship stories focused on conflicts, such as a brother cutting off one of the participant's pigtails and two sisters "ganging up" on the third sister; two stories, however, did describe cooperative acts: loaning a sister money and the participant following her older sister around and learning from her. These two categories, "conflict with parent" and "sibling relationships" directly involve family members (with the one exception noted above); in

addition, the majority of incidents described in "cute/funny things" also involved family members. It is notable that the majority of stories (n = 39) and incidents (n = 23) directly involved family members and the participant.

The fourth category, "potentially serious accidents," includes accidents involving the participant. In seven of these instances, the participant was hurt or endangered: examples include the participant falling in the water and cracking his skull; losing control of a bicycle and being thrown over the handlebars; being trapped in a house fire started as a result of the participant's brother throwing one of her new shoes in the fire, and so on. One instance involved the participant nearly cutting off her sister's finger with hedge clippers.

A fifth content category involved incidents where cooperation, concern or caring was shown by or to the participant. Examples include a participant saving her brother from drowning as well as a participant's mother defending her child's academic ability to a teacher.

Four stories and incidents are concerned with funny or interesting things that happened to the participant when young. Items falling in this category differ from those in the first category in that the previous category involved actions *by* the participant whereas the present category included actions *done to* the participant. In one story in the latter category, the participant's gold fish was eaten by a boy while she was baby-sitting him. The final three sets of content categories include achievements by the

participant; incidents that embarrassed the participant; and a residual category "miscellaneous" including a story and an incident that could not be otherwise classified.

The final entries in Table 1 are two types of Patterns that emerged from the interviews: "personal patterns" and "comparison/contrast." Personal patterns are descriptors the participant reported family members using in reference to him or her. For example, one participant was reported to be imaginative as a child and able to entertain herself; another participant said that her parents characterized her as a "screamer" when she was an infant. The category "comparison/contrast" includes references to the participant being described as very similar to or unlike another family member. One participant was described as a "carbon copy" of his father; another participant was contrasted to her "quiet" brother.

Several other phenomena concerning the participants' approach to the interview situation were noted. Five participants mentioned that the family had direct or indirect documentation of the stories told during the interview. For example, one participant said her mother took pictures of her playing in a mud puddle after being dressed up to go to a party and having been instructed to remain on the porch. Another participant reported that her mother, over her objections, kept a picture of her with a very lopsided haircut, the result of her brother cutting off one pigtail while she was asleep. Family pictures of the participant's mother looking extremely tired and "old" were cited by another participant as

indirect documentation for family stories; they alleged the participant screamed a lot and was difficult to care for as an infant.

While listening to the protocols, it became evident that some participants were better storytellers than others. Fourteen participants told at least one story in which the narrative was well-developed and set in a larger context. Three participants told incomplete or not well developed stories. Three told no stories at all; their protocols included only a single Incident and several events coded as Patterns. It is notable that these three participants mentioned during the interview that their family did not often tell stories; one did say that her family told "stories" although the interview made it clear that these were largely incidents and patterns rather than more narrative stories. In all cases, respondents who told complete and well developed stories noted that their family often told stories when they now visited them, and that both they and other members of the family enjoyed listening to and telling stories. Two of the three participants who told more fragmented stories did report that their families told stories; one said that as a child he rarely listened to the stories but played outdoors whereas the other said that she sometimes found such storytelling "boring."

Another phenomenon noted was that several participants not only told stories about themselves, but included stories about other family members. Participants also told additional stories to compare or contrast themselves with one or more family members. For example, one male participant told stories that portrayed him as a somewhat naive and easily led, but normal child; he then told a

contrasting story that portrayed his brother as manipulative and as taking advantage of his gullibility. Another participant "hated" all the stories about her and reported that she had long disliked her parents' telling stories because she felt they reflected poorly on her. Within her interview, she made a point of telling stories that presented her parents as unable to control their children and as lacking in "parental skills."

Although the topic of the interview was known to participants before they met with the researcher, nothing in the handout or researcher's presentation specifically asked them to think about the topic ahead of time or to prepare for the interview. Five participants, however, reported that they had prepared for the interview with one participant bringing a written list of stories to tell. Two other participants mentioned that they had asked family members for stories about them. Finally, two additional participants mentioned thinking about the interview before it took place. Despite this, one of these did not tell any extended stories; instead she discussed a few aggregated incidents, such as how she "always, even at a young age, tried to do everything for her[mother]" and how the patterns describe herself both as a young girl and as an adult.

Thematic Structure of Stories

Introduction

During the thematic analysis of the protocols, it became evident that while the experience of having a story told about oneself primarily involves the storyteller and participant, such awareness is intimately and inextricably related to the context provided by the

family in which it takes place; both the storyteller and participant are embedded in their family context. The ground of the "family" is never far from awareness. Focal awareness may shift suddenly from the storyteller-participant pair and the immediate experience of the storytelling event to the larger family context; alternatively, the focus may shift from the family context to the pair composed of the storyteller and participant. An example of such changes is given in this introduction to a story.

> P: well, the other one that my mom tells, she's just started telling it recently. And again, I think it's more about her than it is about me in some ways. Um, like between the ages of like two and four is a whole lot of -- my life changed very drastically. All of our lives did. I had been -- my grandfather died and he had been a real huge part of my life. He had like taken care of me every night, like one of my primary caretakers. We had a real special relationship. And um he died and we moved away from the little village where we lived and um my father started traveling and my mom had two babies, one of whom was born very ill, and she herself almost died. So, just like life was just in this huge uproar. And um I guess my mom had to ask me for a lot of help. I was like three and a half or four. And um so she tells this story about one time she - the baby was crying. My little sister just cried all the time and nobody knew what was wrong with her, how to -- you know, how to make it stop. . . .

In this passage, the participant mentions that her mother tells this story about her although "it's more about her than it is about me in some ways." Here she is focusing on the storyteller side of the dyad composed of the narrator and the participant. Attention then shifts to how the lives of the participant's family had changed drastically shortly before the time of the incident to be narrated. It is at this point that the larger family context becomes figural; her grandfather's recent death, the family's move, how her father's work

had changed, and the recent birth of two younger siblings, one of whom was quite ill. Near the end of the excerpt, the relationship between the participant and her mother once again becomes figural: "I guess my mom had to ask me for a lot of help." This shifting back and forth between concern over the larger family context and the specific relationship between the participant and her mother continued throughout the subsequent story.

In order to highlight this figure/ground relationship between the family context and the experience of the storyteller-participant dyad, and to clarify subsequent discussion, themes which emerged from this study are divided into "focal" and "family" themes. The four "focal" themes involve the storyteller and participant directly; these are Storyteller, Me (the person whom the story is about), How It Feels, and Then/Now. Five "family" themes also emerged from the analysis; these include family History, Relationship Patterns, Distinctiveness of the family, family Attitudes, and family Values. Participants reported being more often aware of the four focal themes -- which primarily involved the storyteller and participant -- than of the five family themes. For this reason, focal themes are designated as figure and family themes are designated as ground.

When stories are told about an individual by another family member, he or she is focally aware of who is telling the story (the Storyteller), himself or herself as the protagonist of the story (Me), how the telling feels both to protagonist and storyteller, and of a discontinuity in time -- "me now" versus "me then"; the story then versus the story now; how it felt then, how it feels now, and so on

(Then/Now). Participants described their awareness as often most strongly focused on the Storyteller, the participant (Me) and on the relationship between them. Three aspects of this relationship emerge in the context of storytelling: closeness or distance between storyteller and participant, the similarity or difference between participant and the teller or other family members, and the participant's view of the storyteller's purpose or reason for telling that story at that particular time.

As discussed above, the family context (ground) is never far from awareness when a family member is telling a story about the participant. This ground is intimately connected to the entire storytelling event, since the story, its telling, its meaning, and the reasons it has been preserved all are inextricably linked to the person's unique family structure, history, and patterning of relationships. In turn, the family is linked not only to other individuals and to other families, but also to larger social, political and cultural contexts; thus, the family ground is set in the larger ground of the world of other people. The family is shaped by the larger world or society and culture; and, in turn, the aggregated influence of families shapes the larger culture. Similarly the family shapes and is shaped by its individual members and their relationships; one relationship of specific note is that between the storyteller and participant.

Because the act of telling a family story is embedded in the context (i.e., ground) of the family, the thematic structure of the experience of having stories told about oneself must be described in

terms of figure and ground elements. The structure meant to capture this complex pattern of relationships is shown schematically in Figure 1. In viewing this diagram, the lines in the central diamond shaped figure are intended to indicate meaningful connections between themes at the ends of the various lines. For example, the theme How It Feels is connected both to Storyteller and to Me. This is meant to indicate that how the participant felt during the storytelling event as well as how the storyteller felt (or more exactly the participant's perception of how the storyteller felt) were within the participant's awareness. The figure consists of what the participant was focally aware of when a family member related a story about him or her. Within the course of this event, the family served as the major context within which the story unfolds and takes on its unique meaning for the participant. The four themes that comprise the participant's focal awareness will be listed and discussed first, followed by the specific themes or aspects of the ground or family context that bear on this act of storytelling.

Focal Themes

The four themes comprising the participant's focal awareness are: (1) Storyteller or the family member telling the story, (2) Me, or the participant's awareness that the story is about her or him and thus personally meaningful, (3) How It Feels or the emotional reactions of the participant and storyteller and (4) Then/Now, or the participant's awareness that the present and past as portrayed in the story are distinct. Specific examples of Focal themes derived from the protocols are presented in Figure 2, part A.

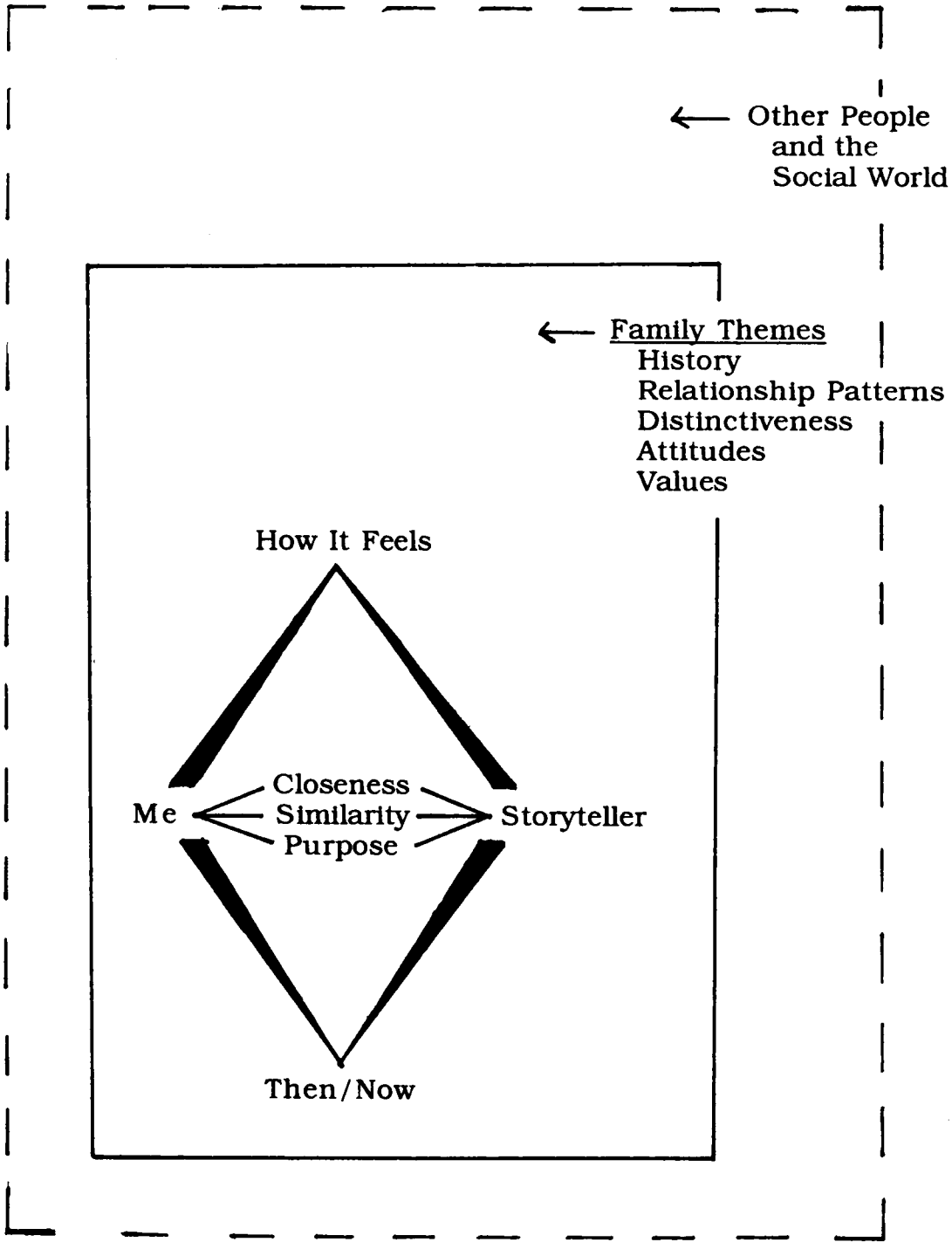


Figure 1. Thematic Structure of the Experience of Having Stories Told About the Participant by Family Members

(A) Examples of Focal Themes.

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1. Storyteller

But the other thing that was interesting that I was thinking about it is that they divide it up. My Mom like has charge of the stories about me and my sisters and brother, you know, the stories about her kids, and she tells them to my kids. . . And my dad does these other kind of stories that are related to people in the village where he grew up and he kind of recreates it. It's like R.'s Lake Woebegone.

2. Me

I can't believe I didn't wake my dad up, that I went and got in the car and watched the whole thing like -- I'm not surprised now that I turned out to be a scientist.

3. How It Feels

A. to the Participant

I found that to be very embarrassing because she always shows people these pictures. And it used to irritate me because she would always tell people about it and they would crack up laughing.

B. to the Storyteller

So, when she tells that story now, it's in this real sad way and it's always to do with she wishes she could go back and do it differently. She wishes that she could be a better mother to me.

4. Then/Now

And so, that was pretty embarrassing. . . . It's funny now, very funny.

It's like looking at who you used to be from a long way back, so it's almost like -- it's like reading a newspaper clipping about somebody else. It's an old story and yellow with age.

Figure 2: Examples of Focal Themes and Aspects of the Storyteller/Me Axis. (Themes and aspects are printed in bold face; examples are printed in plain face type.)

(B) Examples of Aspects of the Storyteller/Me Axis.

A. Closeness/Distance

Those times are a connection with my parents in two ways: First of all, it's things that only the three of us remember . . . And because I'm the oldest, you know, I remember -- I remember when they were really young and really foolishly in love. . . . that I remember those times and can share some of them with them.

I'm really close to my dad and we talk a lot and I love talking about stuff and when he tells me stuff like that I'm more like him.

B. Similarity/Difference

Another reason I'm like him[dad] is I don't get very emotional, whereas my mom does. {Dad is the storyteller}

C. Purpose of Story

That's a story that my mom always tells about when my sister gets on my nerves or I get on her nerves. She reminds us of that.

And it got picked up by other people in the family, like my sisters and brothers would tell it and my grandparents would tell it too. . . different people told it in different ways. Like some people told it with the intent of showing what an ornery kid I was. Some people told it with the intent of showing how indulgent my parents were, and other people thought it was just really cute and they'd tell it because they thought I was a neat kid and that my parents were neat.

Figure 2. (continued)

1. Storyteller. The participant is aware of the family member telling the story as it is being told. A given story is typically told by a specific member (or less often by several members) of the family. The participant is mindful of the storyteller as a particular person with a specific role and place within the family. For example, one participant discussed how her mother and father each told different types of stories.

2. Me. The participant is aware that he or she is being described and that the story may be related to his or her present actions or attitudes; as such, this relationship may be one of contrast or congruence. For example, a family story told of a participant throwing hairbrushes at her sister to keep her out of her room; she regretted such past behavior and felt that, in contrast to the past, she and her sister now got along well (see the theme Then/Now). Another participant linked her current interest in performing as a singer to her family having her sing what she wanted to say when she was younger and her speech difficult to understand.

Three aspects of the relationship between the Storyteller and Me (or the participant) stood out in the protocols: (a) closeness or distance experienced between the storyteller and participant, (b) the similarity and/or difference experienced between the storyteller and participant and (c) the storyteller's presumed purpose in telling that particular story at that time. Specific examples of these aspects are presented in Figure 2, part B.

a. Closeness/Distance. The participant may feel close and affectionate towards the storyteller or more distant. In answer to a question about how she felt about a story, one participant said "I didn't really like her . . . part of me wanted to say, you know, 'Shut up . . . Can't you think of a better story to tell?'" In this instance, the participant's dislike of the grandmother colored her response to the story. Another participant felt particularly close to his father and really enjoyed being around him; telling stories and reminiscing was one way they expressed their closeness. Moreover, this participant felt that the stories delineated ways that he was like his father (see Similarity/Difference below), and this resemblance made him feel even closer to him.

b. Similarity/Difference. This aspect includes both how the participant felt like (or unlike) the storyteller and often, by extension, to other family members. One participant's independence was contrasted with what she perceived as family values of submissiveness, dependence and closeness; one of the stories told about her noted how she was more independent than her brothers and that she had no anxiety about separating from her parents to go to elementary school. In contrast, one man felt that many of the stories told pointed out how he was like his father; other stories contrasted him and his father with his mother.

c. Purpose of Story. Participants often reported that they felt that the storyteller told a specific story in order to make a point or present a moral. Other participants perceived storytelling to be an enjoyable pastime in their family -- where members of the family

relished the opportunity to tell stories. Stories sometimes provided a way for family members to reminisce about their shared past. This aspect of the storyteller-me relationship is meant to describe what the participant believed or felt was the reason the storyteller chose to tell some particular story at some specific time. One participant reported that her mother told a story about her saving her brother and other stories about how she (the participant) would defend the same brother from other children at school; the participant felt that her mother told such stories to encourage her to get along better with her brother in the present. For another participant, stories about a small town the family lived in were a way for her parents to recall a more serene, simpler time when the nuclear family consisted of just her parents and herself.

3. How It Feels. This theme includes emotional reactions the participant experiences while the story is being told as well as the participant's assessment of the storyteller's feelings. Such feelings cover the entire emotional gamut. "And I love, you know, for him to tell that story just cause it gets me all excited and stuff. But it makes me think, you know, that he's proud of me." Here the participant is aware of his own and his father's feelings: of his feeling excited and "pumped up" and his father's sense of pride in his accomplishment. Another participant found her mother's stories "very embarrassing because she always shows people these pictures" and reported becoming irritated and angry when her parents' friends to whom the story was told would "crack up laughing."

The theme How It Feels is meant to describe the participant's feelings about the story and its telling at the time it is told; it also includes the participant's present feelings, including those which emerged during our interview. Sometimes present-day feelings were different from those of the past (cf. the theme Then/Now described below). Participants evinced feelings about the stories during the interview and it was obvious that participants had clear emotional reactions to the story in the present. The man noted above who said the stories told by his father "pump me up" enjoyed retelling the story to me. Another participant noted that all her stories were "rather uh dark, I tried to remember something that was positive and I couldn't." Another participant became teary-eyed during the interview. Another participant spoke of having a different attitude towards the story of her "deciding" to go to first grade a year early. In the past, she and her father viewed the story as her asserting independence at an early age and as evidence that she was really smart and she had enjoyed the story. Later as an adult, she realized she "missed out on a lot emotionally" as a result of being younger than her school mates and she felt resentful and disappointed that her parents did not exercise better judgment and now feels that, as a child, she had held a felt sense of "empowerment" that was "false."

4. Then/Now. This refers to the participant's awareness that a story from the past is being told now and that the present differs from the past as portrayed in the story. The participant is aware that the time when the event being described occurred is distinct from the present in which the story is now being told. The story remains

the same although the persons described in the story have changed over time. One woman said "when she tells people that story it irritates me because, I mean I was a little kid. I didn't know any better. And she makes us seem real, real dumb." Here the participant feels that the story portrays her as "dumb" (as she may have been as a child) but that as an adult she is no longer that way.

The sense of time described is discontinuous; in other words, the two periods (the time of the story and present) were not described as flowing into each other but as distinct. Stories were experienced as an attempt to "freeze time," as if the storyteller were both attempting to fix the definition of its members and re-evoking the past in the present. At times, participants felt as if they were viewed by the storyteller as unchanged from the person portrayed in the story. They were keenly aware that (in contrast to the story's point of view) they had changed and were no longer the person portrayed in the story.

As mentioned, Figure 1 presents a schematic structure of both the participant's figural awareness of focal themes as well as of their awareness of the ground consisting of family or contextual themes. The lines connecting the four focal themes indicate the interrelationships among the themes. They are related to each other and no one theme can be considered independently of any of the others. The line between "Storyteller" and "Me" is deliberately drawn shorter than that between "How It Feels" and "Then/Now." This is meant to suggest that when a family member tells a story about the participant, he or she is usually most focally aware of the Storyteller-

Me axis; and that this awareness includes the three aspects of the relationship as indicated in the figure and discussed above.

Family or Contextual Themes ("Ground")

The telling of stories about participants normally took place in the context of the participant's family; its history, and past and present composition. The family context was described in terms of five aspects: 1) History, 2) Relationship Patterns, 3) Distinctiveness, 4) Attitudes, and 5) Values. Examples of these themes are presented in Figure 3.

1. History. Stories often were told in the context of the family's history; such history describes the changing composition of the family as well as changes in living circumstances such as moves, divorce and/or changing economic circumstances. One participant suggested "that when my parents tell stories about me, in some way it's just like also telling stories about the early days of their marriage or their early days of parenting." Other stories told about the same participant reflected details of her family's relocation and the hardships it entailed for them. A different participant's stories were set in the context of her parent's divorce and the subsequent mutual dislike between her mother and step-mother.

2. Relationship Patterns. Stories often are set in the context of enduring patterns of relationships within the family; this includes more or less enduring subgroups and factions within the nuclear and/or extended family. One male participant mentioned that stories relating to dating are only told in situations involving his mother, sister and himself; these stories are never brought up around his

1. History

Um, like between the ages of like two and four is a whole lot of -- my life changed very drastically. All of our lives did. I had been -- my grandfather died and he had been a real huge part of my life. . . . And um he died and we moved away from the little village where we lived and um my father started traveling and my mom had two babies, one of whom was born very ill, and she herself almost died. So, just life was just in this huge uproar.

2. Relationship Patterns

My mom and my brothers and sisters would tell it. You could have pretty much drawn a line down the family and -- like my mom's side of the family with her kids, and then my dad's side of the family with his parents. . . they all loved it. I think my grandparents probably repressed it right off the bat. And Dad would never tell the story, but he'd laugh if somebody else told it.

3. Distinctiveness

Well, here's another family joke.

4. Attitudes

My mother has a kind of a feeling that you never laugh at someone, you laugh with them.

The boys being the preferred gender in the family. . .

5. Values

She would talk about my independence as a bad thing . . . Probably most of my family thought of as being negative. . . little girls especially are not supposed to be independent.

Figure 3: Examples of Family Themes (Ground).
(Themes are printed in bold face; examples are printed in plain face type.)

father primarily because "he's terrible when it comes to like my girlfriends or . . . my sister's boyfriends." Another participant said "we tell stories about my other sister who is ostracized. . . . we'll get in a group and talk about her . . . and that'll keep us busy for a good two or three hours." Sometimes stories described past relationship patterns which no longer prevail. Several participants told stories about how they and their sisters fought as children or adolescents, but mentioned that presently they get along well with the same sisters.

3. Distinctiveness. Participants were clear that they, and other family members, were aware that their family is an entity distinct from other families and distinct from the larger community. Occasionally participants made comments indicating that they felt their stories might be of interest only to members of the family. After telling a funny story that her family greatly enjoyed, one participant said "That's not really exciting, but that's one of our family stories." Other participants were careful to set their stories in the context of their particular family situation. Before launching into his first story, one participant said: "I came -- a little bit of background about my family -- uh, I came from a large family" and said most of his stories would center about "one particular brother." He went on to describe the family as not having much money and that "to appreciate the story, I guess that you would have to know my father" and then proceeded to describe his father as an "Archie Bunker type of gentleman who has a very flaring temper." Only after providing this introduction, did he tell the first story.

4. Attitudes. Participants' stories often included awareness of attitudes commonly held by the family. Some stories described incidents that showed how the participant's or another family member's actions or words differed from the prevailing attitude. One participant spoke of the family attitude that "you never laugh at someone, you laugh with them." Another was aware that boys were "the preferred gender in the family."

5. Values. Closely related to family attitudes are family values. Stories sometimes embodied family values directly, because the value was either exemplified or betrayed in the story. After telling a story in which the participant acted independently, she said, "She[mother] would talk about my independence as a bad thing. . . Probably most of my family thought of it as being negative because I come from kind of a traditional ancestry." In other cases, family values could be easily inferred although they were not directly stated. One participant said "There's all these stories my mom loves to tell about all the stupid boyfriends I had. She loves to tell this to my husband." Later she tells a story about her inability to train "the stupidest horse I have ever met." At another time she says "I consider myself a smarter person for not, you know, doing that." Although she did not say it in so many words, it was clear that the participant and her family value intelligence and dislike "stupidity."

The two lists of themes labeled "focal" themes and "family" themes should not be construed as independent, but as aspects of a single gestalt having the property of a reversible figure and ground pattern: "the experience of having family stories told about me."

Themes within each domain are richly interrelated among themselves; in addition, relationships are evident between themes in both domains. The storyteller, as member of the larger family, often displays the family's attitudes and values within the story itself, or through his or her commentary accompanying the story.

The following story presents an example of multiple interrelations among themes in the two domains:

> P.: The one that's most commonly was told in the past at least when I was younger. Um. It was told by my dad and took place when I was probably between like one and two years of age. And so, I don't, as far as I know I don't actually remember it. . . . So I'm assuming I'm between, let's say, about one and two years of age and I'm in a highchair and it's a family visit; it's a dinner for our family plus friends. OK and it's a short, kind of sweet story. And supposedly I was, I guess trying to get attention or, or I was upset about something in my high chair and I got angry and I threw a pickle. According to the story, I threw a pickle across the table at, at the man friend of the, it wasn't a family member, it was the man friend of the, he and his wife were visiting for supper, yes. So I threw it at him. And so my dad always told the story and, and just got a real kick out of the fact that I would be so obviously rude to a guest, but since I was only one or two years of age, it was funny.
> I: Yeah. So how did you feel when this story was told?
> P: Um. Well I guess, I guess, I acknowledged that my dad was in a sense, felt close to me in some sense in this. That he actually remembered a scene, from my childhood. It was significant.
> I: The fact that he remembered a scene?
> P: That's right. That's right. Because my dad in some ways it seemed he was always a little bit more separate than the family. I have three siblings and then the four of us and my mother, it seemed that we always had an easier thing of talking everyday type stuff
> I: Right
> P: and my dad was always somewhat removed and so that the fact that he would tell a sort of homely type of story, a story about me when I was so young, it was significant.
> I: It was like he noticed something.

P: That's right. That's right. He remembered I was his daughter. Um, And it was also unusual that because my dad was a strict Catholic; he was the Catholic in the family; my mother converted and so all the Catholic rules were embodied in him. So the fact that he would find funny a time when I was rude and impertinent, and rebellious if we put more adolescent terms on them
I: Right
P: also was sort of significant because um he was a strict disciplinarian and if I had been older, I guess maybe that was the sense of it. If I had been older I would have been, I know I would have been punished obviously for doing something like that. But he found humor in something which was opposite, in a sense to his value system.

In this segment, the participant is aware of her father as storyteller and of herself as the person being told about. She said that she found the fact "That he actually remembered a scene from my childhood" significant, and believed that her dad "felt close to me in some sense in this." This sense of closeness contrasted with her more general sense that her father was "always somewhat removed" from the family. While this sense of closeness exemplifies the Closeness/Distance aspect of the Storyteller-Me axis, it also relates to the family theme of Relationship Patterns, suggesting that her father was usually experienced as separate from the day to day life of the family. This segment also suggested what she perceived to be her father's feelings in telling the story: He enjoyed telling the story and found it funny. She also described her feelings about the story, specifically her pleasure that "he actually remembered a scene, from my childhood." Later in the interview, she expressed another emotional reaction to this story: her surprise that she was ever so feisty.

Additional aspects of family attitudes and values that provide the setting for this story are also presented in this interview segment. Her father was a strict Catholic and the participant realized that her "impertinence" would have been punished had she been older. This possible outcome relates to the family theme of Values. Later in the interview, the participant reported finding it hard to imagine herself as being feisty and rude as a child since she now hides or "sits on" her anger in social situations; thus, this story also is characterized by the theme of Then/Now. The history of the family is less prominently featured, although its setting during a dinner with close family friends indicates the family was intact and had close friendships. Another aspect of the family history was elucidated during the discussion of the story; namely, that the participant's father was Catholic and that her mother had converted to that religion.

This example concerns the focal themes How It Feels, (both to the participant and her father),Then/Now, Me, Storyteller, and the Closeness/Distance aspect of the Storyteller-Me axis. It also includes the family themes of Relationship Patterns, family Attitudes, family Values, and family History. Within this excerpt, the two sets of themes are complexly intertwined, and the participant's attention (awareness) shifts easily among the various "focal" and "family" themes. At any given moment, aspects of either set of themes may be figural. Although focal themes have been separated from the ground of family context themes for the purpose of discussion, the two sets

of themes and their meanings are highly intertwined in the experience of being present to the telling of this story.

CHAPTER V

FAMILY STORIES AND NARRATIVE THEORY

The purpose of this study was to gain a greater understanding of an individual's experience of having stories told about himself or herself by other family members. The specific stories told by participants in the present study were categorized, and variations in narrative elaboration were noted and evaluated. An empirical phenomenological interview procedure was followed in which twenty participants were asked to relate stories told about them by family members. Follow up questions elicited further information about the participants' feelings about the stories and about the context within which the story was usually told. A phenomenological method of research is based on the assumption that experience has a structure. Although each individual's experience of having stories told about oneself will be unique, there also will be features common to all, and the structure of this experience will be revealed by the patterns of relationships characterizing these features.

The stories and incidents told by participants could be coded into a number of thematic story-lines. The largest category (31 out of 79) consisted of "cute or funny" things that the participant did when younger. Several categories concerned relationships within the family: conflict with parents or parental figures (n = 12); sibling relationships (n = 10) both conflictual and cooperative; and incidents where cooperation, concern or caring was shown by or to

the participant (n = 6). Potentially serious accidents (n = 10), interesting things that happened to the participant (n = 4), achievements (n = 3), embarrassing incidents (n = 3) and a miscellaneous (n = 2) category complete the category system used.

The thematic structure of the experience of having stories told about oneself includes focal themes that primarily involve the dyad consisting of the storyteller and person about whom the story is told. They also include themes that speak to the family context within which the stories are told. When stories are told about the participant, he or she reported being aware of the self (or "Me") as subject of the story, the Storyteller, How It Feels to have the story told, and a discontinuous sense of time -- Then/Now. Three aspects of the Storyteller-Me axis also appeared in the dialogues: 1) a sense of Closeness or Distance from the storyteller, 2) Similarity or Difference between the self and the storyteller and 3) the participant's sense that there is a Purpose or reason for telling the Story.

The second aspect to this experience concerns family themes and includes family History, Relationship Patterns, Distinctiveness of the family, family Attitudes, and family Values. Although these two sets of themes were separated for the sake of describing present results, in most stories they are richly interconnected, and the participant's awareness shifts readily among themes in both sets. In recounting stories during the interview, attention often shifted back and forth between the storyteller and the story, and between these

themes and a commentary about the family situation at the time the event happened; such commentary included the family's economic circumstances, which members got along well or poorly as well as information about family attitudes.

Family Stories As Self Description

Stories provided by participants were chosen for telling in the past by the participant's family and during the interview by the participant. To be available for retelling by the participant, a story had to have been told often enough by other family members in the participant's presence for him or her to remember it. The story was presumably interesting to the family member(s) who repeatedly told it. A second choice was made by the participant; to be told, the story had to be remembered by the participant and the participant had to be willing to relate that particular story to an interviewer. Remembered stories, whether told to the interviewer or not, can be assumed to carry meaning for the participant. Thus stories that were related in this study were meaningful both to the participant and to his or her family.

Stories told in this study were often purportedly descriptions of things that the participants did or that happened to them. In addition, stories preserved by the family often were deemed characteristic of the participant. This perceived similarity may have been a source of meaning to the participants. As pointed out by Zeitlin, Kotkin and Baker (1982), one principle of American family stories is the "character" principle; stories simultaneously portray

the individual's character and stereotype it. A single story is often held succinctly and compactly to describe an ancestor. Similarly, in this study, some participants believed that the stories they told were characteristic of them and may have been used to define or characterize them. For example, one participant's stories portrayed him as naive relative to his more manipulative brother. Another participant felt that the stories reflected her being much more independent than other family members.

It may be asked why personal family stories are perceived to be consistent with the participant's self views. In the following discussion, this question as well as the results of this study will be considered from four different angles. First of all, family stories bear at least superficial resemblance both to early memories studied by Adlerian psychologists and to family myths studied by family therapists. Within the former context, early memories have been interpreted as depicting important characteristics of the "life style" of the individual. From the second perspective -- that of family therapists -- family myths are beliefs the family holds about itself; such myths may be bolstered by family stories. From a psychodynamic perspective, personal family stories have been viewed as part of an individual's personal life narrative such as the one created in psychoanalysis, where the individual and the analyst jointly create and a revise personal narrative. A fourth approach to family stories derives from the work of folklorists which may be used to contextualize present results. In the following sections, parallels

will be drawn between the themes elucidated in this study and, in turn, the early memory literature, the family therapy literature, the literature relating narrative to psychoanalysis, and the work of folklorists. This discussion will be followed by clinical applications suggested by the results of this study. Finally, suggestions for future research will be presented and the application of phenomenological methods to this type of research discussed.

Relationships Between Family Stories and Early Memories

Adlerian psychologists such as Mosak (1977/1958) point out that early memories are selected and retained on the basis of consistency with the person's characteristic pattern of living. They provide a picture of how the person views himself, other people, and life in general (Gushurst, 1971). In a similar way, family stories about an individual may be selected and preserved on the basis of consistency with the family's view of the individual. Participants sometimes remarked how the stories describe them in the present, past, or both.

Early memories have some similarities to the family stories told in this study. In both cases an incident is preserved for a number of years. It can be inferred that in both instances the story is meaningful to the protagonist; in the case of present stories, they also were meaningful to other members of the participant's family. Although some early memories are "true" memories, others are stories told so often that the protagonist believes he or she remembers them. Some stories recounted as early memories involve

incidents the individual remembers but which are enriched by accounts given by other family members. In a similar way, participants in this study sometimes remembered the incidents or events memorialized in the stories. In other cases, participants mentioned that although they were sure they did not remember the incident it had been told and retold so many times that they could easily visualize it.

Adlerians believe early memories encapsulate an individual's long range goals, containing both the "story of my life" as well as their views of self and others (Adler, 1931/1958). Early memories are selected and retained because of their consistency to the individual's characteristic pattern of living; they are not causal (that is, they do not mold one's life) but, instead, reflect one's approach to life (Mosak 1958/1977). Much the same may be said about personal family stories: Families retain stories about individuals that they see as characteristic of that person. Although personal family stories may provide a pattern for the individual to follow, the individual may or may not continue to follow that pattern. In the latter case, the story may drop out of the family's repertoire of often-told stories or may be retained as an example of what the person was like or as something uncharacteristic of him or her. Retaining stories that describe what the person "was like" maps onto the theme Then/Now which contrasts past to present. "Uncharacteristic" stories define by contrast the normal or usual way the person acts and thus maps onto the theme "Me."

Mosak (1958/1977) also point out that early memories provide information about the emotional climate surrounding the informant when young. This study suggests that family stories also provide much information about the family of the participant. This facet of family stories is reflected in all of the family themes, especially Values, Attitudes, and Interpersonal Patterns.

In a similar vein, Mayman (1968) argues

> that early memories are not autobiographical truths, nor even "memories" in the strictest sense of this term, but largely retrospective inventions developed to express psychological truths rather than objective truths about a person's life; that early memories are expressions of important fantasies around which a person's character-structure is organized; that early memories are selected (unconsciously) by a person to conform with and confirm ingrained images of himself and others; and that the themes which bind together the *dramatis personae* of a person's early memories define nuclear relationship-patterns which are likely to repeat themselves isomorphically in a wide range of other life situations. (p. 304).

In this quote, Mayman argues that early memories say much about the individual's view of him or her self and others. This study supports the idea that personal family stories, like early memories, provide a rich source of information about the individual's view of himself and his or her family. The family themes Attitudes and Values depict what participants report as common values and attitudes with their families, e. g., preferring boys over girls, valuing intelligence, etc. Likewise, the family theme Relationship Patterns concerns what the participant experienced as predominant family

relationships, such as extreme bitterness between divorced parents or an older brother taking advantage of his younger brother's naiveté.

In addition, nuanced data about the relationship between the individual and storyteller is also available in the present results. The themes Storyteller, Me, and How It Feels as well as the three relational aspects of Similarity/Difference, Closeness/Distance and Purpose of Story all speak to the individual's perception of this dyadic relationship. Another parallel can be drawn between early memories and family stories: just as early memories reflect the individual's attitude towards the world, so personal family stories involve the relationship between the family and the world at large. In this study this relationship is captured in the family theme "Distinctiveness."

To summarize, personal family stories, like early memories, are consistent with a person's character and outlook as given by the person's family and individual, respectively. Both also provide data about the individual's perception of the family environment in which he or she was reared. They differ in that early memories reflect the individual's personal view whereas personal family stories are consistent with the family's view of the individual. It was found in this study that while participants often accepted their portrayal in family stories as accurate, this was not always the case.

Relation Between Stories and Family Therapy

Fiese and Sameroff (1989) proposed that families develop a consensual family code that specifies the behavior expected of each

member in both intra-familial and extra-familial situations. This code consists of the family paradigm, family stories and myths, and family rituals. The family paradigm includes the core assumptions and beliefs the family holds about the environment as well as specifics about how members interact within and outside the family. The family paradigm and, to some extent, family stories or myths define what it means to be a member of a particular family. They embody the family's belief about itself *vis a vis* other families and society in general as well as present the family's current values. The family theme "Distinctiveness" captures the way that the family paradigm defines a particular family as distinct from other families and society at large. Family myths and stories often portray the values held by the family whereas family rituals may display attitudes and values held by the family. In this study, these aspects were captured by the family themes "Values" and "Attitudes."

In addition to defining a particular family's place within the larger society, family stories and myths also explicate and define roles within the family. Zeitlin, Kotkin and Baker (1982) have noted that family stories are told repeatedly about present or past family members and may be passed from generation to generation. This study found that personal family stories, or stories told about the participant, were sometimes used to describe that person; sometimes these descriptions shaded into or became frank prescriptions for behavior. The aspects are captured by the theme "Me" and the "Purpose of Story" aspect of the Me-Storyteller axis.

For example, one woman reported that her mother told stories about how she and her sister fought as girls whenever they, as adults, got on each other's nerves; the participant's sense was that their mother was in this way encouraging them to take the situation more lightly and to be more agreeable to each other in the present.

Family rituals are symbolic forms of communication, repeatedly acted out over years (Wolin & Bennett, 1984). Examples include family celebrations, family traditions and patterned family interactions during which members learn family rules and the family's beliefs about its history and relationship to the larger world. It was found that storytelling is a ritual for some families. For example, one participant's family told stories to entertain each other whenever they gathered. In another participant's family, storytelling was even more ritualized. Each of her parents told certain types of stories; her mother typically told stories about the children around the kitchen table and her father told stories about the village where the participant was born; this usually took place on the deck outdoors. Family rituals, such as Christmas celebrations, birthdays and weddings also provide the family with the opportunity to swap stories.

Ferreira (1963) introduced the notion of family myth into family therapy; a family myth is an integrated set of beliefs shared by all members of a family that concern each member and their relative positions within family life. Such myths refer to how the family views itself and its inner workings (Ferreira, 1967a). The term "myth"

suggests that these strongly held views may appear inaccurate or distorted to outside observers. Such myths are problematic when they become excessively rigid and limiting. Family myths are often buttressed by stories family members tell each other. These stories include those that other family members tell an individual about himself or herself, i. e., personal family stories.

Pillari (1986) interviewed elderly individuals about their families' beliefs or "myths" involving themselves. She studied how such family myths (originating in childhood) seemed consistent with their adult development and character style when she interviewed them. Her study is consistent with the idea that family myths continue to be meaningful to adults even after those who "imposed" them in the first place are no longer present in the adult's life. Such myths continue to define roles and limit choices perceived as possible by each individual and provide pithy narratives that seem to "explain" the person's life.

The themes "Me" and "How It Feels" as well as aspects of the Storyteller-Me axis all indicate that study participants found family stories told about themselves to be meaningful. Some participants found the stories limiting. One woman felt that the stories portraying her as trustworthy, reliable, and having unfailing good judgment prevented her from fully developing her own personality; her parents claimed that they never had to worry about her dating even at an early age because she would always make the "right decisions." As an adult she felt that adherence to this role prevented her from

trying anything "bad," or that might later seem stupid or risky. She felt limited to being "good" and wondered what would have happened if she had "dated that boy." Another participant felt that the stories described her as the "black sheep" of the family.

In addition to defining the role of the protagonist, family stories (and myths) define the place of each individual within both the nuclear and the extended family. The family theme "Relationship Patterns" relates to this phenomena.; that is, stories often were set in the context of enduring family relationships. Thus, one woman's stories involved her repeatedly running from her mother to her grandmother's home; such "running away" stories were set in the context of her mother's and grandmother's rivalry over which of them would be her primary caretaker. The stories not only described the participant as one who often ran away and was unable to be content in either place; they also described the relationship between her mother and grandmother. Other stories told by the same participant highlighted additional aspects of family relations including her parents' divorce and the extremely bitter relationship between her mother and her father's second wife.

Although family myths and stories may "limit" the options available for its members, they likewise provide a way for the family to know it is a family and to express its identity thereby allowing members to interact in reasonably predictable ways. In her study, Pillari (1981) pointed out that despite the fact that family myths may appear to constrain each member's options, the myths also may

provide some satisfaction to each family member, hold the family together, and protect it from outsiders. Within this study, personal family stories provided participants with identities in their families even though some felt constrained by that identity.

Relationship Between Family Stories and Narrative

Family stories about an individual encapsulate family values and attitudes; they also describe events that purportedly happened in the past. As in other retellings of past events, it is difficult, if not impossible, to determine which parts of a story actually happened as portrayed in the story, and which parts have been modified to be consistent with the family's view of itself and of the individual who is at the center of the story. Much as in the psychoanalytic situation (Spence, 1982, Schafer, 1992), "narrative" truth is not necessarily "historical" truth. This study demonstrates that although family stories have more in common with "narrative" than "historical" truth, they endow events involving the participants with meaning and ring true emotionally.

Spence (1982) points out that Freud assumed that each effective interpretation contains an historical truth and refers to actual past events. Spence, however, notes that conviction or belief in an interpretation "emerges because the fit is good," i.e., because that interpretation contributes to the formation of a good story or narrative of the patient's life. In this study, it is evident that family stories are convincing because the fit is good; it is important not to attribute causality to family stories. Family stories, like Adlerian early

memories, may be memorialized more because they fit the person's or family's sense of itself than because they provide data about what made the person or family become who or what it is.

Family stories constitute narrative as defined by Spence (1982); that is, they are accounts that bring out connections between events and define the meaning these events have for participants. For Spence (1982), there is no clear line between reconstruction of historical truth and creation of something new. The same is true for family stories; that is, there is no clear demarcation between the facts and the meanings attached to them. In family stories, as in psychoanalysis, one can never make contact with the actual event but only with a linguistic rendition of it.

This difficulty in separating "real" events from storied ones came through in some of the stories told in this study. One woman said that her mother repeatedly told a story about her rescuing her brother from drowning when she was about six years old. Although she mentioned that she had memories dating back to three years of age, she could not remember that event as having occurred. She was quite aware, however, of the "point" or purpose of the story; her mother wanted her and her brother to get along better and therefore repeated other stories about how she was helpful to her brother in the past.

Whether the event was "real" or not, narrative or story telling is used to define the meaning of the event. Schafer (1976) views actions historically, as a "sequence that is intelligible in a number of

related ways" not merely a "chaotic chronicle whose only organizing principle is the passage of time" (p. 232). The "term experience refers to the person's giving meaning to somatic and environmental happenings" (p. 368), and Schafer points out that experience is never unmediated but is interpreted by the one who remembers and later recollects it. Events are not remembered "in themselves" but are of necessity interpreted by the narrator.

Ricoeur (1977) makes a similar point; the facts of psychoanalysis are not those of observable behavior but reports of events, dreams, etc. Regarding the "reality" or fantasy of story content, the reality or strict objective truth of the event is less important than what the person makes of it. Remembering involves not just "recollection" but formation of meaningful connections to other events as in narrative. This is in line with Schafer's (1976) contention that experience is not unmediated, but is the "construction of personal or subjective situations" (p. 368) and psychoanalytic interpretations can only be interpretations of patient interpretations.

In this study, the specific events related in any story are unavoidably interpreted in the telling. Stories told to the interviewer would seem to have been remembered and interpreted by at least two persons, the family member(s) who normally tell that story and the participant him or herself. First of all, the family member who told the story in the participant's presence viewed the event/story as worthy of recollection and re-telling. In this telling, the story was

interpreted in a manner consistent with the teller's point of view as well as with the family's outlook. Second, the participant, on hearing the story, also found it meaningful and worth remembering. The participant may have interpreted the story somewhat differently from the first teller. In this study, the interpretive aspect of each story was also evidenced in the aspect of the Storyteller-Me axis "Purpose of Story" which describes the participant's perception of the reason the storyteller chose to tell that story at that time.

Schafer (1992) points out that any event or action may be described in many ways depending on the observer's aims. Likewise, family events and stories may have multiple interpretations depending, in part, on the purposes of each storyteller. For example, one woman retold a story of dirtying her dressy clothes in a mud puddle after being instructed to sit on the porch. She reported that this story is interpreted differently by various family members. Her mother tells it as a cute story and an indication of her mother's love for her because she took pictures of her in the puddle instead of punishing her. Some relatives tell it as an example of how ornery the participant was as a child whereas others interpret her parent's refusal to punish her as evidence of excessive leniency. On the other hand, she views the story both as depicting her mother's great love for herself as well as her love of mud puddles. She reported she remembered playing in the puddle described in the story and even as an adult enjoys mud puddles and will sometimes walk barefoot through them.

Schafer (1976) argues that psychoanalysis seeks to develop an intelligible history of the patient's life. New versions of a patient's life developed in psychoanalysis are the result of a joint effort engaged in by patient and analyst. Schafer (1983) also points out that psychoanalysis produces not a single life history, but a series of life narratives. As the analysis progresses, more complete and self-consistent narratives are generated. This implies that even well worn incidents and stories can be reinterpreted in part due to the changing needs of the individual. Likewise, remembered stories are a joint product of both the (usual) family storyteller and the participant in this study. Remembered stories can be reinterpreted several times over the course of an individual's lifetime.

According to Wyatt (1986), listening in psychoanalysis has two contradictory goals (1) to be unprejudiced, and (2) to be vigilant to hints and similarities in order to relate them to psychoanalytic theory and previous data. Psychoanalytic listening "demands" stories. The patient tells an invented story or personal myth, and the psychoanalyst helps to create a more authentic story. In a similar way family stories can be seen as stories that family members and the protagonist jointly create; reinterpretation of these stories is always possible both to serve the family's (Zeitlin, Kotkin and Baker, 1982) and the individual's needs (Stone, 1988).

Stories are re-interpreted repeatedly by the individual and/or the family. This is particularly true for fully narrated, highly detailed stories. More fully narrated stories -- which were termed Stories in

the present analysis -- allow the person's personality or character to emerge as the story progresses; moreover, during each repetition of the story, the teller may emphasize certain details and de-emphasize or suppress others. This feature allows Stories to be open to more variant interpretations than is possible with responses coded as Patterns. Most participants related fully narrated events, i. e. Stories, and Incidents, which briefly and schematically told what the event was about without full narration. Participants also described Patterns, which were compact characterizations of the participant. Stories and Incidents may be open to other varying and changing interpretations at different times in the person's life. For example, as an adult, one participant redefined the story of her "decision" to attend first grade a year early from an initial perception of it as indicating her intelligence and independence to one concerning a failure on her parents' part to make the right decision and have her wait another year.

The significance of a Pattern-type response is that it provides a pithy, ready-made description of the person or of the type of action characteristic of him or her. Such patterns define the way that the family views the person in a way that leaves little room for interpretation. It is as if the participant and family have "thematized" or "boiled down" a collection of stories or incidents to a single phrase thereby making reinterpretation impossible or at least much more difficult. For example, one participant was told he was a "carbon copy" of his father and opposite his brother; another said

her mother talked about how she and her cousin would clean house without being asked. Other patterns alleged that a participant was "obsessive," another painfully shy and, still another, an imaginative child who could entertain herself. In responses coded as Patterns, the character description is more solidified or sedimented than in responses coded as Stories or Incidents.

The development of patterns may be analogous to a type of narrative smoothing, called "Level 2 Smoothing," discussed by Spence (1976). In Level 2 Smoothing, psychoanalytic case histories are presented in brief, literary form and Spence argued that such smoothing was especially pernicious to understanding what happened during the analysis and to the degree to which the analyst may have unduly influenced the patient or the degree to which the analyst's preconceptions colored the data reported. Case presentations usually include only a few briefly described incidents out of a lengthy treatment and thereby deprive the reader of much of the data of the analysis; it also assumes that what is clear to the writer will be clear to the reader. In this study, Level 2 smoothing is analogous to the preservation of only a few Stories or (in more extreme cases) only a few Patterns about the person. In this case there are only a few incidents recalled and the family assumptions (defined by the family themes Attitudes and Values) are not always articulated. Stories thus provide more complete data about the participant's experience in the family than Incidents, which in turn provide more complete data than Patterns.

To summarize: family stories are similar to personal narratives constructed in psychoanalysis in that they provide meaning to past events and provide connections to other events by setting stories firmly in the context of the family. Like psychoanalytic narratives, personal family stories can be reinterpreted by the individual or by other family members. On the other hand, patterns can be viewed as summary descriptions of the individual that are hardly open to interpretation, but which either are accepted as "true" or rejected as "false" by the individual they purport to describe.

Relation of Personal Family Stories to Folklore

Folklorists Zeitlin, Kotkin and Baker (1982) point out that family stories make the family's past accessible even while it is being reshaped on the basis of current needs and desires. Similarly, Stone (1988) notes that stories encapsulate the family's norms and values thereby allowing family members to believe their family is special. These ideas are supported by results of the present study where it was found that the contextual (family) themes, "Values" and "Attitudes," capture the ways in which values and norms appear in the stories told to the researcher. In addition, the family theme "Distinctiveness" incorporates the notion that family members believe their family is unique and special. While any story holds many interpretative possibilities, at any given time the family chooses one. The prominence of each story and its interpretation changes as a family's needs change.

In her study of stories told within families, Stone (1988) defined family "legacies" as stories told to a person about himself or herself by other family members. What Stone defines as "legacies," this study termed personal family stories. She points out that children are shaped by the family's notion of their identities. The story becomes a family story when it hits a "nerve" confirming a fear or value or when it is taken as a omen of what they wish a child to become or fear will become. According to Stone, family legacies provide a vehicle of identity formation for the child. This idea emerged in this study the aspect of the Storyteller-Me axis Purpose of Story. Although Stone implies that personal family stories (partially) determine the person's identity, this study takes no stand with regard to the issue of causality; that is, whether the story determines identity formation or whether one's identity affects which stories are remembered and told.

According to Stone (1988), stories help to provide a place for the child within the family. The narrative message given the child is mixed: Some stories help while others hurt. Although neither this study nor Stone's can address the question of causality, it can be averred that stories told about an individual and related in this study are often consistent with how the participant presently viewed his or her present identity. This consistency was confirmed in this study; for example, by the woman who dated her interest in singing to her parents making her sing what she wanted to say. Another participant's family stories involved the notion of her being

exceedingly independent (at least in her family's view); this view is consistent with her present view of herself.

Stone (1988) also points out that the interpretation of participant's stories changes as the person and/or family change. Usually the stories about a given family member are not internally consistent and may exhibit contradictory attitudes. This fact allows the adult to search for stories that provide alternate role models. Family stories are re-interpreted and re-fashioned to serve the individual's present needs. In this way, family stories become part of one's personal narrative. This is consistent with Schafer's (1992) ideas about how individuals fashion different life narratives during their lifetime; family stories can be reinterpreted and re-integrated to form several narratives over the life span.

Byng-Hall(1982) discussed how family myths appear to affect future generations. A family myth of cowardice on the part of one of his ancestors predisposed Byng-Hall to question his own courage and to perform dangerous acts to prove his "bravery." As an adult, he researched the history surrounding this ancestor and found that contrary to the family myth, his uncle had acted bravely; he then felt "allowed" to edit the story. This example points to a concrete way in which adult children are able to change family stories; gathering additional historical data may provide alternative views and interpretations to past events. In Byng-Hall's case, this data was available in archives since his ancestor had been in the military and the battle in question was well known. Other families, particularly

those who have emigrated or been forced to leave their ancestral homelands, might have little in the way of such data; however, elderly relatives may have additional stories and family legends that could serve to provide alternative views for "editing" family legends.

Most participants in this study reported that their families tell stories; this supports the view of folklorists that stories are used to make sense of oneself, one's world, and of one's place in it. Some participants were more skillful and enthusiastic storytellers than others and it was clear that the best storytellers were accustomed to telling the stories to an audience that enjoyed the stories. The better storytellers also seemed to be careful, interested observers of other people, especially other family members.

Family stories provide an example of the way that persons and their families spontaneously use narrative to make sense of individual and family histories. In addition, family stories may change over time to reflect changing situations and needs. These notions are similar to Gergen's (1973) argument that theories of social psychology reflect contemporary history and change as culture and society change. The use of family stories in the service of understanding meanings parallels Sarbin's (1986) notion that narrative is important in a psychology that seeks to understand human experience; it also tends to support the idea that narrative may serve as "root metaphor" in the human sciences.

Family stories are an attempt to "fix" events in time -- to render them timeless and unchanging. Stories thus belong to the

"Then" pole of Then/Now; as such, they constitute a "memento" that is able to reopen the past so that it can re-evoked in the present. In a sense, family stories are similar to religious stories that are repeated year after year, re-evoking the event each time they are told. One participant reported that every year, shortly before her birthday, her mother told the story of the participant's birth. Another participant felt that her parents especially enjoyed telling stories about her because it evoked the early years of their marriage "when they were really young and really foolishly in love" and were living a simpler life style. This participant described her family sitting around the table telling and hearing stories as a kind of "communion." Such communion not only implies a sharing in the present but also a re-experiencing of the past.

Clinical Applications

In his discussion of early memories, Mosak (1958/1977) says "recollections" or stories others have told about the client cannot be interpreted in the same way as early memories. He proposes that early memories be interpreted like other projective data. Such interpretation treats characters in early memories as prototypes and not as specific characters; moreover, early memories are interpreted as describing the individual's characteristic attitudes and not his or her typical behaviors.

This study indicates that, contrary to Mosak, personal family stories can be usefully interpreted. Such stories offer information about the patient's perceptions of family structure, attitudes, place in

the family and the "affective" climate of the childhood family. The "family" themes elucidated in this study directly address these issues. Rich data about the individual as well as about his family relationships and atmosphere can be obtained by the relatively simple expedient of asking the person to relate stories told about him or her self and following each story with additional questions about the individual's experience with that story. Most of these questions would be suggested by the story itself. In this way, the story could be related to the larger family context and much information obtained about the person's view of and psychological experience within his original family.

Given the clinical interest in early memories, it is surprising that there are only a few references to the use of family stories in the clinical literature (Byng-Hall, 1982; Nicoll and Hawes, 1985; and Mayman, 1968; and Sherman, 1990). Perhaps clinicians have shied away from this and similar techniques because they do not believe reliable information could be obtained in this manner. As this study demonstrates, whether the accounts are veridical or not, the fact that they provide useful insight into family relations and the affective tone of the family of origin may encourage others to ask for family memories, being careful not to take the details of the stories as literal truth.

Previous discussion has noted that family stories change according to the needs of the family. Stone (1988) also found that individuals can pick and choose stories that best fit their current

needs from among the collection of family stories available to them. In a similar vein, Byng-Hall (1982) discussed the use of factual data to edit family stories. In a manner similar to early memories, family stories may change during therapy as during other transformative life experiences and these changes may involve the recollection of "new" stories as well as alterations in details and/or interpretations that cast events, family members, and the patient is a somewhat different light. Therapists should be alert to such changes in family stories or emphases within stories as indicating meaningful changes are taking place. Wyatt (1986) and Schafer (1992) both argue that in psychoanalysis, the patient and therapist together develop a more finely nuanced, rounded out, and more authentic personal narrative. It would be anticipated that during therapy, the patient's recollection of family stories would also become more finely nuanced and more balanced. For example, previously vilified family members might no longer be portrayed as all bad, but be seen as having both good and bad aspects.

Methodological Issues

The use of dialogic interviews in this study allowed the free telling of the stories, and permitted an exploration of feelings and reactions associated with these stories. By allowing the interview to be relatively unconstrained and free flowing, the researcher was able to learn much that was unanticipated. For example, it was discovered that the families of some participants rarely, if ever, tell stories. Nevertheless, these families have generated "ready made"

descriptors of its members; the responses of participants from such families tended to be coded almost exclusively as Patterns. The dialogic interview also allowed each participant to provide a richly textured description of his or her experience in the family of origin, without forcing such descriptive detail. It is unlikely that adherence to a more structured interview format would have been able to elicit such highly textured and nuanced descriptions from participants.

It can be asked whether another phenomenological study of personal family stories carried out in the same manner as this one would yield the same content and thematic analysis. The manifest content of stories may be expected to vary if different participants were interviewed. As an example, some families may tell more achievement-oriented stories while others might focus on catastrophic events. This probability suggests that the quantitative distribution of content categories found in the present study will not necessarily be typical of all stories. Family stories in this study nearly always involved interactions among family members, and it is anticipated that this result would be true in most if not all families. Since most of the content areas discerned in this study involved family interactions, it is expected that a similar pattern would emerge in another study. That is, most family stories would concern relationships among family members, interactions between family members, and events of interest and importance to the family; such events may include notable achievements, injuries, moves, etc. Because of the wide variation in family histories and in what different

families consider important, the proportional distribution of stories falling into each of the various categories would be expected to be more variable than the content categories themselves.

Turning to the question of the repeatability of the thematic analysis, it was argued in Chapter III that the themes found in a properly conducted phenomenological study describe the essential structure and meanings of the experience being studied and that the meaning structure described will be common across all protocols in the study. Thus replication of the present research (assuming it to be well done) would be expected to yield the same or a comparable thematic structure of the experience of having stories told about the self. Although the stories themselves and specific emphases are likely to vary, it is to be anticipated that themes derived from interviews would be similar enough to be understood as encompassing the same meanings. It is possible, however, that alternate (or additional) themes might emerge from a second study. Provided that both sets of themes were anchored in the data, reflective assessment of the relationships among the two interpretations would be expected to reveal partial or mistaken understandings and to yield a more comprehensive understanding than that available from either study alone (Wertz, 1986).

This study made no effort to establish the "veracity" of the stories told. The "facts" were not checked, nor was any effort made to determine whether the characterizations of the individuals provided by stories were accurate. This is an outgrowth of the

phenomenological outlook espoused by the study; namely, that the meaning accorded the stories by the participant is "accurate" for that person. Meanings accorded the same story by different family members may vary greatly, but each person's meaning is real to that person and cannot be called "wrong" even if he or she is the only one to see it that way. This study sought to understand participants' experiences of having stories told about themselves; the experience was at issue, not the story's historical accuracy, nor even other relevant family members' experience of the same story.

Suggestions for Future Research

Further research could be undertaken to compare the same story as told by two or more family members. The focus of the research would not be on finding the "true" story, but on variations in the meanings the story affords to each family member. It is anticipated that such a study would reveal much about interactions between family members both in the here-and-now of the interview situation and in the past. Different family members would probably tell the story in different ways, and interpretations and details included might well vary. Family members could be interviewed together after listening to the several versions. It is likely that a discussion of these variations would ensue and it might prove instructive to study reactions to variant forms of the "same" story. Such reactions might include overt or covert pressure to arrive at a single story, accept the present variant meanings, or indifference to the difference.

An additional study could be performed comparing the characterization of an individual provided by family stories to other characterizations, such as those provided by personality tests. The object of such a study would not be to "prove" that stories provide accurate descriptors, but to demonstrate that stories provide another "window" into the person. It is important to note that neither set of characterizations is to be considered more correct or more accurate than the other; instead both are to be viewed as complementary perspectives on the same individual, each having different sources and different uses.

In this study, the categorization of themes or plot lines was performed by listing plot themes and grouping stories having similar plot lines. This grouping seemed to arise naturally out of the data; however, no real effort was made to determine if the categorization were reliable since the purpose was to set a context for thematic analysis. This part of the study could be repeated with an eye to establishing the reliability of categorizations used to encompass plot lines. Alternatively, such a thematic categorization could be carried out according to categorizations established by literary analysis. This study made no attempt to explore the possibility that there are relationships between the content analysis of story themes and the thematic analysis of the experience of having stories told about oneself. Once a careful analysis of the manifest plot themes is complete, research could explore the question of what relationship,

if any, would emerge between plot themes and the thematic analysis of the storytelling experience.

In the present study, stories were gathered in dialogic interviews. It would be interesting to explore whether results would be different if personal family stories were collected in written essays rather than during interviews. The very act of writing, as well as the greater time allowed, might encourage participants to a more conscious use of narrative form, thereby resulting in a greater proportion of stories being fully narrated. On the other hand, written stories will certainly make it difficult to ask "follow up" questions.

This study found that story telling is a wide-spread although not universal phenomenon in families. In families that do tell stories, individuals remember and find their personal family stories meaningful. These stories can be used to learn more about the individual and his or her family in a way that is not only relatively non-threatening, but often interesting and enjoyable to the participant.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

I am a graduate student in clinical psychology, presently engaged in collecting data for my doctoral dissertation research. I would like to ask you to participate by sharing with me some stories that members of your family tell about you at family events, such as weddings or reunions, or on occasions where they first meet your close friends. I am also interested in additional information about these narratives, including the specific context of the story (who tells it?, when? background of the event), your attitude towards the story (does it reflect your view of your present self? or yourself at the time of the event? do you like the story?) and their context in your family's values and traditions and history. I am also interested in whether the description of your personality contained in these stories are at all similar to the descriptions of your personality gleaned from standard psychological assessment instruments. For this reason, I will ask you to also fill out the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory(MMPI) and the Leary Interpersonal Checklist(ICL). The MMPI is a standard objective personality assessment instrument. Data from the MMPI will be used to generate a description of your interpersonal style as seen by others; it will not be used to generate a psychiatric diagnosis. The ICL consists of 128 descriptors; you will check a descriptor if and only if it describes yourself. This measure will provide me with your self-description in a standardized format. I will also record your age and sex.

Your participation in this study, if you choose to volunteer, will involve an audiotaped interview of one to two hours in length, filling out the MMPI and ICL, and a briefer follow-up interview. The MMPI and ICL can be done on the day of the initial interview or within the week following the interview. The original interview will be transcribed from the audiotape, and at the follow-up interview, you will be asked to review your transcript and any shortened versions of it , to check their accuracy and see if there is anything you wish to add.

All material obtained will be held in the strictest confidence. Audiotapes, transcripts, assessment data, and demographic data will be coded by number, and will be identifiable only through a master list which will be kept in a locked file or my safety deposit box, along with all other material collected. I am the only person who will have access to this master list. I will also be the only one to transcribe audio tapes. Any potentially identifying information in the interview will be edited out of the transcript, and the audiotapes will be erased as soon as the interview is transcribed. The master list will be destroyed upon completion of the project.

The risks involved in participating in this study are minimal. You will choose the stories that you wish to relate and talk about. You are free to discontinue your participation or withdraw from the study at any time without questions or penalty. Many people find that exploring their experiences with another person is satisfying and I hope that this will be the case for you.

If you have any questions at this time, or at any point later in the study, please do not hesitate to ask. You will be given a copy of this form to keep, and I would encourage you to contact me at any time that you have questions or concerns about this research project.

Barbara F. Beier
401G Austin Peay Building
University of Tennessee
Knoxville, TN 37996

Ph. 615-974-6060 (office)
615-689-7850 (home)

I have read the above information and consent form and agree to participate in this project.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name (printed): _____

Address: _____

City & Zip Code: _____ Phone: _____

APPENDIX B

INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM II

At the time of our interview, we discussed the possibility of my using all or part of the interview in my dissertation and/or subsequent publication. I now want to ask your permission to print excerpts from the interview and the verbatim transcript. I plan to use excerpts in the body of the text as specific examples of the stories told about individuals by their family. The purpose of including a verbatim transcript and a summary of it is to illustrate how the interviews were conducted and the steps involved in the analysis of the interview material.

I have provided you a copy of your interview transcript. You will notice that I have deleted all names, dates, places, and any other potentially identifying information. I would like you to carefully check over the transcript to make sure that it is an accurate account of the stories you told and of our conversation, and that it does not leave out any important point you wished to make. Please feel free to make any changes you want, to mark sections that you do not want me to include in my dissertation or journal article, or to add further comments. We can go over these, and any questions you might have, in our follow-up interview.

I would like to remind you that neither your name nor any identifying information will be presented along with the material. I will not publish any part of the transcript without your explicit permission on this consent form. If you do consent, I will include only what you have approved for publication. If you decide for any reason that you prefer not to have your transcript or summary published, please do not hesitate to refuse this option.

If you feel comfortable with my publishing either the transcript as it is, or your corrections of it, please sign this consent form in the space below. A copy of this form will be provided for you to keep. Please contact me at the address or phone number listed if any additional questions or concerns arise.

Again, thank you for your participation in my research. Your assistance has been greatly appreciated.

Barbara F. Beier
401G Austin Peay Building
University of Tennessee
Knoxville, TN 37996

Phone: 974-6060 (office)
689-7850 (home)

I have read the above Information and Consent Form, and approve the reproduction of the verbatim transcript or excerpts from the verbatim transcript or my interview with Ms. Beier on stories family members relate about me, in the form that we have agreed upon.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C

Example Transcribed Interview

Interview conducted Feb. 26, 1993 with a 28 year old man.

I: = Interviewer
P: = Participant

I: Um. As you know the object of this story is to study family stories, that is, stories that your family tells about you at family gatherings such as reunions, weddings, or maybe times, when say you brought your girlfriend home to introduce her to your parents the first time. And we will discuss the stories in some detail, how you feel about them, whether you like them or not, um and to what extent you identify with them or don't and get some notions about what your attitudes are towards them.

P: OK.

I: And whenever you're ready to start and you have thought of a story, we can go on.

P: Well, I guess I'll go ahead and start. I, I can think of a couple or three right off the bat I guess. I came -- A little bit of background about my family -- uh, I came from a large family. There were a total of nine children and they range from, I've got a younger sister that's currently 18 years of age and an older brother that's 40, uh 48, I think it is. And uh, I'm 28; I'm second to the youngest, so for about a 10 year period, I was the youngest in the household.

I: Right.

P: And I had, six sisters, at that time there were five and then two other brothers. I guess uh, most of my stories will center around this one particular brother, he was 4 years older than I and he and I ran around, did a lot of things together and in a big family environment, you understand, many different families are different ways but in our particular family we didn't have a lot of money.

I: Um hmm

P: We had almost zero money, actually.

I: Right

P: And so a lot of out time was spent, um, finding humor as a part of our, I guess, our joy; we didn't have a that much, we didn't have a lot, a lot of toys when we were younger, or a lot of material things as we got older, uh, so we've always enjoyed kind of poking fun, a little bit at each other.

I: um hm

P: And uh, well the first story that comes to mind; and this is a story that I would think would be common for my brother that I spoke of to tell on me. And that would be the story about me when I was around, uh 4 years of age. Uh, the story about the demon that came up on me one day uh as my father had come in from work for lunch. Now, to appreciate the story, I guess that you would have to know my father. He is a kind of an Archie Bunker type of gentleman who has a very flaring temper. Uh, and uh. The story goes, that he came in for lunch. And this demon that came upon me, uh encouraged me to go to his car and to get in his car

I: uh um

P: and lock all the doors and the windows. And, uh, so he finished lunch and my dad comes out and my brother, that I spoke of, is with him. And my father asked me very politely to get out of the car. And with a smile on my face, I, uh, nodded 'no' and uh this went on for a number of minutes; my father saying "I've got to get back to work." Everyone called me L---- when I was young. He says, "L----, I've got to get back to work. Get out of the car!" And, uh, I kept smiling "no." And he went through this full stages of kind of a metamorphosis from a very kind man into this raving state. He was having a fit. And all the while, I don't know why I couldn't understand that if I didn't get out of the car, he was going to beat me senseless. But I was four years old, I had a demon as my brother would say and I just kept saying "no." So

I: Your father didn't have the keys?

P: Father didn't have the keys. No, he always, it was a, in those days he always left the keys in the car. And so I was in there with the keys and the whole 9 yards. And so uh my brother, being the kind of cunning person that he is, uh at this age he was 8 or 9 years old, he says "oh, L----, I, uh, I've got something in my pocket that I was going to give you." And I kind of perked up, you know. And the whole while my dad's looking for something to bash the windshield out with to finally get into the car. And uh he says "its candy." And so immediately I perk up, you know, and he says "If you'll get out of the car, I'll give you some candy." Well, needless to day, I did.

That's all it took, uh. I flipped the uh door lock and I never got close to my brother. A huge hand grabbed then the beatings commenced. And needless to say, I never, I never uh saw the candy either. That's one of the stories that he would tell.

I: um uh What does he mean by 'a demon came over you?"

P: That was kind of a little joke we have. It, uh, a demon uh you may have heard Bill Cosby talk of kids being brain damaged. They do things without any rationalization of why they do it.

I: uh um

P: Its like something comes over them.

I: Right.

P: You know you tell a kid "don't drink the drink" and what does the kid do? He drinks the drink. And that's what we kind of call the little demon. Or you know we didn't -- when we were growing up we didn't, but when we look back in retrospect and think "What as children came over us to do these things?"

I: Right.

P: You know, uh knowing that you were going to get severely, uh disciplined

I: Right

P: We did them anyway.

I: Yeah

P: It was just like, like Bill Cosby says brain damaged.

I: Yeah

P: you know.

I: Or who is that says "The devil made me do it"?

P: Yeah. uh. I think Flip Wilson or one of those

I: Yeah, that sounds like it.

P: The devil made me do it. That's a similar thing. So that's one of them that my brother would tell.

I: What kind of times would he tell it?

P: Um, we're big, well in our family, I guess, we are big story tellers so you made reference to um bringing home a date or, I'm married now of course, but um I'm sure that that story was told on me shortly after I met my wife. um Just one of those type stories that you tell in a big setting. Um when we get together, when our family gets together, family reunions or whatever, we, or Christmas, or whatever the occasion is we tell a lot of stories on each other. A lot of times the same story over and over again.

I: Right.

P: But we have, we find a lot of joy in that.

I: um hm.

P: Um that's more enjoyable than just about any other thing. That's what we all I think look forward to in going home. We're a real loving family uh but we don't show it that way.

I: Right.

P: You know through physical contact. We show it through kind of kidding each other.

I: Right. How do you feel when this one's told?

P: I don't mind it, I, I guess I have maybe some to tell on him too, you know. Um uh that kind of typifies his personality as we, as I see it, or as the family sees it so I don't mind it. Its usually tit for tat.

I: yeah

P: You know, he tells one and I'll tell one and somebody else will tell
I: So you'll tell one where he did something that the demon made him do or

P: yeah or I

I: This sounds almost mischievous except that you sort of carried it a bit far.

P: Right. yeah

I: what kind, uh, how does he play it, does he play it for the humor? or

P: He plays it for the humor.

I: um hm

P: Yeah, he plays it for the humor. There - and I know there are a lot of different individuals, uh, enjoy doing different things for laughs and he and I both enjoy really enjoy humor. Almost all of our family does.

I: right.

P: And that's through the years, that's been, I mean, through the years, I I think back to when I was younger, of course, he was years older than me, he really used to exasperate me when I was younger with, with humor. Uh, I think that's typical in a family that has the personalities, uh, like we have and who use humor or even just in a large family. You know, the kids are always, they're always fussing, fighting, they love each other, but that's just a part of um growing up together.

I: Um hm.

P: They've always got that in them. And a part of that comes in where maybe they tell something on you that may be true or may not be true, but its just a dig. They want to dig you a little bit.

I: Right

P: Get something going and get the group laughing and so forth. Um

I: yeah. Does it often happen that somebody gets upset?

P: Rarely, no, rarely anyone gets upset. Or if they do get upset, they've learned how to camouflage that uh, kind of, like the school of hard knocks, you kind of, I guess you kind of live and learn.

I: um hm

P: Uh I call it getting someone's goat.

I: Right.

P: You get someone's goat. You're not supposed to show that you, that they got your goat.

I: Right

P: Because then they've really got your goat

I: right

P: even worse, so you camouflage it and you wait for the opportunity to kind of

I: try to get his goat (both speaking nearly simultaneously)

P: get his goat, yeah.

I: Is your dad around when this is told?

P: Sure.

I: cause he's the other, character in the story, and he

P: right

I: and it strikes me that he certainly reacted strongly and um

P: Uh uh yeah, of course my dad is like I said, he's got a, he's a real loving father, but he's a, he has a really hot temper. So his perspective usually when the story is told, his perspective is still bewilderment, of 'why could this child not understand that he needed to open the door, because eventually I was going to get in.'

I: um hm

P: 'and the further he waited, the worse his punishment was going to be. Why couldn't he understand that?'

I: Right

P: 'And I, you know, I just can't', he just throws his hands up, 'I can't figure it out' Uh, but he still does. I mean he doesn't get angry about the story, he thinks its kind of a cute story.

I: uh um

P: you know, in retrospect. But he was very angry at the time.

I: Right. And its kind of ironic that your brother is the one that figured out how to get you out there by

P: right

I: tempting you with the, come out I'm giving you candy.

P: right. And that's kind of one of the, I mentioned um personalities, a little earlier, tell a story that is kind of reflective of the personality. Well see that's a story that I can tell, even on myself, to reflect his personality. Because whether this is true or not, he became known kind of as a, as a manipulator

I: um hm

P: in our household. With certain things, he was always, he was the type person that we view, again whether he is or not, but we always viewed him as or char- characterized him as being someone who wanted to sit back and always trying to figure, uh, the ins and outs of every situation. Whether it being dealing with someone else, or dealing with work, or dealing with, whatever he was dealing with, he was always working on trying to figure out, you know, the ins and outs, uh, involved. And in this case, it would be well how do I get him to respond. He would probably be a good subject to study psychologically himself.

I: Of course, in a sense, he was almost, uh, helping sort of save your, save your can because he got you out maybe sooner than, I mean, than if your father had broken the window, you might have gotten even more beating.

P: Well that's true but I don't think either of us ever looked at it that way. I think, he, he found pleasure in, from, in one sense from saying 'hey, you know my father was going to bash the window, but I got him out a different way.'

I: uh um

P: And also the other side of that was that, uh, we were kind of competitive growing up and I don't think he enjoyed watching me getting the spanking, but, uh, he, I don't know, he enjoyed the uh, I guess the scenario, the whole scenario, he kind of got a personal gratification from it or something. So I mean, I mean that might be another, another aspect that I haven't really considered, but when he tells the story, he doesn't tell it as if I was trying to

I: help

P: help out

I: my little brother.

P: Yeah.

I: it was more like

P: He was saying more like I was trying to get him. you know. he thought, he had my dad's goat and now I was going to get his goat and its that same kind of game. that we played.

I: Did you identify much with the kid that got in the car, and that did this kind of almost senseless thing?

P: Did I identify with him?

I: do you identify

P: Well, I guess I do, there's a side of me that does. Uh, I guess, you know, when I go home I, probably, when I go home more that side of me comes out than uh when I'm in the work or school or whatever environment, you know, that side of me comes out more with my wife.

I: um uh

P: I think that's pretty common for, for everyone that they have, they react differently, or act differently, according to what the setting is.

I: right

P: according to what it calls for, not to say that they're um hypocritical or um have multiple personality, but um in a way I guess I do.

I: yeah

P: You know you act according to the environment that, whatever the environment calls for, uh, if you didn't you'd be, you'd be useless in most, in many environments I guess.

I: right. So at work you're much less like-, at work or at school, you're much less likely to do something kind of odd or, or quote senseless than you would say at

P: right

I: home or something where people would be maybe more tolerant.

P: Yeah yeah, I don't know about senseless, I don't, I don't try to do senseless things. But looking back at it, it wasn't senseless to me. See, part of that was that, uh, part of humor like in America uh, our household. Um Part of the process of getting people to laugh is to uh to getting attention, to do something to get attention and people get attention in different ways. Well, I look back now and I, I, and this is something I'm just now thinking about, I didn't have the skill to make people laugh at that age.

I: Right

P: My, uh I could see my older brother, he did, he was nine years old and he could say certain things, he'd learned to do certain things that the other people in, you know, would laugh about and um I didn't really have the ability to get that attention, I guess if I was going to get attention, it was through crying, you know, big brother hit me or something and that would get attention.

I: right.

P: And this is probably one of those things where I enjoyed getting the attention, even though I didn't, for some reason, rationalize the kind of attention that I was going to get.

I: Right. Yeah because you certainly did get a lot of attention by crawling into the car and shutting all the doors and sort of just sitting there grinning

P: Right, exactly so. And, you know, I can carry that into another story where I was, uh I was in church. And um of course with my parents and all of the kids, we filled up a pew in our church

I: right

P: you know and uh I was uh the youngest, the youngest, was restless one day. And I wanted to go home and of course the preacher was up there, you know, giving it this {pantomimes} and preaching and I had this little whiny uh kind of a siren type noise. And this is one that would be told by my father.

I: uh uh

P: This story would be told by my father. He remembered this one very vividly. And so he was a few children down

I: right, did y'all sit by age order?

P: Uh, well we just sat just however we were filed in there

I: right

P: uh I don't recall any particular order, but um I do recall that I was a few brothers and sisters down, you know, and a few siblings down and so I was wanting to go home and it was taking too long and I was restless and I couldn't, and I was in a position where I couldn't lay down. Normally I would lay down.

I: um uh

P: Mother would leave enough room for me to lay down and uh, couldn't lay down, and uh. So I started whispering to my mother who was over I guess a couple over that I wanted to go home and she's shhhh telling me to be quiet, you know. Well this went on over and over and over again and well my dad looks over and my dad, he, again like I say he's the type that um he was a man of action. If he looked at you a certain way, you knew, that, you know, he'd given you the evil eye and you're going to be in trouble if you didn't discontinue what you're doing.

I: right.

P: But I had calculated that the distance, I guess, between me and his, the length of his arm, there was a greater distance between us.

I: right

P: And so, I say that, I don't actually recall doing that but only thing I can rationalize now was that was the case I thought well, kind of like the car,

I: out of his reach.

P: And I've got him where I want him. I mean we're in church. You know my mother's going to try to keep me quiet and, and really my main concern wasn't any of that, it was I want to go, whatever I have to do I want to leave.

I: Right

P: And so um I continued to whimper and, and after he had looked at me and given me this eye, you know, I thought well hmm. I don't know what I'm going to do. I don't exactly what went through my mind at this point but I let out this siren noise that I would start making when I was agitated or whatever. And I had, I had picked this up from hearing the fire trucks that would run up and down the streets in our town and um. I mean it was LOUD. This was a Southern Baptist church and this is one of those pin-drop churches, you know. And uh, it was very loud. And it was like the hand of God, came down upon me and pulled me up by the back of my, I had a little suit on, pulled me up by the back of my suit. And I didn't even, I never even touched the ground. We just went out in front of the congregation and it was later. Dad later told me that one of gentlemen that's in the church um, the gentleman that was my principal in elementary school, said something about that kid'll never do that again.

I: (laughs)

P: before he shut the door and then, he shut the door and whipped me and my family said it echoed all throughout the church. But he really, he was so angry with me, he whipped me good. I needed it. I mean, he didn't, I don't think he was abusive.

I: um hm

P: But he gave me a good burning he was so upset with me that he couldn't even go back into the church and so then he took me out and we went out to eat some where. That's one that he would tell on me.

I: Yeah. How old were you when this happened?

P: This was 5, I was 5 years old, I guess

I: uh um. And what, what sort of point of view does he tell it from now? How does he play it?

P: I guess probably the same. I, you know, like I couldn't understand, my father would say I couldn't understand why can't a kid understand, you know, that if I say "no" or if I say "quit" or "stop" why don't they just stop? And they know what's going to happen. Why do they continue?

I: Um uh

P: And this would probably be the perspective. Um but another thing though would be the fact that we simply, our family simply tells a lot of stories, a lot of jokes, a lot of things that have happened and that becomes a part of it. where.

I: yeah

P: Everyone's got a story.

I: um hm

P: And so he might tell that story.

I: um hm. And how do you feel when he tells it?

P: I don't mind, I don't mind. I think back, you know, I look back on it and well I guess that thought that goes through my mind is I think goodness gracious, you know what are my kids going to be like?

I: (laughs) Yeah

P: 'Cause I mean I was not a real bad kid, I never got into anything that, even going later up in my teens, and so forth, never got into any of the things that my family would have looked at in frowned upon. Unlike some of my other siblings that did. Um but I definitely was um, was a mischievous kid

I: right.

P: Um. At least from what I can remember. I don't guess I thought I was at the time. I thought I was really kind of bashful at the time, but thinking back on the stories, you know, I realize that there was some mischief there. I

I: right

P: I don't know to this day where that came from.

I: Yeah and almost a sense of not knowing, kind of, when to stop.

P: Right.

I: you know

P: yeah

I: In both those cases, it was if you had let him in the car earlier, it was he might have thought it was kind of funny too.

P: Yeah I think it, you know, was in the first case its, its definitely not knowing when to stop. It was done as a joke

I: right

P: you know, for attention. The second one was done as attention, but the second one was done more to get my way.

I: Right.

P: you know, like I'm really fed up, I want to leave

I: right, This is boring

P: this is boring, yeah and whatever I have to do, I'm willing to do it.

I: Well I guess you got to leave. (laughter)

P: got to leave. I guess in one sense, you can say I got my way.

I: yeah.

P: in one sense.

I: And I bet you never did that again.

P: No, I never did that again, never did it again. (pause) Do you have any questions on that particular story?

I: No

P: I'm trying to think of maybe another one (pause) Well I do remember one that uh, I got a chicken bucket stuck on my head one time. And my brother loves to tell that story.

I: The same brother that's 4 years older.

P: Yeah, the same brother. Of course, he tells the stories mostly because he and I spent a lot of time together.

I: um hm

P: So,

I: right

P: But it is this one of those things. Why do kids do it? Sort of like curiosity, um curiosity killed the cat, you know. you know how, how kids are always getting things stuck up their nose, oh, and now I have another story about that too. I had a Kentucky Fried Chicken barrel, bucket

I: yeah, right

P: you know that they used to have it in the large barrels and uh I had um big ears growing up and I don't know what possessed me to do this. We didn't have many assets, we didn't have many toys, so we was always finding things to play with, whatever we had around. And I had um burst out the bottom of this thing and stuck it over my head, but I couldn't get it back up. And I was, I was crying and screaming and I guess I was hard to hear because, I guess, you know, my voice was going right into the side of the barrel and finally uh they ended up, my parents ended up having to cut it off my head because it wouldn't come. I don't know why it would not come up but I got it down and it just got stuck, actually on the bottom of my chin, and uh, wouldn't come up and so that's another story. That one's not told as much though.

I: How old were you then?

P: about 6, 5 or 6.

I: Its a wonder how did you manage to get this bucket on your head that way.

P: Yeah, again It goes back to, why would that story be told. Well why would any of the stories be told? Because my family still is into telling stories.

I: Right.

P: I mean they think of things, kind of like I'm doing now, thinking about stories that have happened that were funny and that we can all sit back and laugh at now. And think that 'Well that was funny.' What would make a kid put a bucket on his head? and he gets stuck`

I: Well it must have looked kind of funny too

P: Yeah I sure it did

I: I mean to the people that saw you

P: that saw me, yeah. And I mean it was a bad experience for me. I mean I'm telling you. (laughter)

I: Yeah, but here's this kid with a, what is it, a red and white

P: uh huh

I: thing from the neck up?

P: with the colonel on the front.

I: Yeah

P: I guess one of the best -- continuing with stories told on me would be uh the story about the light that I stuck up my nose. This happened when I was about 7 or 8 years old, I guess. I had a small boat that I played with in the tub. It had a little plastic light on top of it. I had broken the light off. It wasn't an actual light; it wasn't functional. It was just a, just part of the boat.

I: Oh, it was just like a plastic molded thing or whatever

P: That's right, just a plastic molded light. That's right. It had a little stem on it but I had broken it off and had tried to glue it back on and I couldn't. And I um I was standing in the driveway and my father and my brother, and I don't recall who else, it seems like there was a neighbor there. They were all standing around talking and I didn't have anything to do and I, kind of idle hands, I had this light though in my pocket where I, just that, earlier that day I had realized that it wasn't going to stay glued so I had just taken it off the boat.

I: um hm

P: And um I was, I don't know what was going through my mind at the time other than I wanted something to do. I was bored while everyone else was talking.

I: um hm

P: So I started placing this thing in my nostril and I'd hold one side of my nose and shoot the light out of my nose.

I: out of the other side. yeah(laughs)

P: Right. And so it worked pretty good, you know. And I was having a good time. Well, after, I don't know, the fifth or sixth shot I stuck it up there a little bit too far and I couldn't get it out. And uh, of course, I mentioned that my father was the type, that he would get mad, he would get angry, he would get upset because there were so many of us, you know, if you broke something in the kitchen, it was "You kids are breaking us." You know, we weren't really identified that much as an individual unless it was time to get whipped or some--. But it was always 'you kids' and he was the type -- he would get upset about things like that. And looking back, I can, you know, I can understand I guess to some degree why he would. But so I didn't want him to know that I had this thing because I thought he is going to wear me out if he finds out. So I dug and worked it and tried to get out and I couldn't get it out. And I went to a sister and I told her; I was upset and I was crying and I told her "I have a light up my nose." And she said "you have a what?" I said "I have a light up my nose." And uh she said "You don't have anything up your nose." She said "I think I have things up my nose sometimes too, but I don't." And I said "No, I really do" you know.

I: (laughs)

P: And so she asked me "how did you get it up there?" And I told her, a cockamamie story about how it got there. And uh.

I: Oh, so you didn't tell her you deliberately did that?

P: No, no. The story went this way. I had in the process of me trying to get it out, I was thinking uh I got to get this thing out of my nose, one, but, two, if I don't get it out of my nose how do I explain how it got there?

I: (laughs)

P: So after I realized that this, its not going to come out, I had my story pretty well down. My story was this. I had. I don't know why this was it. But so I was putting the light on my arm and sticking it to my arm because it had a little glue on it,

I: um hm

P: And my nose was running. So I wiped my nose, my arm across my nose and in the process that crazy light got up my nose. And so, you know, what do you do? Now its up there. And uh I sniffed, I sniffed my nose and it went on up. Well of course nobody bought that but I stuck to that story. And my dad, she finally went and told my father and my dad said "What are you talking about? You don't

have anything--" He bent me, uh uh bent me down under a lamp, you know, and looked up in there and said "Well you do have something up there." And so he pulled with the tweezers and all that stuff and I ended up going to the emergency room where um the doctor finally dislodged it from my nose. And uh after, looking back, I mean after we went through the whole process, he wasn't upset with me. He was at first. I think back If he had gotten that thing out of my nose quickly {snapped his fingers}, I probably would have gotten an whipping. But since he didn't he became more concerned.

I: um hm

P: because it was really, it was quite a ways up in there and the doctor became concerned. He uh had tried uh numerous different, numerous instruments and said we may have to, you know, admit him and try to get out through surgical use or something, devices. Um so he became more concerned and everything was OK when the doctor got it out and uh we went back home. And I stuck to my story. You know everybody'd ask me how did you get that up there. And I told them the same story. I told my dad that; and he just said I know you didn't do it that way. Yeah I did. I stuck with it. Then one day my brother F----, the one that I uh, the one that had been with me in the other stories, approached me and says uh "I tell you what. If you'll tell me how you got that up your nose, I won't tell dad. It'll be our secret." And I said "OK, I'll tell you" and I told him exactly how I got it up there. He went straight to my mother and told her. And of course, young and dumb as I was I

I: (laughs)

P: said "you told, You told me you wouldn't tell mom and dad." And he said "No I said I wouldn't tell dad." Typical, typical. So

I: so did your dad get upset when he found out?

P: No, no, he just laughed.

I: It was long enough gone that past that he uh

P: Yeah, and he knew I didn't get it up there that way. I mean

I: Well yeah and he never pushed it, I guess

P: Right.

I: And it sounds like that is another example where your brother was kind of manipulative, wouldn't it

P: right

I: you tell me and I won't tell dad. (pause) So how do you feel when that one's told?

P: I don't mind.

I: Who tells that one?

P: Uh, well usually F----, my brother, starts it out. That's one of those that I usually end up, uh, kind of intervening and telling the story correctly. 'Cause many times for some reason, he uh would get that one wrong. He wou-

I: How does he get it wrong?

P: There were a lot of events that -- well usually its just the, I guess its the detail things that I I want to be correct

I: uh uh

P: And I can't think of any. I'm trying to think of what he may get incorrect because I've not heard him tell this story in some time. But um, for some reason I think back on the time he has told it and I've intervened and said "no no no, wait a second it happened this way."

I: yeah

P: Or maybe added to that later, to kind of, maybe to even tell the story on him. As he's told the story on me, then I come back and say Well yeah, but you forgotten the latter part of the story, the part where you tell me that you won't tell dad. And I explain that because that reinforces our, I guess, picture that we have of him which is a manipulator.

I: Right

P: which is um . . cunning and so forth so

I: um hm. So it sounds like all these stories involve times when you've done something that was in some way mischievous, or

P: That's right

I: or not quote the right thing to do.

P: I believe that's uh that's probably right. Again I think that the stories that we have on each other tend to um reflect the um kind of personality concept that we have of each other.

I: um hm

P: Like I tell stories about him that will be uh. For example, when we had a newspaper, he had a newspaper route. And um to reinforce how manipulative he was and he's the kind of guy we'd say that would uh take advantage of his grandmother.

I: um hm

P: I was very, very young; always very small and very skinny. And my father was always worried is this kid going to make it. 'Cause I was so skinny. But I did half of the newspaper route. He paid me a dollar a week. He got 12 dollars a week.

I: (laughs)

P: And, you know, many times, well I would get, well people would give me tips because I would be carrying this very large newspaper bag and all you'd see is this bag with little stick legs underneath it, you know, and if it'd be rain or shine whatever the case. And they would give me tips because they felt sorry for me.

I: Right

P: I know that's what it was. I mean It was 'you're carrying a big load' I can remember some of the comments: 'that's a big load for a little fellow; here take this quarter', 'take 50 cents' or whatever. And uh again I was about seven years old at this time. And I'd go to him and I'd say "They gave me a tip." He'd ask how much. And I'd say 50 cents and he'd take it. And he would, we had an understanding eventually after that happened over a number of times, he said "wait, whose responsibly is this paper route: is it yours or mine?" "Yours" "Who keeps all the books?" He did have a little book that he kept who he collected from and so forth.

I: right

P: "Well you do." "So whose route is it?" "Well its your paper route." "So I basically keep everything that comes in except for what I pay you because you're my employee. Right?" I said OK. And

that's the way it went for a long time. Of course, my father caught him one day and uh he told him that he ought to be ashamed of himself, you know, because I had earned the tip.

I: Right

P: And so from then I got to keep the tip.

I: So it sounds like in that story you come off as a little bit, as almost kind of naive.

P: Very

I: and gullible

P: very naive. And I don't mind that. See, I don't mind telling the stories when I was younger. His, what he has said about, about that and this is always, I guess, his response to all the stories I tell where he as a brother who was 4 years older took advantage of me in many ways and I did him in many ways too.

I: right

P: that he did, that were clear by these stories. He says Well, you know, L---- learned the hard way and after a certain age he never got anything over on me. As a matter of fact I made money or whatever on him in business dealings ever since. Uh I've been the one that's come out

I: um hm

P: where he has not. And that is pretty, and that is almost true. I mean because there have been some situations where he would be involved in a business deal or something and at a very young age, I was always the money saver; he was a money spender. And he would have to sell me whatever he was working, whatever he was, as an entrepreneur, trying to make money on; he would sell it to me at a discounted rate.

I: um hm

P: And I'd sit on it and sell it and make money off it.

I: yeah

P: And he'd typically would lose money in those cases so .

I: um hm So even though at an earlier age you were sort of easily taken in, you eventually got a little bit more savvy and

P: right

I: and got to the point where you could sort of know what's what.

P: Yeah, I think that's right.

I: So what kind of personality of, do you think the stories portray of yours?

P: Kind of personality?

I: um hm

P: Well its according to uh when its told. I guess those particular stories were, would speak of uh mischievous, naive, uh probably typical, you know, you think of a child, you think of a kid and you think well you can probably manipulate the child pretty easily, for one.

I: um hm

P: Uh, and usually when you think of kids, or I do, I think of mischievous 'cause most of them are.

I: yeah

P: you know this toy's mine, mine, you know and uh there kind of into themselves, you know, and what they're doing, what they, if they see a toy they want it, they get it and they're, they're willing to suffer the consequences

I: want their own way

P: fighting, yeah, fighting for their own way. And so I was probably typical.

I: right

P: I guess.

I: So also a kid that wanted his way, like that time in church.

P: yeah

I: 'I want out of here.'

P: right

I: No matter what it takes.

P: I think so. (pause)

I: Is there anything you want to add?

P: (pause) I can't think of anything that would, you know, as far as stories, uh uh I think of like uh the relationship my brother and I have as well as uh my sisters, though they differ because I'm closer to some than others.

I: Right.

P: My brother and I have um maintained a very um close relationship and um after we got to a certain age, uh we became more protective of each other than anything.

I: right

P: I mean that we still enjoyed getting each other's goat and so forth and we still do, but um, I kind of followed his footsteps in many ways and in some ways I didn't and in the process all along the way he was the big brother, kind of looked out for his younger brother, and I kind of returned the favor later on when I was in a position to do that. Um I think in uh numerous cases, uh

I: If anybody attacked either of you the other one would sort of came to your defense.

P: Sure. Absolutely. Yeah, that's right. (pause) But I can't think of anything else really that, that I would add to any of the stories, and I don't want to -- there are other stories but I don't want to belabor . . . all these stories, you know, because they're things to tell

I: yeah OK Well thank you

P: Thank you.

VITA

Barbara Frances Beier was born in Newburgh, New York on December 16, 1949. She attended Our Lady of Peace elementary School in North Augusta, South Carolina and graduated from Aquinas High School in Augusta, Georgia in May, 1967. The following September, she entered Fontbonne College and in May, 1971 received the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Mathematics. She entered Cornell University in June, 1971 and received a Masters of Science in Chemistry in May 1975. She then worked for Exxon Research and Engineering in Baytown, Texas and later Lockheed Engineering and Science, Company in Houston, Texas. While there she attended the University of Houston-Clear Lake as an evening school student. In September, 1988, she entered The University of Tennessee, Knoxville and in August, 1994, received a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Psychology. She completed her clinical psychology internship at Topeka State Hospital in August, 1994.