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**STORY PATTERNS IN ORAL NARRATIVES: A
VARIATIONIST CRITIQUE OF LABOV AND WALETZKY'S
MODEL OF NARRATIVE SCHEMAS**

**A thesis submitted to Middlesex University in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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ABSTRACT

Labov and Waletzky's (1967) influential six-schema model of personal narratives has often been considered to make claims regarding a 'universal' narrative structure (Hurst, 1990; Hymes, 1996). This study tests how far variations in personal narratives at a schematic level (that is, which schemas are present and how they combine to structure the narrated experience) correlate with aspects of an individual's culture. Oral narratives produced by members of the Greek Cypriot community in London are analysed, to provide data from an alternative group of informants to Labov and Waletzky's, while still using their model as the central framework for analysis. Frequent appearance in the data of an additional schema, 'post-evaluation', suggests that culture is a variable in relation to narrative structure, as are more specific individual and social factors including age and gender. Story topic is also shown to influence how narratives are structured, with different topics resulting in different structures and the general underlying theme of "Trouble" (Burke, 1945; Bruner, 1991; Bruner, 1997) (in fight, danger of death, argument and embarrassing personal experiences) shown to guarantee the 'crisis' required in a narrative. Such findings have implications as regards claims of a universal model of narrative; and the general view that one narrative-structure model may be suitable for all personal narratives is re-examined. By way of conclusion, the study formulates a 'variationist' model of narrative 'grammar' that combines core, optional and culturally variant features. It is suggested that such a model may begin to capture how an individual's social and cultural background, as well as story topic, can function as decisive factors in determining narrative form.

PREFACE

The telling of personal experiences, most notably through narrative storytelling, is generally accepted as a universal activity and integral to a person's socialisation (Ong, 1982; Bruner, 1990; Hymes, 1996). Through narrative discourse, we are able to share experiences while at the same time construct and assert our identity as individuals, as members of a culture and as members of sub-groups within that culture. One area in narrative research that is of particular interest is what form personal narratives¹ take and how form is linked to story function. Other areas of interest are concerned with how far narratives conform to a uniform story template and whether this has implications for the existence of a 'universal' model of narrative structure. In other words, can one model of narrative describe a range of storytelling practices from different cultures and so merit the status of 'universal' or is it more likely that patterns of variation exist that correlate with variables such as culture, social factors such as age and gender, and the story topic of the personal experience?

The notion that patterns of variation might be the result of cultural models of narrative first prompted me to question an existing model of narrative, developed by Labov and Waletzky (1967) and Labov (1972), which is widely accepted as offering a 'universal' narrative framework. However, Kaplan's (1966) earlier analysis of

¹ For the purposes of my discussion, I will use the terms *narrative* and *story* interchangeably.

written essays from members of a range of language groups (Semitic, Oriental, Romance, Russian and English) identified conventionalised rhetorical strategies that differed from each other and, more notably, from the style found in American English. Mills (1940) also identifies cultural differences and argues for cultural models of narratives with her notion of 'vocabularies of motives', where:

speakers learn to express motivations or explanations of their own and others' actions in terms of justifications which they know will be regarded as reasonable by other members of their culture. Just as there are agreed-upon vocabularies of motives, so are there conventionalised ways of choosing particular elements of the action and setting experienced or seen for inclusion in verbalization (and indeed in memory), and of organizing those events into narratives (cited in Tannen, 1980: 53).

With these discussions providing a basis for my research, further readings around the key themes of personal narratives, their structure and the issue of culture raised more questions and concerns than they answered. Consequently, this led to a need to re-evaluate by 'testing' Labov and Waletzky's model with a view to modifying it to one that is able to provide a more comprehensive description of narrative structure across a wider range of cultures.

These lines of my enquiry are outlined in **Chapter 1 Aims and Key Questions of Narrative Structure** in an introductory chapter that presents an overview of the main aims and questions underlying this thesis. The central narrative framework being questioned, Labov and Waletzky (1967) and Labov's (1972) narrative model is introduced as the framework for analysis. In order to test some of the claims of the universal status of their model, the spoken personal experiences of members of the London-based Greek Cypriot community (LGCs) are chosen as an alternative culture to those examined by Labov and Waletzky (1967) and Labov (1972) and for the purposes of comparative research. Other factors thought to cause variation at a lexico-grammatical and structural level and which may create story patterns in

personal narratives are also presented as a basis for the investigation and discussion on cultural forms of storytelling and their variations.

Chapter 2 What is a Narrative? raises questions about what makes narrative a recognisable discourse and distinct from other storytelling genres in an attempt to identify core, compulsory features at a structural and functional level. An analysis of a small sample of literary texts and exploration of recognized story grammars, drawn mainly from literary theory, are presented as a way of identifying prototypical features of narrative form and function and to show a human propensity to organise narratives into a coherent form for their telling, memorisation and recall. Further insights are drawn from interdisciplinary areas of narrative research, such as anthropology and cognitive linguistics, and a discussion outlining the internal structures of alternative storytelling sub-genres provides an analytic starting point from which to begin my research into the core features of oral narratives of personal experience. Attempts to offer a satisfactory definition of a narrative by looking at both form and function provide answers to the fundamental questions of ‘what is’ and ‘what is not’ a narrative, important themes in this study and considerations that pre-empt discussion on narratives in the following chapters.

Chapter 3 Labov and Waletzky’s Narrative Schema Model and Questions of Universalism presents a brief historical account of Labov and Waletzky’s (1967) and Labov’s (1972) ground-breaking research, development and later refinement of their narrative model. A critique of the model’s form and function together with a discussion of some of its limitations is presented, despite it being widely accepted as having universal relevance in terms of its “classic” structure. Criticism which

includes the model's inability to reflect variations in cultural narratives and how far the setting of the interview and theme of the narrative lead to structural variations, which differ significantly from Labov and Waletzky's 'idealised' narrative model, are examined. These discussions question the notion of how far their narrative model, developed from personal experiences of a narrow range of speakers, can represent the broad range of storytelling patterns and their variations from other cultures.

One way of testing the universal application of one narrative model is to look to storytelling practices of another culture as a way of providing a comparative analysis of narrative form and function. **Chapter 4 Methods, Informants and the Speech Community** presents a description of my informants - members of the London-based Greek Cypriot community - and a rationale for why these speakers are my preferred informant group. Concepts such as 'culture' and 'speech community' are explored with regard to an individual's 'membership' of multiple discourse communities (Swales, 1990), and discussion also considers differences with 'participating' together with the implications this might have on identity and storytelling practices. A detailed description of the research methods used for conducting this study is provided, such as the sociolinguistic interview as the preferred option for collecting spoken data, the organisation of informants (in terms of single sex/ age or mixed groups; one-to-one or peer group settings) and the range of questions to elicit personal narratives. The final section of the chapter outlines how spoken data was recorded for analysis, interpretation and the considerations for the final layout of my presentation and discussion of findings.

Findings in this study are presented in three consecutive chapters to be able to do justice to the depth and breadth of variation and storytelling practices of my informant group. **Chapter 5 Schema Variation and Story Genres: When is a Narrative not a Narrative?** focuses on narrative structure, primarily on where schematic and lexico-grammatical variation can exist in personal narratives. Correlating factors such as age and gender are highlighted to show how speaker variables can produce recurring storytelling patterns with specific findings being linked to different social groups. With Labov and Waletzky's model placed at the centre of these discussions, it quickly becomes apparent that not all personal narratives conform to their six-schema structure, and findings that have not been reported are also foregrounded. One such finding is the significant influence that story topic has on narrative form, where it appears that story or rhetorical function may determine story form. Findings pointing to the existence of a further sub-genre category of storytelling found as part of the repertoire of children's personal narratives, with a compelling explanation for their presence, are discussed. While these storytelling forms appear to conform in structure to a narrative, they go on to subvert listener expectations and subsequently, challenge our understanding of narrative form and function.

Further insights into narratives are provided in **Chapter 6 More Than Words: Post-Evaluation**. The presence of what appears to be a new and unreported schema in personal narratives of LGCs, the *post-evaluation* is presented with a discussion of its linguistic form, function and sub-categories. Details of how and why factors such as age, gender and story topic correlate with the highly evaluative *post-evaluation* are discussed in turn with an explanation suggesting that *post-evaluation* is a

rhetorical storytelling device that is intrinsic to the narrative discourse of the Greek Cypriot culture. The existence of this additional narrative schema provides further compelling evidence of cultural storytelling practices and adds to the argument that a single model of narratives is not able to represent the broad range of narrative forms beyond Labov & Waletzky's informants.

Chapter 7 Collaborative Storytelling: Prompts and Requests for Clarification

describes how the interview setting, as a further variable, contributes to storytelling performance and especially, how the co-construction of personal narratives has fundamental implications for narrative storytelling, the narrator, the audience and the role of the interviewer. Peer group interviews, by the very nature of the group context, appear to cause a genre shift from an interview 'speech event' to an 'activity type' that resembles a conversation, despite the constraints of the sociolinguistic setting. This chapter details the different sub-categories for collaborative storytelling strategies, specifically, 'prompts' and 'requests for clarification', with an explanation of their distinct form and function. These findings in peer group settings support the argument that co-operation is a feature of group discourse and that sensitivity to recipient design is fundamental to successful storytelling.

Chapter 8 Formalising Narrative Variation: Beyond Labov and Waletzky?

takes up and responds to one of the central aims of the study: how far a single model of narrative structure is able to describe narratives across cultures, and what implications this has on a 'universal' narrative framework. Discussion and findings from earlier chapters are drawn together to support the argument for a revision of

one narrative model - L&W's - in favour of a framework that is able to reflect alternative and diverse story patterns from other cultures. By using linguistic models of language to provide a systematic and rule-based structure for narratives, a 'variationist' model is developed into a framework composed of core/compulsory and optional narrative schemas to reflect the range of narrative forms across cultures. Since variation in narrative structure is not only culturally-based but also caused by factors pertaining to an individual's social factors (age, gender) and the story topic, the newly revised model is extended to ensure that story patterns found at these different levels are represented in one diagram. A further level showing variation linked to personal narratives by individuals is also built into this model, acknowledging that even within a culture and its social sub-groups, variation at a schematic level is also likely to exist as a result of idiosyncratic storytelling styles.

As an inter-disciplinary area within linguistics, narrative research continues to broaden our knowledge and understanding of story forms and functions. The findings in this study aim to contribute to research in this field by offering insights that both confirm and challenge expectations and recognise that patterns of variation in personal narratives are as much a universal occurrence as is the act of sharing and enjoying each other's stories.

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Transcription Key

?	question or uncertainty
!	Surprise
WORDS IN CAPITALS	emphatic stress and/ or increase in volume
“ ”	indicates direct speech
<i>“italics”</i>	captures the marked change in voice quality in direct speech of narrator or when narrator mimics another
(names and places)	names and locations not given but indicated in brackets
[]	non-transcribable speech
[laughs]	paralinguistic and non verbal information
=	Interruption
= =	Overlap
...	pauses of under 3 seconds
(3.0)	pause of 3 seconds in utterance
[3.0]	interval between turns
-dash	false start/ restart
a-and	elongation of word

CHAPTER 1. AIMS AND KEY QUESTIONS OF NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

'We seem to have no other way of describing "lived time" save in the form of a narrative'

Bruner (1987:12)

1.1 Introduction to narrative research

Narrative storytelling lies at the heart of this study, particularly oral narratives of personal experience and their form and function. It is widely accepted that telling stories about personal experiences is an activity that is shared by members of all cultures, having no bearing on whether the culture itself is literate or non-literate: the telling of oral narratives of personal experiences pervades each and everyone's life. It is what Hymes describes as 'a universal function' (1996: 115) because it is a discourse that is practised extensively, for example, in speech activities such as everyday casual conversations or more formally in organised settings such as a school classroom. Clearly, personal experiences are part of everyone's autobiography but it is only when they are organized into a coherent unit and narrated do they become of interest. Why then are spoken narratives of personal experience an important form of spoken discourse and of particular research interest to a number of interdisciplinary areas?

Studies in linguistics and anthropology show that through narrative storytelling, individuals are able to make sense of their lives; specifically, the exchange of

personal experiences is seen as a social transaction whereby individuals represent and shape their lives through events that have happened in the past. According to Bruner, 'we also cling to narrative models of reality and use them to shape our everyday experiences' (2003:7). Anderson (1998) critically asserts that 'Humans, thanks to language, find it easy to lie and deny, to transport both sender and receiver to other actual and imagined situations, and to construct elaborate shared narratives and simultaneously modify and contradict these stories' (p.31). Sharing personal narratives, therefore is part of a wider strategy for asserting and constructing identity: how we tell stories and who we tell them to reflects who we are, while also expressing how we would like to be regarded. It is what Cobley (2001) sees as a consequence of language, which 'not only "permits" narratives but practically makes them obligatory in the organization of human experience' (p.23).

The function of narrative storytelling however, cannot be looked at in isolation from its formal linguistic properties so how personal narratives are schematically organized will depend on a number of factors. One such factor that may influence structure is the rhetorical function of its telling – whether it is to entertain, assign praise or blame to protagonists or position the narrator in a positive light, for example. Rhetorical function will be reflected in the performance and style of the narration as well as the choice of lexico-grammatical devices, all of which will be evident in the surface structure of the story. At a deeper level, however, story structure may embed cultural traditions of storytelling so that schematic organization adheres to a particular model that is specific to a given culture. The implications this raises are that narratives are as culturally distinct as they are diverse in their structure, and that while the telling of personal narratives is universal, their structure

or schematic organisation may not necessarily be. It is exactly the types of variations that exist in personal narratives, where they are found and how they are distributed that I will be investigating in this thesis.

Issues of variation and the existence of a 'universal' story model are themes that underpin narrative research in my study. With individuals having membership of and participating in not only a culture but various 'discourse communities' (Swales, 1990), which entails having different discourse (community) identities, it is likely that storytelling practices would reflect these differences in the same way that other verbal practices do. Speaker identity is inextricably linked to factors of place, as a person's background becomes a marker of their linguistic behaviours and practices. In other words, the types of personal narratives we share are also likely to be determined by the 'reportable' status of what we have to say: what is funny, embarrassing or sad in one cultural domain may not necessarily have the same reportability value elsewhere. Similarly, what makes a personal experience worth telling in the first place must be bounded by certain parameters of what is and what is not acceptable in a particular culture, otherwise, why would a danger of death experience be worth recalling if it is not marked as newsworthy in any way? Likewise, an experience that is embarrassing must also be outside the norms of acceptable behaviour in a given context for it to be retold at a later date. If a part of an individual's repertoire of reportable personal experiences, these retellings are likely to signal the importance of the events in the experience in the wider context of the telling and also, the importance of the experience to the narrator.

Culture is not the only factor likely to contribute to structural variations in personal narratives. Even members of the same group are likely to differ in the way they tell personal experiences so it is important to extend the discussion of which factors may be responsible for variations at a schematic and lexico-grammatical level. Another variable, this time one that is linked to speaker factor and may also influence story structure, is gender. However, even within this social sub-group, it is also unlikely that all males, for example, conform to the same narrative structure, so age also becomes a speaker variable that might contribute to variation. Other factors beyond the speaker may also be critical in causing variation such as story topic and rhetorical function, which was raised earlier in this chapter. The suggestion is that story topic may influence story structure and give rise to distinct and alternative story sub-genres. All the above factors may be possible causes of variation and challenge the notion of a perceived 'universalist' narrative model that can describe all narratives across all cultures. How can this be tested?

1.2 Aims of investigation into narrative variations and universalism

This thesis will focus on one particular culture, the London Greek Cypriot community (LGC). By analysing their spoken personal narratives for story patterns and levels of variation, I aim to investigate which factors are responsible for causing structural and lexico-grammatical variations in personal narratives and determine where they occur and how they can be accounted for. The central aims of this study may accordingly be set out more formally as:

- i. To test the often assumed ‘universalism’ of Labov and Waletzky’s (1967) and Labov’s (1972) narrative schema model², by investigating oral narratives of personal experience produced by members of the London based Greek Cypriot Community, in order to see how such narratives reflect cultural and social storytelling practices;
- ii. To investigate the part played by story topic in creating sub-genres within narratives of personal experience, by examining relevant schematic and lexico-grammatical features;
- iii. To develop a ‘variationist’ revision which is based on Labov and Waletzky’s (henceforth L&W) narrative schema model but takes into account variables including a speaker’s social background, the story topic and the social setting in which a narrative of personal experience is told.

1.3 Background and key questions for research in personal narratives, variations and universalism

The question of how to test the existence of variations in personal narratives and thereby challenge the notion of a universalist narrative structure was raised in the last section of this chapter and is fundamental to this study. One answer would be to turn to a model of narratives that is widely considered to offer a description of a basic narrative structure: L&W’s (1967) narrative schema model.

² See Labov, W. and Waletzky, J. (1967) ‘Narrative analysis: Oral Versions of Personal Experience’, in J. Holm (ed.), *Essays on the Verbal and Visual Arts*. Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Press, pp. 12-44. Also see Labov, W. (1972). *Language in the Inner City*. Pennsylvania University Press: Pennsylvania.

Most linguists would agree that the narrative schema model presented by L&W (1967) and Labov (1972) provides a clear functional analysis of the internal structure of oral narratives of personal experience (see also Bamberg, 1997). The model has not only proved to be generally insightful but has also helped to advance our understanding of the formal properties of narratives. Since it was first proposed, L&W's narrative model, which was mainly derived from personal narratives of the black working classes in New York, in a study of Black English Vernacular (BEV), has drawn both acclaim and criticism for a number of reasons. Comprising six schemas or stages called the *abstract*, *orientation*, *complicating action*, *evaluation*, *resolution* and *coda*, which claim to be distinct both formally and functionally, the model appears to codify a listener's schematic expectation of a narrative. For this reason, it has been widely accepted as a definition of narrative as an ideal type, one that is universal and can be mapped onto all narratives in both English-speaking and non-English speaking communities. It should be pointed out that L&W (1967) and Labov (1972) never made claims that their narrative schema model could be applied universally, stating that the aim of their work was to research 'close correlations of the narrator's social characteristics with the structure of their narratives, since we are concerned with problems of effective communication and class and ethnic differences in verbal behaviour' (1967:13). They also went on to affirm that 'these conclusions are restricted to the speech communities that we have examined' (pp.41-42).

It has been argued subsequently, that L&W's six-schema model idealises narratives by reducing them to a default pattern with a fixed order in terms of how the schemas are organised. The implication is that, for a narrative to be recognised as fully-

formed - one that fulfils readers' and listeners' expectations - it should ideally conform to this structure. However, while L&W's model is widely considered as describing the more simple or classic narratives such as fairytales, there are problems when the model is used for describing complex narratives that employ more sophisticated structures and stylistic devices to challenge recipients and their schematic expectations. Moreover, the acceptance of one universal model, as opposed to a diverse range of alternative storytelling modes, would appear to rule out the need for a greater understanding of patterns of variability in the distribution and diffusion of variant forms, and their cause.

The choice of LGCs as my informants and as an alternative speech community to those studied by L&W and Labov, will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4. But it is worth noting that Greek - and Greek Cypriot - storytelling practices use a rhetorical narrative style to evaluate personal experiences (and in storytelling in general) and that these practices are embedded in the linguistic behaviours of this culture (Tannen 1984; see also Georgakopoulou, 1997). Patterns of variation in LGCs are therefore likely to arise and challenge the notion that L&W's model is able to reflect the narrative storytelling discourse of my informants.

An example of a cultural storytelling model to illustrate the limitations in L&W's narrative framework emerges out of Hymes's (1981, 1996) study of narratives produced by Native Americans. Hymes found that members of this culture produced distinct evaluative commentary in their narratives. However, L&W's schema categories could not satisfactorily describe this feature and consequently, Hymes found it necessary to create a new category, the 'extraposition' to label this

component (1996:193-195). Is it not possible, therefore, that LGCs might also produce a distinct *evaluation* category or schema that is also not satisfactorily described by L&W and requires a separate category of its own? Hymes' finding points to the possibility that narrative structure does vary and that departures from L&W's model may indicate culturally based storytelling practices, which may or may not be transferable across other cultures.

One of the marked linguistic strategies used by informants in L&W's (1967) research is 'self-aggrandizement', which is 'designed to place the narrator in the most favorable possible light'. Self-aggrandizement functions to cast the narrator in the role of hero, or where appropriate, as victim, in an account that has the overall effect of exaggerating and therefore manipulating what actually happened. The presence of this type of strategy and its range of linguistic features is likely to be found in a personal experience where the narrator is positioned unfavourably, which may be linked to the topic of the personal experience. In other words, a personal narrative that recalls events based on a crisis of some kind that has to be resolved is more likely to elicit evaluative commentary (of self and of events in the experience in general) than an experience describing less serious predicaments. Story topic therefore, may have a far more significant role in how narratives are structured and performed than has been reported so far in narrative research. This raises the point that perhaps other cultural forms of evaluative strategies may be found, including in personal narratives of LGCs, which can be identified by marked lexico-grammatical features and correlated with specific variables.

The importance of culture in determining an individual's way of telling narratives is by no means straightforward, however. Even within a culture, an individual's membership of sub-cultures and discourse communities and, with that, interactions to signal inclusion or exclusion of that membership, may not only influence the lexico-grammatical forms of speech but also their use and distribution in oral narratives of personal experience. The result is that within a culture, it is unlikely that all members (that is, each generation, sex and socio-economic group, for example) will produce storytelling patterns that are homogeneous. Instead, variations are likely to exist which may correlate with social factors pertaining to the speaker so it is important to examine the influence of speaker variables such as age and gender to determine how far they play a role. Questions about whether men and women narrate in the same way by using the same evaluative devices or whether men and women have an equal repertoire of personal experiences in the same range of topics will also provide interesting insights into factors that cause variations at a social factor level as well as at a cultural level.

Another common criticism of L&W's model is that it developed out of personal narratives elicited in response to one story topic, the classic 'danger of death' scenario. By their very nature, danger of death experiences compel the narrator to produce a narrative that is likely to be based on a series of causally linked events. These events are likely to lead to some kind of crisis before reaching a *resolution* and as a result, guarantee a reportable narrative that fulfils particular storytelling criteria that conform to a listener's expectations. In order to investigate how far story topic creates sub-genres of storytelling, and discover whether all personal experiences conform to the same story pattern, informants from the LGC culture in

this study are asked to recall personal narratives about a range of different personal experiences beyond those topics investigated by L&W. A wider range of story topics put to the LGC informants may produce a more diverse mix of personal stories and show structural differences and use of linguistic devices that support the argument that not all personal experiences adhere to the same story template.

Moreover, different story topics may produce sub-genres of personal experiences that are not narratives, according to the description offered by L&W and the core criteria outlined in Chapter 2. According to Plum (1988), narrative storytelling, which is presented as encapsulating the commonest storytelling form, is only one of several modes of storytelling, and not all personal experiences are realised as narratives. Plum's research, for example, has shown that there are other modes of personal storytelling such as 'anecdotes', 'exemplums' and 'recounts', which lack the important core narrative category that defines a story as a narrative. Findings that link story topic with story structure once again question the universal status of any given single narrative framework.

As a sub-genre of storytelling discourse, personal narratives embody a structure that conforms to a conventionalised story template, and these so called templates draw on an individual's story schemas. Clearly, in order for a narrative to be comprehended, both speakers and listeners must have knowledge of its (core) categories, as well as competence in storytelling, in much the same way that speakers and listeners need to have knowledge of the rules of the grammar of a particular language and competence in using those rules correctly. It is this knowledge that distinguishes narratives from non-narratives. By exploring existing

theoretical models for core prototypical features and formal properties associated with narrative genre a common understanding of a basic narrative unit can be reached.

The final variable being examined in this study is whether the interview setting correlates with the process of storytelling and in particular, narrative performance. One of L&W's groundbreaking methods of obtaining personal narratives from their informants was to have peer group interviews where the informants outnumber the interviewer. An examination of narratives produced in a one-to-one and a peer group interview, therefore, may provide valuable insights into how far the interview setting and the dynamics within that setting may affect the way that narratives are produced and organised. For example, it is thought that a peer group setting would be less inhibiting and more facilitating for the production of personal narratives than a one-to-one interview (one informant and interviewer). Moreover, with male group discourse said to be "competitive" and female group discourse, "co-operative" (Coates, 1988) it is likely that linguistic features associated with gendered discourse may emerge that either confirm or challenge existing research in this area. Such findings might also have implications on the storytelling process, particularly as the co-construction of personal narratives appears to be an inevitable and marked feature of group discourse that facilitates the social act of sharing personal experiences (Lambrou, 2003).

By using L&W's and Labov's narrative schema model as a useful 'tool' for comparative research, results from my study promise to throw light on possible limitations in L&W's model and suggest ways of understanding narrative variation

as involving correlators such as cultural and social factors. Any such findings would not only answer questions raised in the discussion of the central aims of this research but also provide evidence to support the argument to modify L&W's existing framework into a 'variationist' model so that it offers a broader reflection of cultural narratives and their variants.

CHAPTER 2. WHAT IS A NARRATIVE?

2.1 What is a “narrative”?

The communicative act of storytelling is one of the ways individuals are able to represent their past experiences in a highly organised form. In both literate and non-literate cultures, storytelling through narrative discourse requires the narrator to adhere to a story template in order for the audience to comprehend what is being said and satisfy their expectations. However, as narrative discourse is likely to differ across the culture from where they emerge it is also unlikely that storytelling practices, including their organisation, adhere to the same story template. Other differences in narrative discourse will depend on their mode of communication, for example, whether a conversational narrative or fictional novel. Despite these differences, both text types³ comprise specific features that mark them out as fitting into a particular genre of storytelling - in this case, as narratives - and it is this distinction that prompts the question “what is a narrative?” An alternative way of exploring this question is to ask “when is a narrative not a narrative?” as both discussions are likely to foreground features that will distinguish this genre from other text types that are conventionally, ideologically, or even culturally considered to be non-narrative texts.

³ *Text* is used throughout this thesis to refer to both spoken and written discourse.

Of specific interest are oral narratives that describe personal experiences and are the focus of discussion in this thesis. Specifically, which features of personal narratives distinguish this form of storytelling from the more generic category of 'narrative', in terms of a recognisable basic structure and patterns of discourse. For example, are differences only found at a thematic and lexico-grammatical level? Only by asking such questions is it possible to understand what a 'narrative' is. Moreover, by identifying common characteristics thought to be fundamental to our understanding of this text type, a clear set of common referents can be drawn up with which to begin this discussion and so gain a clearer understanding of narrative form and function.

A useful approach to answering the question "what is a narrative?" is to attempt to formulate a basic definition by drawing on existing definitions as a basis for my investigation of spoken personal narratives. What might seem to be a straightforward task, however, turns out to be much more complex, reflecting the importance of narratives as an area of interdisciplinary enquiry that includes linguistics, anthropology, psychology as well as literary criticism. Even under the broad heading of linguistics, specific areas of research are wide-ranging, with sociolinguistics, ethnomethodology, Conversation Analysis (CA), stylistics and psycholinguistics each having their own concerns with specific narrative models and approaches to analysis that reflect individual interests. Of explicit interest in several of these fields, and implicit in all, has been a concern with the underlying structure of narratives and the coherence strategies used in their overall comprehension and memorisation. For example, psycholinguistic research on narrative models offers an analysis of the structural, functional and linguistic framework of narratives that focuses on their cognitive processing for understanding. This interest overlaps with

the common view that narratives must have a hierarchical structure so that different functions within the story can be seen to develop and be explicitly realized. Crucially, narratives need to be coherent to be able to function as complete meaningful units that are intelligible to either hearer or reader of the text. Outlining one such view, for instance, van Dijk and Kintsch (1983) propose that a narrative involves a macrostructure composed of smaller parts or schemata⁴ that follow a meaningful pattern. Such patterns play a role in the understanding, representation and retrieval of discourse. Underlying this theory is the notion that structures not only exist in the text but also in the mind of the reader or hearer to facilitate story comprehension, since 'one must know about conventional schemata before one can use them' (1983:251). Other disciplines are specifically interested in how narratives function to shape an individual's social reality. One suggestion is that narratives are stories concerned with 'protagonists who face and resolve problematic experiences' (Eggins & Slade, 1997:239), while another is that narratives communicate a 'socially-situated' identity and 'socially-situated' activity (Gee, 1999). This view, which developed in anthropology, ethnomethodology and sociolinguistics, illustrates the overlapping concerns as well as interests that are specific to each field.

In the study of literary theory, defined by Culler (1997) as 'the systematic account of the nature of literature and of the methods for analysing it' (p.1), there also appears to be no universally agreed model of narrative. This is despite the emergence of theoretical models of narrative from Russian Formalism, French Structuralism, post-structuralist, Marxist, feminist and reader oriented theories, each building on earlier models while at the same time offering different and often conflicting insights into narrative structure. With such a diverse range of research interests in

⁴ *Schemas* and *schemata* will be used interchangeably as the plural of *schema*.

narrative models and their form and function, the task of formulating a comprehensive definition that is sufficiently broad to encompass all concerns will undoubtedly be problematic for the reasons outlined above.

Acknowledging the difficulties of proposing a one-sentence definition of a narrative, Gulich and Quasthoff (1985) avoid the problem by instead outlining a list of what linguistic studies consider to be the most frequently used definable criteria of the concept of 'narrative' as a prelude to their own discussion on narrative analysis. To summarise:

1. 'A narrative refers to a series or real or fictional actions or events that take place in the past relative to the time of the narration (or are told as if occurring in the past). In more succinct terms, a narrative is based on a story';
2. 'The course of action or events that makes up the story contains some kind of transformation or change ... the story must contain some element that makes it reportable ... These expectations and therefore the reportability of an event are ... culturally specific';
3. 'The participants involved in the actions and events related are animate, usually humans. If the participants are not humans, as, for example, in fables or fairy tales, they still possess human qualities and act like humans';
4. 'Narratives are specified by certain formal characteristics. Among these formal characteristics is a specifically narrative macrostructure that manifests itself linguistically in a special way ... Other typically formal characteristics include narrative tenses...and particular connective devices'.

Added to the fourth criterion are four formal restrictions that apply to conversational narratives only: the presence of 'evaluative and expressive speech devices, direct speech, historical present, and a high degree of detail'. (For a fuller discussion of the above criteria, see Gulich and Quasthoff, 1985:170-172).

The criteria proposed by Gulich and Quasthoff would seem to intuitively satisfy the formal and functional requirements of fictional narratives and conversational narratives respectively. An individual's intuition of narratives, a result of schematic knowledge acquired from previous exposure to such text types, is interwoven with

expectations of what a narrative should comprise, as well as how it should develop and finally be resolved, which are all factors that are likely to be culturally defined. One way to test this notion and gain an insight into narratives as cultural forms of storytelling is to apply Gulich and Quasthoff's four criteria to a range of texts conventionally considered to be 'narratives'. By analysing the narratives in this way, it is possible to establish prerequisite and prototypical characteristics of narratives by drawing attention to the various concepts encoded in each of the definitions.

The five texts in question are examples of a diverse range of narrative text types, the first four being widely acknowledged as literary narratives while the fifth is an example of an oral narrative. They are as follows:

1. *Rapunzel* by The Brothers Grimm
2. *The Mayor of Casterbridge* by Thomas Hardy
3. *Othello* by William Shakespeare
4. *Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka
5. An oral narrative of personal experience (author's own data)

Specifically, the five texts represent a range of genres: a traditional fairytale (*Rapunzel*); a fictional novel (*The Mayor of Casterbridge*); a Shakespearean play (*Othello*); a short story in the Modernist tradition (*Metamorphosis*); and a personal experience told by an 11 year old boy, V⁵, taken from a wider sociolinguistic peer group interview. Analysis of the texts for common or prototypical features of a narrative against Gulich and Quasthoff's criteria will help identify which features are

⁵ Names of informants and names of people in personal experiences will not be transcribed in full to maintain confidentiality.

regarded as core (that is, common to all narratives) or peripheral (common to only some narratives), thereby defining the narrative genre. A summary of the plots of Texts 1-4 is given below while Text 5, the oral narrative, is reproduced in full. It is worth pointing out, of course, that narratives 1-4 have been summarised according to my intuitions of what a comprehensive precis of a story should contain, based on an awareness of the schematic structure of other story summaries I have encountered. Consequently, my summaries contain details about the main characters or protagonists at the start, followed by a distillation of the main narrative events and their resolution, set out in a temporal order. In this way, each summary conforms to a recognisable 'beginning', 'middle' and 'end' structure that corresponds to the most conventional and linear form of storytelling.

1. A poor husband and wife steal lettuces from a witch's garden. When the witch finds out, she orders the couple to give her their first baby as punishment. When a baby girl, called Rapunzel, is born, the witch takes her away and locks her in a tower. To enter the tower, the witch calls up to Rapunzel to let her hair down out of the window, which she then climbs up to enter the tower. One day, a Prince hears Rapunzel singing but is unable to enter the tower. He sees the witch call out, asking Rapunzel to let her down her hair and then climb up to enter the tower. After the witch leaves, the Prince does the same and enters the Tower. Rapunzel is very pleased to see him and after several visits the Prince asks her to marry him. Together they plan her escape. However, one day, the witch hurts Rapunzel as she climbs up her hair, prompting Rapunzel to inadvertently reveal that the Prince is always gentle and has never hurt her. Enraged, the witch cuts off Rapunzel's hair, removes her from the tower and waits for the Prince, tricking him into climbing Rapunzel's shorn locks. When the Prince sees the witch, he quickly jumps down to the ground but is blinded. After wandering around unable to see, the Prince hears Rapunzel singing and they are reunited. Rapunzel's tears of joy drop into the Prince's eyes and he is able to see again. They marry soon after.

2. Michael Henchard, an impoverished hay-trusser sells his wife Susan and baby Elizabeth-Jane, to a sailor, Newson after becoming drunk. The next day, Henchard wakes up, discovers what he has done and searches for them. When this proves to be fruitless, Henchard leaves and settles in Casterbridge where he becomes an influential businessman

and Mayor. Eighteen years later supposing Newson dead, Susan and Elizabeth-Jane seek Henchard and arrive in Casterbridge, Elizabeth-Jane having never been told the truth and believing Henchard to be a relative. Susan and Henchard meet, pretend to court and remarry as a way of keeping secret their past relationship. In the meantime, Henchard engages Farfrae in the business and soon Farfrae takes a keen interest in Elizabeth-Jane. However, Henchard grows jealous of Farfrae's success and popularity and after an argument, Farfrae leaves to set up on his own. Susan dies and Elizabeth-Jane leaves Henchard's home to live with a woman called Lucetta, who unbeknown to her was formerly Henchard's mistress. Lucetta and Farfrae meet and marry. When Lucetta asks Henchard to return her former love letters, the messenger, who Lucetta refused to help in the past, reads her letters and the townspeople ridicule her and Henchard in a "skimmityride". Lucetta dies from an illness brought on by the shock. In the meantime, misfortune and a series of bad decisions plague Henchard and he falls into debt. Newson, who is not dead, arrives in Casterbridge seeking his wife and daughter, and tells Henchard his real daughter died and that Elizabeth-Jane is Newson's own daughter. Henchard tells Newson that Elizabeth-Jane is dead, however, Newson returns and reunites with Elizabeth-Jane who is finally told of Henchard's deceit. Elizabeth-Jane marries Farfrae and snubs Henchard who tries to make amends. A broken man, Henchard leaves Casterbridge and dies alone in the countryside.

3. Iago, ensign to the General Othello is exasperated when Othello appoints another man, Cassio to the position of lieutenant in a promotion he expected. Iago determines to revenge himself of the general and secure the dismissal of Cassio. By a series of clever moves, which include stealing the treasured handkerchief belonging to Othello's wife Desdemona, given to her by Othello as a love token, and planting it on the innocent Cassio, he persuades Othello of the adultery of Desdemona with the lieutenant. Tortured by jealousy, Othello first kills his wife and then himself; but Iago fails to rid himself of Cassio since Iago's plotting is disclosed by his own wife, Emilia. Cassio is given further promotion to replace the general, while Iago faces trial and torture.

4. Gregor Samsa wakes up one morning and finds that he has been transformed into a beetle. Mystified by his transformation, Gregor worries about being late for work, being the only family breadwinner. When his family discover the transformation, they are horrified and the chief clerk who has come to check on Gregor's absence is so shocked that he runs out of the house. Terrified of his appearance and assuming that he is unable to understand them, the family lock Gregor in his room and his sister takes responsibility for looking after him. As time passes, Gregor grows more and more ashamed that he is unable to help his family who have debts to settle, a fact he learns by listening to their

conversations. The family leaves the door open so that Gregor can watch them but his sister begins to neglect Gregor and slowly, he begins to waste away. The family begin to see Gregor as an embarrassment and discuss getting rid of him. Realising that the family are right, Gregor dies in his room that night and the family discover his body the next day. The family mourns the death of Gregor but also look forward to the future and better prospects for their daughter who has grown into a young woman.

5. (*Interviewer to peer group: ... if you can think of any others ... any other fight stories ... or when you got into trouble*)

V: "I got one at school we were mucking about um Year 1 on reception this boy was really getting on my nerves and em so I took his -cause it was like wet play and when we came out it was still wet on the floor I took his jacket off I put it on the floor an then started to stamp on it [hits fist on table] and the teacher told me off and then she made me wash it."⁶

A common expectation of a narrative is that it should contain events, or 'actions', as Gulich and Quasthoff (1985) state in their first point. An event, which is roughly synonymous with an action, a happening or an occurrence, is generally regarded as a core feature of narrative, that is, a feature that defines the narrative genre itself, and may be culturally conventionalised. According to Fleischman (1990), an event is 'a hermeneutic construct for converting an undifferentiated continuum of the raw data of experience, or of the imagination, into the verbal structures we use to talk about experience: narratives, stories' (p.99). Linguistically, events are signalled through the use of past tense verbs organised into narrative clauses that are chronologically ordered to describe the main action⁷. Accordingly, 'If there is no interesting event or action in a story, we do not call it a story, or we think the story is not yet finished, that it has no point, or that it may be a story from another culture' (van Dijk and Kintsch, 1983:56). Moreover, the presence of event clauses is what distinguishes a

⁶ Author's data. The name of the informant is not transcribed in full to maintain confidentiality.

⁷ Although in oral narratives of personal experience, the present historic tense is commonly used and interpreted as 'true at a time previous to the time of the utterance' (Polanyi, 1982: 512). Gulich and Quasthoff also list the 'historic present' as a tense used in conversational storytelling.

narrative text from a non-narrative text, such as a report, a point that will be taken up and discussed later in this chapter. Consequently, in the sample Texts 1-5, the old couple giving away their firstborn, Henchard selling his wife and child, Iago planting the handkerchief on Cassio, Gregor waking up as a beetle, and V taking his opponent's jacket off, are all examples of single events within the wider context of the story.

An event in a narrative is not usually a single isolated incident, however. An event is likely to be one of a series of many, sometimes grouped together to form a 'dramatic section' in the story, or distributed throughout the narrative between sections that are primarily descriptive in order to create an alternative 'lull' to the dramatic effect. How these events are organised within the framework of the story brings us to the second prototypical feature of narratives, one that impacts on both story structure and content. Single events (and the smaller actions within each group of events, such as Iago taking the handkerchief, stolen by his wife Emilia, to Cassio's chamber and dropping it where Cassio may find it) are conventionally organised in a discernible linear relationship, also called the 'iconic sequence' (Fleischman, 1990). An 'iconic sequence' in a story is achieved through the temporal ordering of clauses, allowing events to be told in the chronological order in which they happened. Put simply, narratives - whether a fairytale, a novel, a play, a short story or a personal experience - are usually organised around a framework displaying a recognisable 'beginning', 'middle' and 'end' that creates coherence in the story's development for both teller and addressee⁸. Eggins & Slade, however, point out that 'beginning', 'middle' and 'end' are 'textual labels' that should be avoided as they are not 'genre specific' and 'therefore do not distinguish the different purposes being achieved by

⁸ The terms *teller* and *narrator* are interchangeable, as are *addressee*, *listener*, *hearer* and *recipient*.

the different stages of the genre' (1997:233). In this discussion, these labels are used as basic terms to evoke story structure and are not intended to represent or replace the function of each stage.

Not all narratives follow a strict temporal sequencing of their events. But this does not rule out those texts being categorised or accepted as narratives. Often, literary works use devices such as episodes of flashbacks and flashforwards to show off the narrator's skill in creating a marked form of narrative storytelling, what Fleischman calls 'artistic effects' (1990:167). Literary devices such as these are seen as marked only because they offer an alternative temporal structure to the expected temporal sequencing found in conventional narratives and generally considered the norm. Post-Modernist texts in particular, purposely challenge the traditional narrative form to present alternative storytelling modes by manipulating structural expectations. The use of these devices, however, does not prevent them from being recognised as narratives. Fludenik (2003) offers a useful level of analysis of chronology in narratives by drawing on narratological studies that are mainly concerned with literary texts. Chronology can be explained by the 'dichotomy between story and discourse' where:

the *story* level of a narrative, i.e. the sequence of events reconstructed from the surface level of the linguistic medium, can be viewed as a chronological order, whereas on the *discourse* level (the sequence of words on the page that constitute the text) several reshufflings take place to produce a number of *anachronies*, as Genette calls them (flashbacks, flashforwards). The study of these two temporal orders enshrined in story and discourse inevitably leads to the analysis of chronological distortions on the surface level of the narrative text, and therefore comes to connect the study of temporal levels with the surface-structure analysis of tense in narratives. This connection is particularly strong because anachronies are frequently signalled by means of tense shifts (p.118).

The use of such literary devices or departures from conventional narrative structure fulfils a function other than a stylistic one, by filling information gaps in the story where an absence of detail might otherwise cause confusion or disorientation in the

addressee. As such, flashforwards and flashbacks in narratives can be compared to the concept of “repair strategies” in a conversation (Schegloff et al. 1977) where contextual information is added throughout the discourse as a way of enhancing the hearer’s overall comprehension. In both conversation and narrative texts, an episode of flashforward or flashback is likely to return to the point in the narrative where it digressed, restoring the temporal linear structure to allow the story to continue. If it does not, there may be implications as regards the addressee’s overall comprehension due to confusion in the narrative’s structural coherence, and subsequently, as regards whether the text is viewed as a narrative.

Another feature of narratives is the presence of participants and/or protagonist, specifically, the point at which they are introduced into the story. Traditionally, protagonists are presented early in the text to bring about the unfolding of the story and provide the reader or addressee with a referent. Departures from this convention, however, may arise depending on story genre or rhetorical purpose of the text. The protagonist's early introduction functions to orientate readers at a stage when engaging with the text is crucial for contextualisation and the need to arouse curiosity in order to sustain and prolong interest. Details about the protagonist and any other characters are likely to be embedded as descriptive, non-eventful narrative clauses that form a section where nothing of interest has yet happened, and as such, frame the events that are about to occur. This contextualising of characters before any sequence of events can be described as a 'state of normality', as by placing this section at the beginning of the text, a sharp contrast to the ensuing dramatic section is provided. The following section is likely to contain crucial narrative events that inevitably disrupt the carefully constructed state of normality of the previous

section. The juxtaposition of sections provides a causal 'before' and 'after' relationship in the story, while also providing the dramatic plot essential to drive the narrative forward. It is, as Ricoeur explains, 'an operation, an integrative process' that 'makes a single story out of multiple incidents' (1991: 426) and fundamentally, constitutes the reason for its telling in the first place. A return to a state of normality where a resolution, conclusion or goal is attained follows the narrative action. These definable sections give rise to the recognisable 'beginning', 'middle' and 'end' relationship that fulfils text-specific expectations attributed to prototypical plots. However, something has changed as a consequence of a process of causality, and this may be given explicitly or inferred by the reader. So, when the witch discovers the Prince's love for Rapunzel, she removes Rapunzel from the castle to foil her escape; or, on discovering Desdemona's alleged infidelity, Othello becomes enraged with jealousy and murders her; or when Henchard's past catches up with him in a series of unavoidable misfortunes, his downfall and eventual death follows; or Gregor, too ashamed to ask for help and isolated from his family, finally dies of neglect; or as a consequence of 'mucking about', V is punished for being naughty. As Toolan states, 'we expect and demand much more complex connectedness, non-randomness, and sequentiality in the events of narratives' (2001:7). Otherwise, what is there to interest, engage and challenge the addressee and help their understanding of the narrative, if the progression of events remains unclear, calling into question the narrative's lack of coherence and what would be considered an absence of an all-important plot. Moreover, consequence in narratives is not so much 'given' as 'perceived: narrative depends on the addressee seeing it as narrative as, according to Toolan, 'the ultimate authority for ratifying a text as a narrative rests not with the teller but with the perceiver or addressee' (2001:7).

It is time to sum up my discussion so far. In answer to the question “what is a narrative?” I have suggested that narrative structure is closely linked to addressee intuitions and expectations based on cognitive models and knowledge of texts (see also Emmott, 1997). A recognisable ‘beginning’, ‘middle’ and ‘end’ provides the basic and often prototypical structure of a narrative that signals progression in the plot, or what I call a ‘change of state’. This process can be compared to Todorov's (1977) notion of ‘transformation’, which is the perceived movement in a narrative that corresponds to the ‘beginning’, ‘middle’ and ‘end’ development of a narrative, and compatible with the ‘consequence’ condition described earlier by Toolan. The process of transformation in narratives can be represented in Fig. 2.1 below:

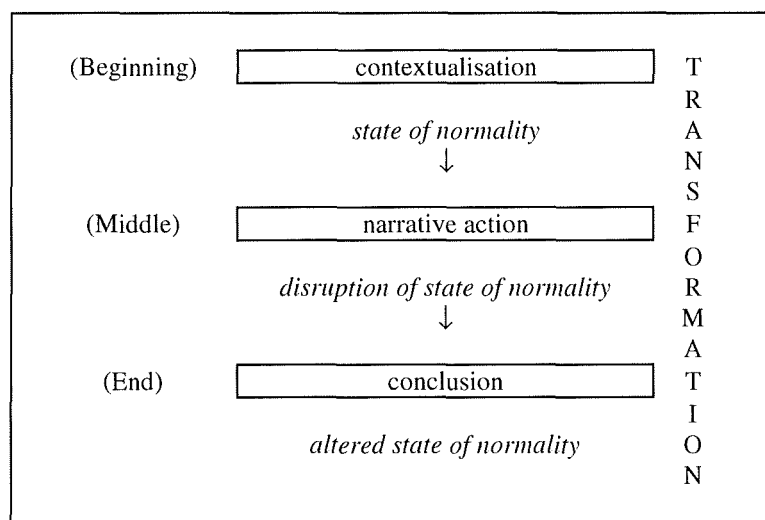


Fig. 2.1. The process of transformation in a narrative

Transformation, then, is inferred by the addressee, whose mental models of similar text types provide a basis for their ability to make sense of complex text structure to create overall, coherent narrative comprehension. In this way, the addressee can make sense of the change from a state of normality, through disruption in the middle, to an altered state of normality where the goal or conclusion of the plot is

reached. Transformation is also signalled by linguistic markers that foreground the function of various stages of the text. For example, transformation may be revealed by the use of descriptive clauses at the beginning, which function to orientate the addressee, or through the use of past tenses and verbs to emphasise narrative action in the middle, or by use of language that is evaluative and functions to highlight the reportable value of the narrative, before returning to a non-eventful description for the narrative's conclusion. Needless to say, all three stages interact to produce a coherent and comprehensible discourse that conforms to and satisfies an addressee's expectation of what a narrative is.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the features of a narrative that have been considered so far also correspond to the three conditions of a narrative proposed by various literary theorists (Prince, 1973; Todorov 1969, 1977). The three conditions - *temporality*, *causation* and *human interest* - are said to combine to form a minimum plot structure, with plot being 'the dynamic, sequential element in narrative literature' ... 'the only indispensable skeleton', the 'most essential' but 'least variable' element of narrative (Scholes and Kellogg 1966: 207 and 238-9, cited in Cortazzi, 1993:85-6). Briefly, *temporality*, as the name suggests, is the temporally-ordered sequence of events, with a minimal narrative requiring three states (the beginning, middle and final state) all linked by conjunctive features of time; *causation* where the middle and final state of the story are linked, that is, the events are connected by time and causation, which forms the plot (Ricouer, 1981). Finally *human interest* (Bremond, 1966; Prince, 1973) must be present, for without this there is no narrative, or at least, it is not worth telling. *Human interest*, however, is subjective and culturally specific,

and what appeals to one audience may not necessarily appeal or have relevance to another.

The five sample texts can now be compared to what have been established as the prototypical features of a narrative, as shown in Table 2.1 below:

	i. Protagonist introduced early	ii. Contains events	iii. Temporality of events	iv. Causality	v. Human interest
1. <i>Rapunzel</i>	√	√	√	√	√
2. <i>The Mayor of Casterbridge</i>	√	√	√	√	√
3. <i>Othello</i>	√	√	√	√	√
4. <i>Metamorphosis</i>	√	√	√	√	√
5. <i>Oral narrative of personal experience</i>	√	√	√	√	debatable

Table 2.1. Some prototypical features of narratives across five different text types.

The five sample texts satisfy the basic requirements of a narrative, although the condition of *human interest* will always be subjective at the addressee level. Despite the cultural subjectivity of the *human interest* condition we might say we know that Texts 1-4 fulfil this criterion due to their canonical status within literature. Equally, it could be viewed that as a result of gaining canonical status, they merit human interest. In oral narratives of personal experience, the justification for *human interest* is much more subjective because the perception of the text as interesting rests to some extent with the narrator rather than the listener. That is to say, just because the narrator thinks the experience is reportable does not necessarily mean that the listener will hold the same view. In such a situation, it is important for the narrator to be able to make a judgement as to whether the narrative fulfils its rhetorical purpose of being interesting, entertaining or relevant in some way to the audience. This

brings into play the issue of 'recipient design', where 'the talk by a party in a conversation is constructed or designed in ways which display an orientation and sensitivity to the particular other(s) who are the co-participants' (Sacks et al., 1974: 727) and takes account of the audience's 'identity, interests and states of understanding'. This notion is comparable with, though distinct from, the notion of the idealised reader in written texts. We can thus say that conditions i-iv, *Protagonist introduced early, Contains events, Temporality of events, Causality and Human interest*, which are present in all my sample Texts 1-4, form the core prototypical conditions of a narrative. Condition v. *Human interest* is a peripheral feature, at least to the extent that it is subjective at both a personal and cultural level. Nevertheless, it would be reasonable to argue that peripheral features such as the presence of human interest in a specific text can shift 'status' between core and peripheral. To give a further example of where a shift may occur, narratives within the 'whodunit' genre are notorious for concealing the identity of a major protagonist until the end of the narrative (this is assuming that this protagonist is the villain rather than the 'lead character' of the story). This directly subverts condition i. *Protagonist introduced early* (though other lesser players will be introduced e.g. the murder victim, the police inspector, other suspects etc.). There may also be a departure from condition iii. *Temporality of events*, as can be found in post-modernist texts where the style intentionally breaks away from established conventions within literature to disrupt the temporal sequence of events. Even the recognisable 'whodunnit' genre of texts has the key narrative event occurring towards the beginning in order to provide motivation for the plot and a series of flashbacks to unravel and solve the mystery, again not adhering to condition iii.

Despite these shifts within the core and peripheral categories, all five conditions are necessary for texts to be perceived and accepted as narrative forms.

We can now return to Gulich and Quasthoff's four definable criteria for a narrative (including the formal characteristics for conversational narratives). When the five sample texts are analysed against them, all five texts satisfy the criteria, as summarised below in Table 2.2.

	1. A narrative refers to a series of real or fictional actions or events that take place in the past relative to the time of the narration...	2. The course of action or events that makes up the story contains some kind of transformation or change ... the story must contain some element that makes it reportable ... These expectations and therefore the reportability of an event are ... culturally specific'	3. The participants involved in the actions and events related are animate, usually humans. If the participants are not humans, as, for example, in fables or fairy tales, they still possess human qualities and act like humans	4. Narratives are specified by certain formal characteristics e.g. a specifically narrative macrostructure that manifests itself linguistically; narrative tenses; connective devices. (Including 4 formal restrictions that apply to conversational narratives only)
1. <i>Rapunzel</i>	√	√	√	√
2. <i>The Mayor of Casterbridge</i>	√	√	√	√
3. <i>Othello</i>	√	√	√	√
4. <i>Metamorphosis</i>	√	√	√	√
5. <i>Oral narrative</i>	√	√	√	√

Table 2.2 Gulich and Quasthoff's (1985) four definable criteria of a narrative applied to the five sample texts.

So far, an examination of various descriptions of a narrative (together with the core categories that distinguish this text type from others) has been developed for the purpose of offering a broad working definition of narrative. Yet, there are other concerns which make the task of providing a definition of narrative still more problematic: this is due to the difficulty of encapsulating the various conditions and criteria held as important by different academic disciplines into one succinct

definition. For example, a definition that is too broad can lead to an overgeneralization that readily describes what are traditionally non-narrative text types, such as anecdotes or police reports⁹, all of which express events in the past, in a temporal order. Conversely, a definition that is too narrow may inadvertently exclude a range of text types traditionally thought to be within the narrative category, whether oral or written, so that it applies only to a select category of narratives. To illustrate the point about using a broad definition, Smith defines narrative as ‘someone telling someone else that something happened’ (1981:228), which not only describes oral narratives, but also anecdotes and police reports, despite emphasising the social transaction function of narratives over and above style and form. The vague description of ‘someone’ in the role of narrator and addressee presents greater problems: out of the five samples only Text 5, the oral narrative, is explicitly told to an audience, while in Texts 1-4, the roles of teller and addressee are assumed or inferred as implied or idealised readers.

A further example to illustrate the difficulty in presenting a concise definition of a personal narrative is one proposed by Eggins and Slade (1997), where narratives are ‘stories which are concerned with protagonists who face and resolve problematic experiences’ (1997, 239). On the surface, this definition satisfies a number of core prototypical features of a narrative. However, by describing narratives as being only about ‘problematic experiences’, stories about other topics, such as happy or sad events are immediately excluded from the definition. Eggins and Slade are therefore

⁹ For a fuller discussion of the internal structure of a *recount* and an *anecdote* and why it differs from that of a narrative, see section 2.6 of this chapter. In accounting for differences between a narrative and a police report of ‘what occurred’, I draw on Polanyi’s explanation: a narrative illustrates ‘some sort of general truth with implications for the world in which the story is told as well as for the impact of events in the story itself’ (1981:326). Police reports on the other hand ‘give a picture of what went on during a particular period’ but convey only the facts and not an evaluation of the events. Furthermore, recipients ‘bear the burden of building the “story” out of the report’ if that report was forthcoming as an answer to a request for information. (Polanyi, 1982: 515).

claiming that story topic is as important a condition as the combination of formal linguistic and structural features in making the text recognisable as a narrative. Moreover, the implication is that experiences that are 'problematic' are in some way the default story topic of narratives, while other experiences result in marked or deviant variations. The importance of story topic as a condition of narratives is a point that will be taken up in Chapter 5 'Schema variation and narrative genres: When is a narrative not a narrative?' where the importance of story topic is discussed as a way of providing an alternative understanding of narrative structure.

Toolan (2001) offers a useful definition of narrative, which closely matches Gulich and Quasthoff's four conditions outlined earlier in the chapter. He states that 'A narrative is a perceived sequence of non-randomly connected events, typically involving, as the experiencing agonist, humans or quasi-humans, or other sentient beings, from whose experience we humans can 'learn' (p.8). Interestingly, and similar to other definitions offered by linguists, Toolan foregrounds the functional importance of narratives in addition to drawing attention to the core features of a narrative, seeing both aspects as inseparable. This issue is raised in his discussion of narrative form below:

The idea of change (of state) is so crucial to narrative as a defining human activity, because without the recordings of change that narrative enables, the *enactment* of further changes would be considerably hampered. In other words, *talking to each other about changes/developments in the past* assists us in coming up with plans in which we initiate (or respond to) present or future changes (2001:13).

Toolan's observation on the process of transformation has direct implications for our social identity as individuals and members of groups. In particular, Toolan works on

the premise that narratives are ‘cognitively enabling’, a notion that develops out of the ‘learning’ condition of ‘transformation’.¹⁰

The discussion so far highlights the difficulty with offering even a preliminary definition of a narrative. Having highlighted some of the common and core prototypical features and criteria of narrative by analysing different examples of text types against the theoretical works of various linguists in the field, it is hoped that this chapter provides a satisfactory basis for moving to a discussion about oral narratives, the main concern of this thesis.

2.2 What is an oral narrative based on personal experience?

Beyond the field of narratology, spoken personal narratives are of interest to a number of academic disciplines, including sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, ethnomethodology and psycholinguistics. Being a sub-genre of the wider narrative category, oral narratives of personal experience can also be identified by distinct core features that describe both their form and function, as illustrated by the descriptions drawn from Toolan, Eggins and Slade, and Smith in the previous section. A brief outline of the key characteristics of this more specific narrative form will provide a useful starting point for the discussion of oral narratives, which will

¹⁰ One narrative genre that that appears to conflict with the notion of it being ‘cognitively enabling’ is horror stories. How can horror stories, which aim to ‘paralyse you with fear’ be cognitively enabling? A discussion of children’s ‘almost narratives’ in Chapter 5 suggests that narrative function is not only about reflecting our world reality and so plays a major role in our socialisation by encoding what is ethically and morally acceptable, but also about providing information to warn us of trouble and dangers that can be avoided in an alternative or hypothetical reality.

be developed in greater depth in Chapter 3. 'Labov and Waletzky's narrative schema model and questions of universalism', as a prelude to my own study.

The features commonly associated with personal narratives are:

- i. the text is spoken and not written
- ii. the narrator is the protagonist
- iii. the narrator uses first person singular "I" so that 1st person narration is used
- iv. events are set in the past
- v. events are based on real past actions and can therefore be described as autobiographical
- vi. events are temporally ordered to reflect the sequence in which they actually happened (this happened ... then this ... and then ...)
- vii. events must be reportable and have 'human interest' i.e. something interesting happens for it to be told in the first place
- viii. the narrator must evaluate the experience to draw attention to what is important to him/her

When compared to written narratives, the oral medium of a spoken narrative has several implications for our understanding of this distinct narrative form. If we make a comparison between the samples of written Texts 1-4 and the sample oral narrative of personal experience in Text 5, it is clear that the latter is produced spontaneously and is not 'fixed', as written texts tend to be. With oral narratives being produced "online", that is, at the moment of speaking, each telling is likely to vary in style and form, depending on a number of factors such as recipient design (tailoring the talk to the audience's identity, interests and states of understanding) and the rhetorical

function of the telling. In this way, the narrator creates a situated identity that is appropriate to the time of speaking, the context and importantly, the audience, whose presence can constrain or influence the telling. All these factors contribute to and influence the final form of the text. The overall organisation of the narrative, however, is likely to follow the same underlying macro-structure and remain unchanged, as the narrator is likely to model their story against a mental model from within the same narrative genre. This contrasts sharply with the fixed format of written texts, where interpretation and overall meaning will vary from reader to reader depending on the positioning of the reader to the text and reader response. Moreover, the 'distance' between author and reader entails that written texts are largely independent of the reader and not constrained by recipient design or 'local occasioning' (creating topical coherence with the ongoing talk), which ethnomethodologists consider to be two crucial factors for successful storytelling (Sacks, 1970-71; Jefferson, 1979; Polanyi, 1982). Recipient design is also a factor for why it is not possible to tell the same story twice as Polanyi (1981) explains:

Not only are the exact words used in telling the story never the same, but also, and much more importantly, each telling will be tuned to the circumstances in which it is told, delicately reflecting the concerns of the participants and their relationships to each other, to the events and circumstances treated in the story, and to the fact that the story is being told at a particular conversation to make a point relevant to the topics under discussion at the time (p.319). (See also Jefferson, 1979; Schenkein, 1979 and Sacks, 1995).

Polanyi draws attention to factors such as 'recipient design' and 'local occasioning' as an important distinction between spoken and written narratives and as vital for the successful telling of oral narratives of personal experience. Understandably, factoring these considerations to the telling places a burden on the narrator to tell an interesting and appropriate narrative, particularly in the face of peer group pressure. Consequently, emphasis is placed on the need to evaluate the personal experience in order to draw attention to what is important to the narrator and, as such, highlight to

recipients the narrative's 'tellability'. Experiences that are more likely to disrupt the normal status quo, such as those about trouble and embarrassing experiences, or those that subvert expectations such as 'almost experiences' (Lambrou, 2003), are more likely to fulfil this condition (see Chapter 3).

Another requirement of oral narratives of personal experience is that they must be an autobiographical account of real events that actually took place at some point in the past. The narrator, as protagonist, expresses his role with the 1st person singular *I* pronoun and relates events in the chronological order in which they happened. This can be illustrated by V's short account of an experience about trouble where he takes the role of perpetrator of the events in Text 2.1 (The oral narrative is broken down into clauses to emphasise the 1st person pronoun - in italics - and the chronological ordering of events):

1		<i>I</i> got one at school we were mucking about um Year1 on reception this boy was really getting on my nerves and em
5	1 st event	so <i>I</i> took his -cause it was like wet play and when we came out it was still wet on the floor
10	2 nd event 3 rd event 4 th event 5 th event 6 th event	<i>I</i> took his jacket off <i>I</i> put it on the floor an' then started to stamp on it [hits fist on table] and the teacher told me off and then she made me wash it

Text 2.1 V's personal narrative

Further personalisation is provided by V's use of the object pronoun *me* to describe the consequence of the 'cause and effect' relationship of his actions in ll.13-14, which place him in the role of the receiver of someone else's actions. Importantly, V's narrative fulfils the criterion of tellability in that it draws attention to his naughty

behaviour, a topic he considers to be of interest to boys of the same age in his peer group interview. This criterion is very much bound up with the social function of personal narratives and oral storytelling in general, and will be explored in greater detail in the following section.

2.3 Why tell oral narratives?

The question of why people tell personal narratives is one that continues to interest researchers. Through narrative storytelling, individuals are able to represent and shape their lives, share and exchange what is meaningful, moral and ethical, and in so doing, construct their identity and those of others.

We have established narratives are 'cognitively enabling' and that 'talking to each other about changes/developments in the past assists us in coming up with plans in which we initiate (or respond to) present or future changes' (Toolan, 2001:13). Culler proposes that 'Stories ... are the main way we make sense of things, whether in thinking of our lives as a progression leading somewhere or in telling ourselves what is 'happening in the world' (1997:83). A further functional description of narratives is offered by Schiffrin (1994) who states that:

A story is a reconstruction of an experience, told at a specific time, in a specific place to a specific audience for whom the storyteller seeks to demonstrate the validity of a general claim (e.g. about oneself, one's experience, or the world). Put another way, a story seeks to establish an intersubjectively agreed upon point (a point which may involve the audience as co-author) (p.7).

By reconstructing real past events, the narrator comes to share his personal experiences with others, in an act that has greater implications than simply

exchanging experiences for entertainment purposes. Moreover, as teller of first-hand experiences, the narrator has the added advantage of controlling what is said and to whom, beyond the lexico-grammatical code. In other words, the experience may involve elaboration or fabrication of actual facts and events so that what transpires may be closer to fiction than truth. In this way, the narrator is able to construct, and even reconstruct their identity, as well as the identity of other agents in their narrative, to represent them in a positive or negative light. All these points will depend on factors such as the storytelling context, the audience and the goal of telling the story, and appears to conflict with Schiffrrin's above statement that personal narratives are 'demonstrating the validity of a general claim', as a distortion of the key events in the experience may influence recipient belief and objectivity as to the truth of the events and their outcome. Goffman (1981) argues that personal narratives are not only about retelling, constructing or reconstructing experiences, but are also about what is 're-experienced' (p.174). So in sample text 5, V re-experiences events in his past as both the main protagonist and antagonist, in roles that present him as both bully and victim, and ultimately, the naughty child who is punished for his misdeeds.

We can see from this discussion that the telling of narratives of personal experiences can be viewed as the ideal medium to communicate one's identity through a conventionalised public activity. Gee (1999) describes this self-authored identity, that is, the multiple identities people assume in different practices and contexts, as 'socially-situated identity'¹¹, which change according to the goal of the speaking context. For example, the narrator can be represented as a hero or victim, a bully or the one being bullied, as illustrated in V's story. Gee also argues that speaking in the

¹¹ The other term Gee uses is 'core identity' to mean a relatively *fixed* sense of self.

first person-*I* is one way of building identities, and that 'building different identities in language always implicates different social languages, since it is in and through different social languages, as they are embedded in different Discourses¹², that we enact, perform, and recognize different socially-situated identities' (p.130).

The notion of an individual's identity being closely bound up with their awareness of social reality is key to Eggins and Slade's (1997) discussion of narratives. They suggest that:

Stories are a reflection of people's identities and these representations then, in turn, shape the way the world is ... It is through the exchange of stories that social life, in all its aspects, is represented and shaped. Stories are not just a reflection of a pre-existing state but they also shape reality (p.264).

Eggins and Slade's description here draws together the various issues raised so far in this chapter, and may be thought to provide a comprehensible working description of the social function of narratives that can be developed in the more detailed investigations which follow.

2.4 Are personal narratives universal?

The activity of personal narrative storytelling is widely accepted as universal for the reasons presented so far in this chapter: in addition to shaping an individual's identity and social reality, the exchange of personal experiences interact with an individual's cognitive awareness of the world in which they live to help them make

¹² Gee distinguishes between *discourses* with a small 'd' to mean how language is used 'on-site' to enact activities and identities, and discourse with a big 'D' which involves both language on-site and non-language "stuff", such as 'clothes, gestures, actions, interactions, ways with things, symbols, tools, technologies (be they guns or graphs), and values, attitudes, beliefs, and emotions "right", as well, and all at the "right" places and times'(Gee, 1999: 7).

sense of the world they live in. If we begin with this premise, then a further assumption begins to follow: that storytelling is not limited to or constrained by any one culture. Deese (1983)¹³ argues that there is an underlying and basic assumption by ethnologists that narratives have characteristics that are universal in human cultures. If we adopt this position, we can begin to question whether the formal properties of narratives, such as those features and prototypical characteristics described earlier in this chapter, are also universal and common to personal narratives in different cultures. Moreover, this will also have implications on whether one narrative model can account for all narratives across all cultures.

According to the psychologist Jerome Bruner:

one important way of characterizing a culture is by the narrative models it makes available for describing the course of a life. And the tool kit of any culture is replete not only with a stock of canonical life narratives (heroes, Marthas, tricksters, etc.), but with combinable formal constituents from which its members can construct their own life narratives: canonical stances and circumstances, as it were. (1987: 15)

It could therefore be argued that canonical narratives and the structure on which they are modelled, are very much a reflection of the cultural storytelling practices from where they emerge. In other words, different cultures are likely to have a different 'canonical' sense of what they consider to be a narrative, whether at a semantic, structural or evaluative level, for example. Furthermore, what are prototypical features of a narrative in one culture may not be transferable to another. If we take Labov and Waletzky's (1967) narrative schema model as a case study to illustrate this point, there is an implicit assumption that the structure and lexico-grammatical usage in the personal narratives of their informants, the Black English Vernacular (BEV) community of New York, is in some sense universal. This would mean that their personal narratives and the characteristics that make them recognisable as

¹³ See Foreword to Peterson and McCabe's (1983) Developmental Psycholinguistics.

narratives are equivalent to those produced by members of, for example, the Greek Cypriot community in London, or any other given community. This is despite the existence of linguistic and cultural diversity, which, contributes substantially to an individual's identity and social reality. Needless to say, both the BEV and Greek Cypriot cultures are steeped in a strong and distinctive oral culture, in which performance and evaluation are inherent to successful storytelling.

The question that remains is this: whether oral narratives are universal and whether it is reasonable to expect there to be a single narrative framework that can accurately describe narratives across all cultures. A useful starting point, in advancing this question, is to clarify what is meant by 'universal'. This can be achieved by looking at other examples of language universals for an analogy with oral storytelling as a way to develop further our understanding of the universal status of narratives to gain insights into the common features that unite them.

We can begin by accepting the general claim that a cultural 'universal' is a concept, property, behaviour and/or activity that is common to all cultures. Traditionally, debates about universals have their roots in philosophy, where the main concern is with theorising innate mental concepts and understanding how humans are able to make sense of these concepts through experiences. When these mental concepts are realised through cultural, social and linguistic behaviour in society, the subject area becomes of interest to a diverse range of fields with their own specialisms, such as anthropology and linguistics.

A human being's unique ability to communicate through language is one of the most obvious examples of a human universal. The capacity for language is biological and

innate, and even culturally determined. Once a child is exposed to language, the process of language acquisition is triggered automatically and the child begins to acquire specific grammatical items in a fixed order that are naturally occurring and can be correlated to the child's age. Such developmental patterns have been investigated and found to occur in all languages (see Brown, 1973). It is claimed that humans have an abstract framework in their brains with 'slots' for specific items of language to be filled in during this predetermined process of language acquisition. For example, word order develops according to rules of generative grammar and specifically phrase structure rules (Chomsky, 1957; 1965). While the process itself is universal, the acquisition of a particular grammar will be culturally specific. Even in the telegraphic speech of young children, where inflections and function words such as prepositions and articles are omitted, children tend to produce phrases that adhere to the rules of generative grammar in their language and any mix up of word order will be seen as incorrect and ungrammatical. The child may be corrected in an attempt to help them produce what is regarded as a 'well formed' utterance that conforms to the grammatical rules of their language. Accordingly, expressions of language will differ according to culture so that sounds, words, symbols and gestures etc. will be culturally determined, yet all languages can be reduced to a basic grammar with rules and parameters for possible phrase structures. It is also possible that the distinction between explicit surface features and the deep underlying structure of languages may describe the basic principles of narrative models as regards whether narratives can also be reduced to the equivalent deep structures or macro-structures. This point will be taken up and discussed in the following section of this chapter, which focuses specifically on story grammars and narrative schemas.

There are a number of other human behaviours regarded as universal that have come to shape the social use of language, such as 'greeting' and 'parting' routines, and honorifics. These practices, however, are mostly culturally determined and culturally constrained, so that their linguistic and behavioural expression may differ significantly from one culture to another. Two such possible language universals are the 'maxims of conversation' (Grice, 1975), which emphasise the importance of mutual co-operation as a basic requirement of any speech event, and the phenomenon of 'politeness', described as 'basic to the production of social order, and a precondition of human co-operation' (Brown and Levinson, xiii: 1987). For successful communication to take place, the notion of 'co-operation' is vital (for example, for creating and maintaining relationships). Both the maxims of conversation and politeness are, in this sense, basic requirements of social order and have developed within society as a means to preserve human existence. It could be argued that there is a direct correlation between behaviours that reduce the threat of social disorder by maintaining co-operation and social order, and behaviours that are viewed as universal linguistic behaviours. As codes for these behaviours are culturally determined, with specific systemic rules for what is and is not acceptable, knowledge and understanding of them would be advantageous to members of each society as a way of facilitating manageable, communal living. Ignorance or violation of these culturally diverse behaviours, on the other hand, would have serious implications for those with different cultural systems. To give an example, the Western Apache of east-central Arizona regard silence as a form of communication that demonstrates uncertainty, while the Danes are said to appreciate periods of silences without feeling any need to talk when in company. The Puliyanese of south

India are described as 'not particularly cooperative' while the Aritama of Colombia are described as 'deliberately evasive' (Wardhaugh, 1992:240-241).

Where do universals fit into a discussion of narratives and storytelling? The structural anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss, well known for his groundbreaking analysis of human universals, also examined narratives. Specifically, his work on narratives developed out of investigating other human universals such as language, kinship rules and exchange, which are vital for human social life. Interestingly, all are fundamentally cultural rather than biological phenomena or manifestations of 'nature' (1949; 1977). Levi-Strauss' structural analysis of myths is a development of Vladimir Propp's (1968 [1928]) linear permutations of the actions or functions in the narratives of Russian fairystories (see discussion below) and provides further insights into the origins of narratives by identifying universal mental principles based on binary relations that can transform a set of myths from one culture into the set of myths of another. Levi-Strauss' claim is that the organising structure is the same for all myths and is an expression of the human propensity to organise 'unconscious structures' into models (1977). He was able to apply this concept to language and other universal social activities such as marriage and cooking, viewing the models as a kind of language grammar where encoded systems across cultures could be broken down into their 'constituent elements'. According to Bruner (2002), Levi-Strauss saw myth and story as 'manifestations of a culture's coming to terms with the conflicting requirements of communal living. Narrative reflected a culture's inherent strains in effecting the kinds of exchange required in communal life' (p.110). (See also Levi-Strauss, 1969; DeGeorge and DeGeorge, 1972; Culler, 1997; Copley, 2001).

So far, we have established that storytelling, including stories about personal experience, is a linguistic behaviour that is universal to all languages and cultures and represents an individual's social reality. In narratives, we expect to see representations of norms reflecting aspects of behaviour, morals and attitudes, together with representations where norms of behaviour are violated. Eggins and Slade assert that stories are more than just a reflection of a pre-existing state, because it is 'through the exchange of stories that social life in all its aspects, is represented and shaped' (1997: 264). Storytelling shapes social life that is represented through personal narratives, which in turn encode human interest. Storytelling, therefore, is a means by which humans establish, confirm and represent their social reality within their society, in an activity that is inherent to all cultures.

Cobley (2001), however, takes a contrasting view and argues against the universalism of narratives. He claims that the early narratives, such as those depicting epics from oral cultures do not reveal universality, 'rather it has been instrumental in the promotion of difference, helping to preserve some memories and not others, and helping to bind some people into a given community and not others' (p.38-39). While Cobley's claim appears to present a counter-argument against the status of narratives as universal, the underlying implication is that storytelling practices must somehow be pan-cultural and a reflection of both an individual's, and in the case of epic storytelling, the community's cultural practices, otherwise there can be no means to compare and contrast narrative function and argue a case for cultural diversity.

The issue of storytelling as universal again raises the question of whether narratives conform to a universal story template that can be reduced to the same basic structure. According to Mandler et al. (1980) there is no doubt that 'the organisation of simple stories is a cultural universal and, furthermore, that it is consistent with daily modes of comprehension and remembering that are also universal, regardless of type of culture or amount of schooling' (p.21). Their position on storytelling stems from their analysis of 'simple stories' found in the children's stories Mandler et al. analysed as part of their study. Personal narratives by adults, however, are far more complex than the 'simple stories' produced by children, or even the formulaic folktales and fables of early oral cultures. While evidence suggests that universals, including storytelling practices, are common to all cultures, it does not in any way entail that they are expressed in the same way either linguistically or behaviourally. For example, personal narratives may not all have the same structural or temporal organisation, the same opening and closing formulas and lexico-grammatical devices, or even the same paralinguistic features. In other words, the telling of narratives may be universal but linguistic and cultural diversity, together with other factors, such as the narrator's age and sex, may well cause variation in narratives that would have implications for the notion of 'one narrative model for all'. Vital to our understanding of the relation between teller and story is *where* variation occurs and *why*. Only by exploring these issues can we begin to gain a better insight into what we understand by 'narrative structure'.

2.5 Story grammars and narrative schemas

One of the ways to advance our knowledge of narrative structure, and the notion of one narrative structure for all cultures, is by looking at some of the main theoretical frameworks for narratives. This is a useful starting point to explore where variation may occur, if we accept that storytelling practices, being culturally and linguistically diverse, are likely to be culturally embedded. A brief overview of several major studies and theoretical frameworks from cognitive psychology and psycholinguistics will introduce some key concepts, including 'story grammars' and 'story schemas'. The overview will provide a theoretical grounding for subsequent, in-depth analysis of one specific theoretical framework, the central case study in this thesis: L&W's (1967) and Labov's (1972) narrative schema theory.

Before discussing L&W, however, one major theoretical framework that proved to be influential in providing an account of the most prototypical form of narrative fiction is Propp's (1968 [1928]) *Morphology of the Folktale*. Propp's pioneering work, which analysed a corpus of 115 Russian fairytales focused on the syntagmatic or linear structure of these texts. Propp found fairytales involved permutations of 31 possible actions or 'functions' that evolve around seven character types or roles. These allow for the combination and inclusion of specific actions and characters to form a recognizable body of Russian folktales. The underlying structure for all Russian fairytales is as a result considered to be the same, with events and characters bounded by parameters that are genre specific. As Toolan (2001) points out, folktales and their outcomes are 'constant and predictable' because variations occur

within a finite set of options that ultimately conform to specific expectations, such as ending with a marriage.

Propp's work has since inspired a number of other important studies that have added to our understanding of narrative structure, in fields as diverse as anthropology, narratology and literary criticism (see Levi-Strauss, 1960; Bremond, 1973; Greimas 1966). Yet Dundes' "Introduction" to Propp's work stresses that one striking criticism of Propp's analysis is that he 'made no attempt to relate his extraordinary morphology to Russian (or Indo-European) culture as a whole'. Despite his analysis being acknowledged as 'a powerful technique of descriptive ethnography', such an atomistic analysis overlooks the fact that 'the form must ultimately be related to the culture or cultures in which it is found'¹⁴. This criticism would seem to be a valid one in light of my discussion of narratives as culturally embedded and reflecting the storytelling practices of the culture where they originate.

The notion of an abstract story template with 'slots' that can be filled from a limited choice of options, underpins the notion of 'story grammars', which are rules that describe the *deep structure* of stories. Building on Propp's findings, there is an indication that stories may conform to a basic structure that is universal to all stories (c.f. Todorov, 1969) and that it is this organisation of the internal structure of stories that assists in their memorisation and recall. Such ideas are of course fundamental to the theory of schemas and story schemas. Developed primarily from Bartlett's (1932) psychological studies, the concept of schemas emerged from 'schema theory' to explain the cognitive structures and processes used in comprehension and memorisation of information. Specifically, schemas contain information connected

¹⁴ See Dundes, *Introduction to Morphology of the Folktale*, 2nd ed, 1968: xiii

with a particular object, situation or event so that a person is able to use the information to make sense of the world around them. Because each schema relies on knowledge from previous experiences, people are able to draw on their schemas as a kind of mental representation to facilitate interpretation and understanding. Examples of schema knowledge are knowing what to do at a post-office, or knowing what happens in a university lecture or knowing what an aeroplane is. Such a conceptual framework would account for how people are able to cope with new situations and might also explain why schemas give rise to expectations and the likelihood of confusion when these are disrupted, for example, in cross-cultural misunderstandings.

Bartlett went on to develop the concept of 'schema theory' by researching narrative comprehension and specifically, participants' ability to memorise and recall story details. In one experiment, Bartlett found that when participants were asked to recall a story they were given, they in fact changed parts of the story by either 'flattening', 'sharpening' or 'rationalizing' parts as they 'used their own schemata as structures of expectation to fill in probable details when recall was partial' (Cortazzi, 1993: 61). This prompted Bartlett to declare that recall was 'construction rather than reproduction' (1932: 204). Two findings emerge from these claims. Firstly, schema theory helps us to make sense of texts and is the reason we have expectations when encountering a text for the first time: there is a tendency for participants to draw on previous knowledge of story structure and content when reading a 'new' story. Schema theory for language processing is the mental organisation of stereotypical knowledge about patterns in discourse which we rely on to help us interpret and understand texts. Our everyday contact with new texts is likely to confirm existing

schemas, called *schema preservation* or *reinforcing* (as opposed to *schema disruption* caused when existing schema knowledge is challenged). According to Rumelhart (1975), our comprehension of texts (and situations and events for that matter) depends on the schema knowledge we have available to us; if they do not fit within the schemas, they are modified until they do. The concept of 'available' schemata must be linked to an individual's cultural and social background as knowledge that underpins comprehension and recall of texts – including narratives – must be determined from past experience. The implication is that knowledge of texts and text comprehension will depend on existing cultural models; and where *schema disruption* occurs, the extent of the disruption is likely to depend on how close or dissimilar the complex general knowledge representations are to the recipient's own understanding and experience¹⁵.

The idea that story schemas provide a story template that fulfil speakers' expectations, in terms of their processing, memorisation and recall of narratives, while simultaneously providing a framework (that can be followed) as an ideal story structure, is central to the development of Thorndyke's (1977) theory of 'story grammars'. Thorndyke suggests that all fictional stories conform to a conventionalised structure through the presence of deep structure rules, also known as 'rewrite rules'. Story content, which includes information on *character*, *location* and *time*, can be generated within the confines of these 'rewrite rules'. Essentially, 'Story grammars define rules for formulating the underlying structures of typical stories; these stories are internalised as story schemas' (Greene, 1986: 49). Essential to Thorndyke's analysis of simple stories is the 'GOAL' of the main character which

¹⁵ For a comprehensive overview of the main areas of study in text-processing, including schema theory and how general knowledge representations and inference making contribute to text comprehension, see Chapter 2 of Emmott (1999) pp.21-77.

drives the plot of the story so that it reaches a final desired 'STATE', a process that can be compared to Todorov's notion of the process of 'transformation', described in Section 2.1 of this chapter. Thorndyke represents his story grammars in the form of a tree-diagram where the nodes that branch out from a single node represent the *Story* and further nodes can be rewritten until the actual phrases are presented for each constituent. An example of such a tree structure using a simple story to represent Thorndyke's story grammars is shown below in Fig. 2.2. (where the numbers in brackets represent the order sequence of the story). (It is also worth adding that Rumelhart (1975) suggests that knowledge of story schema assists readers during the reading process to allow for their comprehension of a text although he does not explain how.)

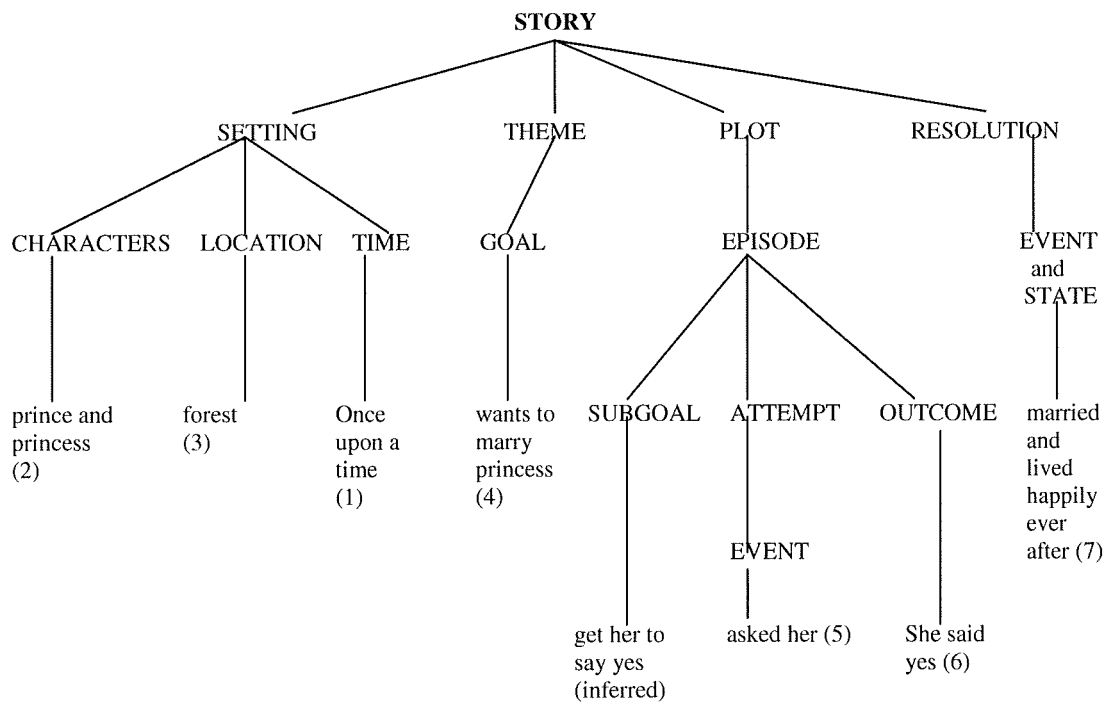


Fig. 2.2 An example of a tree structure to illustrate Thorndyke's story grammar (adapted from Greene, 1986:47)

Not everyone, however, is convinced by the notion of story schemas. Black and Wilensky (1979) are critical of the concept of story schemas as a result of findings

in their own research. As Emmot points out, their main criticism developed from the fact that:

story schemata had been viewed as being grammatical in nature and at a time when the dominant view of grammar, following Chomsky (1957, 1965, 1972), was that it should account for all the sentences of a language and only those sentences. It was clearly not true of stories that they could all be accounted for by the schemata proposed and it was also evident that these types of schemata described other types of text for example, Black and Wilensky used them to analyse a procedural text (Emmott, 1999: 32-33).

Other linguists have avoided the problem presented by analysing texts against a grammatical framework by proposing a problem-solution relationship that can be used to analyse a range of texts and not just narratives (Hoey, 1979, 1983; Winter, 1982).

Schemata and how they are processed, stored, organized and retrieved provide the basis for Kintsch and van Dijk's (1983) 'Macro-structure model' in narrative comprehension. Kintsch and van Dijk's claim that story schemas rely on knowledge of a text type (usually conventionalised and signalled by the title or abstract) and requires the filling in of 'slots' with propositions to form a 'schema outline'. The 'schema outline' then provides a 'mold' (sic) for forming a macro-structure, representing the global structure of a narrative and the framework that creates unity and coherence. As text types differ, so do macro-structures and their semantic content. (For a summary of Kintsch and van Dijk's Macro-structure model, see Cortazzi 1993: 67-74).

Story schemas and grammars are also of interest to the study of spoken narratives, which require similar schematic knowledge for their organisation, memorisation, telling, and so on. Attempts to analyse the internal structure of oral narratives of personal experience for their formal linguistic devices has also foregrounded the

functional properties of the components that make up the narrative. One of the most influential and insightful narrative models to make use of the notion of schemas is Labov and Waletzky's (1967) 'narrative schema model', which provides a functional analysis of the schematic structure of oral narratives of personal experience. Labov and Waletzky developed a framework for narrative form and function from their corpus of personal narratives that has since been widely viewed as a universal description of a basic narrative. Their narrative schema model will be presented as the central model in this thesis, one from which key questions can be extrapolated and discussed. A full description of the narrative model, and a critique that examines the extent to which the model is a universally accurate description of personal narratives will be presented in Chapter 3. However, before exploring this area of narrative study, it is useful to discuss other more recent works on modes of storytelling, to contextualise the work of L&W and in addition, introduce the notion of a genre based approach to storytelling as a prelude to my own research.

2.6 Introducing narrative genres

The question of whether one narrative model can account for all narratives, across all cultures is one of the key discussion points in this thesis. Variation in narratives, however, is not only likely to be culturally based but also caused by the genre of the narrative where variation at a lexico-grammatical and structural level may be the result of the theme or topic of the personal experience being retold. As one of the aims in this study is 'to investigate the part played by story topic in creating sub-genres within narratives of personal experience by examining relevant schematic

and lexico-grammatical features', the importance of story topic and genre will be examined more closely in the following chapters.

If we accept that genre is commonly agreed to mean 'type or 'sort', then clearly, written texts can be said to be genre specific, that is, recognisable by specific features and categorised accordingly into specific sub-genres that share corresponding characteristics. According to Montgomery et al. (2000), genres can be categorised according to a number of criteria that range from: 'formal arrangement' (length, number of lines, rhyme patterns, narration in first or third person etc.); 'theme or topic' (whodunnit, science fiction, western, biography); 'mode of address' (letters, odes); and 'attitude and anticipated response' (feelings of catharsis from classic Aristotelian tragedy drama or patriotism from some kinds of war poetry). Genres are also categories by which various speech events, their goals and the linguistic properties that make them distinguishable from each other, can be described (see Hymes, 1962. See also Hymes' SPEAKING grid in Chapter 7). Foley (1997) refers to Bakhtin when he states that 'genres consist of historically transmitted, relatively stable frameworks for orienting the production of discourse' and despite being conventionalised within a community are still 'nonetheless flexible and open to creative manipulation by performers' (p.359; see also Bakhtin, 1981; 1986). Accordingly, genres 'are not so much inherent in the text form themselves, but in the framework and interpretive procedures that verbal performers and their audiences use to produce and understand these texts' (Foley, 1997:360). Hence, a narrative that begins *in medias res*, where the *complicating action* forms the unlikely opening schema, could be interpreted as subverting the coherent structure of a classic, 'fully-formed' narrative as well as the audience's expectations.

By contrast, a story set within a conventional murder-mystery 'whodunnit' genre would be expected to follow this exact schema structure so as to not reveal details of the *who? what? where? when?* until the very end, after the reportable events in the *complicating action* are made known. By intentionally manipulating and exploiting the conventional narrative structure in this way for a particular effect, a 'whodunnit' narrative is able to maintain the suspense necessary to engage the audience until the final denouement, when the important *who?* element can be revealed. The effect of disorientation on the audience is one that is expected, and the greater the disorientation, the more effective and successful the text is said to be. The 'deviant' structure of a 'whodunnit' narrative in this way conforms to one type of story template, whereas a traditional fairytale such as *Rapunzel* conforms to another, and both are accepted as narratives within their own conventionalised narrative framework. Of the two, *Rapunzel* as a simple fairytale is likely to conform closest to L&W and Labov's model. Variations at a structural, discoursal and lexical level therefore, can be said to determine narrative genre, though it is equally true that in turn, genre determines narrative structure and form.

What of storytelling genres within the telling of personal narratives? If, as we have established, genres can be categorised by theme or topic as well as by discourse type, then within oral narratives of personal experience, different story topics may create sub-genres with their own structural and lexical conventions in much the same way as literary texts do. L&W's and Labov's model provides a structural analysis of narratives about 'danger of death' and 'fight' stories, where danger is the common theme that unites the experiences. However, their model may not easily describe the structure of different experiences, such as happy or sad past experiences

where the element of danger is absent, causing variation at a schematic level to correlate with story topic. In other words, it is possible that stylistic and structural variation linked to the social and rhetorical function of the topic of the personal experience will give rise to sub-genres of storytelling that are distinct from one another. This suggests that story topic determines structure rather than being simply constrained by it. Moreover, variation caused by story topic will have implications on the 'universal' status of L&W's six-schema narrative framework, and questions regarding whether a framework that developed out of personal narratives based solely on danger of death experiences can adequately describe all story genres. This issue will be taken up in Chapter 3.

In the meantime, it is worth considering whether all personal stories elicited in response to a range of topics (e.g. about happy, fight, sad experiences) are in fact narratives. Specifically, do all personal experiences, irrespective of topic, correspond to the same model and so form narratives or do some personal experiences form what might be described as non-narratives?

The idea that structural variation in narratives is linked to genre is not unlike the notion that variation in speech as a result of factors such as the 'setting' and the 'participants' taking part, create speech genres or speech events. Much of the work on speech genres focuses on the 'situatedness' of speaking, where a competent speaker will intuitively adapt to each speech context and comply with specific criteria, such as 'goals of communication' for successful interaction. This is described by Hymes in his SPEAKING grid for effective communication (1962, 1972a; also see Chapter 7, 'Collaborative storytelling: prompts and clarification', for

a broader discussion). In fact, the idea of acts of speech interacting with the 'purpose' and 'goals of communication' are also within the theoretical paradigms of Critical Discourse Analysis: Fairclough defines genre as 'a socially ratified way of using language in connection with a particular type of social activity' (1995:14). Therefore, it would seem fair to argue that each speech genre is as much shaped and determined by the social activity itself as by the intended outcome. From a sociolinguistic point of view, Eggins and Slade propose that genre 'is an institutionalized language activity which has evolved over time to have a particular text structure' (1997:231). Clearly, the issue of genre interacting with structure has important implications for texts, whether spoken or written, and this will be explored further in the following paragraphs.

More recent studies on personal narratives have shown that not all stories are narratives according to the criteria set out in this chapter. Some retold experiences may on the surface appear to fulfil the basic conditions of a narrative in that they describe past experiences. Closer examination of the texts, however, shows that the clauses lack the all-important narrative action or *complicating action*, which is the sequence of events that forms the basic narrative unit and is the 'tellable' high point of the story. Without clauses that constitute a *complicating action*, there can be no transformation and so its absence must disqualify any story from being called a narrative. Fludernik (1996) identifies various types of 'natural narratives' and other oral modes that are usually found in conversational storytelling as what can be called a 'narrative report', the 'observational narrative' and 'narratives of vicarious experience'¹⁶. The narrative report, like any report - whether an eyewitness account

¹⁶ Fludernik also identifies the 'joke and/or the anecdote' as one other mode of conversational storytelling, however, this will not be elaborated here (see 1996: 81-91).

of an incident by a police officer or a personal account of a relative's wedding - functions only to 'provide information, not to tell a story' (p.71). Consequently, a report lacks the necessary 'tellability' factor crucial to personal narratives as well as an evaluative commentary to draw attention to the point of its telling. Linguistically, Fludernik points out that reports are more likely to use *then* clauses instead of causal *so*, commonly found in narratives of personal experience. In narratives of vicarious experience, the events described are ones that have occurred to someone else and so are third-person accounts - often hearsay - rather than autobiographical, first-person stories. Such narratives were first identified and categorized by L&W in their analysis of oral narratives as non-narratives, for the reasons stated above. Observational narratives, on the other hand, may be considered a basic story category which uses the first person *I* 'as witness', and conveys 'the narrator's surprise, dismay, shock, fear or frustrated expectation that constitutes the tellability of the story' (Fludernik, 1996: 73). However, observational narratives cast the narrator in the role of 'a passive experiencer of the events that usually do not concern him/herself directly' (p.74). Fludernik's work on 'natural narratives' is important to the discussion on storytelling sub-genres because she identifies sub-categories that correlate to function and form.

In terms of sub-genres of personal experiences, one further valuable area of research that has helped our understanding of genre-based approaches to storytelling has emerged from the work of Plum (1988). Plum developed his theory of storytelling genres after examining story forms, elicited from sociolinguistic interviews, formulated in response to one question. Specifically, he found that while some responses from informants conformed to L&W's six-schema structure, other

personal experiences did not. However, this did not lead Plum to conclude that such stories were not well formed or were unacceptable. Instead, Plum identified distinct groups of text-types determined by their internal structure, which led him to propose four categories or generic structures of storytelling to account for these formal variants. In addition to the *narrative* genre, Plum concluded that personal experiences are also expressed as *anecdote*, *exemplum* and *recount*¹⁷, each a separate speech genre with identical beginnings and endings but with variations in the middle sections of their structure. Functionally, each storytelling genre is said to be associated with different ‘entertainment values’. For a summary of Plum’s four storytelling genres, see Table 2.3 below:

	BEGINNING	MIDDLE	END
Narrative	(Abstract) Orientation	Complication - Evaluation - Resolution	(Coda)
Anecdote	(Abstract) Orientation	Remarkable Event - Reaction	(Coda)
Exemplum	(Abstract) Orientation	Incident - Interpretation	(Coda)
Recount	(Abstract) Orientation	Record of Events - Reorientation	(Coda)

Table 2.3 Plum’s storytelling genres (adapted from Eggins and Slade, 1997)

Plum explains the social and rhetorical function of the different storytelling genres by stating that:

Both anecdote and narrative may be said to be primarily concerned with ‘entertaining’ a hearer with a textual artefact which, in order to be successful needs to have a status independent of the experience it represents. On the other hand ... exemplum (is) much more concerned with ‘making a point’ rather than with entertainment, something which is achieved by creating a link between the text as representation of experience and something outside it. (Plum, 1988: 223)

Of the four text-types, neither the *anecdote*, *exemplum* nor *recount* can be described as a narrative, primarily because of a lack of *complicating action*. Plum’s analysis of

¹⁷ For an excellent discussion of Plum’s work on storytelling genres, see Eggins and Slade (1997), particularly, Chapter 6, *Genre in casual conversation: telling stories*; and Toolan (2001), Chapter 7.7 *The systemic-linguistic account of story genres*.

storytelling genres in personal stories provides insights into storytelling and sits comfortably alongside existing theories of narrative models, such as L&W's narrative schema theory and Fludernik's 'natural narratives'. Importantly, Plum's work emphasises how genre and form can be seen as inextricably linked to social function, and how such forms can be conventionalised into distinct genres.

Plum's research on storytelling genres is introduced here as it is relevant to my discussion of the narrative versus non-narrative distinction and the influence of story topic as an underlying factor. Not all personal experiences are narratives, and it is possible that certain topics lend themselves better to producing personal narratives than others. This is one of the themes being investigated in this study, specifically, through the analysis of personal experiences from the LGC community, which may reveal the effect of story topic on form, and add to research in storytelling genres. By highlighting further correlations with the speaker's age and other social and cultural factors, it is hoped that fuller, more comprehensive insights can be offered into narrative models developed so far in terms of the relation between form and function.

CHAPTER 3. LABOV AND WALETZKY'S NARRATIVE SCHEMA MODEL AND QUESTIONS OF UNIVERSALISM

3.1 Development of Labov and Waletzky's narrative schema model

What is widely considered to be one of the most incisive and insightful analyses of narratives emerged as a result of a study undertaken by William Labov and Joshua Waletzky that was published in a paper entitled *Narrative Analysis: Oral versions of Personal Experience* in 1967. Primarily, L&W set out to investigate the use of linguistic variables in the speech of minority groups in New York (from the African-American and Hispanic communities) as a way of challenging the notion that social deprivation resulted in the use of a 'restricted code', a sort of linguistic deficiency. The low performance and success rates at school of youths from these communities led to growing concerns and, more questionably, misheld beliefs about spoken competency that fuelled debates about deficit theories linked to an individual's social class (Bernstein, 1966; Bereiter and Engelmann, 1966).

To investigate the speech of various members of their chosen communities, L&W adapted the one-to-one, interviewer-participant dynamic of a traditional sociolinguistic interview in order to collect data that reflected spontaneous and casual speech, or at least speech which was as close to a relaxed and natural style as is ever possible in an observed interview context. The speech style in question was the vernacular, 'the style in which the minimum attention is given to the monitoring

of speech' (Labov, 1972: 209). L&W's technique was to ask participants¹⁸ what has famously become the *danger of death* question, "Were you ever in a situation where you thought you were in serious danger of being killed?". Alternatively, informants were asked, "Were you ever in a fight with someone bigger than you?" to which they could answer either "yes" or "no". If the answer was "yes", informants had committed themselves to answering, and elicited a "Go on" response from the interviewer. At this point it would have been impossible not to progress and recount a narrative of personal experience, especially after an instructive prompt from the interviewer to continue: to not produce a narrative would suggest the informant was lying, and so be flouting Grice's (1975) maxim of 'quality' where truthfulness is the central premise in a communicative act that is supposed to be co-operative. Conversely, an elaboration of "yes" with a personal experience would confirm that the speaker was telling the truth and being co-operative.

Another groundbreaking procedure used by L&W was to conduct peer group interviews where participants outnumbered the interviewer, thus reducing the formality of a one-to-one interview and helping to reduce the consequences of the Observer's Paradox. There are a number of other advantages in eliciting narratives in this way, the main ones being as follows:

- i. by asking *danger of death* type questions interviewees were required to produce elaborated answers in the form of a personal narrative, and consequently, linguistic variables could be analysed beyond word and sentence level;

¹⁸ The terms *participants*, *informants* and *recipients* are used interchangeably.

ii. the production of oral narratives of personal experience gave participants a more meaningful context in which to express their storytelling skills; skills that are culturally embedded in an oral storytelling tradition, providing a fairer 'test' for the analysis of linguistic competence in these speech communities;

iii. extended discourse in the form of a personal narrative allows not only the analysis of formal linguistic properties, but also their structural and schematic organisation, providing new and alternative insights into language use;

iv. asking emotive questions about life threatening situations led to participants engaging with their personal narrative and their recounting of it, resulting in less attention being paid to speech and a perceived style shift to the vernacular;

v. consequently, some of the problems associated with the Observer's Paradox were perceived to have been minimised as a result of the above factors, yielding data considered to be more reliable;

vi. finally, conducting peer group interviews provided a ready-made audience for the narrator, beyond the formal question-answer dynamic of traditional interviews with just the interviewer, and produced language that was contextualised, functional and social.

L&W's analysis of the close correlation between 'non-standard' linguistic variables and the social characteristics of New York African-American and Puerto Rican speakers proved to be helpful in their investigation of the 'problems of effective

communication and class and ethnic difference in verbal behaviour' (1967:13). Additionally, their decision to collect linguistic data in the form of personal narratives proved to be ground-breaking in the interdisciplinary area of narrative research and it is this aspect of their study I am concerned with.

L&W claim that in order to understand narratives it is important to analyse their internal structure in relation to their function, so that 'it will be possible to relate the formal properties of narrative to their functions' (1967:12). Consequently, they analysed recurring patterns, from clausal level to whole narrative structure and proposed an 'analytical framework for the analysis of oral versions of personal experience in English' (1967:12) outlining, first, the basic units of a narrative before commenting on their overall structure. This led to L&W defining narratives as 'one method of recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events which (it is inferred) actually occurred' (1967:20) and proposing a functional description of a narrative. As a result of their findings, L&W claim that a 'fully-formed' narrative comprises six sections, each composed of 'a group of clauses of a common functional type' (Labov, 1997:403). The six sections, which are more often described as schemas, are the *abstract*, *orientation*, *complicating action*, *evaluation*, *resolution* and *coda*, each with a distinct form and function. (A full description of each of the schemas is presented in section 3.2.)

Labov's concern with low reading scores in New York schools among users of the African American Vernacular English or Black English Vernacular (BEV) dialect underpinned much of his research on the linguistic skills of this community. His study on the speech of individuals from south-central Harlem was necessitated by a

need to establish that, while the BEV dialect was non standard, it was nevertheless systematic in terms of its grammar and embedded within the culture's rich oral tradition. Having produced the narrative framework with Waletzky, Labov went on to analyse the *evaluation* strategies that members of this particular BEV culture used in their personal narratives, and described his findings in Chapter 9, 'The Transformation of Experience in Narrative Syntax' in *Language in the Inner City* (1972). Labov interviewed pre-adolescents, adolescents and adults, again using the danger of death question as the central means of eliciting oral narratives of personal experience. He applied his earlier narrative model to naturally occurring narratives of personal experience and found the results not only strengthened his earlier convictions about the six-stage schema framework, but also led to a reassessment of one of the schema categories, the *evaluation*. Specifically, Labov found that informants express involvement at all stages of their storytelling, using a variety of means with which to do so, resulting in Labov offering a more detailed description of the form and function of *evaluation*. By building on his earlier work with Waletzky, Labov was able to propose a more convincing framework for the analysis of spoken narratives.

3.2 Narrative schema model: description of schema form and function

The narrative schema framework proposed by L&W (1967) and Labov (1972) claims that a fully-formed narrative comprises six schemas. Each schema has its own distinct functional and structural role in the narrative. (Definitions from Labov, 1997):

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| 1. Abstract | <u>definition:</u> ‘An <i>abstract</i> is an initial clause in a narrative that reports the entire sequence of events of the narrative’ |
| 2. Orientation | <u>definition:</u> ‘An <i>orientation clause</i> gives information on the time, place of the events of the narrative, the identities of the participants, and their initial behaviour’ |
| 3. Complicating action | <u>definition:</u> ‘A clause of <i>complicating action</i> is a sequential clause that reports a next event in response to a potential question: “And what happened [then]?”’ |
| 4. Evaluation | <u>definition:</u> ‘ <i>Evaluation</i> of a narrative event is information on the consequences of the event for human needs and desires’; ‘an <i>evaluative clause</i> provides evaluation of a narrative event’ |
| 5. Resolution | <u>definition:</u> The resolution of a personal narrative is the set of complicating actions that follow the most reportable event |
| 6. Coda | <u>definition:</u> ‘A <i>coda</i> is a final clause that returns the narrative to the time of speaking, precluding a potential question: “And what happened then?”’ |

According to Labov (1997), each section or schema is ‘a group of clauses of a common functional type’ (p.403) and is recognisable by its use of specific lexical and grammatical devices, which form distinct sections in the narrative. L&W also asserted that the six schemas in the model follow a fixed order as listed above, to form a coherent narrative¹⁹. However, Labov (1972) revised his earlier proposal on the *evaluation* schema to claim that it is in fact woven throughout the narrative as well as found as a section between the *complicating action* and *resolution* schemas. A summary of the six schemas detailing their function and form is provided in Table 3.1 (a composite for the works of L&W, 1967; Labov, 1972; Simpson, 1992; and Toolan, 2001).

¹⁹ Labov’s actual wording is ‘a fully-formed narrative *may* show the following...’(1972; 363) (my italics) where the cautious use of ‘may’ carefully tries to avoid any implication of prescriptivism. Nonetheless, subsequent descriptions of Labov’s and L&W’s model by other academics use ‘fully-formed’ to mean all six schemas are required for a comprehensible narrative.

According to Labov, 'The abstract, the orientation, the resolution and the evaluation answer questions which relate to the function of effective narrative: the first three to clarify referential functions, the last to answer the functional question... - why the story was told in the first place' (1972:370). In more explicit terms, the function of the *abstract* is to signal the beginning of the story and what it is about, while the function of the *coda* is to signal the end of the story or to 'close off the sequence of complicating actions' (p.365). However, both the *abstract* and *coda* are found less frequently than the other four schemas of the narrative and are often described as optional categories. The *complicating action*, on the other hand, is essentially the core narrative category of the story so that if the narrative was stripped back to ask the question *what happened?*, only the clauses in this section would remain. These narrative clauses are very likely to contain 'temporal junctures' between them, in accordance with Labov's definition of a minimal narrative, 'a sequence of two clauses which are temporally ordered' (1972:360). The function of the *resolution* is to provide the *what finally happened?* to signal that the narrative is coming to an end. It may seem unnecessary to identify a separate category for what is essentially part of the *complicating action* and comprises identical lexical-grammatical features i.e. contains narrative events in clauses that are temporally ordered. However, L&W make a distinction between the two schemas in terms of their function, as the *resolution* signals closure of the *complicating action* section and without a *resolution*, the narrative is likely to be judged as incomplete. *Evaluation*, where a 'narrator evaluates events by comparing them with events in an alternative reality that was not in fact realized' (Labov, 1997:403) can be found concentrated as a section before the *resolution* schema, thus helping to identify the *resolution*. Alternatively, *evaluation* can be present as clauses that are 'woven' into the narrative

as *waves of evaluation*. Described as ‘perhaps the most important element in addition to the basic narrative clause’ (1972:366), and what Toolan calls the ‘pre-eminent constituent’ (1988:156), evaluative clauses signal the narrator’s assessment of events in one of two ways: as *internal evaluation* or *external evaluation*. The sub-categories of *evaluation* depend on whether the assessment appears inside the narrative, as part of the narrative clauses and made explicit through linguistic devices such as *intensifiers*, *comparators*, *correlatives* and *explicatives*; or, are found outside the narrative, where the narrator breaks off from the telling to comment on the experience (see Table 3.1 Summary of Labov and Waletzky’s (1967) and Labov’s (1972) narrative schema model). In his later work, Labov found that evaluative strategies tended to be missing from the narratives of children who appeared to lack the ability to evaluate their personal experiences in the way that adults can. This point is taken up and discussed in Chapter 5.

Table 3.1 Summary of Labov and Waletzky's (1967) and Labov's (1972) narrative schema model.

CATEGORY	FUNCTION	FORM	
1. ABSTRACT <i>(optional)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> signals beginning of story and indicates what it is about. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> usually one or two clauses found at beginning of narrative story that provides summary of the (whole) story. 	
2. ORIENTATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provides the <i>who, what, when</i> and <i>where</i> of the story. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> usually found towards the beginning of the story, prior to the development of narrative action; introduces protagonist(s) of narrative; orientation section composed of free clauses (not confined by temporal juncture) - usually descriptive - that serve to orient addressee; often characterised by past progressive verb forms and adverbial modifiers of time, place and manner; lacking in narratives of children and less verbal adults (1967:32). 	
3. COMPLICATING ACTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provides the '<i>what happened</i>' part of story; is the core narrative category conveys events that have happened and are reportable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> composed of narrative clauses which are temporally ordered; normally have a verb in the simple past (action of the narrative); something reportable happens. 	
4. EVALUATION <i>'perhaps the most important element in addition to the basic narrative clause' (Labov, 1972:366)</i> <i>'Pre-eminent constituent' (Toolan, 2001:152)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> makes point of the story clear by providing the '<i>so what?</i>' element, its <i>raison d'être</i>, the reason it's worth reporting; highlights what is interesting to narrator or addressee; may convey narrator's personal involvement in a story; involves a temporary suspension of the action - a 'time out', while elaborate arguments are developed; distributed throughout the narrative 	<p style="text-align: center;">EXTERNAL EVALUATION</p> <p>Appears outside of narrative clauses; is a commentary revealing how participants in story felt; are of five sub-types:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> wholly external evaluation e.g. <i>It was the strangest feeling; It was quite an experience;</i> evaluation embedded as comment made by teller-as-participant at the time of event e.g. <i>And I said to myself: 'This is it!'</i> embedded as comment made by teller-as-participant to another 	<p style="text-align: center;">INTERNAL EVALUATION</p> <p>'Woven' into complicating action sentences; depart from basic narrative syntax; more evident in personal narratives of adults than in adolescents/ pre-adolescents; categorised under four headings with sub-types:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> INTENSIFIERS - do not complicate basic narrative syntax, include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> gestures e.g. pointing usually accompanying deictic <i>this</i> or <i>that</i> expressive phonology e.g. <i>shhh!</i>, <i>a lo-o-ong ti-i-me</i> exaggerating quantifiers e.g. <i>all</i>; repetition ritual utterances which are culturally specific

<p>4. EVALUATION (cont.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> and occurs before the resolution; draws attention to the resolution and significance of story 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> participant e.g. <i>And I said to Mary: 'This is it!'</i> embedded as an evaluation from another participant e.g. <i>And Mary said: 'This is it!'</i> evaluative action: responding in physical rather than verbal terms to ongoing events e.g. <i>I was shakin' like a leaf</i>. Use of symbolic action will be culturally defined e.g. <i>crossing yourself</i> (1967:38) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> COMPARATORS - evaluate indirectly by comparing events which occurred to those which did not; are sources of syntactic complexity, include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> negation modality and modulation (modal verbs and adverbs including <i>possibly, surely, usually, always</i>) futurity hypothetical sentences questions usually embedded in the speech of the actors imperatives comparative or superlative phrases with <i>as</i> in prepositional phrases and <i>like</i> in metaphors and similes CORRELATIVES - bring together events in a single, independent clause; are sources of syntactic complexity beyond the range of younger narrators, include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> simultaneity of occurrence of actions e.g. <i>while; be + V- ing</i> appended participles (doubled progressives with <i>be</i> deleted) e.g. <i>I was sitting on the corner smoking</i> To describe antagonists: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> double appositives e.g. <i>a knife, a dagger</i> double attributes (both attributive and predicative positions) e.g. <i>a drunken, old lady</i> 'left-hand' participles or 'deverbal' adjectives e.g. <i>an unsavoury-looking character;</i> EXPLICATIVES - attention of the listener may be transferred backward or forward or in to a realm of 'abstract speculation' wholly unrelated to the narrative;
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<p>4. EVALUATION (cont.)</p>			<p>appended subordinate clauses which qualify, clarify or give reasons for main events reported, introduced by conjunctions e.g. <i>while, although</i> or causal <i>since, because</i>; simple, complex and compound embedding (3 types of attachment to the main clause)</p> <p>(Other syntactic devices include deletions, passives, ellipses; reorderings such as flashbacks and displacement of orientation; dysfunctional aspects, such as confusions of persons, anaphora and temporal relations).</p>
<p>5. RESOLUTION</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provides the '<i>what finally happened?</i>' element of story; without this, the narrative is incomplete; • provides closure to narrative (although not always clear); • significance of resolution may depend on genre of the narrative. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • last of the narrative clauses of complicating action which terminates that series of events. 	
<p>6. CODA (optional)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • signals 'sealing off' or end of story and may be in the form of a moral or lesson; • a generalised statement that is timeless in character: may contain observations or show effects of the events on teller; • bridges back to the teller-addressee present. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • composed of free clauses; • usually switches from past tense to present tense; • use of deixis such as <i>that, there, those</i>. 	

3.2.1 Narrative schema model and issues of reportability, credibility, objectivity, causality, assignment of praise and blame, and viewpoint

In his article entitled "Further steps in narrative analysis" published in *The Journal of Narrative and Life History* (1997), Labov returned to his earlier work on oral narratives of personal experience to re-evaluate the schema categories proposed by L&W (1967) and Labov (1972). In this article, Labov considers 'the further issues of reportability, credibility, objectivity, causality, and the assignment of praise and blame' to provide a fuller analysis of the properties of oral narratives beyond their 'temporal organization and evaluation' (p.397). His starting point is his definition of a narrative, based on the 'initial conception of L&W':

'Definition: a narrative of personal experience is a report of a sequence of events that have entered into the biography of the speaker by a sequence of clauses that correspond to the order of the original events.' (p.398)

The first of the concepts intrinsic to oral narratives is *reportability*, which Labov compares to Sacks's approach to controlling speaker-assignment in conversational narratives (1995, Vol.2, pp.3-5) and defines as follows:

'Definition: A reportable event is one that justifies the automatic reassignment of speaker role to the narrator' (p.406).

In other words, for a narrator to be given a further opportunity to speak, they must be able to justify the reassignment by recounting a narrative that is worth telling, and a narrative of personal experience that is worth telling must contain at least one reportable event. Vital to this act of storytelling is the narrator's knowledge and understanding of the audience and speaking context so that no social or cultural norms are violated. Accordingly, for a personal narrative to be told in the first place it follows that the narrative should contain the most reportable event, so that, 'The more reportable the most reportable event of a narrative, the greater justification for

the automatic reassignment of speaker role to the narrator' (p.407). However, this may lead to the problem Labov calls the 'Reportability Paradox' where 'reportability is inversely correlated with credibility', which brings us to Labov's second concept, *credibility*.

Two essential characteristics of personal narratives are that events in the story actually took place and that what is recounted by the narrator is based on a close version of those events. Therefore, there needs to be an element of *credibility* in the way personal narratives are told, which Labov defines as follows:

'Definition: 'The *credibility* of a narrative is the extent to which listeners believe that the events described actually occurred in the form described by the narrator' (p.407).

The paradox Labov presents is that the more reportable the events are, the less likely they are to be believed. In the case of 'serious' narratives, where it is essential to establish credibility, any doubt as to the veracity of the narrative's content will lead to the personal experience failing to achieve credibility. Such a loss of credibility may damage the status of the narrator as a reliable storyteller, which may in turn adversely affect their future claims to reassignment of the speaker role.

The third concept offered by Labov as intrinsic to narrative construction is *causality*. *Causality*, according to Labov, is the chain of events leading to the most reportable event, beginning in the *orientation* section, which provides the contextualising information that assists with the interpretation of events, followed by a *complicating action*. Often, causal relations between events in a narrative are not stated explicitly but implied, relying on the listener's situation-specific schema knowledge. Here, the listener may also draw on social and cultural information to fill in any gaps, although inevitably, this can result in differing interpretations. In this way, the

listener is able to comprehend the narrative as it moves through different stages towards a *resolution*. The causal chain of events provides the coherence necessary in a narrative and is linked with Labov's fourth concept *the assignment of praise and blame*.

The assignment of praise and blame may be shown in what Labov calls *polarizing* narratives, where there is a protagonist-versus-antagonist dynamic, or in an *integrating* narrative where 'blame is set aside or passed over by a variety of devices' (p.409). In spoken personal narratives, *the assignment of praise and blame* is presented from the narrator's viewpoint, so it is likely that the experience 'is certainly colored by the moral stance taken by the narrator'. In other words, when the experience is transferred linguistically from the narrator to the listener, it induces 'the audience to see the world through the narrator's eyes' (p.410) and the audience's agreement or disagreement with the narrator's moral stance is independent of this process.

Labov's fifth concept of narratives, that of viewpoint, is defined as follows:

'Definition: The viewpoint of a narrative clause is the spatio-temporal domain from which the information conveyed by the clause could be obtained by an observer' (p.411).

Labov sees *viewpoint* as 'the most characteristic feature of narratives of personal experience' because 'events are seen through the eyes of the narrator' (p.411). Moreover, the narrator makes known the events of the experience in the temporal sequence in which they occurred. For this reason, Labov claims there can be no flashforwards, and no recounting of events that occurred at an earlier point in time in the narrative, though this is a controversial point as it conflicts with literary models of narratives, and will be discussed later in this chapter.

The final characteristic of narratives proposed by Labov is *objectivity*. Narratives that show the most *objectivity* have the greatest impact on the listener compared to narratives that are more subjective. Here, Labov argues that ‘objectivity increases credibility’ (p.412) and defines the notion as follows:

‘Definition: An *objective event* is one that became known to the narrator through sense experience. A *subjective event* is one that the narrator became aware of through memory, emotional reaction, or internal sensation’ (p.412).

According to Labov, objective reporting of events is a necessary condition for personal narratives ‘to transmit experience to the audience’ ... ‘as if it were their own experience’ (p.413). Part of this process involves listeners becoming aware of events in the narrative and experiencing them in the way that the narrator did, a concept which also strengthens Labov’s claim that flashbacks cannot be a feature of spoken personal narratives as they subvert the linear telling of events.

What is interesting about Labov’s discussion of *reportability*, *credibility*, *causality*, *the assignment of praise and blame*, *viewpoint* and *objectivity* is not so much that they offer new insights into narrative form and function, but that Labov acknowledges the importance of these concepts in narratives in addition to the structural and evaluative functions outlined in his original narrative schema model. As such, Labov offers a fuller, more comprehensive description of personal narratives that widens the discussion of narratives beyond their formal linguistic properties and schema functions. Clearly, it is imperative that a personal narrative comprises reportable events, if it is to be narrated in the first place, a fact that is particularly important in group contexts where maintaining status as a skilful storyteller is vital. Moreover, personal narratives must be about credible and reportable experiences which are based on actual events: narratives lacking these

features would not only fail to be considered a personal narrative, but would also violate Grice's (1975) maxim of *quality*, by stating something which is untrue, inviting doubt or disbelief from the audience at the outset. Labov's conditions, therefore, could be added to the list of prototypical features to be found in personal narratives, as outlined in Chapter 2 'What is a narrative?' to provide a salient description of this discourse genre.

There are, however, several problems with some of Labov's concepts, that seem to conflict with his notion of a Reportability Paradox. Firstly, it would seem more accurate to claim that the Reportability Paradox involves all three concepts of *reportability*, *credibility* and *objectivity* interacting together, rather than a correlation of *reportability* solely with *credibility*: under Labov's definitions, *reportability* is inversely correlated with *credibility*, and *objectivity* is correlated with increasing *credibility*. Secondly, it might be expected that the opposite of the *objectivity* 'theorem' would be true, as the more *subjective* a narrative is, the more *credible* it is likely to be because of its higher content of *evaluation*. After all, *evaluation* functions to draw attention to what is important to the narrator about their experience, and a narrative containing a high proportion of evaluative expressions would create a greater impact on the audience by commanding their attention and interest. It is well known that skilled narrators of oral narratives purposely employ a range of stylistic devices, such as the evaluative strategies described by L&W and Labov, together with elements of performance such as the use of imagery, metaphor, repetition, paralinguistic and prosodic features, to enhance performance and 'entertain' the audience (Wolfson, 1976). The juxtaposition of *objectivity* with *credibility* would seem to contradict the very nature of personal narratives, which

cannot be anything but subjective, simply because they present one viewpoint – that of the narrator as protagonist.

Labov also argues that flashbacks are not possible in oral narratives of personal experience, as events must be told in the order in which they happened. Assuming that the audience is known to the narrator and vice-versa, and they all share mutual contextual knowledge of the same social and cultural schemas, there may be no reason to employ the literary device of flashback. However, in a situation where these factors are absent or where the audience is unknown to the speaker and vice-versa, flashbacks may be a necessary strategy to aid story comprehension, as a kind of ‘filling-in’ where there are information gaps. The issue seems to be primarily whether flashbacks function solely as *complicating action*, conveying events that happened at an earlier point in the story, or whether they also provide *orientation* information and function to provide the audience with additional *who, what, where, when* details where their absence might otherwise lead to confusion. This argument is explored in greater detail in section 3.3.3 of this chapter.

3.3 Critique of Labov & Waletzky’s narrative schema model: accuracy, conformity and universalism.

In the years since the development of L&W’s narrative schema model, there has been a continuing interest in narrative research with their schema model presented as the central case study for discussion (see *Journal of Narrative and Life History* (1997)). One reason why L&W’s model is so appealing is that it provides a clear, functional description of each stage of an oral narrative. The six schemas of the model and their distinct lexical and grammatical properties offer a comprehensive

framework that seems to fulfil our expectations of a narrative and gives coherence to narratives viewed as constituting a discourse unit. The distinct linguistic markers for each schema also offer an alternative model to other descriptions of narratives, for example those from a literary perspective, which are mainly concerned with plot and characterisation (see Chatman, 1978; Genette, 1982) or cognitive and psycholinguistic models, which deal with cognitive understanding, processing and memorisation of stories (see Thorndyke, 1977; van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983; Emmott, 1997). However, L&W's model's use in comparative research across non-linguistic disciplines concerned with narrative study may have inadvertently promoted its status to that of an idealised narrative framework with presumed universal application. There is no doubt that because the narrative model is widely perceived as a prototypical structure that conforms to intuitive notions of a narrative, it has been adopted and applied, perhaps without due circumspection, to a range of narratives across all cultures. The issue of universalism that is precipitated by such application is just one of several controversial aspects of L&W's model that will be discussed in the next section.

3.3.1 Can a model of narratives developed from a sociolinguistic study apply to all narratives?

One of the criticisms levelled at L&W's narrative schema model concerns the sociolinguistic approach used to collect oral narratives of personal experience. Despite their interview methods being widely recognised as innovative and notable for reducing affective factors, which would otherwise heighten the Observer's Paradox, there is nevertheless a significant difference between narratives elicited in

an interview context and those that occur spontaneously, for instance, in a casual conversation. Sensitive to the theoretical problems this imposes on sociolinguistic methodology, Wolfson (1976) states that the fundamental difference between the two discourses are that sociolinguistic interviews are speech events whereas conversations are not. Citing Hymes (1974), Wolfson points out that 'The term speech event will be restricted to activities, or aspects of activities, that are directly governed by rules or norms for the use of speech. An event may comprise of a single speech act, but will often comprise several' (1976:52). (For a summary of Hymes's work in this area, see section 2.1 of Chapter 7.)

A sociolinguistic interview generally conforms to a question-answer dynamic between the interviewer and informant(s), and anyone entering such a 'setting' (using Hymes's term) is likely to be aware of their role and what would be involved. It follows therefore, that any speech produced in a sociolinguistic interview would be as natural as one would expect to hear in such a context. As Wolfson explains:

being interviewed is hardly an everyday experience for most people, but there is nothing 'artificial' about it, and there is no reason to believe that the speech produced by the subject in such an interaction is anything but natural - for an interview (1976:195).

So, 'If speech is felt to be appropriate to a situation and the goal, then it is natural in that context' (p.202). An oral narrative of personal experience elicited in a sociolinguistic interview therefore is as natural to that context as a personal narrative produced in a casual conversation.

However, different speech events produce different speech styles or speech 'genres'; so narratives produced in different 'settings' with distinct goals are just as likely to produce linguistic variables, which may affect the final narrative form. The

importance of eliciting the vernacular as the basis for the most reliable data also implies there are alternative styles of speaking that may produce alternative ways of storytelling. Similarly, the problems associated with the Observer's Paradox and its impact on the production of the vernacular entail that speech style will vary according to the narrator's knowledge of the audience, where the issue of 'recipient design' or tailoring the narrative to suit the audience is also likely to produce different styles of spoken personal narratives. For example, where differences between narrator and recipient are at a social or cultural level and basic schematic knowledge is lacking, the narrator may be required to provide greater *orientation* information as a frame of reference for listeners. The result might be perceived as a more "long-winded" version of the experience when compared to a version narrated to close friends where details of the *who*, *what* *where* and *when* are known. Another consequence is the use of flashback to fill-in gaps in the narrative for the benefit of recipients' comprehension. Pressure to perform in peer group contexts is likely to influence stylistic choices and encourage the use of a range of evaluative devices to enhance the events in the story and engage listeners, particularly as failure to narrate skilfully may lead to a loss of status. Other issues that narrators might need to be aware of are Labov's (1997) concepts of *reportability*, *credibility*, *objectivity*, *causality*, *the assignment of praise and blame*, and *viewpoint* described earlier in the chapter for their definitions as well as problems as theoretical concepts, and fundamental to all storytelling practices.

Ironically, the most striking aspect of L&W and Labov's spoken data from peer group interviews is that it lacks the common features associated with interactive speaking in a sociolinguistic interview (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974;

Goodwin 1981). It is as though the narratives have been stripped of the characteristic markers of interactional speech such as silences, hesitations, backchannelling, interruptions, receipt of the narrative and any extraneous speech leading up to and during the narrative, as if 'waiting to be delivered, to fit in or be trimmed to fit the context into which it is to be inserted' (Schegloff, 1997:100). This omission leaves the data open to criticism, particularly among theorists within Conversation Analysis and Ethnomethodology. The importance of the audience, particularly in peer group interviews where participants outnumber the interviewer, are sure to have played an important role in actively participating in co-constructing narratives, similar to the strategies described in Chapter 7. Furthermore, narrative psychologists and conversation analysts have been critical of the isolation of the narratives from their wider speaking context which excludes 'the basis for their telling'... 'in being told as part of an ongoing social interaction, for that interaction, a lot of what is said, its "point" and evaluation, will be built into what occasions it and into its descriptive detail' (Edwards, 1997: 145). Instead, the narratives are presented as 'well formed' (that is, is consistent with the notion of an idealised six-schema structure), concise and coherent monologues, unobstructed by irrelevant linguistic and paralinguistic detail outside of L&W and Labov's research aims, and fit what would be accepted as a conventional story template. Clearly, the discussion so far on the narrative schema model being representative of oral narratives and, as such, a useful tool for the analysis of personal experiences seems to present more questions than it answers. Accordingly, a critical discussion of whether L&W's narrative schema model is an accurate description of oral narratives of personal experience, and narratives in general, is presented below in an attempt to gain a greater understanding of the structure and universal principles of narratives.

3.3.2 How far does Labov and Waletzky's model accurately describe narrative structure?

A major concern about L&W and Labov's narrative model amongst linguists, literary theorists and linguistic anthropologists (e.g. Hymes, 1996; Gee, 1999) has been the supposed universal status of the framework. Such a universalism would imply that narratives across all cultures comprise the same six schemas, organised into the same strict sequential order. While the suggestion of uniform storytelling practices is appealing, it is nevertheless controversial for a number of reasons, including the fact that even for L&W, not all the six schemas are compulsory as a the narrative can be stripped down to just one, the *complicating action*. Furthermore, there is evidence to support the presence of cultural models of narratives, which are as distinct from L&W's model as they are from each other (see Hymes, 1981; 1996).

The question of L&W's model's optional schema categories highlights the problem of the 'fully-formed' condition of a narrative. In addition, both the *evaluation* and *complicating action* schemas have been criticised for different reasons, which will be outlined below. Described by L&W as 'that part of the narrative which reveals the attitude of the narrator towards the narrative by emphasising the relative importance of some narrative units as compared to others' (1967:37), the *evaluation* section was originally identified as a part in the narrative that emphasised 'the point where the complication has reached a maximum: the break between the complication and the result' (pp.34-35). In other words, *evaluation* appeared as a section between the *complicating action* and *resolution*, drawing attention to the latter schema. However, in his 1972 study, Labov reassessed *evaluation*, both linguistically and functionally, to propose that while it is concentrated in a section, it may also be found distributed throughout the narrative as 'waves of evaluation that

penetrate the narrative' (1972:369) (Also, see section 3.2 of this chapter and Table 3.1 for a more in-depth description of *evaluation*.) The following evaluative comments, taken from a much longer personal narrative about a frightening plane journey, illustrates how *evaluation* pervades a narrative and how the narrator interrupts her narration to express her feelings at the time. (From Labov, 1972: 371):

gg	and it was the strangest feeling because you couldn't tell if they were really gonna make it
hh	if they didn't make it, it was such a small little plane, there was no chance for anybody.
xxx	... But it was really quite terrific it was only a half hour's ride to Mexico City
aaaa	... But it was quite an experience.

Another factor that differentiates *evaluation* from the other schema categories is the endless list of lexical and grammatical means by which the point of the narrative and its effect on the narrator can be conveyed. As Polanyi (1985) points out, expressions of *evaluation* also include phonological and discursal choices, so 'There are no absolute evaluative devices' (p.196). In fact, any phonological, lexical, discursal, prosodic or paralinguistic expression of evaluation fulfils the function of *evaluation*, according to L&W's definition, including many of the features of performed narratives identified by Wolfson (1976). These include sound effects, reiteration, direct speech with intonation patterns and historical present tense. Some linguists have argued that there are too many evaluative devices with too few constraints on distribution, creating a 'lack of a one-to-one relationship of any particular structure with the evaluation' (Kernan, 1977:100). Tannen (1984) points out that strategies used to evaluate and interpret the point of the story are culturally bound and

therefore culture specific. It could be argued that, because some of the evaluative expressions are not transferable across cultures (for example, the physical and symbolic act of crossing oneself, or use of the ritualised utterance 'Insh'Allah'), it would be impossible to compile a definitive and finite list that is applicable to all, and complicates further the discussion on whether the *evaluation* schema is universal. Clearly, *evaluation* is integral to a 'well formed' narrative, particularly in raising the narrative's reportability status, not only because it draws attention to the events in the experience but also because it highlights why the experience is important to the narrator. However, the devices are socially and culturally bound and too numerous and varied to be predicted for all speakers.

The second schema category to provoke criticism is the *complicating action*, the *what happened?* element in the narrative composed of narrative clauses. The *complicating action* should convey the 'the most reportable event', and in L&W and Labov's data this is based on experiences in response to the *danger of death* question. It makes sense therefore that the more dangerous or exciting the event, the more reportable the experience is likely to be. In a critique of L&W's *complicating action*, Bruner (1997) goes as far as to suggest the presence of a further element - 'Trouble' - with a capital 'T' as defining complication (p.63), which builds on the earlier work of Burke (1945) and his "dramatist Pentad". Moreover:

L&W take Trouble so much for granted as the heart of complication that they even gathered their corpus of narratives so as to guarantee its presence. Recall that they asked their subjects to tell about a time when their lives were endangered - the ultimate trouble! And, of course, it's virtually in the structure of narrative that if a story contains a troubled complication, it requires some explication about how things were before it got that way - that is, an orientation, telling how things were before the trouble erupted. (p.63). (See also Bruner, 1991.)

Bruner's salient observation raises the question of how different the *complicating action* section of a narrative would be if based on less dangerous and more mundane topics, contextualised in happy or sad experiences. This is assuming that a *complicating action* with the formal properties described by L&W and Labov is present in all personal experiences and for all story topics, when there may in fact be alternative modes of storytelling that would undermine the notion that all personal experiences conform to one narrative model. This factor may also have implications for the level of evaluation, as the more mundane or less life threatening the story topic, the less need for expressions of *evaluation*, self-aggrandizement or appraisal and blame, to justify the narrator's choice of personal narrative.

A final comment on the schema categories relates to L&W's description of the 'fully-formed' condition of narratives. Essentially, the notion of well formedness equates with a narrative having all six schemas in the order presented by L&W. Yet this seems to contradict the notion of the minimum narrative criterion, which requires only two clauses to be temporally ordered to form a *complicating action*. The *complicating action* is clearly the only compulsory schema necessary for a text and considered 'essential if we are to recognise a narrative' (1972:370). This would suggest that the other five categories are somehow obligatory to the narrative genre. Moreover, the *abstract* and *coda* are regarded as optional schemas and are sometimes lacking from narratives, as is the *resolution*, which is not always clear. L&W and Labov also found that *evaluation* was lacking in the personal narratives of children, but this did not lead them to conclude that these stories were badly formed or in any way less coherent or recognisable as narratives. It is also worth pointing out that despite proposing a six-schema model for narratives from the BEV

community in New York, L&W found evidence of variation among speakers of the same speech community, which they correlated with a person's age and gender and even class. This may explain Labov's hedging in his use of 'may' when introducing the schema categories of his model: 'a fully-formed narrative *may* show the following...' (1972:363). The optional status of five narrative schemas and the compulsory nature of one keeps open questions about which categories are necessary for a narrative to be accepted as such. Moreover, if you accept evidence of lexical and structural variation even among speakers from the same community, then what implications does this have as regards the possible universal status of L&W's narrative model?

3.3.3 Sequence of schema categories and no flashback condition

Despite the usefulness of L&W's and Labov's narrative model the six schema framework has been criticised on a number of levels, including the question of temporality in narrative structure. While recognising the 'theoretical rigour' of their model, Mischler's (1997) criticism of L&W, in what he describes as 'limitation of L&W' arises from his experience of narrative research involving the collection and analysis of spoken data. He states that:

in intensive life history interviews, respondents rarely provided chronological accounts. Finding a temporally ordered sequence of events was a task of analytic reconstruction, and the technical apparatus of narrative and nonnarrative clauses had to be subordinated to or displaced by other methods (Mischler, 1992). (Cited in Mischler, 1997: 72).

The strict ordering of the six-schema categories in L&W's narrative model would also appear to be a concern as it rules out the use of flashbacks and flashforwards which are common to written narratives and may occur in storytelling genres.

Literary theorists in particular are unhappy that the model does not allow for instances of flashbacks or analepsis, which describe 'any evocation after the fact of an event that took place earlier than the point in the story where we are at any given moment', or flashforwards also called prolepsis, which describe 'any narrative manoeuvre that consists of narrating or evoking in advance an event that will take place later', (Genette, 1986 in Walder, 1990: 147). Perhaps one reason for the criticism of L&W's narrative model is because it has been compared to written models of narratives and literary theorists are critical that a framework developed from oral narratives should provide the basis for literary narratives. This is despite the fact that fictional narratives are widely believed to derive from an oral storytelling tradition. Among narratologists there is a division of opinion as to whether L&W's model provides an accurate representation of written narratives. Bernstein (1997) points out how some narratologists have readily connected this analysis (or its counterpart Labov, 1972) with Formalist narratology. Indeed Pratt (1977), who correlates Labov's narrative schemas with the formal organisation of novels, concludes that, 'If it weren't for the fact that his data are not literature, Labov's analysis could have provided valuable linguistic support for the Formalists' ideas about the aesthetic organisation of narrative' (p.68).

Chatman (1990), on the other hand, criticises the fixed ordering of the six schemas, describing the structure as 'monochronic' since it proscribes 'the exchange or "twisting" of (surface) clauses out of their causal-sequential order (p.318). The strict temporal ordering of clauses within the *complicating action* and the fixed ordering of the schemas within the framework are, for L&W, fundamental characteristics of narrative structure which underpin their 'no flashback condition' and fulfils the criterion of *causality* in a personal narrative. In addition, structural deviation would

also disallow narratives that begin *in medias res* from being described as narratives and any other forms that break away from or subvert conventional modes of narrative storytelling.

Interestingly, Fleischmann (1990) describes departures from linear story structure through the use of literary devices as 'artistic effects'. Bernstein (1997) provides a compelling explanation in his discussion of 'artistic affects' by pointing out that, 'it is essential to ascertain what constitutes the unmarked form of natural storytelling in order to understand the departures that make some storytellers seem practiced' (p.47). L&W's narrative schema model could therefore be said to represent the most basic story template of oral narratives of personal experience, chiefly, those about trouble. Only when a basic norm for narrative storytelling exists can there be genres of narrative form which then allow comparative study and permit, for example, 'the exchange or "twisting" of (surface) clauses out of their causal-sequential order' (Chatman, 1990:318, fn11). This notion of a basic template which provides the norm for storytelling, may also account for the controversy surrounding the structure of modernist and, in particular, post-modernist texts as literary forms, where fragmentation of temporality and linearity is a marked feature. The refusal of the certainty of narrative intentionally exploits conventional narrative structure by subverting expectations and creating alternative or even extra rules for storytelling that build on underlying ones. Lyotard (1984) defines postmodernism as a phenomenon as 'incredulity toward metanarratives ... The narrative function is losing its functors, great hero, its great dangers, its great voyages, its great goal' (1984:xxiv). At a fundamental level, the reinvention of narrative structure alters expectations of what is acceptable, resulting in a broadening of the prototypical

features of narratives, as described in Chapter 2. In other words, without a list of core features there would be nothing to exploit. Since oral narratives represent the most basic story template found in narratives, postmodernist texts, which are not constrained by the same rules, deliberately deviate as far as is possible from this model to produce alternative literary effects. Such a characteristic, according to L&W, would not be acceptable in the structure of oral narratives of personal experience.

3.4 Is Labov & Waletzky's model of narrative universal?

Having established that the practice of storytelling and, specifically, the telling of personal narratives is widely acknowledged as a 'universal' behaviour (see Chapter 2) it is now necessary to explain whether L&W's model has 'universal' application across all narratives. The point this raises is whether this model of personal narrative can be applied to narratives across all cultures, or just those from the BEV culture.

It is worth pointing out that L&W have never made claims as to the universalism of their model. In fact they have stated that, 'The ultimate aims of our work will require close correlations of the narrator's social characteristics with the structure of their narratives, since we are concerned with problems of effective communication and class and ethnic differences in verbal behaviour.' (1967:13). They also point out that 'these conclusions are restricted to the speech communities that we have examined. This view of narrative structure will achieve greater significance when radically different cultures are studied in the same way' (1967:41-42). Why has L&W's

narrative model, therefore, been taken as a universal story template when its authors clearly state that this was not their intention?

One reason that might explain the universal status of the narrative model is put forward by Hymes, even as Hymes remains fairly critical of the prescriptive nature of the six-schema framework. Hymes (1996) states that the model is perceived to provide a 'definition of narrative as an ideal type' adding that, 'Labov presented these categories as universal, as in effect a universal description or definition of a 'fully-formed' narrative. They have often been accepted as such' (1996:193). To illustrate his point, Hymes adds that, 'A recent book concerned with literature for children accepts them in just this way (Hurst, 1990: 95-97)'. Clearly the suggestion is that the functional description of the schemas and internal structure of the model provide a simplistic story template that appears to fulfil a listener's expectations of a narrative based on their text-specific knowledge. In addition, there is also the implication that L&W's narrative model reflects the storytelling practices of both English speaking and non-English speaking communities across the world, despite being developed from oral narratives of personal experiences from a limited range of participants and speech communities. Even within the same speech community, would it also not be likely that lexico-grammatical variation in personal narratives might be found due to the range of informants interviewed, so that social factors, as well as culture and speech community, would also be variables that influence storytelling practices?

Complications as regards L&W's 'universality' can also be glimpsed by looking at the categories of evaluative devices under the *external evaluation* sub-heading. One of the sub-headings proposed is 'culturally defined' (1967: 38):

symbolic action: "They put an egg on his door."
 "I crossed myself."
 "You could hear the rosaries clickin"

The labelling of culturally defined symbolic actions in this way highlights how differences in the way *evaluation* is expressed will depend on an individual's culture as well as social background, and suggests that certain devices are likely to be meaningless outside the cultural setting or non-transferable across cultures (Tannen, 1984; Gee, 1990; Hymes, 1996). All this actually proves, however, is that expressions that are culturally bound will differ, not the actual act of evaluating experiences, which may well be universal. A discussion of culture-specific aspects of narrative telling is presented in the following section with the aim of shedding light on the claimed universal status of L&W's narrative model.

3.4.1 Cultural models of narratives

The understanding that there exists a close link between language and cultural identity has resulted in bringing closer the disciplines of anthropology and linguistics, in terms of areas of overlapping interests. In particular, the works of Boas (1911) and Sapir (1933) have helped to advance our knowledge of linguistic diversity and cultural relativity, first described in studies researching Native

American Indian languages. Sociolinguistic studies, specifically, have been concerned with correlating linguistic variables with an individual's social and cultural background, and acknowledge the importance of conveying one's identity and social reality through personal stories that adhere to cultural models of narratives. Moreover, as Polanyi (1979) points out:

What stories can be about is, to a very significant extent, culturally constrained: stories, whether fictional or non-fictional, formal and oft-told, or spontaneously generated, can have as their *point* only culturally salient material generally agreed upon by members of the producer's culture to be self-evidently important and true (cited in Tannen, 1980: 53)

The acceptance of cultural models must therefore overturn the notion of one single narrative model and by default, the concept of a universal framework. Instead, they suggest the existence of variation at a structural, lexical and grammatical level, as different speech communities and the cultures that define them, express and realise their experiences through different linguistic means.

How does L&W's narrative model, therefore, fit into the idea of cultural models of storytelling, which reflect the oral traditions in which they are embedded?

According to Bruner (1987), one important way of characterizing a culture:

is by the narrative models it makes available for describing the course of a life. And the tool kit of any culture is replete not only with a stock of canonical life narratives ... but with combinable formal constituents from which its members can construct their own life narratives: canonical stances and circumstances as it were (1987:15).

The concepts of cultural and linguistic diversity underline Bruner's position whereas L&W's model would seem to argue for the opposite. One major problem accordingly, with accepting L&W's model as universal is that proposing one single model, formulated from a particular speech community for all narratives across a range of cultures, may show a disregard for cultural differences in personal

narratives and a need for greater understanding of patterns of variability, their distribution and why they occur. On this theme, Bauman asserts that, 'Oral performance, like all human activity, is situated, its form, meaning, and functions rooted in culturally defined scenes or events - bounded segments of the flow of behaviour and experience that constitute meaningful contexts for action, interpretation, and evaluation' (1986:3). This point is confirmed by L&W's findings of a 'two part' structure being characteristic of the *danger of death* and *fight* stories of the BEV culture, even though their discussion is not extended to explain how it is reflected in the model.

Further evidence to argue against a single narrative schema model across all cultures is provided in Labov's (1972) more formal work on the speech of members of the BEV culture. Labov identified socially learnt traditions, such as the use of opening and closing formulae to signal the beginning and end of a narrative, as well as the use of ritual insults that are associated with performance rather than with the intention of offending others, i.e. storytelling devices deeply embedded in the particular linguistic patterns and behaviour of a given culture.

A further example of differences in narrative structure is provided by Hymes (1996) in his study of Native Americans. Commenting on L&W's model, he states that 'Finding something to fit the categories is not proof that the associated questions fit. A story may answer questions specific to a tradition of which it is part' (p.193). Hymes discovered that the *evaluation* element in narratives of Native Americans did not 'suspend' the narrative clauses as in L&W's model. Instead, 'a line of action may be suspended without evaluation, and without a break in succession of temporal

clauses. What happens is that realization of a formal expectation is delayed. The main line of action is amplified.' (p.194). As such, L&W's schema categories could not satisfactorily describe these narratives accurately, which led Hymes to create a new structural category, the 'extraposition' where 'what is expected at one point is extracted and placed outside that sequence (p.194). He gives an example from a Zuni narrative:

Coyote learns a song from Old Lady Junco, loses it, and comes back for it. The fourth time (the Zuni pattern number is four) she sees him coming, and at the point in the scene at which one would expect the outcome of the fourth time, the narrator says instead that Old Lady Junco put a rock inside her blouse. The outcome of the fourth time is a scene in itself, a scene (the fourth) longer than any of the others. In it Coyote's fourth request is made six times. When Old Lady Junco twice does not answer at all, he threatens her and counts out loud four times, then jumps at her and breaks his teeth on the rock. Again, immediate outcome is delayed for sake of an extended finale. This is dramatic suspense - evaluation one might say - of the dramatic importance of what happens, but where there is no break in succession of temporal clauses (pp.194-5). (See also, Hymes, 1982)

Far from dismissing the narratives of this particular culture as not being not well-formed, Hymes was able to identify variation as culturally embedded and develop an alternative model to describe the structure of narratives of this community. Hymes also found 'more than a single level of successive action and groupings of lines' (p.195), which vary from L&W's model. In this case, L&W's framework provides a valuable basis for comparative research, a point that Holmes (1997) is keen to acknowledge despite recognising structural differences as a result of cultural storytelling models. On identifying systematic variations in the oral narratives of the Maori and Pakeha of New Zealand, Holmes concludes:

Maori narrators sometimes dispensed with components such as the resolution and the coda. By contrast, Pakeha narrators generally spelled out the significance of their stories overtly with a clause expressing a resolution ... Moreover the expression of the evaluation by Maori storytellers tended to be very inexplicit judged by Pakeha norms ... Hence the narrative components identified by L&W proved useful in identifying ethnic differences in the way stories were structured, and their framework seems to provide an adequate descriptive tool (1997:92).

In light of this discussion, it seems reasonable to say that there is plenty of evidence against the notion that L&W's narrative model can be presented as a single,

'universal' model for all cultures. Cultural models of oral storytelling are very much in existence; variation at a structural, organisational and grammatical level have little to do with narratives being flawed and are instead shown to be an expression of rich, oral storytelling traditions. L&W's model offers a clear description of simple narratives, but it could be argued, is more suited to describing narratives from the western, namely English speaking tradition, while providing merely a 'useful tool' for comparative research in oral narratives.

3.5 Why Labov and Waletzky's narrative schema model needs re-evaluating

L&W and Labov's work on oral narratives and narrative schema is generally acknowledged as groundbreaking, and continues to be viewed as providing valuable insights on narrative form and function (Bamberg, 1997). My critique of the model in this chapter, however, shows it to be constrained by the ideologically structured six-schema framework and fixed organisation of the schemas. My critique also emphasizes how not all schema categories are obligatory, since the narrative can be stripped down to just the *complicating action*. At the same time, the existence of culturally varying models of oral storytelling seems to question the universal status of L&W's model, especially as there is also evidence of variation within a single culture. L&W found that variation at both a structural and grammatical level can be correlated with the speaker, their social background, as well as factors not pertaining to the narrator, such as story topic and even the interview setting itself. These points, which will be developed below, support a need to re-evaluate L&W's model and offer a variationist account of their narrative model that takes into account social and

cultural variables, and any other factors, providing a more representative model of oral narratives.

3.5.1 Causes of variation: factors pertaining to the narrator

Culture

A major influence on the way an individual expresses a personal narrative is likely to be linked to their culture, and storytelling practices of a given culture. Analysis of cultural models has identified variations at both a structural and grammatical level and supports the notion of cultural and linguistic diversity in language and behaviour. The notion of cultural models of storytelling would therefore seem to mitigate any concept of a universal narrative framework. The question now to ask is this: how far can a narrative framework modelled on oral narratives from the BEV culture satisfactorily describe the oral narratives of members from other speech communities?

Gender

L&W claim that the ultimate aim of their research is to correlate the narrator's 'social characteristics with the structure of their narratives' (p.13). This issue however, is not really explored in their study, nor in Labov's follow up research with the BEV culture, so the gender of participants was omitted and discussion on gender differences as a basis for linguistic or structural variation is absent. To give an example, the central story topics for the personal narrative in their study were about *fighting* and *danger of death*, which may have been less appropriate for female

informants, yet this was not an issue that was explored. As Cazden points out, 'gender might be for some researchers the most salient speaker variable of all' (1997: 186) and with a growing interest in gender and language, the issue of gender differences is certainly an area that deserves more rigorous investigation.

Age

The age of informants in the study was another factor that produced variation at a structural level. Labov found that narratives of pre-adolescents lacked an *orientation* schema and syntactic devices for expressing *internal evaluation*, concluding that these important features of a fully-formed narrative developed later in life, since they were more evident in the personal narratives of adults than those of adolescents, and in the narratives of adolescents when compared to pre-adolescents (p.1972:393-396).

Class/ Level of education

Labov found that while participants from the working class BEV culture tended to be less wordy when recounting their personal experiences, their narratives were nevertheless more direct and explicit than those of their college-educated counterparts. Labov described the oral narratives of college educated participants as 'enmeshed in verbiage' (p.214) while middle class narrators tended to frequently interrupt their narratives with *external evaluation*, to comment on their feelings at the time the events in their experience took place. The suspension of narrative events to evaluate experience in this way produces variation that is both structural and grammatical, and worth investigating further.

3.5.2 Causes of variation: factors not pertaining to the narrator

Story topic

Plum (1988) and Fludernik's (1996, 2003) research on alternative modes of storytelling, outlined in Chapter 2 draws attention to the fact that not all stories of personal experiences are necessarily narratives, and that distinct variations in their internal structure can be explained by a genre approach to storytelling. The question to ask is how far does story topic determine structure to create sub-genres of personal experiences? For L&W and Labov this factor was only discussed as being possibly crucial for causing the narrator to style shift to the vernacular. Moreover, with "Trouble" defining complication, narrators are more likely to impress fellow peer group members for the purpose of self-aggrandizement with a greater use of evaluative devices, performance strategies and exaggerated assignment of praise and blame to heighten the narrative's reportability status. It could be argued therefore that narratives that develop out of less exciting themes may vary in structure and in their use of lexico-grammatical devices because the criteria of "Trouble" is absent.

Among pre-adolescent informants, Labov found that younger participants gave minimal responses instead of more fully-formed and explicit personal narratives. This was explained as inhibition rather than as an inability to provide comprehensive narratives. Children, it seems, were reluctant to give details, as they were suspicious of the interview setting and adult researcher, believing that their spoken data might be used against them. This resulted in performances that may not have necessarily reflected the children's skill at storytelling and consequently, a less than 'fully-formed' spoken narrative, bringing about a comparison with Bernstein's (1966)

notion of a “restricted code” of communication. Clearly, methodology and conditions within the sociolinguistic interview are factors which may cause variation in the speech of informants so data needs to be carefully analysed to avoid incorrect interpretation and assumptions.

Interview situation: one-to-one interviews and peer group interviews

L&W and Labov famously carried out interviews in two ways: in one-to-one interviews and peer group interviews, the main aim in the latter was to reduce the inhibiting effects of the Observer’s Paradox. Thus, the focus was on creating an environment, which encouraged a more vernacular style of speech, with little discussion of wider issues of the effects of the two interview contexts (see also Gee 1989; Cazden, 1994, 1997). For example, there is limited comparison of the form of narratives produced in a ‘speech event’ compared to those produced in a ‘speech event’ that develops into an ‘activity type’²⁰, or of the collaborative storytelling strategies that are inevitable in a group setting (see Chapter 7). L&W however, identify *self-aggrandizement* as a characteristic of peer group interviews that is lacking from one-to-one interviews, a characteristic which functions to show the narrator in a ‘favorable position’ (p.38). *Self-aggrandizement*, which is expressed through *evaluative* commentary, is only necessary where there is an audience present, particularly if they are your peers.

Social pressure to perform in peer group interactions may also influence speech styles and encourage the explicit use of *covert prestige* as a defiant act of solidarity. Gang members in Labov’s study used a kind of sub-dialect that only exists within

²⁰ See Hymes (1962) for *speech event* and Levinson (1979) for *activity types*, and also Thomas (1995). This point is also discussed in Chapter 7 of this thesis.

the peer group and affects style, structure, choice of lexis and pronunciation of speech (1972:257). Labov interpreted this use of a non-prestige variety of speech as an attempt to maintain status in the group through a mutually intelligible code. Whether the use of *covert prestige* created significant variation in personal narratives, however, was not commented on despite features resulting from its use being identified.

In light of the above discussion, variation in oral narratives of personal experience, the distribution of variant forms and underlying causes, all suggest there is a need to re-evaluate L&W's narrative schema model to test the validity of their model's claimed universal status. If social factors such as age and gender, or choice of story topic and interview setting, can cause variations at a structural and lexicogrammatical level in the narratives of members of the same speech community, then how far can one narrative model describe all narratives across different cultures? Having set out the main questions of enquiry, my following chapters set out to investigate these questions by focusing on the oral narratives of personal experience from a speech community other than the one researched by L&W and Labov.

CHAPTER 4. CULTURE AND SPEECH COMMUNITY; INFORMANTS AND RESEARCH METHODS

4.1 Introducing methods and informants for narrative research

If we accept some or all of the main directions of criticism of L&W's (1967) narrative schema model outlined in Chapter 3, and discussions that point to evidence of cultural models of storytelling, then it seems unlikely that one narrative model can adequately describe the structural organisation and linguistic properties of all narratives. The implication of one model would not only require that all speakers adhere to the same story structure and conform to the same strategies for their evaluation but that research into narratives and their variations, prompted by cultural and social differences, may be viewed as having little importance, or at least considered peripheral to the interest of disciplines concerned with narrative study. Culturally distinct models and alternative modes of storytelling would support the argument that personal narratives are embedded in cultural practices (Hymes, 1996; Gee, 1999), while evidence of schematic variation among members of the same speech community (Labov, 1972) further challenges the universalist status of a single narrative model. Moreover, an understanding of where variation occurs and why, may provide insights and broaden our knowledge of the different forms and functions of personal narratives.

One way of concretely examining the apparently presumed universalism of L&W's narrative schema model further and gain a greater understanding of narrative form and function, is to apply their model to oral narratives of personal experience from speech communities other than the ones investigated by L&W and Labov. In theory, any culture that is distinct from the one investigated by L&W and Labov should provide a suitable case study for comparative research for spoken personal narratives. As for choosing which culture to provide the informants for a comparative study, of particular interest is one that is steeped in a storytelling tradition where the sharing of personal experiences through narratives is recognised as a very commonplace social activity. A culture which is associated with a strong tradition of oral storytelling such as those found in BEV cultures, would also provide a fairer comparative study in this type of research. Other important considerations in any such study are that informants need to be easily identifiable, accessible and available in order to avoid difficulties of not having enough informants to examine levels of variation adequately. For these reasons, and for others that will be discussed in detail in this chapter, the London-based Greek Cypriot community (LGC) was identified as providing informants for my investigation.

4.2 Culture and speech community

Throughout this thesis, frequent reference is made to the terms "culture" and "speech community" as concepts that contextualise earlier research in narratives and to underpin mine. Both concepts express a number of meanings as a result of their

multidisciplinary use, so it is worth clarifying their meanings in the context of this study to be able to establish a common understanding before any further discussion takes place.

My primary use of “culture” and “speech community” in this discussion so far has been with reference to informants: from the Black English Vernacular (BEV) culture in New York, investigated by L&W and Labov in their studies of spoken personal narratives to the London based Greek Cypriots in my research. L&W’s narrative schema model is fundamentally a description of the storytelling traditions embedded in the BEV ‘culture’, including the various linguistic and non-linguistic means of evaluating experiences. However, both L&W and Labov appear to use “culture” and “speech community” interchangeably to describe particular groups of people and their linguistic behaviour. For example, they claim that their study contributes to a greater understanding of narratives and that, ‘This view of narrative structure will achieve greater significance when materials from radically different cultures are studied in the same way’ (p.41-42). This is despite their informants representing a mix of ethnic groups (African-Americans and Puerto Ricans). Furthermore, their focus on ‘verbal behaviour’ led them to state that ‘It is clear that these conclusions are restricted to the speech communities that we have examined’ (p.41). To confuse matters further, Labov’s (1972) follow-up study investigated the linguistic variables and patterns of evaluation in personal narratives of inhabitants of south-central Harlem, and the speech of the Black English Vernacular (BEV), which again reflects verbal cultural practises.

The terms “culture” and “speech community” in this study are also used in a much wider sense to refer to cultures and speech communities generally. In this sense, it is the distinctiveness of communities from each other, rather than the properties they share, which forms the basis for discussion on linguistic and behavioural diversity underpinning human ‘universals’. As both concepts appear to be rooted in each other and therefore not easily distinguishable, it may be helpful to examine the complexities involved in defining each term, first, as a prelude to my research.

4.2.1 Culture

One of the difficulties in defining the meaning of “culture” results from the term's historical development and use, and how it is understood both inside and outside academia where it is of interest in a number of fields other than linguistics. For these reasons, this thesis will not attempt to describe the many wide-ranging meanings of “culture” (for example, the popular notion of “high culture” which describes musical, literary and artistic achievements). Instead, I focus on its use within the context of the aims in this study. Definitions, therefore, will be drawn from anthropology, ethnography and linguistics. (For a summary of the historical development and range of meanings for ‘culture’, see Williams, 1988; Mulhern, 2000).

In *Linguistic Anthropology*, Alessandro Duranti (1977) outlines six theories of culture within anthropology ‘in which language plays a particularly important role’ (p.24). He acknowledges that, while each theory ‘implies a different research

agenda', language behaviour is the uniting feature. Furthermore, language 'provides the most complex system of classification of experience' within the notion of 'culture as learned patterns of behaviour' (p.49). Duranti offers several definitions of culture as starting points for his discussion, one of which is reproduced below:

In anthropology a culture is the learned and shared behaviour patterns characteristic of a group of people. Your culture is learned from relatives and other members of your community as well as from various material forms such as books and television programmes. You are not born with culture but with the ability to acquire it by such means as observation, imitation, and trial and error (Oswalt, 1986:25).

A further definition is proposed by Hall (1997) who describes culture as 'whatever is distinctive about the 'way of life' of a people, community, nation or social group', adding that culture 'can be used to describe shared values of a group or of a society - which is like the anthropological definition, only with a more sociological emphasis' (p.2). (Also see Hall and du Gay, 1996). The shared linguistic and behavioural practices of members of the same culture is fundamental to the concepts of cultural and linguistic diversity and underpins Hymes's (1962) *Ethnography of Communication*, an integrative approach to discourse based in anthropology and linguistics²¹. According to Hymes, the basic theoretical premise of communication lies in the fact that language as cultural behaviour is integral and as such, is part of an individual's cultural knowledge. As anthropological interests in narrative are in 'cultural patterning of customs, beliefs, values, performance and social contexts of narration' ... and ... 'cultural ways of telling and the relationship between narrative styles and contexts of narration' (Cortazzi, 1993: 100-101), context and culture are clearly fundamental to what is said, how it is said and how it is interpreted. Schiffrin (1994) describes this notion as entailing 'a recognition of both the diversity of communicative possibilities and practices (i.e. cultural relativity) and the fact that

²¹ See Chapter 7, 'Collaborative storytelling: prompts and clarification', for a summary of Hymes's *Ethnography of Speaking* and a description of the SPEAKING grid which developed from his research.

such practices are an integrated part of what we know and do as members of a particular culture (i.e. a holistic view of human beliefs and actions)' (p.137). Linton (1945) offers a further definition of culture as 'the way of life of its members; the collection of ideas and habits which they learn, share and transmit from generation to generation' (p.203). 'The way of life' definition corresponds with Mesthrie et al., (2000) description of culture as a 'design for living, which defines appropriate or acceptable ways and forms of behaviour within particular societies' (p.29). Drawing together the main elements of this discussion so far, "culture" can be defined as the learned behavioural and linguistic practices that are embedded in the shared practices of a particular group of people, so that these practices are particular to them.

One issue that is increasingly pertinent to today's multicultural societies is that a culture is not always able to sustain its distinctiveness by remaining intact. In other words, unless a culture remains in complete isolation, such as the Native American Indian cultures studied by Boas (1911) and to some extent Hymes (1981), it is unlikely that it will be impermeable to influences from other surrounding cultures. If language is acquired from 'foreign cultures' (Boas, 1911; Oswalt, 1986) then so are behavioural practices, which are assimilated and practised. This will therefore have implications as regards storytelling practices and raises the question of how far these practices are influenced by 'foreign cultures' if exposed to other cultural practices. Following on from this point, it then becomes complicated when attempting to identify which storytelling practices are 'native' to a culture and which not, or at least strongly influenced by another. These points are pertinent to L&W and Labov's studies on the BEV culture as well as to the LGC culture being researched

in this study, as both exist as part of a much wider and possibly less definable cultural system that is American and British (or English), respectively.

Taking the LGCs specifically, informants in this study have multiple memberships of more than the LGC culture as they are also members of a British culture, an English culture and, it could be argued a London culture. For the first generation Greek Cypriots, who I take to mean those who emigrated from Cyprus and settled in London and have Greek as their native language, this is less of an issue despite exposure to different behavioural and linguistic practices as a consequence of assimilation into another culture, as their native language and traditions remain intact in a conscious act of self-preservation. However, this is not the case for second generation LGCs, and even less so for the third generation. For second generation LGCs born in England, England and English are the more dominant culture and language; and as advancement in education and employment are seen as extremely important for an individual's future success, assimilation into the dominant culture is an inevitable necessity. The consequence, however, is that 'the way of life' begins to erode as knowledge and use of the Greek language, which is no longer the mother tongue, become less of a priority, as do traditional cultural practices, which may be reduced to symbolic gestures. This is despite the strong traditional family and cultural values that are held as important to Greek Cypriots and a close-knit community that is nevertheless maintained. The inevitable effect of fewer fluent speakers of the Greek language, an identifiable and necessary characteristic of a culture, will no doubt have a negatively significant effect on cultural identity to some degree. The likelihood is that the generation furthest apart

or more distanced from the 'original' culture and mother tongue i.e. third generation, will show the greatest amount of variation in behavioural and linguistic practices.

Other influences that are likely to affect behavioural and linguistic practices will come from membership of a range of discourse communities and sub-cultures that individuals will have contact with on a daily basis. For second generation London-born Greek Cypriots (of which I am one) and for those who are third generation, it is reasonable to argue a case for multiple membership of more than one culture. However, claims to membership of the Greek Cypriot culture must first and foremost be based on ethnicity as much as on shared behavioural and linguistic practices that do not belong to the British or English culture. In other words, part of who we are is fundamentally based on who we are not, as well as on what practices we share compared to those we do not. The notion of culture, it would therefore appear, represents a constant conflict of 'universal' with 'diversity' and consequently, the abstract concept of one's identity will be challenged. Moreover, the notion of one's self-perception of belonging to a particular group, which in this case is bound up in an actual, as well as, symbolic sense of being part of a Greek Cypriot family and everything that this heritage entails, is part of a much wider sense of being Greek Cypriot. Furthermore, culture and group identity is likely to influence how we perceive and relate to others with notions of membership and group solidarity resulting from an innate sense and knowledge of deeply embedded linguistic and behavioural practices.

4.2.2 Speech Community

The notion of “speech community” builds on the concept of “community”, which is usually taken to mean ‘a dimension of shared knowledge, possessions or behaviour’ of a group of people (Mesthrie et al. 2000: 37). To this extent it is often interchangeable with the term “culture”, although in a broader sense, community also describes sub-groups of people within a community, a topic that will not be discussed here²². Historically, however, ‘both Bloomfield and Chomsky reduce the concept of speech community to that of language (Hymes, 1996: 32). The difficulty with this rather terse definition is that linguistic practices (and social practices for that matter) are not constrained by the rules and norms of one linguistic code as the nature of a community is ‘dynamic and complex’ and allows for linguistic diversity even within the same speech community (Hymes, 1996: 32). Unlike formal grammarians who work from the premise that the community is homogeneous (Chomsky, 1965:3), studies by linguistic anthropologists and sociolinguists show that variation in speech styles, such as the use of social dialects, is in reality a common feature of speech communities and commonly found in monolingual communities. Variation within the same speech community therefore, is a common and well-researched phenomenon, and evidence of linguistic variables that correlate with social and cultural factors of a particular group of speakers is also likely to be found in storytelling practices.

At a basic level of description, a “speech community” is taken to mean people who use the same linguistic code, that is, they share a common language, and have

²² For example, “community” also refers to a group of people having common interests e.g. *the international business community* as well as a group viewed as forming a distinct segment of society, such as *the gay community*.

knowledge of its use. Hymes expands this definition stating, it is 'a community sharing rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech, and rules for the interpretation of at least one linguistic variety' (1972b: 54). Labov (1972a), however, proposes a definition that not only focuses on shared linguistic behaviour but also on the importance of shared behaviour and values:

The speech community is not defined by any marked agreement in the use of language elements, so much as by participation in a set of shared norms; these norms may be observed by overt types of evaluative behaviour, and by the uniformity of abstract patterns of variation which are invariant in respect to particular levels of usage (p.121).

The BEV culture investigated by Labov (1972) in *Language in the Inner City* is one example of a speech community. Labov was able to identify characteristic patterns of variation in their speech such as the systematic use of non-standard and grammatically marked forms of speech, such as the use of double negatives and 'contraction, deletion and inherent variability' of the copula 'be', as well as rules for ritual insults in the vernacular of 'black' youths. Moreover, Labov provides a detailed list of 'overt types of evaluative behaviour' in his analysis of personal narratives from members of the BEV speech community that are widely recognised and associated with the linguistic practices of the BEV culture. It would seem therefore, that features of a language and how they are used are distinct to a culture and their storytelling practices; the structure and performance of personal narratives are likely to mirror these linguistic behaviours, which are embedded in the culture of a given people and determined by the linguistic norms of that particular speech community.

Linguists, such as Saville-Troike, recognise that there are, however, problems with the notion of a "speech community" as the term:

cannot be exactly equated with a group of people who speak the same language, for Spanish

speakers in Texas and Argentina are members of different speech communities although they share a language code, and husband and wives within some speech communities in the South Pacific use quite distinct languages in speaking to one another (2003:14).

Saville-Troike goes on to point out the need to distinguish between 'participating' in a speech community and being a 'member' of it, as 'speaking the same language is sufficient (yet not necessary) for some degree of participation, but membership cannot be based on knowledge and skills alone' (p.15). In this way, individuals are able to 'dip in and out of' various speech communities and adjust their language and behaviour accordingly. In light of this line of reasoning, it could be argued that the LGC informants hold "membership" of the Greek Cypriot community while "participating" in other speech communities. Moreover, the notion of "membership" and "participation", particularly multiple membership of more than one speech community, is also relevant in multicultural speech communities, where bilingual speakers have knowledge and use of more than one linguistic code and probably, more than one culture. Accordingly, communicative competence, code-switching and an ability to style-shift are some of the linguistic strategies that are necessary for successful membership as well as participation of more than one speech community.

Moreover, multilingual speech communities are only too aware that a speech community does not always remain fixed or is impermeable to outside influences, as the occurrence and consequence of "language contact" will testify. Language contact inevitably brings with it what I call "culture contact"²³, which has implications on the linguistic code and verbal behaviour of a group of people. Contact with other (dominant) speech communities and cultures means exposure to different patterns and styles of speaking that are likely to result in linguistic variation. This is

²³ In fact, the analogy could be extended even further to include "culture displacement", "culture conflict" and even "culture loss" or "death".

particularly evident among different generations, where assimilation into a different educational system, for example, will have far reaching effects on all aspects of language, behaviour, norms, attitudes etc. This notion of 'linguistic diversity within the same speech community' underpins Hymes' (1972b; 1974) ethnographic approach to communication where variation rather than uniformity is a consequence of context and appropriateness determining the language used.

The most compelling argument for describing LGCs as a speech community is their knowledge and use of the Greek language, or specifically a Cypriot dialect of Greek. While usage has so far been maintained through several generations, for the younger members however, it is noticeably less fluent and consequently, there are fewer fluent bilingual speakers. With a reduced knowledge and practice of Greek and Greek cultural traditions as a result of assimilation into the much wider and dominant English culture, it is possible to predict that use of the Greek language may deteriorate with each subsequent generation. In this case, characteristics that make the LGC community a distinct speech community become less clear and definable, despite efforts to preserve the Greek language and, importantly, a separate identity.

Gardner-Chloros's (1992) study of the London community of Greek Cypriots, and specifically the linguistic differences in the use of the Greek Cypriot dialect among first, second and third generation members, provides some interesting insights into the speech community, not least by highlighting the lack of homogeneity:

within a given community certain typical patterns arise at a linguistic level, of which the best known is doubtless the three-generational pattern in which the first generation is monolingual in

L1, the second is bilingual in L1 and L2, and the third is monolingual in L2. (1992:112-113)²⁴

While Gardner-Chloros's findings reflect my discussion as regards the negative effect of exposure to a more dominant language and culture, it is inaccurate to claim that first generation LGCs remain monolingual in their native language because factors motivating a need to integrate and participate in the wider community far outweigh reasons for remaining monolingual. Clearly, instrumental and integrative motivations for learning the English language to a reasonably fluent standard is necessary for advancement in employment and for the education of children, both of which are factors that are important priorities for members of this culture. The availability of church-run and parent organised Greek schools, provide formal opportunities for second, third and subsequent generations of LGCs to learn and practise the Greek language - which is otherwise maintained at home, with grandparents, and during family holidays in Cyprus - although as Gardner-Chloros points out, it is Standard Greek rather than the Greek Cypriot dialect that is taught.

Another factor that undermines the notion of a homogeneous speech community is that even among members of the same generation, for example first generation Greek Cypriots, there is a certain amount of diversity. While the earliest Greek Cypriots migrated to London in the 1930s and 40s, the majority settled in London during the 1950s and 60s, with a further group of refugees settling in London as a result of the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974. The experiences of integrating and assimilating into a new community and culture differ significantly between the earliest, who struggled to make in-roads into a foreign culture, and the later migrants

²⁴ See Gardner-Chloros (1992) for a fuller discussion of the linguistic differences in speech among three generations of London Greek Cypriots.

who were welcomed into a thriving community that had been established by the earlier settlers in London.

An alternative way of understanding what it is that makes a group of people in a multilingual speech community a distinct speech community is to look at the analogy of the Arizona Tewa community. Despite three centuries of contact and intermarriage with 'their more numerous Hopi neighbours', the Arizona Tewa have nevertheless managed to maintain the Tewa language 'although there are signs of language loss among the younger members of the community' (Duranti, 1997:76). Although occasionally identifying themselves as Hopis, "they reserve an identity for themselves which is unavailable to the Hopi and uniquely their own" (Kroskrity, 1993:7, cited in Duranti). Clearly, as this analogy shows, the importance of preserving language as a symbol of ethnic identity lies at the heart of the Arizona Tewa as it does for the LGC community.

The discussion on "culture" and "speech community", and in particular, attempts to define the terms within the context of this thesis have raised a number of complex issues related to understanding the language practices of specific groups of people. The LGCs were chosen as my informants as they represent an alternative culture for research to those investigated by L&W and Labov. As to whether the LGCs have shared patterns of variation and 'overt types of evaluative behaviour' characteristic of their culture and speech community, only an analysis of their oral narratives can tell. Through this type of research can cultural models of storytelling be identified, together with other marked variables that may be correlated with other speaker factors. Details about the informants and the study will be discussed in greater detail

in the following sections. In the meantime and for the purposes of this study, I will refer to the LGCs as a “culture” and “speech community” subject to the kinds of qualification I have outlined here.

4.3 Informants in study: London Greek Cypriots (LGC)

The speech community chosen for the study is the London based Greek Cypriot community (LGC) who comprise members of the second and third generations. (To clarify, first generation Greek Cypriots in London are those members of the community who were born in Cyprus - having Greek as their native language - and who migrated, mostly in the 1940s and 1950s and settled in London. Second generation Greek Cypriots are their children, whose native language is English, and third generation are the children of the second generation born in England.) Members of this speech community were approached and asked to take part as informants in sociolinguistic interviews to investigate their oral narratives of personal experience.

The LGC community was chosen for several reasons, and within the community, specific groups were identified. The principal reason for choosing LGCs is that they represent an alternative speech community to the one investigated by L&W. Any evidence of variation at a structural, schematic and lexico-grammatical level would challenge and test the presumed universalism involved in a single narrative schema model and support the existence of culturally diverse narrative models. In addition, speaker variables will be investigated and correlated with social factors such as age

and gender. Secondly, being second generation Greek Cypriot and the fieldworker/ethnographer in this investigation, approaching and interviewing members of the Greek community would be a less formal undertaking not only because of my knowledge of the culture and language (which is advantageous), but also because I can draw on an extended network of family and friends for my informants. Furthermore, as a member of the Greek Cypriot community, I am a familiar and, it is hoped, less inhibiting presence to the LGC informants in this study, particularly in terms of reducing the likelihood of the Observer's Paradox affecting the production of narratives in interviews. This is essential for interviews involving children and informants who are not known to me who are most likely to be affected. (While there are strategies that can help reduce the Observer's Paradox, it is recognised that this is an inherent problem of sociolinguistic interviews and one that can never be completely overcome.)

The peer group interviews were conducted with informants who knew each other; for adults these were mostly friends, family or work colleagues, with most belonging to a denser, multiplex network that involves membership of two of these categories. The children are from a local Greek school in London who attend classes twice a week to learn Greek language, dance and culture. Most are also friends outside the classroom context so peer group interviews were conducted with friends and fellow classmates.

I had originally considered interviewing different socio-economic groups to investigate whether an individual's class was a factor that caused variation in personal narratives. The social class variable has been viewed as an important aspect

of sociolinguistic studies since Labov's groundbreaking research in *The Social Stratification of English in New York* (1966) as it highlights change and diversity within a single speech community. However, placing a person into a social class category, with all the subsequent connotations this creates, is problematic. According to Milroy (1987) 'The nature and definition of social class has for a long time been a controversial matter in the social sciences, and positions adopted by participants in the dispute usually reflect opposing ideological commitments' (p.29). The main problems are the indicators used to determine the various classes. For example, Labov used three: education, occupation and income. Trudgill (2000), in his Norwich studies, used occupation, income, education, type of housing, locality and father's occupation. Moreover, for his purposes, Labov identified ten classes, which were grouped into four strata - Lower class, Working Class, Lower-middle class and Upper-middle class. Other sociolinguists, by contrast, used mathematical calculations to distinguish their categories (see Milroy, 1987:30). Such issues raise problems with trying to distinguish the social groupings of the LGCs. For the majority of second generation informants, the indicator of 'father's occupation' would misrepresent their level of education and occupational status because many first generation parents lacked many of the opportunities for higher and further education associated with a higher social status. Despite this factor, many first generation Greeks Cypriots became self-employed and opened businesses in catering, tailoring/dressmaking, hairdressing, groceries and other manual skilled jobs which resulted in the comfortable and wealthy lifestyles associated with this community. This leads me to conclude that the majority of LGCs involved in my study could be described as broadly middle class and to try and make distinctions within the one socio-economic group would be problematic as well as controversial.

Because of this, identifying the socio-economic background of participants in the study as a speaker variable was not pursued and investigated.

4.4 Research methods: ethnography, sociolinguistic interviews and informants

In their studies, L&W interviewed male members of the BEV culture only. The ages of the informants ranged from 10 to 72, while Labov interviewed children and teenagers, who were also male. Both L&W identified schematic variation in the personal narratives of their younger informants, which consistently lacked the *abstract* and *coda* schemas. *Evaluation* strategies that commented on personal experiences were also found to be absent. In light of these findings, two of the social factors being investigated in this study as possibly causing schematic and lexicogrammatical variation in personal narratives are age and gender.

Three age groups were identified for the purposes of my own study: 9-11; 18-21 and 35-49. These groups represented membership of two different generations of the LGC community. Typically, informants in the older adult group are second generation Greek Cypriots, while the younger adult group and children are third generation LGCs. Differences in the range of each age group (i.e. three years for the third generation informants and 15 years for the older adult second generation group) was the result of practical considerations, for example, which informants were available to participate in the study. A further consideration for selecting informants in the younger group with a smaller age range and who were therefore, closer in age, was to reduce the possibility of inadvertently introducing the

additional factor of stages of cognitive development as a basis of variability, as this would require a complex discussion that would be outside the aims of this study. This factor, however, was not an important issue for the two adult groups, who have reached cognitive maturity, with the result that evidence of variation could be confidently correlated with other factors discussed in the aims of this study.

To test how far the interview situation and the presence of peers affect storytelling structure, and contribute to variation, informants were interviewed in different settings: either in a one-to-one interview with the interviewer or in a peer group setting with between two to four informants of the same age and the interviewer. To be able to research gender differences in personal narratives, male and female informants were interviewed in single sex peer group interviews with no mixing of ages. The reason for this decision was that the study sets out to collect personal narratives and investigate differences in schematic structure and use of linguistic devices that can be correlated with specific factors such as age and gender. The aim is not to investigate the dynamics in mixed groups caused by gender differences and male-female power relations which would introduce other processes that are outside the interests of this research (see Coates and Cameron, 1988; Coates, 1998).

Informants in both one-to-one and peer group interviews were asked to recall personal experiences about the same themes: happy, sad, funny and embarrassing events as well as those involving fights, arguments and the classic danger of death scenario. The interviewer framed her questions in the following way, for example:

- Can you tell me about a sad experience?
- Can you tell me about a time you were involved in a fight or an argument that really upset you?

The range of topics was deliberately chosen to be wider than L&W and Labov's 'danger of death' and 'fight' themes, where, as I have suggested previously, "Trouble" (Bruner, 1991) is arguably the underlying theme that is guaranteed to produce a narrative. The purpose of this is to test whether different story topics affect story structure to produce variations that create sub-genres of narratives, and as such differ from the model proposed by L&W and Labov. The test is to investigate whether there is a correlation between story topic and story form and whether all topics produce personal experiences that fulfil the criteria of a narrative; or whether in fact they encode other storytelling modes, such as the non-narrative 'recount' (see Plum, 1988; Eggins & Slade, 1997; and Section 2.6 of Chapter 2).

All interviews were conducted in English because it is the native language of all the informants (and interviewer). To attempt to conduct interviews in Greek would add a further dimension of anxiety to those informants who are not fluent, particularly children. Consequently, informants would be concerned with their performance and a concern with being judged, and a constant monitoring of their speech would cause the style-shift away from the vernacular and other possible effects, which would be detrimental to data collection. It is important to avoid this, especially as the aim of the interview is to elicit personal narratives and not to test the fluency of the informants. Moreover, it is important to create an environment that is conducive to the production of narratives; making informants feel relaxed and at ease is one way of achieving this and reducing the effects of the Observer's Paradox. Occasionally, informants used Greek at word or phrase level in their retelling, a factor that reinforced solidarity between participants (including the interviewer) and signalled

that all participants in the speech event belong to the same culture and speech community.

My role as ethnographer, field worker and interviewer allowed me to approach individuals first hand to ask if they would participate in the study. Informants were asked to sign a "Participants Letter of Permission" assuring them of confidentiality and asking permission to reproduce data from the interview for the purposes of the study²⁵. Personal information such as: age, sex, place of birth, 1st, 2nd or 3rd generation LGC, occupation and highest qualification were also recorded at this stage. As a way of acknowledging their participation in the research, informants were given a copy of the interview transcript and, if specifically requested, a copy of the interview tape. Interviews were conducted at different locations with the main consideration being convenience for the informants. Locations included my office at the university, the informant's home or workplace, my home and the Greek school attended by the children²⁶. All interviews were recorded onto a cassette recorder that was placed in front of the informants and remained visible throughout the interview²⁷.

During the interview it seemed important to encourage and maintain a flow of communication between the interviewer and informants, but not at the risk of affecting the structure of the narrative. The conventionalised question-answer routine of an interview, where the roles of participants (the interviewer and

²⁵ Participants were asked to sign two copies, one of which was returned to me for my records. A copy of the letter is attached at Appendix I.

²⁶ Several of the male informants in the 18-21 category, who were interviewed in my office, admitted to feeling apprehensive before arriving but added that I made them feel at ease once the interview begun.

²⁷ Ideally, microphones pinned onto the informant's clothing would have been less visible and possibly less inhibiting but these resources were not available.

informants) is fixed and a strict turn-taking sequence is adhered to, was understood by all participants - adults and children alike - and allowed for this process to be followed. One-to-one interviews presented less of a problem, as they closely followed the expected interview pattern of turn-taking which required little prompting from me. Peer group interviews, particularly those composed of adults, however, saw the emergence of collaborative storytelling strategies, specifically the use of *prompts* and *requests for clarification*, which facilitated the production of spontaneous personal narratives. A further consequence of this change in group dynamic was the backgrounding of my role as interviewer and a foregrounding of the peer group informants who inadvertently took over proceedings to conduct and shape the interview (See Chapter 7 for a separate discussion of these collaborative storytelling strategies).

Some of the younger informants (aged 9-11), however, required constant prompting, particularly in one-to-one interviews, to encourage personal narratives and to extend minimal contributions beyond a short clause or their *abstract*. Children needed greater encouragement to elaborate their personal experiences into fuller responses beyond their initial short utterance in one-to-one interviews where they appeared to be more inhibited, possibly because they lacked the implicit motivating presence of peers. An example of this can be found in Text 4.1 below, which offers a full transcription of an interview with an 11 year old male and is typical of a one-to-one interview with children. It is presented here to illustrate the need for the interviewer (Int) to use prompting and questioning strategies to encourage the child (M) to speak, a methodological issue that had not been anticipated by the interviewer at the

outset. See Text 4.1 below. (Transcription conventions are discussed in Section 4.5. and a transcription key is given on page 13 of this thesis).

- 1 Int Okay (M) can you tell me about a time you were in a fight that made you very upset
M Em ... [5.0]
Int Or an argument
- 5 M Right em I was at school ... and em (4.0) this em boy was taking the er mickey out of me and em he just kicked me ... and em we like had a fight and I was like very upset cause of this []
Int Are you friends now?
M Nah
- 10 Int Okay em what about em can you think of a time that made you very sad [8.0] was there a time in your life that made you very sad [6.0] it's very hard to think of a story isn't it when you're put on the spot okay what about something that made you very happy ... maybe it was a holiday or your birthday or something at school
- 15 M Er yeah birthday ... em I em my mum and dad got me something I wanted
Int Can you tell me about that day
M Yeah and um I went swimming and with my friends and I was like very happy then
Int Yeah were there any other times when you were really really happy
- 20 M Mm not really
Int Oh!
M Just my birthday
Int Yeah okay what about em something a-a time when you were very embarrassed ... [8.0] ... was there ever a situation when ah you were very very embarrassed ... [7.0]
- 25 M Don't know
Int Okay ... em going back to the um the kind of time that you were -that you've been upset was there ever a time when you thought that your life was in danger ... you haven't been in any car accidents
M =nah nah

Text 4.1. An example of a one-to-one interview with a child, (male, aged 9-11)

In all cases it was important for the interviewer to be aware of not potentially 'damaging' the elicited narrative with prompts or questions that might inadvertently force the speaker to produce a different story from what they might have produced. There is also a danger that children may interpret prompts and questions as being the direction they need to take leading them to say what they think the interviewer wants them to say. Again this can skew data and produce what may well turn out to be an unreliable corpus of narratives.

What can be seen in Text 4.1 is how the interviewer attempts to elicit personal narratives throughout the interview for different experiences where the informant is not providing a full account (e.g. lines 3, 15 and 17). The interviewer remains careful to not influence the structure of the narrative by influencing the child to present any other information. One possible explanation for M's reticence in producing more elaborated personal accounts may be the inhibiting effects of the interview setting, as well as the child-adult power relationship, most probably heightened by the fact that the interview took place in a Greek school where I may have been viewed as being in a similar role of teacher. It was also the first time I had met M, who is not known to me. A further explanation is that M feels there is no need to impress me with accounts of his experiences, particularly with the absence of his peers. His use of a relaxed speaking style – the vernacular (1.13, “yeah”; 1.26, “nah nah”) - signals just how comfortable and apparently unaffected he is in the interview. On reflection, I felt that generally, the interviews were successful and that informants of all ages were happy to take part and disclose their personal experiences²⁸.

In total, 26 interviews made up of 14 one-to-one interviews and 12 peer group interviews were carried out, producing a corpus of 279 personal stories. Of the 279 stories, 171 were identified as personal narratives²⁹ (see Chapter 3) while the remainder was categorised as ‘recounts’ or non-narrative forms of storytelling. (A discussion of recounts as a finding is discussed at length in Chapter 5, section 5.4.1.

²⁸ On a personal note, I felt that much of this success is due to the informants’ desire to help me with my research.

²⁹ For a story about a personal experience to be recognised as a personal narrative, it must fulfil Labov’s definition of a minimal narrative by having at least ‘a sequence of two clauses which are *temporally ordered*’ (1972:360), which is the *complicating action*. In addition, these clauses must report events that actually happened.

See also section 2.6 of Chapter 2. for a discussion of Plum's (1988) category of 'recount'.) This information is represented more clearly in Table 4.1 below:

Sex of informants	Age group	Interview setting	No. of interviews	Total no. of informants	No. of personal stories elicited	Stories which are narratives
Male	9-11	One-to-one interviews	2	2	9	5
		Peer group interviews	3	9	61	43
	18-21	One-to-one interviews	2	2	11	8
		Peer group interviews	3	8	49	32
	35-49	One-to-one interviews	2	2	13	6
		Peer group interviews	1	4	20	15
Female	9-11	One-to-one interviews	3	3	14	5
		Peer group interviews	2	4	28	12
	18-21	One-to-one interviews	2	2	12	5
		Peer group interviews	1	2	14	11
	35-49	One-to-one interviews	3	3	21	11
		Peer group interviews	2	4	27	18
			26	45	279	171

Table 4.1 Summary of informants, interview setting and total number of personal narratives elicited in this study.

4.5 Transcription conventions

Taped interviews were transcribed so as to provide a full written record, a task that was done at the outset, primarily for ease of analysis to help in identifying linguistic

and structural variations³⁰. Moreover, it was important to be able to correlate marked features more easily with the speaker, an issue that became apparent in peer group interviews where interruptions, simultaneous speech and overlapping would occur. The transcriptions reproduce every utterance to ensure that the speech 'surrounding' personal narratives and recounts is reproduced faithfully as it is important to contextualise the data within a wider framework of spoken discourse in order to provide greater insights into interactive storytelling processes in peer group interviews. As Labov's narratives have been criticised for being monologic and lacking interaction, this was a criticism I wished to avoid (see Corston, 1993).

A low-level orthographic transcription scheme was used to reproduce the spoken data as closely as possible to the original speech, which was not 'edited' to Standard English. As my concerns are to identify linguistic patterns above clause and sentence level, this level of transcription is sufficient for my purposes. A transcription key was devised by adapting existing schemes, including Schifffrin (1994) and Eggins and Slade (1997) and can be found on page 13 of this thesis.

Prosodic and paralinguistic behaviour - such as change in voice quality, change in pitch in questions, emphatic stress on words/change in volume, hand and body gestures, laughing, pausing - was also noted in the transcription, but only where a feature was felt to be an important part of an informant's repertoire of speech devices. An example of how the spoken data is represented in transcription form is presented in Text 4.1 'An example of a one-to-one interview with a child, male (aged 9-11)'. Another example of transcribed data, this time showing examples of

³⁰ An example of a tapescript is given at Appendix II. Copies of all other tapescripts are available on request from the author.

paralinguistic features such as laughter, is presented in Text 4.2 below. The excerpt is taken from a peer group interview between adult males, aged 35-49. The excerpt shows some of the paralinguistic and prosodic features commonly found in group discourse:

- 1 Int Okay, can you think of um an embarrassing experience that you had?
 G Embarrassing?
 Int Embarrassing
 G ... Many I think [laughs]
 All [laughing]
- 5 G It's on a daily basis each one
 M = [=] [laughing] each one that I could possibly like am willing to like
 divulge []
 All [laughing]
 C Ah dear ... no!
- 10 G Ah [phhhh] ... I don't -I mean there's so many you just -I can't even -the one that
 stands out mine is is that one's a personal one in a sense it's embarrassing between
 2 people ... (*continues personal narrative*)

Text 4.2. An excerpt from a peer group interview with adult males (aged 35-49), to show examples of prosodic and paralinguistic features in group talk.

My transcribed data are presented in several ways, determined by the focus and level of analysis in the discussion. For example, the format in Text 4.2 above, reproduces an excerpt from a wider interview at a discourse level, examples of which can be found in Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8. These chapters are concerned with units of narrative discourse and the interactive features of collaborative storytelling used by informants in peer group interviews, respectively. Certain sections in Chapter 5, and also Chapter 6, however, adopt a different format from the example above for the presentation of spoken data. This is because of a change in the focus of the data analysis, which is concerned with identifying variation at structural and schematic levels. Here, I felt it was best to present the data to the various schematic stages in the narrative to be able to identify structural and schematic variation clearly and in relation to each other. Text 4.3 is an excerpt from a larger personal narrative about a

fight and illustrates the marked use of flashforward in A's personal narrative. The excerpt is taken from a peer group interview with adult males, aged 18-21 (CA = *complicating action*):

1	A	... and one of them ran over and punched him through the window so	CA
		they both got out and they all got jumped on basically and when my	CA
		friend who ran down to the station after he had the eye because he got	CA
		punched through the window and he managed to run off but the other guy	CA
5		was -the one that was getting beaten up on the floor and he -the two guys	CA
		that the main guys that were involved are like one of them's been in	Orientation
		prison already for stabbing someone with a screwdriver yeah	Orientation
	C	was it was it [whispers]	CA
	A	yeah em <i>and their -the court case was like the -like in the last two</i>	Flashforward
10		<i>months like a year later and I don't actually know what happened</i>	Flashforward
		<i>actually I think it got like it's been postponed</i>	Flashforward
		but yeah like they had to get all the security and all that but apparently	CA
		they didn't get a good -cause the bouncer at the door he was friends with	CA
		all of them anyway	CA
15	Int	hm	
	A	so obviously he didn't -and he was standing there and he never even	CA
		once decided to -he was just standing there watching it ...(continues)	CA

Text 4.3 A's personal narrative about a fight with an episode of flashforward (in italics) to illustrate discussion of data at a structural level.

Column 1 presents the line number of the spoken text, while Column 2 shows who is speaking. Column 3 provides the actual spoken text using the low-level orthographic conventions favoured throughout my transcriptions. Flashforward, the feature under discussion in this excerpt is presented in column 4, using the schema categories proposed by L&W and Labov - and any other relevant categories that might not be represented by their six-schema model. Other presentations of transcribed spoken data in the following chapters are organised into clauses (comprising a subject and verb), with the boundary marker for each 'new' line being a pronoun or cohesive device/conjunction. An example is presented below in Text 4.4. taken from a one-to-one interview with C, an 11 year old female. By presenting data in this way, it is

easier to analyse the stages of the personal narrative for the use or omission of particular schemas and be able to identify marked structural or lexico-grammatical differences for discussion. In the example below, the focus of the discussion might be on the absence of *evaluation*, *resolution* and *coda*.

1	Int	yes [laugh] okay em how about a really funny situation do you have a memory about something really funny that happened to you ...	
	C	funny	
5	Int	hmm	
	C	what like embarrassing or em...	
	Int	embarrassing would be...okay funny or embarrassing	
	C	embarrassing em	<i>Abstract</i>
		when I was at em the shop	<i>Orientation</i>
10		with my mum	<i>Orientation</i>
		I went to Next	CA
		and I saw my mum	CA
		and there was this coat I liked	CA
		and then I linked her hand	CA
15		and started swinging	CA
		and said "mum can I buy that coat"	CA
		and I looked	CA
		and she said "pardon"	CA
		I looked up and it wasn't my mum	CA
20		and then	<i>(Resolution?)</i>
	Int	= =[oh]	

Text 4.4 A personal narrative from an 11 year old female showing a marked absence of various schema categories (*evaluation*, *resolution* and *coda*).

4.6. Narrative analysis: how findings are presented

At this stage of the study - having collected and transcribed the interviews - it was necessary to identify which of the stories were in fact narratives and which were not, before further analysis could be undertaken. Each personal experience was noted from the tapescript as either being a narrative or a recount, and a template was drawn up to record this information systematically. (The template was used for all the tapescripts.) An example of a template summarising spoken personal experiences

on Tapescript 5b is reproduced below in Table 4.2. The data recorded shows details of the first six stories produced by M (female, aged 40, one-to-one interview). (Key: CA = *complicating action*; Ev = *evaluation*; PE = *post- evaluation*)

TAPE NO. AND TRANSCRIPT 5B						
Description: male/ <u>female</u> 9-11 18-21 <u>35-49</u>				Interview: <u>1-2-1</u> / peer group		
story no.	topic	narrative	non-narrative	structural deviations - additional or lacking schemas	boundary markers	other distinct features e.g. lexicogrammatical
1	embarrassing	√		- no abstract - orientation clauses after CA - CA- direct speech - PE- before coda		
2	embarrassing	√		- orientation in CA - PE after coda		- orientation in past perfect tense; to fill info gaps - parallelism in CA
3	accident/ upset	√		- highly evaluative - no coda - PE (after R)		- parallelism in CA
4	argument	√		- long orientation - short CA (4 clauses) - PE (after R) - no abstract - no coda		
5	danger of death	√		- long PE	CA - and/ but Ev - but	- parallelism in Evaluation
6	danger of death		√	(descriptive recount – no narrative clauses)		

Table 4.2. Summary of Tapescript 5B (-speaker M, female, aged 40, one- to-one interview)

Having established which personal experiences are narratives and which are not, it was useful to record the theme or topic of the experience (e.g. happy, danger of death) together with any marked structural or linguistic features (using the schema categories proposed by L&W). With the data presented so clearly, it is possible to make a correlation with story topic and narrative/non-narrative form; in this way it is possible to see a pattern of which story topics create narrative forms and which create recounts, findings that are important to the aims of this study. Furthermore, I

was able to identify a group of clauses or schema that are outside the description of L&W's and Labov's narrative schema model, and which I will call "post-evaluation". This initial finding proved to be significant as regards my overall argument and is discussed in full in Chapter 6, 'More than words: Post-Evaluation'.

The next stage of analysis required a closer examination of each of the personal experiences identified as narratives in Table 4.2, above, for their structural as well as lexico-grammatical features. Preliminary examination, as shown in speaker M's data, highlighted two interesting findings: not all the personal experiences are in fact narratives; and some structural variation seems to exist in the form of an additional schema, a *post-evaluation*. By examining the narratives further, I felt it would be possible to discover whether *post-evaluation* is consistently used by some or all informants, which would have implications concerning whether it is a feature unusually or uniquely embedded in the cultural storytelling practices of LGCs. Moreover, I was interested in examining whether these variations were just isolated findings or, if consistently present across the data, whether they could be correlated with speaker age or gender. Another area I was concerned with was whether story topic determined story structure to create alternative modes of storytelling and sub-genres of narrative forms. To re-state a point made earlier, are certain topics better suited to producing narratives, such as those that have "Trouble" as the underlying theme? With the data prompting questions at each stage of analysis, it was necessary to draw up a further template to summarise my findings to describe every personal experience in all the tapescripts. An example of the 'Narrative Analysis: summary of findings'³¹ is presented below in Table 4.3.

³¹ Copies of tables and graphs summarising data and findings are available on request from the author.

1. Schema/structure	2. Description of feature and number of personal experience (in tapescript)	3. Story topic of personal experience (in column 2)
Abstract	given given by interviewer/peer in question (2,5) given by previous narrator: narrative runs on about a similar theme/topic, so no need to emphasize lacking (16) ring composition: abstract \leftarrow \rightarrow coda (7,9,11,20,21)	All (except 16) Danger of death Embar x2; happy x2; funny
Orientation	very long i.e. ¾ of narrative (6) clauses inserted after main CA schema; gives background/ contextualising info (13,17) clauses inserted during CA (21) is final clause at end of narrative, after resolution; elaborates orientation (14, 20) orientation info prompted by interviewer (16)	Funny Danger x2 Happy Danger; happy Danger
Complicating action	expressed through direct speech (2,6,7,13)	Upset/argument; funny x2; danger
Evaluation	narrative begins with evaluation (1:20) evaluation follows abstract (19) woven through orientation (14) narratives highly evaluative – marked (14,17,19,21)	Happy Happy Danger Happy, sad, danger x2
Resolution	not clear (2,5)	Upset/argument; embar
Coda	repeated (10,11,15) lacking	Fight; embar; danger
Post-Evaluation	given (10,11,14,17,21) prompted – (13)	Danger of death x2; fight; embar; Danger of death
Ring composition	Parallelism at abstract \leftarrow \rightarrow coda (7,9,11,20,21)	Embar x2; happy x2; funny;
Parallelism	see ring composition repetition of main CA events (11,15) repetition of orientation (17) repetition of evaluation (20,21) repetition of coda (10,11,15)	Embar ; danger of death Danger of death Happy x2 Fight; embar; danger
Non narratives	Fight/ upset x2 , funny, embarrassing, danger of death	

Table 4.3 Narrative analysis: summary of findings for Tapescript 1 (males; adults; 35-49; peer group interview. Informants: G, C, M, A)

The above template provided a useful method of recording the analysis of all personal experiences on all the tapescripts, since it was important to be systematic and comprehensive. The 'schema/structure' being analysed in column 1 are the six schemas identified by L&W, together with *post-evaluation* - the newly identified schema category in my data - and two other structural features that came to light

once analysis had begun: *ring composition* and *parallelism* (see Chapter 5, section 5.3 for a full discussion of these two findings). Also noted against each feature in column 2 was the number of the personal narrative from that particular tapescript to be able to analyse any correlation with story topic.

In each tapescript, the story topics of all personal experiences found to be non-narratives were listed at the bottom of the template for practical purposes - primarily to have all the relevant information on one sheet. By summarising the data in this way, it was then possible to focus on specific areas of the data, such as which of the story topics produced narratives and which did not; or whether there is a correlation with particular marked structural features in narratives with the informant's social background (e.g. males, females, adults or children etc.) A full discussion of these findings, together with their interpretation, will be presented in the following three chapters.

Before leaving this chapter, it is worth briefly restating how my chosen method serves the thesis aims overall. Investigating members of the LGC culture and speech community as an alternative speech community to those researched by L&W and Labov is one way of testing the presumed universalism of their narrative schema model. Evidence of variation at a structural and schematic level would provide further insights into our understanding of cultural models of storytelling, while findings that can be correlated with the speaker's social background would seem to support a notion that linguistic and behavioural practices may significantly differ within a single speech community. Such insights promise to not only answer the

many questions raised throughout this thesis, but also to provide a basis for a variationist revision of L&W's narrative schema model.

CHAPTER 5. SCHEMA VARIATION AND STORY GENRES: WHEN IS A NARRATIVE NOT A NARRATIVE?

5.1 Presentation and discussion of narrative patterns in data

This study set out to investigate a corpus of personal narratives by members of the LGC community to establish how far they are culturally embedded and display levels of variation that challenge the notion of a universal narrative. Other factors examined as possible causes of variation are speaker factors, that is, social background factors such as gender and age as variables. Any evidence of systematic variation across narratives will inevitably have implications as regards the existence of a single narrative framework as providing an accurate description of all narratives across all cultures. Other factors thought to cause variation and investigated as part of this study are: the role that story topic has in influencing or even determining narrative structure to create so called sub-genres of narratives; and the interview setting, specifically how differences in a one-to-one or peer group interview might influence patterns of interaction, performance and final narrative form. (Findings relating to the interview setting and its effects on informants, their interaction and storytelling is developed into a separate chapter, Chapter 7).

In this chapter, key findings from the study of personal oral narratives of the LGCs will be presented, along with a discussion of their analysis and possible interpretation. The findings are presented under three broad headings: 'Schema

variation in personal stories', 'Structural variation in personal stories' and 'Alternative story genres'. These sections are further divided into sub-headings that present specific features considered marked, or of special interest to the study of narratives, and are discussed separately. Before presenting the findings, however, it is useful to have a summary of the key facts and figures from which some of the following discussion will emerge.

In this study, a total of 44 LGC informants participated in 26 interviews, resulting in a total 279 personal stories from one-to-one and single sex peer group interviews. Of the 279 personal stories:

- 61% were identified as narratives
- 39% were identified as recounts (non-narratives)

(see Table 5.1, below for a summary of this information).

in this study. Sex	Age group	Interview setting	Number of interviews	Total number of informants	Number of personal experiences elicited	Experiences which are narratives	Experiences which are recounts	
Male	9-11	One-to-one	2	2	9	5	4	
		Peer group	3	9	61	43	18	
	18-21	One-to-one	2	2	11	8	3	
		Peer group	3	8	49	32	17	
	35-49	One-to-one	2	2	13	6	7	
		Peer group	1	4	20	15	5	
Female	9-11	One-to-one	3	3	14	5	9	
		Peer group	2	4	28	12	16	
	18-21	One-to-one	2	2	12	5	7	
		Peer group	1	2	14	11	3	
	35-49	One-to-one	3	3	21	11	10	
		Peer group	2	4	27	18	9	
				26	45	279	171 (61%)	108 (39%)

Table 5.1 Summary of LGC informants, interview setting and total number of personal stories (narratives and recounts) elicited in this study.

In order to see whether there exists a correlation with story topic or theme of the personal experience (danger of death, fight/argument, embarrassing, happy, funny and sad) and informant groups (male/female; interview setting), and to examine their distribution, the 279 personal stories (both narratives and recounts) were analysed more specifically. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 5.2, below.

Sex	Age	Interview Setting	Number of stories	Danger of death	Fight/argument	Embarrassing	Happy	Sad	Funny
Male	9-11	One-to-one	9	1	3	1	3	1	0
		Peer group	61	15	10	13	8	7	8
	18-21	One-to-one	11	3	2	2	2	1	1
		Peer group	49	8	8	8	11	10	4
	35-49	One-to-one	13	2	3	2	2	2	2
		Peer group	20	6	4	4	2	1	3
Female	9-11	One-to-one	14	0	4	2	4	3	1
		Peer group	28	1	5	4	6	10	2
	18-21	One-to-one	12	1	2	3	2	3	1
		Peer group	14	3	2	3	2	2	2
	35-49	One-to-one	21	4	5	4	2	4	2
		Peer group	27	3	4	5	4	4	7
			279	47	52	51	48	48	32

Table 5.2 Personal stories (narratives and recounts) by story topic

As this research is mainly concerned with narrative forms, a further table has been drawn up to provide a break down of just the personal narratives by story topic for

all the informant groups. This table provides the basis for much of the discussion, which follows in this chapter (see Table 5.3, below).

Sex	Age	Interview setting	Number of narratives	Danger of death	Fight/argument	Embar-rassing	Happy	Sad	Funny
Male	9-11	One-to-one	5	1	2	1	1	0	0
		Peer group	43	14	9	10	1	2	7
	18-21	One-to-one	8	3	2	1	1	1	0
		Peer group	32	6	4	8	5	7	2
	35-49	One-to-one	6	1	3	1	0	0	1
		Peer group	15	5	2	3	2	1	2
Female	9-11	One-to-one	5	0	3	1	0	0	1
		Peer group	12	1	2	3	1	4	1
	18-21	One-to-one	5	1	1	2	0	0	1
		Peer group	11	3	1	3	1	1	2
	35-49	One-to-one	11	3	4	3	0	0	1
		Peer group	18	2	1	5	2	1	7
			171	40	34	41	14	17	25

Table 5.3 Personal narratives showing the range of story topic for each informant group

5.2 Schema variation in personal narratives

5.2.1 Additional and omitted schemas

One of the interesting findings that came to light in the analysis of personal narratives for all informant groups is that only a small proportion of the narratives

produced conform to the idealised and ‘fully-formed’ six-schema structure proposed by L&W and Labov. For example, of the 32 narratives produced by 18-21 year old males in a peer group interview setting, only 8 comprised the 6 schemas. The most striking finding relates to the narratives produced by children (aged 9-11). Of the total 65 narratives by males and females from both interview settings, only two contained all six schemas. In total, 27% of all narratives conformed to the six-schema framework. The figures for all informant groups by age, sex and interview setting are given below, in Table 5.4.

Sex	Age	Interview setting	Number of narratives	Narratives with all six schemas (proposed by L&W, 1967)
Male	9-11	One-to-one	5	0
		Peer group	43	0
	18-21	One-to-one	8	5
		Peer group	32	8
	35-49	One-to-one	6	3
		Peer group	15	9
Female	9-11	One-to-one	5	0
		Peer group	12	2
	18-21	One-to-one	5	1
		Peer group	11	8
	35-49	One-to-one	11	5
		Peer group	18	6
			171	47 (27%)

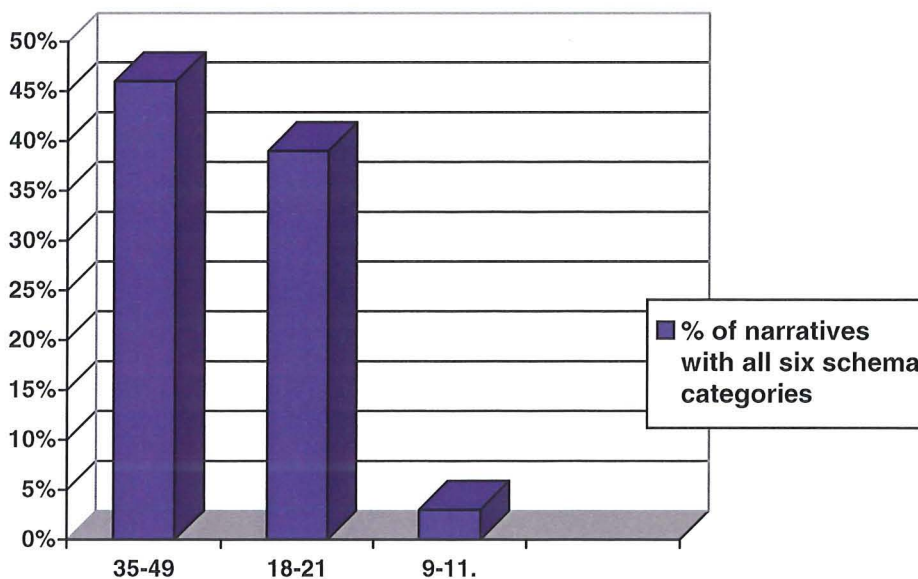
Table 5.4 Number of narratives containing all six schemas, by informant group

What is particularly striking about only 3% of all children's narratives containing all six schemas is that this age group produced the largest proportion of the total 171 narratives - 38%. The children's 3% figure can be compared to 46% of narratives by the older adults (35-49) as having all six schemas and 39% of narratives by the younger adults (18-21) (see Table 5.5, below).

Age group of informants (male and female)	Total no. of narratives	No. of narratives with all six schemas	% of narratives with all six schemas
9-11	65	2	3 %
18-21	56	22	39 %
35-49	50	23	46 %

Table 5.5 Narratives containing all six schema categories (see Labov and Waletzky, 1967 and Labov, 1972)

The figures in Table 5.5 are represented in graph form for a more visual comparison of the proportion of fully-formed narratives across the three age groups. (See Graph 5.1, below



Graph 5.1 Percentage of narratives in this study with all six narrative schemas (according to L&W, 1967 and Labov, 1972) by age group.

The findings presented so far have emphasised just how far from L&W's idealised narrative model the personal narratives from the LGCs are. A discussion of schema variation in the narratives of all informant groups, specifically what level of variation (schematic, structural, lexical) and where variation occurs, is therefore important and will be described in the following sections. At this stage, however, it is also important to acknowledge that almost half, or 46%, of narratives of the older adult LGCs, and 39% of narratives from the younger adult age groups contain evidence of all six schemas. This finding confirms in some way the validity of L&W's functional model as being a useful description of personal narratives, but there are clearly some schema categories that are essential to a narrative being recognised and comprehended just as there are others that are less important. This point will now be discussed in relation to the findings in this study and the schema categories proposed by L&W.

Analysis of narratives lacking all six schema elements shows that those mostly and commonly absent are the *abstract* and *coda* schemas. Both categories are found less frequently than the other four schemas and are viewed as optional categories. Moreover, their omission has little effect on the overall comprehension of the narrative, despite functioning to open and close a narrative. One argument for the absence of an *abstract* in so many narratives may be because of the interviewer's question: the interviewer provides the topic of the experience and inadvertently frames the subsequent narrated experience, and as such gives the *abstract*. It is therefore unnecessary for the narrator to re-state what the experience is about, both in a one-to-one interview setting where the topic is obvious to the interviewer and informant, or in peer group interviews where all informants present would be aware

of the story topic. This is a likely explanation for peer group interviews as the context allows for the production of narratives that are thematically linked and narrated one after the other as a result of being triggered by the previous speaker. Here, the theme of the experience is 'implicitly' known to members of the peer group participating in this form of storytelling and again, it may be felt to be unnecessary to re-state the story topic. The result, therefore, are narratives without an *abstract*. (For a discussion on 'implicit collaboration', see Chapter 7.) It is also worth pointing out that all narratives by adult informants contained *orientation* details, in contrast to those produced by children, a point that will be discussed in section 5.2.2. Furthermore, narratives by adults were evaluated with a variety of devices including strategies not identified by L&W in their findings (see Chapter 6 for a full discussion on the form and function of *post-evaluation*).

Apart from the *abstract* and *coda*, the other schema found to be commonly absent is the *resolution*, the last of the narrative clauses. The *resolution* functions to provide 'the what finally happened?' element to the narrative and those narratives found to be lacking a *resolution* are likely to be judged as incomplete. Analysis of children's narratives, which often end abruptly tend to lack a *resolution*. (Schema variation in children's narratives is discussed in a separate section, below).

Variation in narratives by adult informants was not only found at a schematic level, where certain categories were absent, as discussed above, but also at other levels. Other striking differences that challenge L&W's six schema framework as 'ideal' were also found, including the presence of two *codas*, in personal narratives by adult males in the older age group (35-49), and mostly in personal narratives where the

theme of 'Trouble' appears to be the correlating factor. A possible explanation for two *codas* is that repetition of the *coda* functions to emphasis the lesson learnt as a result of the experience, and if this is prompted by 'Trouble' as the theme of the experience, then the lesson learnt might be worth re-stating. Other structural variations include the presence of *orientation* clauses scattered throughout the *complicating action*, as well as the use of *flashback* and *flashforward*, anachronisms that contradict the six-schema sequence and linear temporality of L&W's unmarked, basic narratives. These findings will be presented below with examples.

Perhaps the most significant finding to emerge in my data is the suggestion of an additional schema, which I have already called *post-evaluation*. Close analysis found that certain clauses that appeared after the *complicating action* had a distinct evaluative function that differed from the categories offered by L&W's and Labov's *evaluation* schema. Moreover, *post-evaluation* can be sub-divided into further categories, depending on the form and function of the clauses, and this is described in detail in a separate chapter, Chapter 6, 'Post-Evaluation: more than words'.

5.2.2 Schema variation in children's narratives and absence of evaluation

Children's personal narratives (age group 9-11) for both males and females were found to consistently lack an *abstract*, *resolution* and *coda*, and contain the briefest *orientation* details to contextualise events in their experience. A significant finding is that children rarely evaluate their experiences; where *evaluation* is present, in a very small proportion of narratives, it is very brief, or has been prompted by the

interviewer. This finding seems to be true of all story topics, despite an assumption that it would be mostly a feature of experiences where “Trouble” is the general theme (i.e. danger of death, fight and argument experiences) and invites comments from the narrator. Examples of personal narratives lacking any form of *evaluation* are given below in Texts 5.1 and 5.2, and are representative of the many narratives produced by children. (The narrative text is analysed and presented by clause to emphasise the different schemas more clearly. Note that these examples also lack an *abstract, resolution* and *coda*.)

1	Int	Okay that's great ... were you ever in a fight	
	E	=Em	
	Int	at school?	
	E	not really but I do have arguments with my friends sometimes	
5	Int	can you tell me about one particular argument that upset you	
	E	um it was I think just a few weeks ago	Orientation
		when my friend had told me something um	Orientation
		she didn't want anyone to er anyone to know	Orientation
		and there was this	Orientation
10		–and by accident I split the word	Orientation
		and em another girl was spreading the word as well	Orientation
		my friend got really angry with me	Orientation
		and I tried to take it back	CA
		I tried to like do something to make her happy again	CA
15		but she wouldn't	CA
		and she kept away from from me for quite a few days em	CA

Text 5.1. Informant E: aged 11; one-to-one interview. (Key: CA = complicating action)

In Text 5.1, E begins narrating her experience from line 6 with *orientation* details to contextualise the events that are about to be narrated. The *abstract* is missing although it could be argued that it is provided by the interviewer's question in line 1 (henceforth 1.1³²) and the additional prompt in 1.3. E goes on to provide the narrative events or *complicating action* element of her experience from 1.13, but ends abruptly

³² In this thesis, text number and line from transcript will thereafter be represented numerically e.g. (1:1).

at 1.16, not having provided any form of *resolution*. Most strikingly, E does not evaluate her experiences with comments that convey how she felt at the time the narrative events took place, despite the emotive circumstances surrounding these events.

Similarly, both speakers C and L in Text 5.2 do not evaluate their experiences in their embarrassing and fight narratives:

1	C	You know - we were playing this game run-outs	Orientation
		and em I was gonna run yeah	Orientation
		and I was like the only one who was running yeah	Orientation
		and they were like blocking the bench	Orientation
5		and I went to go	CA
		and run	CA
		and I fell over that on my back as well [laugh]	CA
	Int	can anyone else think of a funny story...[long pause] ... or another fight story maybe ...	
10	L	yeah I was playing football at my school	Orientation
		and I went to get the ball	Orientation
		but my like um the person on the other team moved out of the way	Orientation
		so I kicked on the leg	Orientation
		and cause he's very big and tall and strong	Orientation
15		so he like shouted like kicking me	CA
		and punching me	CA
		and I tried to like stop	CA
		but he went	CA
		he just keep on kicking me	CA
20		so I tried to punch him back	CA
		and I hit him in the face	CA
		and I went to	CA
		I went in to the teacher	CA
		and said that by accident I kicked him	CA
25		and then he started the fight	CA
		and he wouldn't stop	CA
		and even I tried to stop him ...	CA

Text 5.2. Informants C, V and J; aged 10-11; peer group interview

Again, at no point in the above narratives do C or L attempt to draw attention to their feelings, despite narrating what are evidently reportable events. In other words, the point of the experience and the significance of why it was worth telling in the

first place are lost without any evaluative comments. Yet this missing element does not seem to cause any problems for the other informants in the peer group, since at no time do they interrupt the narrator to ask how he felt at the time, or after the experience.

Unlike the *abstract* and *coda* schemas, a personal narrative without *evaluation* strategies is judged by L&W as not being fully-formed (L&W, 1967), or fulfilling the criteria of 'reportability' (Labov, 1997). However, the lack of *evaluation* in children's narratives concurs with Labov's findings in his study of children's narratives in the BEV community. The evidence in this study together with Labov's findings suggests that this schema category is not a natural part of children's narratives, unlike in the personal narratives produced by adult speakers (where it is integral). One reason for the absence of what Labov describes as 'perhaps the most important element in addition to the basic narrative clause' (1972: 226) can be linked to children's cognitive development and their acquisition of conventional story schemas. For an explanation for the absence of story schemas, including *evaluation* in children's narratives, it is necessary to turn to research in the field of cognitive linguistics for insights into the development of children's storytelling processes.

The development of child discourse, and specifically how children's storytelling skills evolve through various stages to become more coherent and sophisticated, has received a great deal of attention (see Ervin-Tripp, 1977; Kernan, 1977; Peterson and McCabe, 1983). Bruner suggests that there 'is a "push" to construct narrative that determines the order of priority in which grammatical forms are mastered by the

young child' (1990: 77), while Peterson and McCabe (1983) argue that children learn to organise their narratives around a 'high point', which is synonymous with L&W's description of 'high points' or 'suspension points'. These describe the build up of events (*complicating action*) followed by their suspension to highlight what is important (*evaluation*), followed by the *what finally happened?* element (*resolution*). Peterson and McCabe (1983) found that four year olds progress from telling 'leap frog' narratives, which jump from one event to another, and 'impoverished narratives', where 'Not enough events are present to form a recognizable pattern' (p.50), into structures that are closer to L&W's model. Most five year olds were able to tell 'ending-at-the-high-point-narratives' which end after the *complicating action* and an *evaluation* and omit the *resolution* and *coda*, giving an abrupt ending to a narrative. These findings agree with L&W's and Labov's findings, and to some extent my own, which show that certain schemas - the *abstract, evaluation, resolution* and *coda* - are likely to develop at a later stage than the more prototypical features of narratives such as the *orientation* and *complicating action*. By the time children reach six they are able to tell 'classic narratives' which are closer to L&W's schema model. My findings however, show that *evaluation* is largely absent from personal narratives of my informant children aged 9-11.

There were also other differences in story structure that can be correlated with a child's age. While all children in Peterson and McCabe's study (aged 3-9) provided *orientation* details to contextualise the events in their narratives, older children provided more detailed and complex clauses to express this element, being seemingly more aware of a need to orientate their listeners to aid comprehension. Moreover, older children concentrate this information towards the beginning of their

narratives, which is more useful for the listener. This gradual development in children's storytelling can be explained by a number of factors that are both internal and external to the child. With age comes an increase in language skills, and with longer periods of schooling, they are also more likely to be exposed to traditional and prototypical forms of storytelling. At school, children are encouraged to tell narratives about themselves and learn to structure their narrative discourse accordingly. These factors interact with a child's development and advancement in cognitive skills to cause a significant increase in information and understanding of the world. According to Peterson and McCabe (1993) 'it is undoubtedly true that increased understanding of an experience goes hand-in-hand with increased (long-term) memory for that experience, and memory of an experience of course is also a prerequisite for representing it in a narrative' (p.191). This would support the notion that *evaluative* devices are particularly sophisticated storytelling strategies that require an ability to reflect or express feelings and reactions, and as such, is typically beyond the capability of most children. (See also Toolan, 2001, for a clear description of children's narrative forms and comprehension of narratives.)

5.3 Structural variation in personal narratives

5.3.1 Flashback: a repair strategy

The fixed sequence of L&W's narrative model rules out any deviations from a linear story structure, or what Chatman describes as 'the exchange or "twisting" of (surface) clauses out of their causal-sequential order' (1990: 318, fn11). For this reason, narratives containing episodes of *flashback* or *analepsis*, which describe 'any

evocation after the fact of an event that took place earlier than the point in the story where we are at any given moment' (Genette 1986 in Walder, 1990: 147) cannot be described as narratives because they conflict with the notion of a monochronic story structure. However, I would like to argue that, far from providing narrative events out of sequence, *flashbacks* function to provide further *orientation* information at a stage in the narrative where the narrator feels this is necessary for the recipients' understanding of events. It is crucially part of the process of 'recipient design', which is vital for successful narration and story comprehension. (See also the discussion on flashback in a critique of L&W's narrative model, in Chapter 3.)

Episodes of *flashback* appeared in only four narratives and where it does appear, it is inserted after the narrator has progressed to the narrative events stage of their experience. In this way, *flashback* functions as a kind of 'repair strategy', by providing contextualising information to aid listener comprehension. This literary device may be necessary in a sociolinguistic interview where the audience, including the narrator, are not familiar with the narrator or their experiences, and is particularly pertinent in peer group interviews where it is vital to show sensitivity to the audience's knowledge and tailor the structure and content of the narrative as necessary. This shows the importance of recipient design as a factor of storytelling, since the audience is very much part of the storytelling process and signals the narrator's awareness of a need to perform well and maintain their status as a competent and compelling storyteller. Two examples of *flashbacks* (shown in italics) can be seen in Texts 5.3 and 5.4. (The narratives are broken down into schemas).

In Text 5.3, speaker M describes an embarrassing experience at a party where she became uncontrollably drunk, in-a one-to one interview. The narrative begins with an elaborated *orientation* (not shown) to locate events in time and place and set the scene of the party to orientate the listener (the interviewer), before describing the sequence of events that leads up to the particular embarrassing moment. The extract takes up the experience in the middle of the narrative.

1	M	... and then somebody in the hotel set	CA
		off this fire alarms the sprinklers so the entire floor that we were on was	CA
		completely saturated in water [phone rings – switch off tape] the entire	CA
		floor was saturated with water and I remember thinking	CA
5		even in my drunken state I was so damned sensible	Evaluation
		I got in the lift knowing of course it wasn't actually a fire it was somebody	CA
		just set off the alarms got in the lift went down to reception	CA
		<i>oh I forgot to mention some point during the drinking process I'd eaten</i>	Flashback
		<i>rather copious amounts of popcorn because there was a catering bag</i>	Flashback
10		<i>which sits up stands about 4 foot off the ground of popcorn you know these</i>	Flashback
		<i>big vendors that do all this catering</i>	Flashback
		I seem to remember I was under the piano with the popcorn	CA
		<i>having played on the piano</i>	Flashback
		I was actually sitting on the floor dancing with the guy	CA
15		and then I went down to reception screamed that something was going	CA
		wrong on the floor leant over reception there was nobody there sat back in	CA
		the chair and proceeded to sick	
	Int	=Oh! No!	CA
	M	popcorn	
20	Int	Oh no	CA
	M	all over myself but three minutes after which a whole load of fire engine	CA
		men you know firemen fire engine men [laugh] arrived	CA
		to watch me throwing up popcorn on my chest ...	Resolution

Text 5.3 M's embarrassing moment with episode of flashback (in italics)

Up to the end of 1.7 the narrative events are told in the temporal sequence in which they happened, signalled by the use of verbs in the past tense. At 1.8 speaker M unexpectedly breaks off from narrating events to insert a section of events that happened prior to those in the *complicating action*. This episode of flashback in 11.8-12 refers to an earlier series of narrative events, and is signalled by the use of the

past perfect tense (*I'd eaten*, 1.8 and present perfect continuous *having played* 1.13). As the *resolution* describes the narrator *throwing up popcorn on my chest* (1.22) the flashback functions to fill in missing information gaps in the narrative which helps the listener gain a fuller understanding of the concluding events and moreover, why the personal experience is considered embarrassing. The *flashback* contains important events that the narrator has forgotten to mention earlier in the narrative and as the *resolution* of the narrative approaches, its omission becomes more apparent as does the necessity to recall it to fill in gaps in the narrative.

The 'repair strategy' function of flashback can also be seen in Text 5.4, an excerpt taken from a much larger personal narrative about an argument. Text 5.4 shows speaker A (female, 35-49, one-to-one interview setting) describing a stressful experience that resulted in a huge family argument.

1	A	...and then one day when my dad came round as usual with the key in the door, walked in, and said "I've changed my mind I want my house back". A-and just then my husband was coming in from work and when he heard the story I thought he was gonna have a heart attack	CA CA CA CA
5		because he was so angry that his FIST pounded down on to the table and that we were all just fraught all I wanted was to just DIE to just I wanted the floor to open up and just swallow me up because I couldn't believe what I..I was listening to <i>I..I'd uprooted my family ... my children, I, I'd moved them</i>	CA CA Evaluation Evaluation <i>Flashback</i>
10		you know because they couldn't get their act together they can't sort their lives out they'd ruined mine ... (continues)	Evaluation Evaluation

Text 5.4 A's family argument with flashback (in italics).

Again the flashback sequence in 1.9 informs listeners of events which occurred prior to the narrative events of the *complicating action* in lines 1-6, and signalled by the use of the past perfect tense *I'd uprooted my family...I'd moved them*. The

significance of the *flashback* is highlighted by the highly emotive evaluative comments in 11.7-8 and seems to serve two functions: firstly, the events in the flashback are not known to the interviewer (the only recipient in the interview) and inserting this vital detail at this point in the narrative is necessary to convey the extreme difficulty of the situation and contextualise the argument that ensues and assign blame elsewhere. In this way, the reportability status of the personal experience is justified. Secondly, the 'new' information in the flashback contextualises events in the *complicating action* and so functions as additional *orientation* information, which provides a fuller, more comprehensible narrative for the recipient. Deliberate insertion of the *flashback* at that point in the narrative shows the speaker's skill in storytelling by filling in an important gap that foregrounds personal details necessary to comprehend A's state of mind.

5.3.2 Flashforward

Another type of structural variation that is usually associated with literary works – but not with everyday narratives of personal experience - is the use of *flashforward* or prolepsis. Prolepsis, which is 'any narrative maneuver that consists of narrating or evoking in advance an event that will take place later' (Genette 1986 in Walder, 1990: 147). A flashforward is essentially another type of anachrony, the distortion of chronological events in a story, and has the opposite effect of a *flashback*. However, similar to *flashbacks* in personal narratives, *flashforwards* are alternative storytelling devices that disrupt the linear, temporally ordered structure proposed by L&W.

In the personal narratives of LGCs, *flashforwards* as a structural deviation was found in only one narrative, so it can be concluded that it is not a common feature of personal narratives of LGCs as narrators are consciously aware of providing narratives that conform to a ‘traditional’ linear story structure. It is nevertheless useful to present a discussion of this finding in an attempt to understand its function when it does appear in oral narratives, as its presence has implications as regards what is acceptable within the linguistic parameters of a definition of a narrative. The example in question is presented below in Text 5.5, and is an excerpt taken from a larger personal narrative about a fight that happened several years earlier. We enter the story after the fight has begun and is told by speaker A (male, 18-21, peer group interview) to three of his closest friends.

1	A	... and one of them ran over and punched him through the window so they both got out and they all got jumped on basically and when my friend who ran down to the station after he had the eye because he got punched through the window and he managed to run off but the other guy	CA CA CA CA
5		was -the one that was getting beaten up on the floor and he -the two guys that the main guys that were involved are like one of them's been in prison already for stabbing someone with a screwdriver yeah	CA Orientation Orientation
	C	was it was it [whispers]	
	A	yeah em <i>and their -the court case was like the -like in the last two months like a year later and I don't actually know what happened actually I think it got like it's been postponed</i>	Flashforward Flashforward Flashforward
10		but yeah like they had to get all the security and all that but apparently they didn't get a good -cause the bouncer at the door he was friends with all of them anyway	CA Evaluation Evaluation
15	Int	hm	
	A	so obviously he didn't -and he was standing there and he never even once decided to -he was just standing there watching it ...(continues)	Evaluation CA CA

Text 5.5 A's personal narrative about a fight with an episode of flashforward (in italics)

The flashforward episode in ll.9-11, which is inserted into the *complicating action* section (which is also interwoven with *orientation* information, another marked feature which will be discussed in section 5.3.3), is a device that mainly functions to

fill in information at a point in the narrative where it is felt to be necessary for the narrative to fulfil its 'reportability' value. Speaker A's personal experience describes a vicious fight involving a gang of youths outside a pub and draws listeners' attention to one particular member of the gang who has a reputation for violence. The *flashforward* reveals information about a court case that takes place in the future, *like a year later* (1.10) and functions to fill in information in the following way. It is primarily a response to speaker C's request for clarification in his question in 1.8, *was it was it [whispers]*, which speaker A answers and elaborates with the *flashforward* information. Without C's prompt, it is unlikely that this detail would have been narrated even in the correct chronological order (i.e. after the actual fight details), as it relates to a separate incident. Its addition emphasises the violent nature of the person involved, which in turn enhances the danger element of the experience and therefore, the narrative's reportability. Here, the *flashforward* provides a type of projected *resolution* to the events described even though it is temporally out of sequence. The result is a narrative that differs from L&W's basic narrative structure, however, the presence of a *flashforward* provides fuller contextualisation of the people and events in the experience, a point that the narrator is aware of as necessary to satisfy his listeners' expectations.

5.3.3 Orientation clauses interwoven through the complicating action: another repair strategy

According to L&W, the *orientation* appears as clauses towards the beginning of a narrative with the distinct function of locating the *who*, *what*, *where* and *when* aspects of the narrative, to enable recipients to make sense of the narrative events

that follow. This positioning of contextualising detail conventionally and conveniently at the beginning of the narrative, before the narrative action, conforms to a traditional story format also found in classic fairytales. However, narratives from adult LGCs show that rather than appearing as a complete section, so that all contextualising detail is given in one go, *orientation* clauses are also found woven throughout the narrative, most prominently in the *complicating action* stage. Of the total 171 narratives by males and females in both interview settings, 41 (or 39%) of these narratives show this type of structural variation. It can therefore be argued that, structurally, *orientation* is similar to the *evaluation* schema, in that although it tends to be concentrated in one part of the narrative it can also be found scattered throughout the narrative.

Text 5.5 above, has *orientation* clauses (ll.6-7) inserted between the narrative clauses in the *complicating action*, while Text 5.6 below, is a further example. Text 5.6 is taken from a peer group interview and recalls an embarrassing experience (males 18-21). (The category P-E describes *post-evaluation*, a marked feature of narratives by LGCs which is described separately in Chapter 6).

(The narrative is presented as monologic for clarity and ease of analysis, despite interruptions of laughter and gasps by the other participant and interviewer.)

1	C	I used to go (name of place) like there's a swimming	Orientation
		-we used to go there like every Saturday...	Orientation
		I was only like 10? 9? 10?	Orientation
		that when I was still at primary innit?	Orientation
5		9, 10 ... and em ...	Orientation
		everyone was scared to go on the top board apart from me	Orientation
		I was the macho one yeah	Orientation
		I thought I'd go on the top board	Orientation
		so I just dived I dived off yeah	CA
10		<i>an' I never used to buy my my own swimming trunks my mum used to</i>	Orientation
		<i>buy my == swimming trunks yeah</i>	Orientation
		So	CA (false start)
		<i>-they weren't trunks they were like shorts</i>	Orientation
		so I jumped off the top one yeah	CA
15		went to the bottom and I done like a a scissors thing a straight thing	CA
		I went straight to the bottom yeah	CA
		and came back up	CA
		and see my trunks floating on the thing on the water like that	CA
		My teacher was in tears	Resolution
20		I just felt like ...	Evaluation
		I didn't feel like embarrassed	Evaluation
		it was as I was going like swimming to get em	Evaluation
		and I knew that everyone was watching me... seriously	Evaluation
		I felt like drowning	Evaluation
25		an like when you go to the bottom there's like windows there's like	Evaluation
		windows	
		and they can see people that going down	Evaluation
		but I was only young though ...	P-E
		THEN it was embarrassing	P-E
30		but now when I think	P-E
		I was only young ...	P-E

Text 5.6. Personal narrative showing orientation clauses woven into the complicating action

In both Texts 5.5 and 5.6, the function of the additional *orientation* clauses becomes clear. The narrator may not always be able to anticipate how much contextual information to provide at the start of the narrative. Only after the narrative has begun and, specifically, after the narrative events, does the narrator realise that there may be information gaps, which if left 'unfilled', may impede the audience's comprehension or, in the case of the embarrassing experience, this audience's enjoyment of the story. The narrator becomes aware that his audience would not be familiar with these facts, and provides further *orientation* as a repair strategy to enhance the narrative by helping listeners to bridge information gaps. While these

clauses appear to be added as an afterthought, they nevertheless function to draw listeners' attention to them. Consequently, they raise the reportability value and level of humour, which is often a feature of embarrassing experiences and necessary if the narrator is to be considered a skilled and successful storyteller.

5.3.4 Ring composition

Another interesting finding in the narratives of LGCs is the presence of 'ring composition', a feature often associated with folktales and oral narratives from primary oral cultures. According to Watkins, (1995), 'ring composition' is the name given to a parallelism between the beginning and the ending of an episode at the level of lexis, clause or syllable. Its use as a boundary marker is commonly found in ancient Indo-European metrical poetry for example, Homer's "Odyssey". (See also Fabb, 1997:199-200). In the personal narratives of LGCs, ring composition occurs at the beginning and end stages of a narrative, in the *abstract* and *coda*. This differs from the traditional definition of ring composition, which is found within the series of episodes that make up the narrative rather than as boundary markers beginning and ending a narrative to signal that it is a complete unit of discourse. Nevertheless, I would like to borrow the term and adapt it within the context and purposes of this discussion. My main reason for using this particular term is that 'ring' suggests the text has in some way reached 'full circle'. With wording in the *abstract* mirroring the wording in the *coda*, this is exactly the case in my data.

As well as signalling the opening and closing of the narrative to listeners, ring composition also functions to emphasise the theme or topic of the experience, stated at the beginning as the *abstract* and then restated at the end as the *coda*. An example of ring composition can be seen in Text 5.7, below (shown in bold), in a personal narrative that is part of a much wider interview. Speaker M narrates his funny experience to three others (males, 35-49, peer group interview).

In Text 5.7, ring composition functions as a framing device: it not only signals the start (ll.1-2) and sealing off (l.23) of the narrative, but also states and restates the theme of the personal experience, at both a lexical and clause level. The stating of the story theme not only tells other interviewees what the experience is about by evaluating the event, but also alerts everyone present that it is a particularly memorable experience for the narrator.

1	M	... Er another funny one was er I suppose it was drug related that was quite funny. Er ... it er was one of the lads who who lived in the flat he was always stoned out of his mind and er we used to live right opposite Ealing Broadway so he had massive windows in	Ring composition Ring composition
5		his room so he used to open 'em out and put his 2 speakers facing outwards onto the Broadway. And he was sitting on the ledge like just boogying away to the music and he'd obviously just had his rolly of the day and me and er me and the others were out shopping 'cause it was Saturday morning and we got back and he said, " <i>Hey guys you'll never never believe it!</i> " He said " <i>we just got raided by the, by the bizzies</i> " And I was going [rise in pitch] " <i>What you mean we just got raided by the bizzies?!</i> " And he said, " <i>Well they got, got me me for noise pollution, 'cause even the tramp across the road was was playing the air guitar</i> " laughing]"	
10		[laughing]	
15	All M	..he said "to the music" And er we said to him like "did they find anything?" And he said, he said, "No cause" he said "I'd lost my stash so I like ripped my room apart" and you walked into his room and it looked like it had just been trashed and it was er cause he had er cause he'd bought some stuff the night before and he couldn't find it and he just smashed his place up looking for it and it was lucky I suppose they didn't find it otherwise we could have been in some kind of trouble ... that was a -that was quite -thats a funny episode [laughing].	Ring composition
20			

Text 5.7 M's narrative with ring composition in the abstract and coda (bold).

In the eleven personal narratives produced in this peer group interview, ring composition was found in five. The clauses showing ring composition (in the *abstract* and *coda*) are reproduced below in Texts 5.8-5.12.

Abstract:	Err the most embarrassing moment of my life happened in December that just passed ...
Coda:	... and that was the most embarrassing moment of my life!

Text 5.8 Ring composition – embarrassing experience

Abstract:	... well I guess the last fight I was in ...
Coda:	... that was the last fight scenario I was in

Text 5.9 Ring composition – fight experience

Abstract:	An embarra [laughing] I've had em...I don't even have to think too far away and this is as true as I'm sitting here...
Coda:	...but definitely it would be one of the most embarrassing, I was bright red from Palmers Green to Haringey if you know North London that is...That's the truth

Text 5.10 Ring composition – embarrassing experience

Abstract:	Um the most amazing day I've ever experienced but I didn't actually –by default I didn't actually get to see the birth
Coda:	...but it was it was absolutely amazing amazing day

Text 5.11 Ring composition – happy experience

Abstract:	Ehm I think the most happiest day was when (daughter's name) was born...
Coda:	...and that was the happiest day AND obviously getting married to (wife's name)...

Text 5.12 Ring composition – happy experience

A closer analysis of ring composition in these examples showed that it is mostly found in the narratives of older adult informants (aged 35-49), and predominantly males. There appears to be no correlation with story topic. Most significantly, ring composition is absent from the personal narratives of children. This finding can be easily explained by the absence of an *abstract* and *coda* commonly found in children's narratives, evidence that is apparent not only in my data but also supported by L&W's and Labov's findings (see discussion in 5.2.1 and 5.2.2 of this chapter). As the *abstract* and *coda* are not always present in children's personal narratives, the presence of ring composition cannot be guaranteed: without these two schemas there can be no ring composition.

I would like to suggest a further explanation to account for the presence of ring composition in the narratives of older adult informants. Specifically, second generation Greek Cypriots are the generation closest to the original Greek Cypriot language and culture (practised and maintained by the first generation LGCs - their parents). As a result, this generation has been influenced the most by exposure to rhetorical storytelling styles, so it is inevitable that these sociocultural practices are evident in their narratives. A more in-depth discussion putting forward the argument of cultural storytelling styles as explanation is presented in Chapter 6, in the discussion of *post-evaluation*, another marked feature of the narratives of my informants.

5.3.5 Parallelism: lexical and clausal level

Another type of parallelism in personal narratives, but one that differs from the sort of ring composition described above, is parallelism found at a lexical and clausal level. This category of parallelism involves a repetition of words or clauses that occur at a critical point in the narrative following a build up of narrative clauses in the *complicating action*. Its primary function is to emphasise, through reiteration, the high point of the narrative, and in this way draw attention to the reportability value of the experience. Parallelism that is *evaluative* also shows the effects of events on the narrator, as can be seen in Text 5.13, below (in bold), a personal narrative by speaker C (female, 18-21, one-to-one interview setting) about a danger of death experience.

1	Int	Okay (C) can you tell me about a time you were you thought your life was in danger	(abstract)
5	C	Ye-eah it's like er when I went Greece this year em I'm not a very good swimmer but em me and my friends -I went with 2 girls one girl (M) one girl (S) so there's 3 -3 of us and we had a float and I have a fear of deep water but I can swim but only like up to my neck and we were actually leaning over the float together and just like floating on the sea if you know what I mean and em we was out heading towards the rocks and it's quite shallow there but I didn't realise how far we were going until we reached like until to the end of the rocks and I couldn't feel my feet on the ground and I was -I REALLY thought I was gonna die and I just did a prayer cause I thought that was it I was gonna die but even -there was someone on the shore that we knew so I called out to him and he come and got us I I thought I was going to die this year [laugh]	Parallelism Parallelism Parallelism Parallelism
15	Int	Oh goodness!	
20	C	Yeah cause I have a fear of deep water and I -we were just drifting outwards and we didn't realise it and we're both kicking our legs and trying to go to shore but the wind was so strong it was drifting us out more and more and more but after that I was just sitting on the beach I couldn't go in the water so I went home but I thought I was gonna die [laugh] it was really bad	Parallelism Parallelism

Text 5.13 Parallelism that is evaluative (in bold)

Despite a false start (l.4 *but em me and my friends*) that signals the beginning of the *complicating action*), C's *orientation* (ll.3-8) provides just enough details to contextualise the events before and leading up to the danger of death incident of her personal narrative. The gradual unfolding of *complicating action* reveals the terrifying crisis C finds herself in and this is strongly conveyed by the emphatic use of parallelism *I thought I was gonna die* which is repeated four times (ll. 11-13; 14-15;21-21), almost word for word.

As well as providing evaluative comments, parallelism is also present in personal narratives as part of the *complicating action* and functions to highlight to listeners a particular clause within the narrative events. Both types of parallelism can be seen in Text 5.14 (females, 35-49, peer group interview) about a funny experience.

- | | | | |
|----|---|---|-------------|
| 1 | G | ... oh there's my sister as well we were walking we're actually quite young my sister must've been about 11 I think and em there was a big group of us in Turnpike Lane [to D] you know where the little record shop used to be? | |
| | D | No | |
| 5 | G | At the top near the station Turnpike Lane not Wood Green | |
| | D | OH YEAH on the corner | |
| | G | Yeah we were going to the record shop and there was a big group of us and she actually stepped out in front of this little old black man on his moped and we thought " <i>oh she's gonna die he's gonna knock her over</i> " and as he screeched up to her she grabbed his handle-bars | |
| 10 | D | [laughing] | |
| | G | and flipped him flipped him off the bike and he had a basket of oranges [laughing] ran all down Turnpike Lane my brother was shouting at him my sister was crying the little old man thought he'd killed her and like she just like flipped him off his moped and she was only about 11 years old that was quite -yeah she's got scars to prove that which is that's that was quite funny ... | Parallelism |
| 15 | | | Parallelism |
| | | | Parallelism |
| | | | Parallelism |

Text 5.14 Parallelism in narrative events (in bold)

In this example, G uses parallelism as part of the *complicating action* in ll.12- 13 and 15-15 draws attention to a funny event within the narrative. Parallelism appears

again as evaluative comments in ll.16 and 17; in both examples the clauses are repeated almost word for word (as the term parallelism would suggest).

As can be seen from the above examples, parallelism at a lexical and structural level functions as a type of rhetorical device in a similar way to ring composition in personal narratives. Specifically, it highlights what the narrator considers to be reportable while also enhancing the narrator's performance by drawing attention to what is dangerous or funny etc. Parallelism, however, is only found in the narratives of adult informants in my data (both males and females, aged 18-21 and 35-49), who are more skilled and practiced in storytelling compared to the more inexperienced children who have yet to acquire these skills.

5.4 Alternative story genres

5.4.1 Recounts

In the opening paragraphs of this chapter, it was pointed out that only 171 (61%) of the total 279 personal stories collected are narratives, according to L&W's definition which requires as a minimum 'a sequence of two clauses which are temporarily ordered' (1967: 20). The remaining 108 (39%) were categorised as non-narratives and classified as recounts (see Table 5.1), a specific sub-genre of storytelling first identified by Plum (1988). (Also see discussion in Chapter 2.) According to Plum, recounts have stages that are close to narrative, but crucially lack a high point or crisis that forms the *complicating action*. Because there is an absence of narrative

events, recounts also lack an *evaluation* and *resolution*, because nothing reportable happens. In other words, recounts are best described as a ‘record of events’ rather than a series of events linked through a process of causality.

Three examples of recounts are shown below in Texts 5.15 (female, 18-21, one-to-one interview), Text 5.16 (male, 35-49, one-to-one) and Text 5.17 (male, 10-11, one-to-one).

- 1 Int Tch okay em what about em a sad er experience in your life?
A ==Hmm tch oh it has to be
em ... my gran’s death and deaths in the family ... they’re probably the worst
experiences in my life ... people that I’m close to an
5 Int Hmm can you think of a particular event the kind of events leading up to er ... to
one of those experiences that you can tell me about -a story about it
A Ehmm ... well ... actually my my em aunt’s death was pretty em unexpected and
em we weren’t really expecting it at all so its not much leading up to that but my
gran em she was in hospital for about a month or two before she actually died so ...
10 there was obviously a lot of upset in the family then
Int Hmm

Text 5.15 A recounts a sad personal experience (female, 18-21, one-to-one interview)

- 1 Int Great okay emm change the tone a little bit erm can you tell me about a time when
you were very happy ... is there a lasting memory a very happy memory
L A very happy memory? um 1986 one of the best holidays I’ve ever had in Cyprus ah
3 weeks of doing absolutely whatever I wanted ah I’d just started working in a bank
5 pre -2 years before that and I was on a very very good salary so I was -I had the
money to blow and could drive and do whatever I want so it was 3 weeks of sheer
bliss in Limmassol, Larnaca, Paphos met my first girlfriend there so yeah that’s
probably the best memory I’ve got at the moment ... Could always say kids giving
birth but THAT is something I always go back to

Text 5.16 L recounts a happy experience (male, 35-49, one-to-one)

- 1 Int Okay...what about a happy story can you think of a happy moment in your life?
H Em oh yeah when I went on em a jet ski in Greece with my cousin and we saw –we
were heading towards this old ship and all the jelly fish were round it and then like all
these like and then all these pieces of woods off the ship were just falling down and we
5 were laughing
Int You had a really nice time
H Yeah

Text 5.17 H recounts a happy experience (male, 10-11, one-to-one)

As the above three texts illustrate, recounts are descriptive records of the past. Moreover, they may also describe recurring facts, in the same way the grammatical 'used to' describes past habits and states. This is best illustrated by Text 5.18 (male, 18-21, peer group interview), where A's personal experience is about fights and arguments.

- 1 Int Okay were you ever involved in a fight or an argument that really upset you?
 A I've been in fights yeah like I've been in a fight the only ones that actually annoy
 me and anger me is the ones between me and my brother you know because they're
 the ones that 'cause he means something to me it's like it annoys you when he says
5 something to you but when it's someone else so you don't care it's like no no-one
 else means anything to you so no matter what they say to you they can't anger me
 but when it's someone close to you ...
 Int Yeah can can you think of a specific argument
 A yeah oh with my brother em [laugh] just little things like you know it's over the
10 most stupid things 'cause he's -he comes home tired from work an' its like he takes
 it out on everyone and ... but so do we and we just all take it out on each other an
 like we argue over stupid things like this shirt like wearing someone's clothes or
 you know who's gonna get in the bath first an' you know things like that an' it just
 like it builds up to like the biggest argument an' then you stop and you think yeah
15 an you stop and you think "Wait a minute why am I arguing with you over
 something like this? There's no reason to". It's normally over what he says to my
 sister my little sister as well 'cause like he shouts at her ...

Text 5.18 A recounts fights and arguments

Speaker A begins with an extended *abstract* on fights (11.2-7) but his description is general and not specific to any one incident. The interviewer's attempt to elicit a narrative about a specific incident (1.8), however, fails. What follows is a series of free clauses, which describe arguments in his family that are general and recurring, as indicated by the word *normally* (1.16). The recurring nature of these arguments is also signalled by the use of present simple tenses throughout to suggest habitual behaviour, states or facts. C's recount is in fact an elaboration of the *most stupid things* (1.10), otherwise a description of a general state of affairs, which he then goes on to list.

The recounts in my data were analysed more closely by story topic, sex, age and interview setting to provide a comparative analysis and identify whether any correlations can be made. See Table 5.6, below.

Sex	Age	Interview setting	Stories which are recounts	Danger of death	Fight/argument	Embar-rassing	Happy	Sad	Funny
Male	9-11	One-to-one	4	0	1	0	2	1	0
		Peer group	18	1	1	3	7	5	1
	18-21	One-to-one	3	0	0	1	1	0	1
		Peer group	17	2	4	0	6	3	2
	35-49	One-to-one	7	1	0	1	2	2	1
		Peer group	5	1	2	1			1
Female	9-11	One-to-one	9	0	1	1	4	3	0
		Peer group	16	0	3	1	5	6	1
	18-21	One-to-one	7	0	1	1	2	3	0
		Peer group	3	0	1	0	1	1	0
	35-49	One-to-one	10	1	1	1	2	4	1
		Peer group	9	1	3	0	2	3	0
			108	7	18	10	34	31	8

Table 5.6 Recounts showing story topic, sex, age and interview setting for each informant group

My comparison of narratives and recounts (Tables 5.3 with 5.6) allows close attention to the figures across a range of story topics. What emerges are some findings that may well be of significance in research in spoken narratives and narratology beyond studies of the LGC speech community, in particular.

Specifically, there appears to be a correlation with recounts and story topic that has not yet been commented on by other works, including Plum's. Despite the 108 recounts ranging across six story topics or themes, over half the recounts (60%) are based around two topics: happy (31%) and sad (29%) experiences. Conversely, in Table 5.3, both happy and sad experiences provide the lowest proportion of narratives. A comparison of narratives and recounts by topic is presented in Table 5.7, below, showing sharp contrasts.

Genre of storytelling	Total elicited	Danger of death	Fight/ argument	Embarrassing	Happy	Sad	Funny
Narrative	171	23%	20%	24%	8%	10%	15%
Recount	108	6%	17%	9%	31%	29%	8%

Table 5.7. Table showing the high proportion of recounts about happy and sad topics (in bold) when compared to the low proportion of narratives

As can be seen in Table 5.7, happy and sad personal stories provide the highest proportion of recounts and the lowest proportion of narratives. It can be argued therefore, that recounts are descriptions of 'states' whereas narratives are descriptions of actions and that these findings provide evidence suggesting that story topic determines story form. The question this now raises, is why do experiences about happy and sad topics produce recounts, while stories about danger, fights, arguments and even embarrassing stories are more likely to produce narratives?

The most obvious explanation for these schematic differences in personal stories that describe narratives and recounts can be explained by a single concept proposed by Bruner. According to Bruner, 'Trouble' defines complication' (1997:63; see also

1991). Indeed, 'Trouble' almost guarantees a crisis, which is likely to be expressed as a series of narrative actions, linked by causality, and having the assignment of praise and blame as central characteristics. Narratives by adults about 'Trouble' also guarantee *evaluation* of some sort, which also ensures their reportability worth, a further core characteristic of a personal narrative. On the other hand, less dangerous or dramatic experiences, such as those found in happy and sad stories, do not provoke the same schematic form and stylistic demands, and may typically result in less need for expressions of *evaluation*, self-aggrandizement or appraisal and blame. Fundamentally, happy and sad experiences describe 'states', where nothing of note happens, as opposed to actions where something leading to a high point or crisis that needs to be resolved does, and this is crucial to our understanding of differences between recounts and narratives.

Another interesting finding in my data is the correlation of recounts with informant age. Children (aged 9-11) of both sexes produced the largest proportion of recounts of the three age groups. Possible explanations are that children have fewer experiences to narrate, or, have not yet acquired competency in storytelling to understand the importance of a *complicating action* in their personal experience to justify its telling. Both hypotheses, however, would need further investigation. Interestingly, children's limited life experiences on which to base their narratives may also be part of the explanation for another sub-genre of personal narratives that emerged in my study, which I will call "almost narratives". "Almost narratives" will be described in full in the following section.

5.4.2 “Almost narratives” of children’s “almost experiences”

As has been established in earlier discussion, the telling of personal experiences through narrative discourse is one of the ways individuals can represent and shape their lives and importantly, construct and reconstruct identities. One linguistic device that achieves this is the act of ‘self-aggrandizement’, which is ‘designed to place the narrator in the most favorable possible light’ (L&W, 1967: p.38). Not surprisingly, self-aggrandizement was also found in my data, as a characteristic of peer group interviews where its presence helped to shape the final narrative form and raise the status of the narrator. Its use functions to cast the narrator in the role of hero, or where appropriate, as victim, with the overall effect of avoiding a loss of “face” (Brown and Levinson, 1987).

In my data, 9 of the 64 personal narratives, or 14%, by children use a distinct and marked type of self-aggrandizement to describe their experiences that does not appear to have been reported elsewhere. These narratives are somewhat unusual in that while formally, they are composed of the required, temporally ordered and causally linked clauses that lead to some kind of resolution, they in fact recall events that *could have* or *might have* happened but, unexpectedly, never actually did. This sub-genre of children’s personal narratives, or “almost narratives”, as I prefer to call them will be described in this section. Discussion will focus and explore the mismatch of *actual* versus *almost* in oral narratives of personal experience where ‘almost heroes’ describe ‘almost events’ in a tale that subverts the listener’s expectations. Understanding why this occurs and what implications it has on the reportability value of the experience - the reason for its telling in the first place -

provides further insights into children's personal narratives and the importance of maintaining a high status among peers.

For a narrative to be recognisable, it must fulfil a range of criteria at a structural, schematic and functional level, as detailed in the lengthy discussion in Chapter 2. Text 5.19 below, by speaker L (male, 9-11, peer group interview) about a danger of death experience is a reminder of a narrative that conforms to the core prototypical criteria, and as such, fulfils the listener's expectation of an "acceptable" personal narrative. (The narrative is presented in clauses to emphasis the various schematic stages.)

1	L	... em it's a danger one	Abstract
		em I was riding my bike	Orientation
		cause I was going down a hill	Orientation
		and you can't really see it	Orientation
5		cause there's another corner	Orientation
		cause me and my friends were riding bikes	Orientation
		and we were -both came out at the same time	Orientation
		and we just	Orientation
		-I don't know	Evaluation
10		um I smashed my chin	CA
		and had to go to hospital	CA
		and had seven stitches inside my mouth	Resolution
		and it really hurt	Evaluation
		so and I was like I didn't ride my bike for another 3 or 4 months so	Coda
15	Int	did it hurt when you tried to eat or talk?	
	L	yeah a bit and I -after five months I got used to it and yeah ...	Evaluation

Text 5.19 An example of a narrative with reportable events (bold)

Text 5.19 is an example of what L&W would describe as 'fully-formed' because it comprises all six schemas (which, incidentally, as I have outlined above, is unusual for a child's narrative). Moreover, the experience comprises the all important temporally ordered sequence of events that lead to the causally linked *complicating action* (ll.10-12). It is the crisis in the *complicating action* that fulfils the criterion of reportability. "Almost narratives", however, differ in that, while structurally and

schematically they also meet the criteria of a narrative in that they contain an all-important *complicating action*, functionally, it would appear they do not because nothing reportable happens. In other words, although there is a build up of narrative events leading towards a presumed high point or crisis, nothing of interest actually happens. Consequently, listener expectations are subverted causing ‘schema disruption’, where ‘conceptual deviance offers a potential challenge’ (Stockwell, 2002:79) because it challenges existing knowledge structure. The conflict here arises because despite the presence of a *complicating action*, the narrative lacks the necessary events that make the experience reportable and worth telling. This raises the fundamental question of whether “almost narratives” are in fact narratives, which has further implications on the discussion of “What is a narrative?”

Two examples of “almost narratives” are presented below in Text 5.20 (males, 10-11, peer group interview) and Text 5.21 (males, 10-11, peer group interview). Both experiences are about danger of death.

1	Int	that’s a funny story anything else?	
	G	Yeah I got like a danger one	Abstract
		cause once I was on my blades yeah	Orientation
		and we went to this park	Orientation
5		and me and my friends we were doing loads of tricks	Orientation
		and there was this really steep hill	Orientation
		I went up it	Orientation
		and when I was coming down there was this little coke can	Orientation
		and I tripped over it	CA
10		and I wasn’t wearing any pads or anything	Orientation
		and I literally like nearly broke my knee	CA
		and shattered it	CA
		but I didn’t	Resolution
		and it was all cut	Evaluation
15		cause it was like it was stone ground	Evaluation
		and there was loads of like pebbles and like glass on it	Evaluation
		and it was really badly injured	Evaluation
	Int	Did you have to go to hospital?	
	G	No	

Text 5.20 G’s “almost narrative” which lacks a reportable event

“Almost narratives” are signalled explicitly by the use of negatives (*didn't*) and adverbs (*nearly, almost*) or implicitly by inference. Clearly, “almost narratives” subvert the importance of reportability where ‘a reportable event is one that justifies the automatic reassignment of speaker role to the narrator’ (Labov, 1997:406). Specifically, Labov argues that reportability is intrinsic to oral narratives, and can be compared to Sacks et al.’s (1974) approach to controlling speaker-assignment in conversational narratives.

1	Int	Okay ... okay have any of you been em in a situation where there was a lot of danger and you were very frightened ...	
	V	I was quite little	Orientation
		and I went to cross the road	CA
5		and this car went skidded	CA
		and it almost hit me	resol;ution
		and I got really scared ...	Evaluation
	Int	Were you okay?	
	V	Yeah	
10	Int	What about you two?	
	C	[] I-I remember once when I walked []	Orientation
		crossed the road as well	Orientation
		and this car just came []	Orientation
		cause I was -like I never looked where I was going	Orientation
15		I just looked straight	CA
		and I crossed the road	CA
		and this car nearly hit me ...	Resolution

Text 5.20 V and C’s “almost narratives” which both lack reportable events

The whole point of recalling a particular experience is that it must be worth telling in the first place, and this is an essential factor in group interviews where a narrator’s performance will be judged by his or her peers. Accordingly, the sequence of clauses that makes up the *complicating action* should be about a crisis that is somehow resolved. We can go even further and assert that, for a personal narrative to be told in the first place, the narrative should contain the most reportable event, so that, ‘The more reportable the most reportable event of a narrative, the greater justification for the automatic reassignment of speaker role to the narrator’ (Labov, 1997:407).

Equally important is that a reportable experience should assert the status of the narrator in the group as a credible and skilled storyteller.

Analysis of “almost narratives” shows that nearly all (8 of the 9) were produced in peer group interviews composed of boys, and is a further factor that links this sub-genre of narratives together. It is the fact that they all describe potentially dangerous experiences, as my findings show in the following examples: *nearly* being run over, *almost* being hit by a rugby ball, *nearly* having a hand chopped off, *almost* breaking and shattering a knee, *nearly* falling off a cliff in a car and *almost* having a burst appendix. Interestingly, they again fit into Bruner’s (1990; 1997) “Trouble” category of personal narratives, where, although a complication is guaranteed, the expected crisis is not. In “almost narratives”, LGC children cast themselves as “almost heroes” in what are literally ‘pointless’ personal narratives that challenge our understanding of what is an acceptable narrative, so it is necessary to try and account for why these stories exist and why children tell them.

Storytelling, as we know, is one way that individuals construct identities for themselves as well as for others. In a group setting, participation in storytelling is crucial to maintain and demonstrate membership, even if, as data my suggests, there are no reportable events to tell. One could argue that in this context, it is not so much the particular experience that counts but the actual act of storytelling. The fact that “almost narratives” were all found in group interview settings and not in one-to-one interviews (apart from one narrative) underlines the social pressure to perform to others, especially if the audience members are your peers: there was no need for children to impress me or to construct a particular identity for me, whereas the

pressure to perform to friends and family appears to be of the utmost importance. This is especially true of storytelling among children who are particularly competitive in group storytelling situations and are compelled to be vocal as well as visible if they are to assert and maintain their status - even if there is nothing reportable to narrate (see Chapter 7; also see Lambrou, 2003a).

There is a further, more plausible explanation to account for why children told “almost narratives”. For children in the 9 to 11 age group, perhaps these “almost experiences” are the most reportable events they have experienced so far. Even “almost narratives” encode moral and ethical dilemmas that have a social value, in that they warn others of possible life-threatening experiences. What may not seem dangerous to an adult who has gone on to face a greater range and depth of experiences might nevertheless seem like ‘danger of death’ scenarios to a child with limited life experiences. Moreover, had the appendix burst, or the car fallen over the cliff, or the knee been broken and shattered – all examples from the recounts in my data - the consequences could have been dangerous and life threatening, or at the very least, frightening or unpleasant. Recipients of these narratives accept and understand this, and by placing themselves in the protagonist’s position, can imagine the consequences of an alternative reality. For these reasons, “almost narratives” encode experiences that are worth telling for both the narrator and recipients. This explanation appears to fulfil what Toolan (2001) describes as the ‘cognitively enabling’ function of narrative, a notion that develops out of the ‘learning’ condition of ‘transformation’, which has implications on our social identity as individuals and members of groups (see Chapter 2). For children, especially, “almost narratives” offer insights into alternative realities of what might happen if warnings about

danger are not listened to. It could be argued, therefore, that “almost narratives” embody an important story genre that conforms to a characteristic of children’s stories, something that they are most likely to have been exposed to and aware of in their reading and perhaps this pattern is reflected in this way. The fact that a happy ending is guaranteed because nothing dangerous happens - a pattern found in classic fairytales - would seem to support this argument. In terms of the reportable value of these sub-genres of narratives, there is no doubt that for the narrator at the centre of these events, the closer the experience was to being ‘actual’, the more heightened the drama, and this is enough to justify its credibility and worth as a reportable personal experience³³.

5.5 When is a narrative not a narrative?

The question prompted at the start of Chapter 2, ‘What is a narrative?’ provided the basis for the ensuing discussion in this chapter and throughout my study on spoken narratives of personal experience. Analysis of 279 personal stories provides evidence to suggest that not all of them can be described as narratives according to the definition and model proposed by L&W (1967) or the criteria discussed in Chapter 2. Instead, variation at a schematic level appears to be widespread and across many personal narratives and recounts, which are all strategies for recalling past events.

³³ Though a completely different genre of storytelling, newspapers will often report incidents that ‘almost happened’ such as the scenario of “A man/ nearly drove off a cliff/ broke the Olympic record/ won 10 million on the lottery...etc. because these stories are deemed to be of interest to the public and therefore newsworthy. ‘Near misses’ (of trains/planes etc.) are further examples of this.

Findings under the headings, “Schema variation”, “Structural variation” and “Alternative story genres” suggest that these systematic variations can be correlated with a number of factors, such as the speaker’s social background, the story topic, and interview setting. An analysis of children’s narratives in particular, revealed a number of findings to show that their narratives (aged 9-11, for both males and females) are less likely to adhere to L&W’s idealised or ‘fully-formed’, six-schema narrative, although the *abstract* and *orientation* schemas are also found to be lacking in narratives of young adults (aged 18-21). In fact, as I have suggested above, only 27% of the narratives by all informants were found to comprise all six schemas. Children of both sexes also tend not to evaluate their experiences, and this finding can be linked to a child’s cognitive development and acquisition of storytelling schemas which is only fully-formed by adulthood. The lack of ring composition and parallelism, rhetorical devices found in narratives by adult LGCs, would appear to support the notion that storytelling skills in children are acquired and learnt, particularly in this age group where they are still being developed.

The sequential ordering in the narratives of adults is called into question by the use of flashforwards and flashbacks - literary and stylistic devices that create a twisting of the surface narrative that deviates from conventional story structure, including the schema sequence in L&W’s model. Listener expectations are also challenged with the movement back and forth of events, which calls into question the skill of the narrator despite their use of recipient design. Other schematic variation shows evidence that not only is *evaluation* interwoven throughout the narrative but that the *orientation* may also be found at different stages, and not necessarily as a discrete section towards the beginning of a narrative. The importance of story topic in

creating variations is foregrounded in the discussion on story sub-genres, by the appearance of recounts as non-narratives. The correlation with recounts describing 'states of affairs' such as happy and sad experiences, and narratives describing 'actions' based on "Trouble", point to the existence of alternative modes of storytelling. Another finding to emerge that would appear to be obvious in light of these findings is that perhaps the most successful and coherent personal narratives - in terms of fulfilling expectations of a reportable event - are based on experiences such as danger of death, fights and arguments where a crisis arises that must be resolved.

The findings presented in this chapter all call into question the notion of a single universal narrative model for all stories across all cultures, and the need to redefine and broaden our understanding of narratives. The presence of variations at a structural and schematic level calls to mind the question asked earlier in this thesis: "when is a narrative not a narrative?". This will be properly addressed in the final chapter of this thesis, where the range of variations in the personal narratives in this study will be considered and a variationist model that builds on L&W's narrative model will be offered. Before then, however, other findings that arguably offer greater insights for our understanding of narrative form and function will be presented in the following two chapters. Chapter 6 presents what is perhaps the most striking schematic variation in my study of the narratives of LGCs: the *post-evaluation* schema; and Chapter 7 describes the effects that a peer group interview setting has on the interview dynamics, the participants and their storytelling practices.

CHAPTER 6. MORE THAN WORDS: POST-EVALUATION

6.1 Introduction to post-evaluation

The presentation and discussion of findings in Chapter 5 has highlighted a number of schematic and structural variations and their correlates in the personal narratives of the LGC informants. A further finding, which I will call *post-evaluation*, showed variation at a schematic level and is striking for several reasons. *Post-evaluation* as a marked and naturally occurring feature of personal narratives of LGCs has not been commented on previously by L&W as a category in their narrative model. This chapter will accordingly describe the form and function of *post-evaluation* and where it is found before going on to argue why this schematic anomaly, which is uncharacteristic of the simple narratives described by L&W's model, is an inherent feature in the storytelling traditions of the LGC culture.

6.2 What is post-evaluation and where is it found?

As the name suggests, *post-evaluation* is a stage or schema in personal narratives that provides further evaluative comments about the personal experience, over and above the type of *evaluation* presented by L&W's in their model. Specifically, *post-evaluation*:

- i. is found as a discrete section either before or after the *coda*. (This contrasts with L&W's *evaluation* schema which can be found as clauses interwoven throughout the narrative clauses, though mostly before the *resolution*);
- ii. evaluates the whole of the personal experience and does not only draw attention to the *resolution* (which may not always be clear, unlike L&W's *evaluation* category which functions to draw attention to the *resolution*);
- iii. provides a deeper, more insightful expression of the narrator's personal involvement in the events and more importantly, any lasting after effects;
- iv. functions to rationalise, explain, question and/or interpret the events in the experience as a way of making sense of what happened;
- v. gives the narrator an opportunity to confront difficult, painful and/or traumatic past experiences encoded in the narrative.

It could be argued that *post-evaluation* can be categorised under L&W and Labov's *evaluation* category, especially as their schema has been criticised for having too many evaluative devices with too few constraints on distribution, creating a 'lack of a one-to-one relationship of any particular structure with the evaluation' (Kernan, 1977:100) (see Chapter 3). However, L&W's *evaluation* schema is not found as a discrete section at a specific point in personal narratives but interwoven throughout, whereas in narratives by LGCs, it is a separate and distinct stage that appears at a particular point in the narrative. In fact, a closer analysis and description of *post-*

evaluation, and the various sub-categories within this schema will show that it is a naturally occurring feature in the narratives of the LGCs and can be correlated with specific forms and functions, to make it a separate category from L&W's and Labov's *evaluation* schema.

An example of a personal narrative showing *post-evaluation* as a discrete and distinct schematic feature is presented below in Text 6.1, a personal experience about a fight. Speaker A, an adult male (aged 36, peer group interview), is considered a skilful and entertaining storyteller by his peers and this is exemplified by the amount of detail and use of direct speech in the narrative. In the past, A was known for being "tough" and for having been involved in numerous fights (a fact known to all the informants in this peer group interview, including the interviewer). The narrative in Text 6.1 below, has been presented to show the different schema categories in A's personal narrative with *post-evaluation* highlighted in bold.

1	Int	Can you tell me about a time you were involved in a fight or an argument that really upset you?	(Abstract)
	A	Right let's rewind the memory thing (6.0). When I was about 14 which is many years ago ... in the school playground ... I was er I	Orientation
5		was sort of one of the main men of the of the gangs you know it used to be a gangland sort of thing and I was one of the top men so I used to control most of the things that went on in the playground until this other boy came along, a boy called (E), a black guy, same age as me but a about a foot bigger in height and six inches wider. Looking at	Orientation Orientation Orientation Orientation Orientation Orientation
10		him I didn't have much of a chance but ME being ME unfortunately we clashed on who was going to play football first, so we all got out in the playground we all run out to take the main goals then the rest would play in the little goals but the big goals were the ones that everyone wanted so we run out and (E's) team run on and (A),	Orientation Orientation Orientation Orientation Orientation Orientation
15		myself well my friends have run on. Anyway, and eh (E) goes, " <i>See you later mate</i> ". I say, " <i>What you talking about?</i> " I say, " <i>We're playing, we got out here first</i> ", he goes, " <i>You're not</i> ".	Orientation CA CA CA CA
20		So I was very short-fused and without thinking I said to him, " <i>Look, you either get off or I push you off</i> ". And he says, " <i>I don't think so</i> ". So as I went to hit him, he blocked me,	Evaluation CA CA CA

25	not knowing at the time but he was like a karate fanatic first down or a black belt, and he kicked me [laugh] from here to the moon basically he kicked me all over the place. I was off school for 2 weeks with bruises and they broke my arm	Orientation Orientation CA Evaluation Evaluation Resolution
30	Int A That was the last time I reacted without finding out if I could take someone on board. So basically, when it came - after that though I must blow my own trumpet I didn't get beaten up again. That was the last time I got beaten up. But I'm not a trouble-maker let's get that clear but I could handle myself. I did slip up when I come up against (E). So that was one of the worst fights that I can remember and like I say I suffered for about two weeks with it but it taught me a lesson it disciplined me.	= = Goodness! Coda Coda Post-evaluation Post-evaluation Post-evaluation Post-evaluation Post-evaluation Post-evaluation

Text 6.1 A's personal narrative about a fight showing *post-evaluation* (in bold)

After a long *orientation* section (ll.2-15) to contextualise the narrative events in the *complicating action* (ll.16-25), speaker A goes on to provide further *orientation* details, some *evaluation* and a *resolution*, before talking about his reactions to his personal experience (ll.32-37). These evaluative comments appear as a concise section towards the end of the narrative (hence the 'post' in *post-evaluation*), after the *resolution* and *coda*. The comments effectively evaluate the whole of the experience giving insights into the impact of the events described in the *complicating action* and their lasting effects on the narrator. Through the use of self-aggrandizement, speaker A draws attention to his actions and their effects, which importantly, function to emphasise the reportability aspect of his personal experience. Moreover, *post-evaluation* allows the narrator to maintain 'face' despite losing the fight with such painful consequences. When compared to L&W's *evaluation* schema, *post-evaluation* could be said to provide an extended commentary of the personal experience, which builds on the earlier evaluative clauses woven into the narrative. However, that would be too simple a description.

Post-evaluation evaluates the experience beyond the events in the *complicating action* and *resolution*. Not only is the ‘what happened?’ element of the story provided, but also the ‘what happened after?’

Another example of a personal narrative with *post-evaluation* is given below in Text 6.2, this time about an embarrassing experience. Here, speaker A’s experience (male, 18-21, peer group interview) is told collaboratively with speaker E, a friend, who was also present when the events took place. (Speaker E’s contribution is shown in square brackets in the column showing the schema categories, to distinguish from Speaker A’s narration)

1	Int	Hmm okay changing changing the tone um ... can you think of a time where you were really embarrassed?	
	E	[laughs and pointing at A] (MR G!)	[Abstract]
	A	Oh!	
5	E&A	[Laughing]	
	E	Yeah say that one	
	A	Yeah I I was thinking about that one actually - I can’t say that ... I’ll get chucked out of university [laughing]	Orientation/ Evaluation
	Int	Mr who?	
10	E	Em it’s a biology teacher at our school he’s a nice guy but em one day (A) was em they gave a wager like to see if he would take his pants down and show it to someone	[Orientation] [Orientation] [Orientation]
	All	[Laugh]	
	E	in the corridor or was it or was it on top of the desk I’m not sure	[Orientation]
15	A	corridor	Orientation
	E	was the corridor and [on top of his desk]	[Orientation]
	A	=let’s get it right it was a moonie yeah a moonie you know	Orientation Orientation
	E	and he pulled it down in front of a girl and it happened that Mr (G) was walking past around the corner and he saw him and [] give a right telling off	[CA] [CA] [CA]
20	A	He said um “Go and see Mrs (C)” which was the head of year and I sort of like wandered downstairs and was like just walking around like and I was gonna go back and say oh I couldn’t find her	CA CA CA
25		but when I went back he was with the er [to E] -what was she called deputy head and -she’s a scary woman scary and I was like “Oh my God” and I had to speak to her an I got suspended	CA Orientation Evaluation CA/ Evaluation Resolution
30		and that was a bit bad and like I was young we do these things when you’re young	Post-evaluation Post-evaluation

Text 6.2 A’s embarrassing experience with *post-evaluation*

Post-evaluation in Text 6.2 (ll.30-31) again appears after the *resolution* and foregrounds the narrator's age as an excuse for his past actions, which he evaluates as *a bit bad* (ll.30). By using the "I was young" excuse, the narrator attempts to overcome a loss of face by presenting this as a justification for his actions.

Post-evaluation in the above examples display acts of self-aggrandizement and functions to justify or excuse past behaviour as a way of overcoming a 'loss of face'. A fuller analysis of the sub-categories of the forms and functions of *post-evaluation* is given in the next section.

6.3 Linguistic form and function of post-evaluation

Once *post-evaluation* was identified as a possible additional narrative schema, the evaluative strategies were examined for recurring patterns. The result was that *post-evaluation* could be grouped into five sub-categories according to their function and distinct lexico-grammatical forms. Those five sub categories are:

1. reasserting the role of the narrator in a positive light
2. the 'I was young' excuse
3. the 'what if...?' hypothetical scenario
4. expression of the narrator's feelings at the time of the events
5. expression of the lasting effects of the experience

The five sub-categories of *post-evaluation* are summarised in Table 6.1. The second column attributes a 'Function' to each of the five categories, while the column headed 'Form' describes the lexico-grammatical devices for each sub category of *post-evaluation*. Examples of *post-evaluation* taken from the personal narratives in my study are also presented to exemplify differences between each sub-category of *post-evaluation*³⁴.

SUB CATEGORY	FUNCTION	FORM
<p>1. Reasserting the role of the narrator in a positive light</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attempts to absolve narrator from blame • expression of self-aggrandizement which may be self-congratulatory • more prominent in fight stories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use of clauses that overtly express self-aggrandizement; • use of negative statements to express what the narrator is 'not' <p><i>'after that though I must blow my own trumpet I didn't get beaten up again. That was the last time I got beaten up. But I'm not a trouble-maker, let's get that clear but I could handle myself'</i></p> <p><i>'I mean that wasn't an argument per se I'm just trying to think I don't really have I'm not an argumentative kind of person'</i></p> <p><i>'the actual kid that hit me was smaller than me...he must've been about bloody 11 years old or something but he had 2 but he had 2 bigger boys with him'</i></p>
<p>2. The "I was young" excuse</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • makes excuses for past actions to justify behaviour • attempts to overcome a 'loss of face' • may introduce an element of humour into what might be perceived as a face threatening or humiliating experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explicit foregrounding of narrator's age as the main reason for events in past • use of emphatic <i>then</i> and <i>that</i> deixis <p><i>'but I was only young though...THEN it was embarrassing but now when I think I was only young'</i></p> <p><i>'I got suspended and that was a bit bad and like I was young we do these things when you're young'</i></p> <p><i>'but I was about ooh lets think about 13 at the time so I think I can be forgiven now'</i></p> <p><i>'we were younger wouldn't do it again though its just like pointless really stupid fight'</i></p>

³⁴ It was decided just to present the clauses of *post-evaluation* in isolation from the whole narrative for reasons of clarity and also because some narrative transcripts extend over several pages.

<p>3. The “what if...?” hypothetical scenario</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> speculates on how events might have been different if circumstances (in the past) had been different 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use of <i>if</i> clauses marked use of modals and hypothetical statements use of adverb <i>actually</i> to give emphasis to “Trouble” <p><i>‘I realised that his ski could have gone through my neck ...I mean I actually think being frozen on the spot and being so frightened really helped cause had somebody said move out of the way I could have gone one direction or the other and it could have been very difficult...’</i></p> <p><i>‘But it was only afterwards - I can remember one of the teachers who were actually talking I overheard them and they were actually quite relieved because they - one of them “Well actually he was quite lucky”, cause I mean if the sea would’ve -if I’d have come down again...if I would’ve fallen off that ledge then I would’ve struggled to get up another wave would’ve come in probably you know SMASHED me into little pieces...it could’ve been quite dangerous’</i></p>
<p>4. Expression of the narrator’s feelings at the time of the events</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> questions the events in the experience as a way of making sense of what was happening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use of rhetorical question forms may be in the form of free direct speech <p><i>‘It felt like a straight jacket job you get me?...You know what do you do?’</i></p> <p><i>“Why is he saying stuff about my mum he don’t really know my mum?”</i></p>
<p>5. Expression of the lasting effects of the experience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> confronts traumatic, difficult, anxious or painful memories may show regret may function similarly to Labov and Waletzky’s <i>coda</i>, i.e. may be in the form of a moral or lesson 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use of repetition as emphatic device use of <i>now</i> to bring the events of the experience into the present to comment specifically on the ‘<i>what happened after?</i>’ use of clauses in the present tense <p><i>it makes you learn though never never to let it happen again I suppose never letting anyone treat you like that’</i></p> <p><i>‘and now I avoid small areas...now I think twice’</i></p> <p><i>‘The next day I found out that he was black and blue all over without a mark on but that’s the only thing that upset me that I’d actually really hit him and hurt him’</i></p> <p><i>‘that was quite a big argument between us it’s not really the same now after that’</i></p> <p><i>‘that’s always stuck in my mind because that fear of knowing that you’re going to die because that’s EXACTLY what I thought’</i></p>

Table 6.1 Five sub-categories of *post-evaluation* showing function and form.

Closer analysis of the personal narratives from LGCs, however, indicates that *post-evaluation* is not consistently present in all personal narratives across all the informant groups. Instead, *post-evaluation* correlates with specific factors, such as speaker age, gender and perhaps not so surprising, the topic of the narrative experience. These factors will be discussed in turn in the following section, in an attempt to account for why such variations are prevalent within the same speech community.

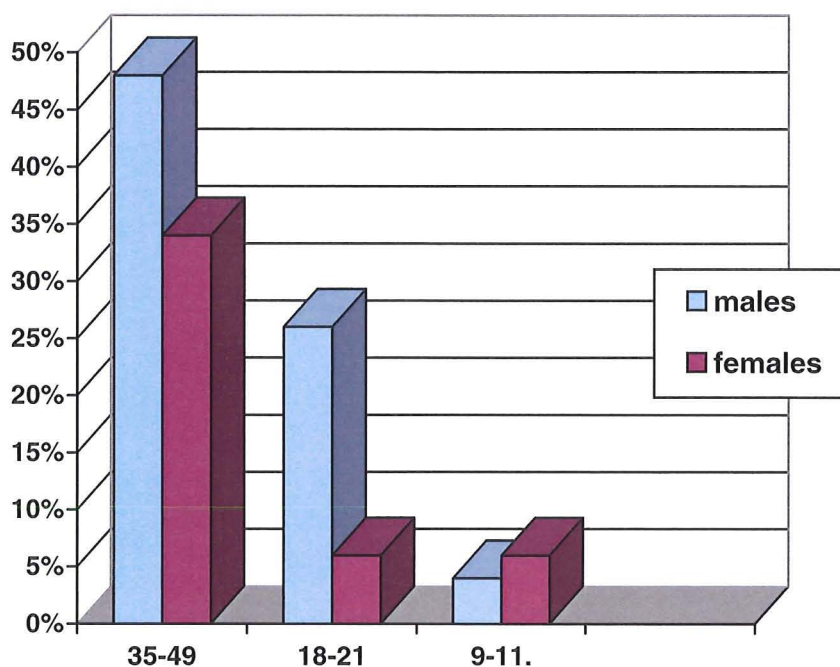
6.4 Post-evaluation: age, gender and story topic as factors

6.4.1 Post-evaluation, age and gender

Analysis of all personal narratives collected across all age groups, sexes, interview settings and different story topics found evidence to suggest that *post-evaluation* is mostly found in the personal narratives of adult speakers, predominantly the older, adult male informants (35-49 age group). Conversely, it was found to be mostly absent in children's narratives of both males and females. Specifically, *post-evaluation* is:

- present in 48% of narratives of older, adult males (aged 35-49)
- present in 34% of narratives of older, adult females (aged 35-49)
- present in 26% of narratives of young adult males (aged 18-21),
- present in 6 % of narratives from young adult females (18-21)
- present in 4% of narratives in boys (aged 9-11)
- present 6% of narratives from girls (aged 9-11)

These figures are represented in Graph 6.1 below.



Graph 6.1. The presence of *post-evaluation* as a schema category in the personal narratives of males and females in three age groups

The differences between the three age groups and adult male and female informants are clearly significant. But why should this be the case? One possible explanation is that *post-evaluation* is simply a rhetorical device that highlights the narrator's performance skill, and is used to engage the audience by emphasising the reportability aspect of their experience. The fact that this feature is prevalent among the oldest and more experienced storytellers would seem to support this argument. However, its presence may be linked to acquisition rather than performance skill as the absence of *post-evaluation* in children's narratives provides another compelling argument to suggest that it may be related to children's cognitive development of story templates and acquisition of story schemas, as discussed previously in Chapter 5. It is possible that children in this study are below the developmental age for this to have happened, particularly as it requires a greater level of sophistication and

verbal skill than simply acquiring narrative structures. Even so, neither possible explanation offers a convincing reason for why *post-evaluation* occurs less frequently in personal narratives of the adult female informants where its absence is particularly marked in the 18-21 age group, when compared to both adult male groups. Each of the points raised here will be discussed in the following sections in an attempt to understand why *post-evaluation* is present in some personal narratives and not in others.

6.4.2 Post-evaluation and story topic

As has been established in this chapter so far, *post-evaluation* functions to rationalise, explain, question and/or interpret the events in past experiences as a way of making sense of what happened. Moreover, it gives the narrator an opportunity to confront difficult, painful and traumatic past experiences that are encoded in their narrative. It is not surprising, therefore, that narratives with a *post-evaluation* schema tend to be about highly anxious experiences, namely danger of death, fights /arguments and embarrassing experiences. Conversely, narratives about happy, sad, and funny experiences, particularly happy and sad topic genres, which tend to describe states that lack an essential anxiety factor, are less likely to include a *post-evaluation*. This finding suggests that *post-evaluation* as a feature of personal narratives is topic-specific and defined by “Trouble”, a notion discussed in Chapter 5. “Trouble”, according to Bruner (1997), defines complication and nothing guarantees drama, crisis, a high-point etc. more than narratives based on fight, arguments, danger of death and embarrassing experiences. When story topic was

examined closely to establish how far it correlated with the presence of “Trouble” as an underlying theme, some interesting figures emerged. These figures, stating the percentage of personal narratives with a *post-evaluation* by story topic are given below for each informant group - males, females and three age groups:

- **older, adult males (aged 35-49):** in 21 narratives elicited, 10 contain *post-evaluation* = 48% ; of the 48% of narratives with *post-evaluation*, 80% were found in those defined by “Trouble” (danger of death, fight/argument and embarrassing experiences)
- **older, adult females (aged 35-49):** in 29 narratives elicited, 10 contain *post-evaluation* = 34%; of the 34%, 80% were found in those defined by “Trouble”
- **young, adult males (aged 18-21):** in 40 narratives elicited, 11 contain *post-evaluation* = 26%; of the 26%, 64% were found in those defined by “Trouble”
- **young, adult females (aged 18-21):** in 16 narratives elicited, 1 contains *post-evaluation* = 6%; of the 26%, 100% was found to be defined by “Trouble”
- **children, males (9-11):** in 48 narratives elicited, 2 contain *post-evaluation* = 4%; of the 4% 100% was found to be defined by “Trouble”
- **children, females (9-11):** in 16 narratives elicited, 1 contains *post-evaluation* = 6%; of the 6% 100% was found to be defined by “Trouble”

At this level of analysis there is clearly a correlation between “Trouble” as the theme underlying the personal experience and the presence of *post-evaluation* in the personal narratives of LGCs. A first glance at these figures, however, may incorrectly give the impression that females have a repertoire of danger of death, fight/argument narratives as part of their autobiographical experiences as they also produced a large percentage of narratives about “Trouble”. This would suggest that males and females across the three age groups tell an equal amount of “Trouble”

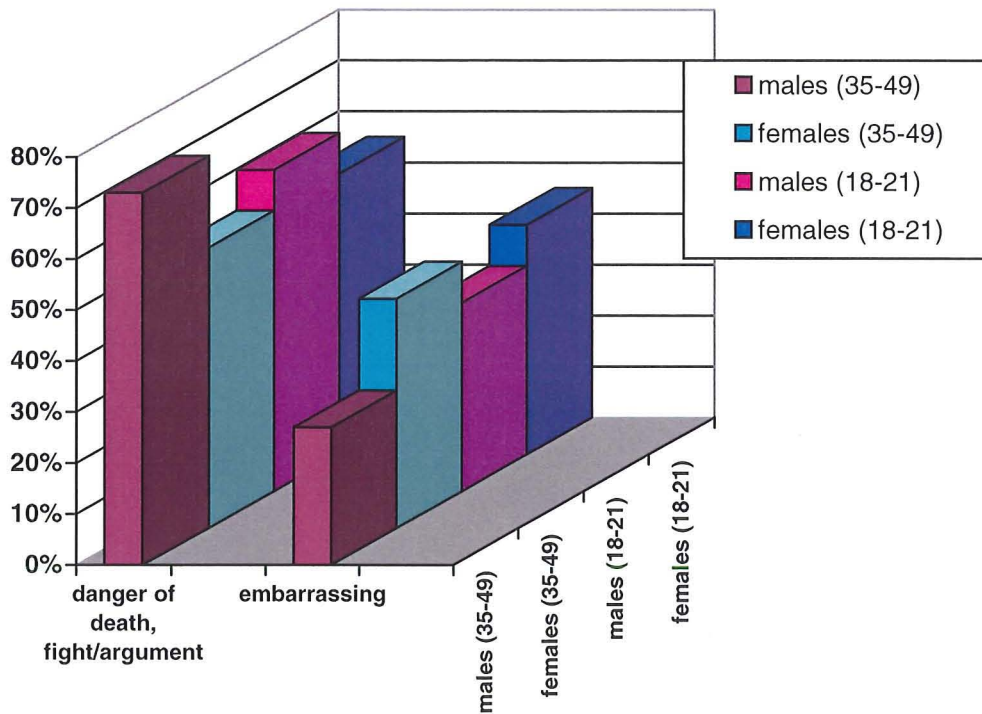
narratives based on similar types of experiences. However, when these narratives were analysed for their story topics – specifically those describing danger of death, fight /argument and embarrassing experiences, my findings revealed a marked difference in the topics that males and females tell. Females in both adult age groups tell a higher proportion of personal narratives about embarrassing experiences as opposed to the proportion of danger of death and fight /argument experiences which were found as a higher percentage in personal experiences of adult males. These figures are set out in Table 6.2 below:

older, adult males (aged 35-49): of the 21 narratives, 71% were about “Trouble”
older, adult females (aged 35-49): of the 29 narratives 62% " "
young, adult males (aged 18-21): of the 40 narratives 60% " "
young, adult females (aged 18-21): of the 16 narratives, 69% " "
children, males (9-11): of the 48 narratives, 77% " "
children, females (9-11): of the 16 narratives, 63% " "

	Total number of “Trouble” narratives (danger of death, fight/ argument and embarrassing experiences)	Proportion of danger of death and fight/ argument narratives	Proportion of embarrassing narratives
Older Adult males (35-49)	71 %	11 73%	4 27%
Older Adult females (35-49)	62 %	10 55%	8 45%
Males (18-21)	60 %	15 63%	9 37%
Females (18-21)	69 %	6 55%	5 45%

Table 6.2 Danger of death and fight/ argument experiences v embarrassing experiences in the narratives of adult LGC male and female informants.

The figures in this analysis are also represented in Graph 6.2, which presents a comparison across the male and female informants for both adult age groups.



Graph 6.2 Break down of “Trouble” narratives to show proportion of ‘danger of death and fight/argument narratives’ against the proportion of ‘embarrassing’ narratives, across the adult (male/female) informant groups

Table 6.2 shows that of the 71% of narratives produced by older adult males (35-49) about “Trouble” topics (danger of death, fight/argument and embarrassing narratives), 73% are specifically about danger of death, fight/argument experiences while 27% are about embarrassing experiences. In comparison to narratives by female informants, the proportion of danger of death and fight/argument experiences is almost equal to those about embarrassing incidents - 55% to 45% - in both adult age groups. In other words, females told a higher proportion of embarrassing experiences, which can be equally anxious or traumatic, while males narrated more experiences about danger of death and fight/arguments. This accounts for why both sexes appear to have a high number of “Trouble” narratives as part of their storytelling repertoire.

Interestingly, these findings confirm the results of research into gender differences in storytelling, which reveal that women are more likely to tell personal narratives about embarrassing or humiliating experiences where humour is more likely to be present as a device to overcome a loss of face and facilitate a sharing of experiences. Men, on the other hand, are more likely to cast themselves in the role of hero in narratives about danger and violence where it is important to preserve a masculine identity when narrative discourse takes place in group settings, especially in the company of other males (see Eggins and Slade, 1997; Coates, 1995b; and Johnstone, 1993).

Discussion so far on *post-evaluation* has established that it is found mainly in the personal narratives of adult males and females, though proportionally higher in those by the older adult male informants (35-49). Furthermore, *post-evaluation* correlates with story genre as it appears to be present in narratives defined by “Trouble” and provides a particular type of evaluative commentary that functions to heighten the reportability value of the narrative experience.

Also pointed out earlier in this chapter is the noticeable absence of *post-evaluation* in children’s narratives (for both male and female informants), despite the fact that children in all informant groups told a large number of narratives based on “Trouble”. One of the reasons to explain this has already been outlined in Chapter 5, section 5.2.2. The absence of *post-evaluation* may also be explained by a child’s cognitive development of story templates and acquisition of story schemas. To summarise, *post-evaluation* appears to be a sophisticated stylistic device and a distinct feature of personal narratives about “Trouble” in the LGC culture that is yet

to be acquired by children. It has not yet become part of the narrative schema repertoire of these children who have not yet developed the skills to reflect, rationalise or question their past actions and those of others in their experiences in the way that adults can. The absence of *post-evaluation*, therefore, is not so much a reflection of an incomplete narrative form, or unsuccessful narrator but a reflection of the age of the storyteller.

I would also like to propose, in the next section, a further possible explanation for the correlation of *post-evaluation* with age that is outside the parameters of an individual's cognitive development (although these factors are likely to interact rather than provide an alternative explanation). My argument in the following discussion is based primarily on an implicit understanding of Greek discourse that emerges from a strong oral storytelling tradition embedded in the culture.

6.5 Post-evaluation and London Greek Cypriot community

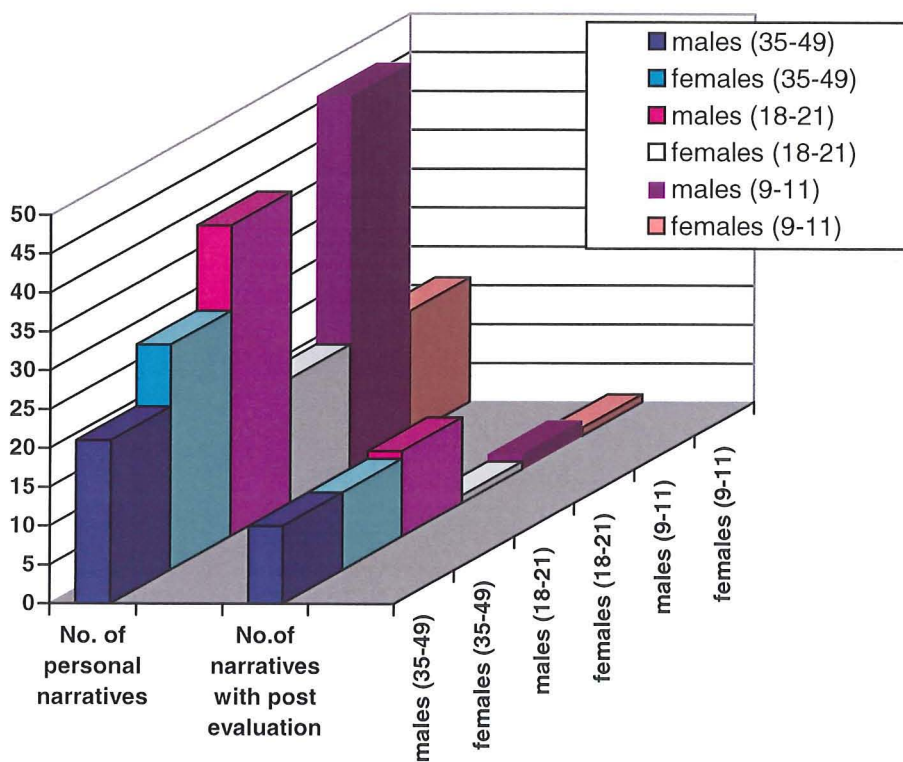
The distribution of *post-evaluation* in the personal narratives of children, young adults and the older adult informants, reveals a strong correlation of this feature with age (see Graph 6.1). It seems possible therefore that *post-evaluation* as a storytelling device may be an inherent feature of personal narratives of 'native' Greek Cypriots who have the 'purest' oral storytelling tradition, which historically, has been associated with the culture for centuries. In the London based Greek Cypriot community, the 'native' Greek Cypriots are those who were born in Cyprus but emigrated and settled in London as first generation Greek Cypriots. These members

of the LGC community, by their closest association to the Greek language and culture, express a storytelling discourse that appears to be more rhetorical and evaluative in its form. This is reflected in the style of narration and final narrative form, both of which employ strategies of self-reflection to not only emphasise the point of the story to listeners but also the importance of the experience to the narrator. Consequently, narrative performance is more vocal as well as verbal and appears more practised than those produced by their younger counterparts. The outcome is a narrative that exhibits the ‘fully-formed’ structure and sophisticated evaluative commentary associated with the spoken discourse of this culture³⁵.

By implication, *post-evaluation* would be expected to be a feature of personal narratives produced by the next, or second generation LGCs (aged 35-49). This section of the community, effectively the children of those members who settled in London, are closest to the ‘native’ Greek Cypriot language and culture - compared to the subsequent generations that will follow - and will have been exposed to the cultural storytelling forms of their parents. Through such exposure and close contact in what has always been a tightly-knit community, the traditions of one generation are passed on and to some extent acquired by the next generation. This would explain the highest presence of *post-evaluation* in the narratives of the older adult age groups (48% in males; 34% in females). However, with each successive generation, contact with the original ‘native’ oral culture gradually becomes ‘diluted’, as exposure to other discourses and storytelling modes from what is now their native language and culture - English – makes a greater impact. The result is a

³⁵ Members of the first generation LGCs were not interviewed for their personal narratives in this study. This discussion is based on an implicit knowledge and understanding of the Greek language and culture, of which I am a member. Future research that specifically looks at personal narratives of first generation Greek Cypriots from this section of the community would provide an interesting as well as useful comparative study on narrative structure.

smaller proportion of narratives from these informants having a *post-evaluation* in their personal narratives. Specifically, *post-evaluation* is not always or successfully acquired for the age groups 18-21 (26% in males; 6% in females) despite the males in this age group producing a large number of personal narratives. This can be seen more clearly in graph 6.3 which shows the proportion of narratives with a *post-evaluation*, against the actual number of narratives produced for each informant group.



Graph 6.3 The proportion of personal narratives from the LGCs which contain a *post-evaluation* schema, for males and females across three age groups

Graph 6.3 shows that the smallest proportion of *post-evaluation* in the personal narratives of LGCs is produced by the youngest group of informants aged 9-11 (4%

males; 6% females), who are third generation LGCs and the grandchildren of the 'native' Greek Cypriots who settled in London. Reasons to explain this finding have been outlined in the preceding section although it is worth noting that this generation are furthest away from the original, and as such, 'purest' oral storytelling traditions and general linguistic practices of their grandparents, which includes the use of rhetorical devices such as those found in *post-evaluation*. Consequently, these informants would have received less exposure to the more fully-formed narrative forms and stylistic strategies of their parents. This explanation implies that *post-evaluation* may never be acquired even once these children reach adulthood and have gained a full range of cognitive skills, as *post-evaluation* may be in the process of being 'lost' and therefore no longer a feature of personal narratives from successive generations of LGCs. This hypothesis, which I will call 'narrative schema death' is a possible contributory factor as regards why *post-evaluation* is noticeably missing from narratives of young adults (aged 18-21), where assimilation into an English language and culture exposes them to a wider range of storytelling modes that directly impacts on the strong oral storytelling tradition of the culture³⁶.

A useful insight into understanding the importance of storytelling for Greek Cypriots and why *post-evaluation* can be considered a natural feature of the narratives from LGCs can be found in Georgakopoulou's (1997) opening paragraph to the preface to her book on Modern Greek storytelling:

Stories seem to dominate Greeks' conversational encounters enticing both tellers and audiences. As Tannen (1989) suggested, when heard by outsiders and non-Greeks, they come across as particularly dramatic, involving and enjoyable. Even to non-linguists, they present themselves a major regulatory force of the society's ethnography of interactions at an

³⁶The key to confirming some of these claims lies in further research, specifically in a comparative study of personal narratives from Greek Cypriot children from Cyprus and London from the same generation for variation in narrative structure.

integrational level. Storytelling events constitute an indispensable component for both adult-adult and adult-child interactions, thus embracing the gamut of socialization and acculturation processes. Furthermore, in a community which stresses performative excellence, they are viewed as arenas for display of communicative skill and efficiency in which the good storyteller's reward is as valuable as any reward for proof of cultural membership and competence. (p.xiii)

The telling of stories is fundamental to the Greek tradition of both Greek Cypriots and other Greeks and is evident today as a highly developed form of discourse, including the telling of oral narratives of personal experience. The use of *post-evaluation* as a way of providing an altogether more conscious and effective expression of identity through common experiences and culturally and socially acceptable behaviour, is bound up with pressure to deliver an interesting and engaging story, especially to peers. As a form of *evaluation*, *post-evaluation* fulfils the criterion of reportability, where 'performative excellence' is crucial for creating the resulting 'dramatic, involving and enjoyable' styles of storytelling which are deeply embedded in a culture where storytelling is 'proof of cultural membership'.

It is also worth pointing out that, while *post-evaluation* presents a significant schematic variation in the personal narratives of adult members of the LGC community, there is no suggestion that it is a feature that only belongs to this culture and is not to be found in personal narratives of other speech communities. Further research in the personal narratives of other cultures where 'performative excellence' is also embedded in a storytelling tradition would establish to what extent *post-evaluation* is present and whether the same or alternative sub-categories exist.

6.6 Conclusion: post-evaluation - a marker of culture?

The presence of *post-evaluation* as a distinct schema in the narratives of LGCs has several implications as regards narrative form and function. Variation in narrative form at a schematic and by default, structural level, questions the existence of a claimed universal framework for narratives, as does the fact that this feature is not consistently found across narratives by members of the same speech community. Moreover, with the discovery that *post-evaluation* has a strong correlation with personal narratives where “Trouble” is the underlying theme, story topic is yet another factor that is likely to create marked patterns in the storytelling discourse of this group of informants and challenge the notion of one narrative model for all.

To summarise, findings in my study suggest that *post-evaluation* is predominantly a feature of narratives about “Trouble”, which guarantee drama, a crisis or high point that needs to be resolved. Such a level of drama in the narrative events also appears to guarantee specific sub-categories of *post-evaluation*, that are as distinct from L&Ws *evaluation* schema. Moreover, *post-evaluation* is shown to be present mainly in the personal narratives by older adult male and female informants (aged 35-49), and almost nonexistent in narratives by children. Its use is arguably a reflection of a more sophisticated and rhetorical storytelling style, as is shown by the five sub categories which ultimately function to emphasize the importance of speaker identity and face, and the reportability value of the experience in group storytelling. The presence of this additional schema appears to mirror the oral storytelling skills traditionally associated with Greek culture, a finding also made by Tannen (1980) in a comparative study of American and Greek storytelling where Tannen postulates:

the Greeks in this study, as a result of their cultural and historical development, were employing conventionalized forms and strategies associated with the oral tradition of the family and peer group and the Americans were employing the literate tradition of schools (p.84).

These differences stem not from underlying 'differences in cognitive processes' but in the 'conventionalisation of appropriate rhetorical forms' as 'Greeks were telling stories designed to interest their listeners' (p.85). These findings also confirm the notion of the existence of cultural models of storytelling which challenges L&W's existing narrative model as universal: in light of these findings, their model appears to be over-constraining, particularly as variations at a lexico-grammatical and structural level can be correlated fairly consistently with a speaker's social and cultural background as well as with story topic. Such findings also question what is acceptable as a narrative since departures from L&W's model can be shown not to be the result of faulty storytelling practices but of different cultural models that reflect variations from diverse storytelling practices. Consequently, a greater recognition of alternative narrative models is needed and with that, a proposal for a less constrained model that places L&W's influential structure as the central framework which can be developed into a variationist model of narratives. In this way, a fuller, more representational account of personal narratives and their variations can be presented, which has wider implications as regards our understanding of the form and function of narratives.

CHAPTER 7. COLLABORATIVE STORYTELLING: PROMPTS AND REQUESTS FOR CLARIFICATION

7.1 Introduction to collaborative storytelling

There is no doubt that L&W's (1967) and Labov's (1972) groundbreaking methods for collecting spoken data in a sociolinguistic setting remain as powerful and applicable today as when they first undertook their research. Their decision to conduct peer group interviews and provide a situation that is more conducive to this type of data collection has been recognised for its contribution to helping sociolinguistic research produce spoken discourse that is more natural in style, and spontaneous. One area of L&W's data that has received little attention within the wider context of group discourse, however, is the interviewer-interviewee dynamic, and whether changes in this dynamic affect the production of narratives in peer groups. The assumed roles of informant and interviewer are crucial factors in the proceedings. For example, it would be expected that the less involved or intrusive the interviewer, the less formal the interview. This in turn would create a less inhibiting speaking context, thus reducing the Observer's Paradox, resulting in the production of more reliable data.

Another area of L&W's work on peer group storytelling that has received little or no attention is an examination of the speech surrounding their informants' oral narratives, preferring instead to present their data as monologic, and commenting

only on linguistic features such as the evaluative “self-aggrandizement” and covert and overt speech styles. In this third of three chapters presenting findings from my study, the effects of peer group interaction on the storytelling process and interview dynamic will be discussed below.

One of the aims of this study has been to investigate how far the interview setting affects the production of oral narratives of personal experience by comparing spoken data produced in a one-to-one interview (informant and interviewer) with the spoken data produced in a peer group interview. A close examination of personal narratives from the LGC community shows evidence of distinct linguistic patterns across peer group interviews that appear to be a result of changes in group dynamic. In peer group interviews, informants adopt what I call ‘collaborative storytelling strategies’, categorised according to the function they fulfil within the interview, despite the constraints of a conventional interview setting. Moreover, the emergence of collaborative storytelling in this setting causes a significant genre shift in the interview ‘speech event’ to an ‘activity type’ (Levinson, 1979) in which conversational type narratives emerge as the main type of discourse. Such findings may provide a fuller understanding of the interaction and co-production of narratives in an interview, especially as much of the work on collaboration in group discourse has focused on conversational narratives (Coates, 2001, 1988; Norrick, 2000; Eggins and Slade, 1997; Tannen, 1989).

While previous studies have provided useful insights into models for the organisation of talk and descriptions of ‘co-operativeness’ and ‘competition’ (Coates, 1988) none, as far as I am aware, have examined collaborative storytelling

in an interview setting - a speech context supposedly less conducive to the production of spontaneous and natural narratives. This chapter outlines the various features of collaborative storytelling and discusses whether they are an inevitable feature of group interaction, despite constraints of the interview setting, and whether they in fact help to facilitate or hinder the storytelling process.

7.2 Genre shift: from interview to conversation

If we accept that an individual's communicative competence (Hymes, 1972) allows speaking behaviour to adapt, in order to be appropriate in speech contexts within culturally defined frameworks, then we also need to accept that such contexts are governed by specific rules or norms for the use of speech. In other words, the context of a speech event determines the outcome, whether in a conversation among friends or a sociolinguistic interview for the collection of oral narratives. Implicit knowledge of the rules for successful interaction will be constrained by a number of factors or 'components', including the defined roles of participants involved and appropriate use of language and style.

Hymes's "SPEAKING" grid (1962, 1972b), a model developed from work on *The Ethnography of Speaking*, and referred to several times in this thesis with reference to genres, culture, and speech community, provides a useful summary of the components necessary for effective communication (see Table 7.1).

Scene or Setting	physical circumstances; subjective definition of an occasion
Participant	speaker/hearer; sender/ receiver; addressor/ addressee/audience
Ends	purposes and goals; outcomes
Act sequence	message form and content
Key	tone, manner
Instrumentalities	channel (verbal, non-verbal, physical); forms of speech drawn from community repertoire
Norms of interaction and interpretation	specific properties attached to speaking; interpretation of norms within a cultural belief system
Genre	textual categories

Table 7.1. Hymes' SPEAKING grid (adapted from Hymes, 1962)

So, a 'scene' such as a casual conversation between friends is likely to conform to a set of rules that can be modelled in work in conversation analysis, where 'a model of turn-taking in conversation would be characterised as locally managed, party-administered, interactionally controlled, and sensitive to recipient design' (Sacks et al., 1974: 696). Alternatively, a sociolinguistic interview 'scene' for the collection of spoken personal narratives would be expected to follow a different set of 'norms of interaction and interpretation' modelled on a question-answer dynamic. Here, the 'participant' role of interviewer will be responsible for who speaks, when that person speaks, and choice of topic, while the 'participant' role of interviewee would be to respond with appropriate answers as dictated by the 'ends' of the speech event. Subverting any one component may cause a slight blurring of the speech event but the occasion will nevertheless remain recognisable as a sociolinguistic interview. But where deviation affects the 'ends' of the speech event, there may inadvertently be changes. For example, a reversal in 'participant' roles, where informants

uncharacteristically come to dominate proceedings through spontaneous interaction, may result in a shift away from an interview to a 'scene' resembling a casual conversation.

This transformation of speech genres is easily conceivable, as narrative storytelling is a social activity and the audience is an integral part of the telling. The very presence of an audience wider than just the interviewer triggers such a change, resulting in a shift in the dynamics from a speech event to an 'activity type', 'a fuzzy category whose focal members are goal-defined, socially constituted, bounded, events with *constraints* on participants, setting, and so on, but above all on the kinds of allowable contributions' (Levinson, 1979: 368). Moreover, activity types are not so much determined by the norms of the occasion as much as by the 'goals' of individuals taking part. Hymes's model in this respect is limited by the fixed nature of the components within a specific speech context: the model does not account for changes in a peer group interview, which sees participants shape the event by actively co-operating with each other to cause a genre shift in a direction of an activity where collaborative narrative storytelling is a marked feature. As Thomas points out, 'Hymes sees context as constraining the way the individual speaks; Levinson sees the individual's use of language as shaping the 'event'' (1995:189).

Several factors explain the genre shift from peer group interview to casual conversation, which can be linked to the interviewer, informants and the discourse activity of the speech event. One major factor is the transfer of authority from the interviewer, who is conventionally responsible for regulating turn taking, to peer group members who outnumber the interviewer. Peer group members are the

catalyst for this shift, as the highly interactive turn-taking between informants (who self-select or select each other to narrate personal experiences), unintentionally force the interviewer into a backgrounded role. With less need for interviewer intervention and prompting, peer group members come to dominate proceedings, resulting in a break down in the question-answer format. With talk becoming freer, one obvious advantage of the shift, as regards research, is that the interview becomes less inhibiting for the production of narrative storytelling.

For the narrator, there are a number of issues to consider when narrating personal experiences to an audience, since the speech event becomes more than a conventional question-answer activity. According to Coates, 'The terms "narrator" and "audience" set up a false picture of an active story-teller and a passive group of listeners, whereas the reality is that co-participants (the audience) are always co-authors in some sense' (2001: 82). Moreover, recipient design, where 'the talk by a party in a conversation is constructed or designed in ways which display an *orientation* and sensitivity to the particular other(s) who are the co-participants' (Sacks et al., 1974: 72), becomes central to this process, and is particularly important if the goal of narrating is to be successful. The narration, therefore, should fulfil certain criteria to satisfy the social function of storytelling, such as 'reportability', 'credibility', 'objectivity', 'causality' and 'the assignment of praise and blame' (Labov, 1997) (Also see Chapter 2). As Polanyi observes, in order to achieve this 'a competent storyteller needs to take into account the relative knowledge, states and interests of his interlocutors' (1985: 200).

A further concern for informants is the necessity of asserting themselves as skilful narrators, since failure to do so can lead to a loss of 'face' (Goffman, 1967). If narrators establish themselves as good, or interesting, or entertaining storytellers, they will subsequently be allowed to keep the floor to recount their personal narrative and the resulting response from other peers in the group will be positive. If, however, they fail in this activity, their right to a turn may be taken away. For those who self-select, however, this factor becomes even more crucial.

In comparison, the interviewer, whose role is backgrounded and has little input into the proceedings, is faced with a dilemma. Any attempt to reassert their role to gain control of the interview and revert back to the question-answer routine may inadvertently affect the narration and skew data, in the same way that providing minimal responses in a one-to-one interview may affect the storytelling process. (However, it could be rightly argued that storytelling in a contrived and unnatural context exacerbated by silence may be equally inhibiting). Such changes in participant roles and their implications prompt a comparison of the characteristics of a *one-to-one interview*, *casual conversation* and *peer group interview* to highlight similarities and differences between speech genres (see Table 7.2, below).

Type of speech event or activity type	Participants and roles	Type of interaction	Recipient of speech	Distinct features of speech
One-to-one interview <i>(to collect personal narratives)</i>	Interviewer in authoritative role; interviewee responds to questions	Question-answer routine (similar to adjacency pair); interviewer selects topic and controls when interviewee speaks; turn order is fixed; topic or purpose of interview may be known in advance; minimal interaction	Interviewer	Interviewer remains silent during interviewee's turn, limiting backchannelling signals; interviewee produces constrained and unnatural speech
Casual conversation	Participants are both speakers and audience, sharing equal status and access to floor (although one speaker may dominate more than another)	System of turn-taking in place that is locally managed; topics are not decided in advance; turn order is not fixed neither is turn size; speakers can self-select their turn; spontaneous interaction	All participants	Highly interactive; presence of interruptions, overlapping, backchannelling, humour, telling of narratives, features of collaborative storytelling; spontaneous and natural speech
Peer group interview <i>(to collect personal narratives)</i>	Role of interviewer, initially in authority (setting topics and selecting speaker) is backgrounded; interviewees take over and direct proceedings; results in minimal interviewer intervention	Begins as question-answer event, shifts into a turn-taking activity; turn order is not fixed but speech limited to specific topics, may be known in advance; extended turns allowed without being challenged; speakers can self select their turn; develops into spontaneous interaction with minimum prompting from interviewer	Interviewer and all peer group members	Features of casual conversation are present including collaborative storytelling, such as prompts and requests for clarification; peer group members produce spontaneous and near natural speech

Table 7.2. A comparison between characteristics of a peer group interview with a one-to-one interview and casual conversation

Features of natural and spontaneous speech associated with casual conversation are a characteristic of most group discourse, including peer group interviews, despite the constraints of the formal setting. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, L&W and Labov have been criticised for their presentation of monologic data from peer group

interviews, which completely lacks any form of interaction (see Corston, 1993). Justifiably, L&W and Labov were concerned with narrative units and not with ‘other conversation “detritus”’ (Schegloff, 1981:74), and so presented their data in this way for reasons of clarity. Yet analysis of such ‘detritus’ might have yielded further insights into the development, form and function of personal narratives in a group setting beyond discussion on narrative schemas, such as evidence of collaborative storytelling. It is this aspect of peer group interviews that will be discussed below.

7.3 Linguistic forms and functions of collaborative storytelling

When spoken data from the peer group interviews in my study was analysed, it revealed consistent patterns of collaborative storytelling, the co-construction of narratives by two or more participants in the peer group, across the various informant groups for both males and females and for all three age groups. Emerging almost as soon as the interviews began, these linguistic patterns have been categorised, to explain their distinct form and function, under descriptive subheadings: *explicit collaboration* and *implicit collaboration* and more specifically, *direct prompts*, *requests for clarification* and *indirect prompts* (summarised in table 7.3 below). Each category is described in relation to L&W’s narrative schema model, which is again summarised below, and confirms the existence of an implicit story template that enables individuals to produce, process and comprehend narratives:

Abstract	signals beginning of story, what it is about; a summary of story;
Orientation	provides <i>who, what, where, when</i> of story; orients listener;
Complicating action	provides the what happened? part of the narrative;
Evaluation	provides the <i>so what?</i> element of story; may convey narrator's involvement and highlight what is interesting to narrator or audience;
Resolution	provides the what finally happened? element of story;
Coda	signals sealing off or end of story; may show effects of event on narrator; may be evaluative.

1. EXPLICIT COLLABORATION Direct verbal collaboration with other members in peer group interview	2. IMPLICIT COLLABORATION No direct verbal collaboration with other members in peer group interview
A. Direct prompt i. provides abstract: <i>story topic</i> ii. provides coda: <i>evaluative</i>	C. Indirect prompt i. triggers abstract: <i>story topic</i>
B. Requests for clarification i. elaborates orientation: <i>who?</i> <i>what?</i> <i>where?</i> <i>when?</i>	

Table 7.3 Categories of collaborative storytelling (placed within Labov and Waletzky's, 1967 narrative schema model, shown above)

A description of the form and function of each of the collaborative storytelling strategies is provided in the next section.

7.3.1 Explicit and implicit collaboration: an introduction

Explicit collaboration, the first of the collaborative storytelling categories, can be described as overt verbal collaboration between peer group members and can be sub-divided into *direct prompts* and *requests for clarification*. *Direct prompts* arise

when a peer group member deliberately takes the floor away from another informant with the intention of helping them, providing either a story topic, which functions as the story *abstract*, or a comment which may be evaluative and functions as the *coda*. Informants also interrupt the narrator to *request clarification* if there are gaps in the contextualising information dealing with the *who*, *what*, *when* and *where* detail.

Implicit collaboration, on the other hand, involves no direct verbal collaboration between peer group members and narrator. Instead, *indirect prompts*, the sub-category, trigger personal narratives in other informants as a result of the narrator using certain keywords, which they then go on to narrate in order to create a sequence of narratives that are thematically linked.

7.4 Explicit and implicit collaboration: when and how they occur

7.4.1 Direct prompts which provide the abstract

Direct prompts that provide the *abstract* occur after the interviewer asks a question to elicit a narrative, which may be directed at a specific individual or at the group e.g. *Can you tell me about a funny experience?* If the group or specific person selected by the interviewer shows hesitation or signals difficulty remembering an experience, one informant prompts another with a one or two-word *abstract*, a short clause or even a summary of events. Examples are presented below³⁷.

³⁷ The examples are extracts taken from much longer peer group interviews.

In Texts 7.1 and 7.2, the individuals selected by the interviewer signal difficulty with remembering a personal experience and use similar meta-comments *I can't think of one I can't think of anything ...* (Text 7.1, line 7³⁸) and *I can't even think of em somebody would have to start* (7.2:7).

- 1 Int Okay em change the mood a little bit em can you tell me about um a funny experience
 A Funny?
 C&A [laugh]
 5 Int A really memorable
 C = every everyday
 A I can't think of one I can't think of anything ...
 C [faintly] Holiday ...
 A What was funny then?
 10 C [laugh] Everyday innit
 A = everyday was funny in Cyprus we went Cyprus this year all of us ...

Text 7.1 (Males, 18-21)

In both extracts, one member of the interview interrupts to provide a relevant prompt for another group member to begin a personal narrative in response to the interviewer's question *Holiday ...* (7.1:8), *Everyday innit* (7.1:10) and *horse riding ... [faintly] you went horse riding* (7.2:8).

- 1 Int Okay, can can you think of um an embarrassing experience that you had? ...
 G Ah [phhhh] ... I don't -I mean there's so many you just -I can't even -the one that stands out mine is is that one's a personal one in a sense it's embarrassing between 2 people that killed themselves laughing and it happened over 20 years ago (*narrates personal experience*) ... I remember umm other embarrassing situations there's just too many [laughing] I can't even think of em somebody would have to start
 5 C = horse riding ...[faintly] you went horse riding
 G Oh that oh... oh yeah, here we go he'd see there -cause I told them the stories -like telling kids stories it was in (country) we went horse -we went pony-trekking ...

Text 7.2 (Males, 35-49)

³⁸ Hereafter texts and line numbers shown as, for example. (7.1: 7).

Interestingly, both ‘prompters’ speak faintly, not wishing to subvert the norms of the interview by disrupting the selected speaker’s turn, although the very fact that they collaborate in this way does exactly that.

In Text 7.3, the interviewer directs the question at both interviewees present. Speaker E immediately takes the floor, not to recount his own personal experience, but to prompt speaker A with a potential *abstract (Mr G) (7.3:3)*. As speaker E was present at the event, he knows details of the experience.

- 1 Int Okay well changing the tone um can you think of a time where you were really embarrassed
 E [laughs and pointing at A] (*Mr G*)
 A Oh!
 5 E&A [Laughing]
 E Yeah say that one
 A Yeah I I was thinking about that one actually -I can’t say that I’ll get chucked out of university [laughing] ...

Text 7.3 (Males, 18-21)

Speaker E’s comment *Yeah say that one (7.3:6)* appears to undermine the conventional norms of interview interaction by prompting an informal system of turn-taking to take over. This compromises A’s position, forcing him to recount the experience despite initial reservations. Yet at no time does speaker E compete for the floor in any attempt to actually recount his friend’s experience, or one of his own, suggesting that he is continuing to observe the conventions of the interview.

The collaborative storytelling in Text 7.4 confirms the closeness of the peer group members and shared knowledge of their experiences, when speaker G’s hesitation prompts speaker M to interrupt with a detailed summary of an incident that

happened many years ago (7.4:4). The prompt is accepted and recounted (not shown³⁹).

- 1 Int Can you think of a particular incident?
 G The particular incident? Ha blimey you're asking! Don't forget you're now
 pushing my mind back 30 ... 33 years
 M = = I've got a good one! I give -I go -you can -a story
5 for you what happened to your 2 children when you went to a little ca -a little -you
 took them to a er a self-service restaurant and ehm and some old lady gave, was it
 (name of child) some hassle about him being Greek. Was that still -do you
 remember that one?
 G I remember but I don't remember when that was [clears throat]. That was an
10 incident where we tried to sit down o-or we sat down ahh (name of child) had sat
 down to get us a table and we went to get, this is true, went to get food from the
 self-service ...

Text 7.4 (Males, 35-49)

Speaker M deliberately interrupts to assist speaker G in an act of co-operativeness rather than competition (Coates, 1988) after the interviewer's request for an experience is met with some hesitation. Speaker M is able to assist with a specific *abstract*, in this case, about an incident that had been told to him at some point in the past by speaker G, most likely in the form of a personal narrative, as is suggested by the explicit metacomment *do you remember that one?* (7.4:7). The fact that M remembers G's personal experience suggests that it fulfils the all-important criteria of *reportability*, *causality* and *assignment of praise and blame* which ensures that the experience is memorable and that G deserves an extended turn⁴⁰.

³⁹ This excerpt is taken from Tapescript 1 in Appendix 1, where many other examples of collaborative storytelling can be found.

⁴⁰ It is worth noting G's comment in Text 7.2 ll. 8-9 –*cause I told them the stories -like telling kids stories ...* which is also taken from the same peer group interview. G is at least 12 years older than his peer group members and in the past would often narrate personal experiences, which were received as “stories”, to his younger friends and relatives, as these examples show.

7.4.2 Direct prompts which provide the coda

Direct prompts which provide the *coda* are found towards the closing stages of personal narratives and convey the listener's involvement in the narrative events and their effects, as well as highlighting what is interesting to the narrator and other group members. Being highly evaluative, they are often difficult to separate from L&W's concept of *evaluation* in narratives. *Direct prompts*, which provide the coda, can take the form of a one word prompt or short comment that can be accepted by the narrator and integrated as part of the narrative *coda*, or alternatively, rejected.

The friends in Texts 7.5 and 7.6, have shared similar life experiences growing up, as is supported by speaker A's prompt [*faintly*] *trouble* (7.5:7) which is subsequently accepted and integrated into the narrator's *coda*.

- 1 C Yeah yeah it upset me because like he was a mate sort of thing we used to go out all the time together an' that for him to say that it just offended me sort of thing like "Why is he saying stuff about my mum he don't really know my mum?" sort of thing and I was upset but I was only young ...
- 5 Int [laugh]
C I didn't really know much better but apart from fighting an'
A = [*faintly*] *trouble*
C like *trouble* it's like the
main thing in school ain't it so ...

Text 7.5 (Males, 18-21)

The opposite occurs in Text 7.6, however. In this example, Speaker C's prompt of *funny* (7.6:3) is rejected by the narrator for not accurately describing the effects of the events. However, the narrator, A, accepts speaker C's second prompt, the evaluative *You were just enjoying it* (7.6:7).

- 1 Int Was that a really scary experience?
 A = It wasn't scary it was ... it was more
 C = = funny
 A it was it
- 5 was no it was scary cause it happened so quick you know I didn't get no fear it
 was just like went over quick and I just reacted ... there was no fear (3.0)
 C You were just enjoying it []
 A = yeah I basically felt as scared as I do as when I was
 younger ...

Text 7.6 (Males, 18-21)

There is no speaking faintly for fear of disrupting the interview. On the contrary, the high-involvement style shown by the interruptions to complete each others' turn confirms the close friendship and empathy between the two men.

Speaker M, in Text 7.7, provides evaluative comments revealing the effects of the events even before her cousin relates the experience, *and it was a sad one for the rest of the family* (7.7:8) and *Actually that was brilliant...* (7.7:10). Here, the *coda* is prompted after speaker S offers an *abstract* of her experience *when I eloped with my husband [laugh]* (7.7:2) but before she recounts events, again suggesting knowledge of each others' experiences because of a close relationship, something that is constantly alluded to throughout the interview.

- 1 Int ... or any any happy experiences really happy experiences or memories
 S = =em (5.0) when I
 eloped with my husband [laugh]
- Int Wow!
- 5 S Yeah yeah that's right
 Int Wow!
 S It was a happy experience for me [laugh]
 M =and it was a sad one for the rest of the family
 S&M [laugh]
- 10 M Actually that was brilliant ...
 S (narrates personal experience)

Text 7.7 (Females, 35-49)

7.4.3 Requests for clarification

Requests for clarification occur towards the end of personal narratives, either before or after the *coda* section. They function by filling in the *who? what?, where?, when?* type information gaps commonly given in the *orientation* stage of a narrative. *Requests for clarification*, therefore, enable recipients to comprehend and relate events to specific persons, locations, time and place. Typically, therefore, they take the form of questions - either direct questions e.g. *How long ago was that?* (7.8:6) or statements that take a question tag, *that was over a girl innit?* (7.9:19). The interviewer may inadvertently also take part in the storytelling process by requesting clarification as a result of becoming engaged in the subject matter (7.10:17).

In most cases, informants in the peer group wait until the narrator has completed narrating their experiences before requesting clarification, as shown in Text 7.8. Speaker C waits until the end of speaker G's turn before requesting clarification of when events in the narrative took place with *How long ago was that?* (7.8:6). While this information may seem like a minor detail, for speaker C, it is necessary for him to gain a fuller understanding of the narrative events by locating them in a specific time.

- | | | |
|---|-----|--|
| 1 | Int | (G) ehm can you tell me about a time that you were involved in a fight or an argument that really upset you? |
| | G | (G recounts an argument) ... and this is in the restaurant and the worse bit about that was again that NOBODY but NOBODY, if you think that you're gonna get some HELP from anybody, NO -everybody just LOOKED but nobody made any comments |
| 5 | C | How long ago was that? |
| | G | This is when the kids were about 6 and 8 years old ... |

Text 7.8 (Males, 35-49)

The rapid exchange between two friends in Text 7.9 resembles a casual conversation rather than an interview in every way. Speaker A interrupts with specific *requests for clarification* on three different aspects of speaker E's experience: the *who? who the bouncers?* (7.9:7); the *what? what he was with you?* (7.9:10) and the *why? that was over a girl innit?* (7.9:19). Evidently, the *orientation* information has fallen short of what speaker A requires to fully comprehend the narrative, leading to some confusion and an urgent need for clarification. *Requests for clarification* in this extract function as a kind of 'repair strategy' and it is in the narrator's interest to respond with relevant answers if he wants to maintain his status as a successful storyteller.

- (Description of fight)
- 1 E ... and everyone's just jumped in everyone's like the next minute I just see like I just went back an ambulance -it went -it was -where they demolished them finished dunno I dunno who it is now I think he might've -I might've done it I might have broke his nose I don't even know you know I was
- 5 A =WHAT!
E yeah they really
A =who the bouncers?
E =no no the geezer (S) he can really kick the crap out of you
- 10 A what he was with you?
E no no I weren't with him I was with all the others I was with everyone he was -he knew everyone but of course for some reason I dunno -but dunno for some reason they all stood by me cause they were all my friends they all stood by me but recently right what 2 year ago they did not stand by me they did not stand
- 15 these old and new friends did not stand by me (C, S) and that lot
A =Oh yeah yeah yeah
E =did not stand by me and they all took sides and the whole [] took side on me
- A = that was over a girl
20 innit?
E Yeah personally I mean it all took like -they all took revenge on me and I was like "What did I do?" ...

Text 7.9 (Males, 18-21)

Speaker A's request for clarification *that was over a girl innit?* (7.9:19) functions in two ways; as a question seeking clarification, but also as a rhetorical confirmation of

what he already knows, hence the use of the question tag *innit?*. Speaker E regards the turn as a question and responds with a positive affirmation. Coates categorises question tags as an ‘epistemic modal form’ which are ‘facilitative’ by inviting others to speak, while also functioning to mark a speaker’s monitoring of the progress of the conversation (1988:115). In other words, A’s rhetorical question tag also functions as a form of backchannelling that signals interest in the narrator’s talk.

Further examples of *requests for clarification* are found in Text 7.10, in response to D’s personal experience involving her husband.

- 1 D There was a funny incident that happened that turned into an almost tragedy but ...
I don’t know if it’s relevant to it wasn’t it didn’t happen to me but I was –it was em
we were in the park one day with my husband and kids and my nephew and my
husband was on a push bike round the lake of the park ... (narrates experience)
- 5 G = is this your husband?
D yeah but my nephew had just jumped off and ended up losing a shoe and just stood
there crying again cause he was scared so I was more worried about the child
thinking God he’s he’s not mine as well as you know is he seriously hurt. I
remember calling an ambulance and the ambulance wouldn’t come cause I was in
10 the park calling from a mobile so I had to tell them exactly where I was they had to
ring the games keeper –the park ranger to confirm that
- G yeah
D there was a park -anyway eventually you know it took him about 2 years to recover
from this little fall off a bike in a park yeah cause he um he damaged a disk down
15 here [gestures] he must’ve catapulted over the park can imagine still don’t know
how it happened to this day
- Int when this –when did this happen?
D Ah August 97 it was the day
G = = it was quite recent then
- 20 D the day of his father’s *mnimosino*⁴¹ to the
day his father died on the 12th of August and this happened on the 12th of August
sort of 10 years later, maybe 8 yeah
- G did they think he was gonna be paralysed?
D huh didn’t know didn’t know for a while ... (continues)

Text 7.10 (Females 35-49)

Speaker G asks for clarification *is this your husband?* (7.10:5), *did they think he was gonna be paralysed?* (7.10:23) and acknowledges the clarifying information with *it*

⁴¹ A church requiem on the anniversary of a person’s death.

was quite recent then (10:19). The interviewer also *requests clarification* becoming engaged with the content of D's personal experience *when this –when did this happen?* (7.10:17). It is worth pointing out that although the participants in this interview are colleagues - including the interviewer - they do not socialise outside the work domain and have little knowledge of each other's personal experiences, hence the marked number of *requests for clarification* in this short extract. While a lack of awareness of each other's experiences might be expected to impede collaboration, the effect is actually the opposite, with the series of question-answer exchanges functioning to fill information gaps that provide a fuller picture of the overall experience through direct verbal collaboration.

7.4.4 Indirect prompts which trigger the abstract

Indirect prompts, the only sub-category of *implicit collaboration*, lack the direct verbal collaboration between the narrator and the informants in the peer group that is found in *explicit collaboration*. Instead, *indirect prompts* function by triggering personal narratives in individuals as a result of listening to other informants narrate their experiences. This type of narrative production has previously been commented on by several linguists, including Coates (2001), whose discussion on stories that occur in sequence builds on Sacks's (1995) 'second stories', where thematically linked narratives follow on from the previous one. Those discussions, however, were limited to narratives in casual and natural conversations and not ones produced in interviews.

Examples of *indirect prompts* are presented in Texts 7.11 – 7.14 below to exemplify their form and function. Speaker A’s experience in Text 7.11 is prompted after listening to the previous narrator recount a personal narrative about a car accident. This reminds speaker A of a similar experience, which he introduces with the explicit meta-comment, *On accidents now you’ve just brought -you see its one story brings another but then again* (7.11:1) before describing the incident.

- 1 A On accidents now you’ve just brought -you see its one story brings another but then
again. When I was 17 ... I I was taking my driving lessons and when I passed my
dad promised me that when I passed he would buy me as good a car as he could
obviously what he could - you know what he could afford give the man credit
5 anyway. He bought me a 5 year old car and I was 17 years I mean that was a result
so I got it I dived in obviously you got a go and show the boys that was when we
was training at Holloway (to M)
 M Uh-huh
 A Yeah ‘cause that was when -bringing Akanthou⁴² up now again as you say one
10 story brings another, that’s where the football originated from - remember
Holloway School [pointing to M and C]? So I was driving to there ... (narrates
experience)

Text 7.11 Danger of death - car accident (Males, 35-49)

In fact, speaker A repeats his awareness of the effect of *indirect prompts* and group storytelling with the comment, *Yeah ‘cause that was when - bringing Akanthou up now again as you say one story brings another* (7.11:9), causing him to change topic in mid-sentence to draw attention to this fact.

Text 7.12 illustrates how speaker S’s utterance about general incidents that took place in church triggers a memory of an experience in speaker M. Earlier, both interviewees struggle to recall an embarrassing incident until S’s chance remark,

⁴² A village in Cyprus where the parents of all those participating in this peer group interview, including the interviewer’s, are from.

=when I'm in the church as well (7.12:9) indirectly prompts speaker M (7.12:10), who takes the floor to narrate her experience.

		[... trying to think of an embarrassing story]
1	S	I can't think of one
	M	Embarrassing -nothing embarrassing
	S	No!
	Int	Maybe something will be triggered off later
5	S&M	= =Yeah maybe probably
	S	There must be something
	M	I think those two were quite embarrassing for me I think the most embarrassing ones I ever had
	S	=when I'm in the church as well
10	M	Oh God yeah [laugh] look like I needed God's help then [laugh] em I was young young we was -it was Easter time and we went to church to drink the Holy Communion and (S) was with me ... (continues)

Text 7.12 Embarrassing - church incident (Females, 35-49)

Indirect prompts, as shown in Texts 7.11 and 7.12, appear to be spontaneous and very natural features of group interaction despite the constraints of a sociolinguistic interview setting. They not only emphasise the highly interactive nature of group discourse but also, how facilitating peer groups interviews are for the production and co-production of spoken narratives of personal experiences.

When peer group interviews with children are compared to those with adults, there are noticeable differences in the turn-taking dynamics. Children tend to observe the question-answer rules of the interview much more, limiting their interaction with the interviewer and other group members. This is not to say that children do not collaborate, however, as they are more likely to participate in *indirect prompts*, where they interrupt each other rather than the interviewer, to take their turn instead. In Text 7.13, speaker V is interrupted by speaker C (7.13:12) who has only managed to provide an *abstract* for his story about the death of a pet. Speaker C is

subsequently interrupted at the same point in his narrative by speaker J (7.13:15), who has a similar experience to tell.

- 1 V I've got a sad one
 Int Yeah
 V This might kind kind of sound a bit silly but my cat died ... some people think that why are you crying over a cat but its like its been in my family for loads of years
 5 an its like maybe your brother he was human and maybe []
 Int =Oh I died -I cried when my cat died you get very attached
 V Yeah
 Int and its always there
 10 V Yeah
 Int so don't don't be embarrassed about crying over a pet
 C =yeah that's the same what happened in Cyprus with my cousin where his dog yeah the first dog that he ever had got run over
 15 J That's what happened to my cat my first one but it was weird how I got it I was down in Devon with my cousin ... (narrates experience) ...

Text 7.13 Sad - death of pet (Males, 9-11)

A similar pattern occurs in Text 7.14 between children, although speaker A is in the final stages of concluding her personal narrative.

- (Speaker A concludes a narrative about a happy experience)
 1 Int Oh that's nice isn't it
 A&AG Yeah
 A But my dad's finally [] he's like he is like got friends who are like pilots and things so he's worked hard an
 5 AG =Same with my dad em there was a moment like a couple of months back we couldn't really we could afford things but it's just that we had to be careful with our money now ... (continues)

Text 7.14 Happy - my dad (Females, 9-11)

Speaker AG interrupts speaker A with *Same with my dad* (7.14:5) to recount her own experience, in a competitive rather than co-operative manner that came to be a marked feature of children's narratives in peer group interviews this study. Children have a tendency to try to outdo each other with their personal experiences so that

they are, for example, much more embarrassing or dangerous than the previous narrator's experience. This is particularly noticeable in narratives that are linked thematically and have been triggered by the previous narrator's experience. In Text 7.14, A's comments (7.14:3) about her dad indirectly prompt speaker AG to interrupt to exalt her own father's qualities and outdo those of speaker A's.

With *indirect prompts* triggering narratives, there is little need for the interviewer to intervene to select a narrator or prompt story topics, as personal experiences are generated spontaneously, one after the other. Children in my peer group interviews appeared confident, uninhibited and eager to narrate their experiences and in doing so, actively participated in shaping and steering the interview.

7.5 Effects and implications of collaborative storytelling in peer group interviews

Despite the interview setting, collaborative storytelling appears to be a marked characteristic of group discourse and lends support to the general notion of co-operativeness in the co-construction of personal narratives. Use of *prompts* and *requests for clarification* by other informants in the interview contributes to the inevitable shift from a conventional interview to an activity type that resembles a casual conversation. But what of the effect of collaboration on the storytelling process? Do *explicit* and *implicit collaboration* help narrators recount their experiences or, do they hinder narration and undermine the narrator and interview process?

Prompts

My findings show that *direct prompts* which provide the *abstract* act as verbal reminders and enable peer group members to participate in the actual storytelling through direct interaction with the narrator. Where another interviewee is aware of the experience, either having been present at the time or having been told the experience in a narrative form, the intention appears to be to help rather than hinder by providing the topic for a narrative. *Direct prompts* are nearly always accepted and therefore can be said to assist in the production of personal narratives.

Direct prompts that provide the *coda* and show the effects of an experience on another informant can either be accepted and integrated into the story, or rejected. If rejected, the prompt may nevertheless force the narrator to provide an alternative comment; one that conveys a more accurate description of the effects of their experience.

The wider implication is that interruptions may force the narrator to break narrative continuity in order to respond to the prompter and repair any misunderstandings, and this may inadvertently bring the narrative to an earlier conclusion than was intended. Furthermore, *direct prompts* bring into play elements of humour, as seen in Texts 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.5, 7.7 and 7.12. This aspect is discussed further in Section 7.6 Humour as Collaboration.

Indirect prompts also contribute to the overall storytelling process by spontaneously triggering ideas by activating schemas through the narrator's use of keywords or phrases. The result is a continuous flow of narratives or a sequence of stories that are

thematically linked, with few pauses between turns and little need for interviewer intervention to prompt or select a narrator. *Indirect prompts* inadvertently signal an understanding of and support for each others' experiences by making it known that the narratives are being closely listened to. One incidental but positive outcome, from a research point of view, is the production of a larger corpus of data than might have been expected, caused by the production of non-stop storytelling in a facilitative setting that encourages group discourse of this kind.

Analysis of children's personal narratives in this study shows that *indirect prompts* are the most prominent category of collaborative storytelling. Another finding is that children have a tendency to interrupt each other almost immediately after the current narrator has given their *abstract*. This can hinder the narrator's progress. Children's competitive nature and impatience to wait until their peers have completed their turn suggests that they are less aware of the rules of turn-taking in group discourse, and that these rules have to be learnt in order for them to communicate more effectively and successfully among their peers.

Requests for clarification

As well as reinforcing the interactive nature of peer group interviews, *requests for clarification* elaborate the *orientation* or contextual information in personal narratives and assist recipients in comprehending the story in a meaningful way. Where *orientation* information is lacking or over-elliptic, as illustrated in Text 7.9 and 7.10, it may be necessary for recipients of the narrative to ask questions if they are to make sense of the narrative, locate events in time and connect them to people and place. *Requests for clarification* function as 'repair strategies' (Schegloff et al.,

1977), a term borrowed from Conversation Analysis where it describes how spoken errors or misunderstandings are corrected. By filling in information gaps in the *who*, *what*, *when* and *where* categories of storytelling, *requests for clarification* contribute to the overall production of a more satisfying and comprehensible narrative - even if narrators are interrupted. The existence of this category of collaboration across male and female peer groups lends support to a shared notion of implicit narrative structure, or a standardised story template against which a certain, minimum level of information is needed for story comprehension. Otherwise, why else are peer group members compelled to interrupt to request clarification using the same pattern of questions?

The notion of an implicit structure corresponds with L&W's description of the *orientation* schema, confirming the need for contextualising information early in the narrative. *Requests for clarification* are clearly signals from group members that narrators have failed to satisfy the considerations of recipient design to be able to provide successful and comprehensive narratives. Where requests are made, the narrator will always provide a relevant answer to ensure a better understanding of events, as it is in their interest to do so if they are to maintain their status as a skilled narrator and justify taking an extended turn in the interview.

Analysis of children's peer group interviews in particular shows that *requests for clarification* are noticeably lacking. There are several possible explanations to account for this. The first may be the same reason that explains the lack of *explicit collaboration* in children's storytelling: children are more likely to observe the rules of conventional interviews as a result of being inhibited in the presence of an adult

interviewer. An alternative reason is that children are simply less sophisticated communicators, something that becomes evident in a group situation which involves sharing information. A basic lack of awareness of a need to offer backchannelling signals to show interest in each other's stories is a common strategy of group discourse that has to be learnt. Also worth pointing out is the correlation with the low level of *requests for clarification* and the close relationship between peers which can be explained by each having knowledge of the other's experience (which may also be shared experiences). With mutual contextual background knowledge, there is little need for clarification, resulting in the production of what another less familiar audience may consider are narratives that are full of ellipsis.

7.6 Humour as collaboration

An important feature of group discourse, including sociolinguistic interviews, is the marked use of spontaneous humour in narrative storytelling. Interactive humour occurs among both male and female informants of all ages and is most clearly signalled by frequent laughter. As well as occurring within narratives as part of the narrator's performance, it is also found in the discourse surrounding narratives, among the 'detritus' of peer group conversation. Functionally, humour in its various forms reinforces friendship and solidarity through shared experiences while enhancing group rapport (Tannen, 1989). This is particularly evident in the telling of personal narratives that are spontaneous rather than rehearsed and tailored to fit the audience as well as the context (Norrick, 1993). For this reason, humour is not only limited to narratives about funny (Text 7.1) and embarrassing experiences (Texts

7.2, 7.3 and 7.12), which are more likely to describe humorous events. It is also present in and around narratives about other topic genres, for example, fight/argument (Text 7.5) and happy experiences (Text 7.7).

As a collaborative storytelling device, humour also enters the framework of *prompts* and *requests for clarification*, as shown in Texts 7.1, 7.3 and 7.12, where the highly interactive turn taking helps break down the formal interview event to cause a genre shift to an activity type. Humorous interjections by other informants appear to disrupt the flow of the narrator, which could undermine the interview. However, they also function in the co-production of narratives by helping to create a more informal interview context. The use of humour as a collaborative device seems to be primarily an indirect form of backchannelling, the linguistic signals that acknowledge receipt of spoken discourse. It could be argued, therefore, that any form of humorous interaction indicates engagement and interest, factors which create a sense of solidarity and friendship in the peer group.

7.7 Conclusion: co-operation or competition?

The prevalence of collaborative storytelling in peer group interviews for the collection of oral narratives of personal experience appears to be an inevitable feature of group discourse. As this study shows, a context that facilitates the social act of sharing experiences, in which the presence of an audience is wider than just the interviewer inevitably gives rise to the use of *explicit* and *implicit collaboration* and their use offers valuable insights into the co-production of narratives. *Prompts*

and *requests for clarification* and the spontaneous telling of thematically linked narratives, not only shape the interview but also allow for a shift in roles and responsibilities of both interviewer and interviewees. Rather than undermining the interview process, the result is a transformation in speech genre from a conventional question-answer speech event to an activity type resembling a casual conversation where the informants' discourse shape the interview. The interview context becomes more conducive to the telling of personal narratives, which sees features of talk most commonly associated with casual conversation begin to dominate. Through such devices, acts of co-operativeness become the norm in peer group interactions of both male and female informants⁴³. As Coates (1988) observes, 'At the heart of co-operativeness is a view of speakers collaborating in the production of text: the group takes precedence over the individual' (p.118). Hence, interruptions occur not only as part of a competitive strategy to take the floor from the current narrator, but also as a way to support and actively help co-produce personal narratives through *prompts* and requests for *clarification*. The resulting change in the group dynamic and shift in speech genre facilitates a less inhibiting group context for the sharing of personal experiences. Moreover, the context allows for the production of personal narratives that are, significantly, the closest to near natural speech one could expect to elicit in a sociolinguistic interview of this kind.

⁴³ According to Coates (1988), *co-operativeness* is a feature of female interaction whereas *competition* is prevalent in group discourse among males. Analysis of spoken interaction in single sex peer group interviews in this study, however, reveals that co-operativeness through explicit and implicit collaborative storytelling occurs in both male and female peer groups. Acts that could be described as competitive were a feature of children's interviews for both males and females.

CHAPTER 8. FORMALISING NARRATIVE VARIATION: BEYOND LABOV AND WALETZKY?

8.1 Story so far

One of the central aims stated at the outset of my study was to establish how far a single narrative model can describe narratives across cultures, in effect claiming the status of a ‘universal’ narrative framework. My approach to this issue, together with discussion of a number of other areas concerning narrative form and function, has been to present and offer commentary on the prime candidate for ‘universal’ status in terms of narrative structure: L&W (1967) and Labov’s (1972) narrative schema model. The purpose of such discussion was primarily to see how well their model fits spoken data from an alternative speech community; failing to do so would have implications as regards the ‘universal’ status of the framework.

L&W and Labov’s model is generally seen to exemplify such characterisation of an idealised narrative form to the extent that it describes commonly held expectations of a “fully-formed” narrative (see Chapter 3). Developed from naturally-occurring data, their six-schema framework provides not only a range of local insights into narrative but also offers a persuasive basis for the universal appeal of the model as a whole. The appeal of generalisation exists, even despite the model having been developed from highly specific personal narratives collected in the BEV community

in New York, an origin that might equally have encouraged the data to be viewed as representative of only oral narratives within a single, specific speech community.

Pursuing this alternative line of enquiry, I set out to investigate how far narratives are culturally embedded, reflecting the storytelling traditions of a particular culture which may not necessarily correspond with L&W's six-schema model. This area of investigation was prompted by one line of criticism against L&W's model: that their six-schema model may fail to deal with complex, alternative and/or cultural features of narrative storytelling, including those personal stories categorised as non-narratives (also see Hymes, 1981, 1996; Havelock, 1986; Plum, 1988; Gee, 1999). Personal narratives with "systematic" variations, that is, schematic or structural differences which appear as a recurring pattern and can be correlated with a particular group of informants would appear to question the notion of 'one model for all narratives'. The line of reasoning I have developed for this otherwise somewhat stark challenge to L&W is this: while individuals are members of a specific culture or speech community, they also have membership of a range of different 'discourse communities' (Swales, 1990) where groups of individuals have goals and purposes and use communication to achieve these goals. Consequently, variation in speaking is likely to arise as a result of an individual's different discourse community 'identities', which may depend on social factors such as age and gender, and seems likely to undermine any fixed concept of a homogeneous speech community and, with that, the likelihood of uniform verbal practices, including storytelling. Structural variations, therefore, may also arise because of differences in an individual's culture as well as because of social factors such as age and gender.

Evidence in my findings shows that other factors also contribute to variation in personal experiences. Such factors include the interview setting and the story topic of the personal narrative (for example, whether the experience describes a happy or a danger of death incident). This finding stands in contrast to L&W and Labov's original studies, which simply used danger of death and fight narratives as a way of guaranteeing large units of natural and spontaneous speech in an interview setting. Personal narratives about danger of death and fights, it should be noted, seem to have a strong probability of eliciting the basic narrative requirement of 'a sequence of two clauses which are temporally ordered' (Labov, 1972:360) and fulfil the important criterion of 'reportability', the reason for its telling in the first place. In contrast, the spoken data in my study suggests the existence of sub-genres of narrative storytelling, ones that raise the question of whether they are "fully-formed" - or even narratives at all. Moreover, peer group settings, which prompt a different set of dynamics when compared to one-to-one interview settings, affected overall storytelling performance, with collaborative storytelling being a distinct feature of group discourse

Analysis of the 279 personal narratives elicited from informants from the LGC community highlighted a number of findings, outlined in previous chapters which can now be brought together here. One such finding is that, of the total personal experiences elicited, 171 (61%) conform to a recognisable narrative structure while 108 (39%) do not. Specifically, the remaining 108 personal experiences lack an all important high point or crisis and so were categorised as non-narratives. The proportion of non-narrative stories (more than a third of the total) in itself invites reflection; but what is more striking is that these findings correlate with story topic

to an extent, suggesting that story topic is likely to lead to significant differences of story sub-genre. (A detailed presentation of the various findings in this study can be found in Chapters 5, 6 and 7).

While there is no question that L&W's and Labov's narrative schema model provides a useful starting point for discussion of narrative structure, their model nevertheless, presents a description of an idealised narrative form rather than a definitive or comprehensive one. My findings suggest the presence of variation in narrative structure at both a schematic and lexico-grammatical level, indicating an absence of one or more of L&W's schemas and the presence of another; and this points to a need to reconsider the basic criteria of what a narrative is. With a single model set up as 'ideal', emphasis is placed on the narrator to conform to one format of storytelling with the expectation that listeners will have a similar schematic model for its comprehension, as each narrator-listener conforms to a single story template. Conversely, narratives that deviate from an 'ideal' storytelling format may be perceived as badly formed and the narrator as unsuccessful, if schema disruption occurs and inhibits recipient comprehension. My findings implicitly invite alternative ways of trying to capture basic narrative structure, by positioning L&W's model at the centre of the framework but adapting it so that it shifts from a simple, notional (and idealised) description of narratives to one that also accommodates variant patterns that may be present in narratives from other cultures.

8.2 'Variationist' account of narrative structure

The task of revising L&W's narrative model brings with it a number of challenges, the greatest being which form the model should take. The success and lasting appeal of L&W's model suggests that it would make sense to retain their six-schema model as the central framework and develop a 'variationist' model from this. By 'variationist' here is meant a model of narratives that comprises the possible range of schema options to describe narrative structure across different cultures. From this framework, the storytelling practices of groups of people – whether defined by culture, or sub-groups within that culture, such as specific social factors (age and gender) – can be identified and presented. One approach could be to expand L&W's model by adding other schema categories, which are found to be core narrative categories from alternative cultures. In this way, their model would have the potential to describe a wider range of narratives, to provide a more flexible framework that is able to accommodate patterns of variation reported in a range of other culturally specific empirical studies. Such a framework may offer a model in future for a universal model of narratives. As for how to visually represent the structure of the model, at this point, it may be useful to propose a structure that borrows forms of description from other established linguistic models as a way of offering an analogy between those aspects of language and narrative structure.

During analysis of my data, it became clear that variations in personal narratives are often not due to a single, isolated factor. Rather, multiple variables seem to interact such as age, gender and story topic. An example of this can be found with *post-evaluation*. Not only is this schema present in narratives by adult informants, it is

also mainly found in narratives by adult males and in the 35-49 age group. Furthermore, *post-evaluation* is typically present in personal narratives about fights and danger of death experiences. It would be useful, therefore, to summarise this type of variation in LGC narratives, reflecting the nature and distribution of the range of variants for the revised narrative model. These findings are presented in Table 8.1⁴⁴ below.

1. Cause of Variation	2. Key Findings	3. Additional Correlation (with 1. Cause of Variation)
Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • presence of <i>post- evaluation</i> schema in personal narratives • presence of <i>ring composition</i> and <i>parallelism</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • age • gender • story topic
Speaker factors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age • Gender 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • older adults (35-49): presence of <i>post -evaluation</i> • presence of <i>ring composition</i> and <i>parallelism</i> • younger adults (18-21): <i>post-evaluation</i> not always present • children (aged 9-11): absence of <i>:abstract</i>; a clear <i>resolution</i>; <i>evaluation</i>; <i>coda</i>; <i>post-evaluation</i> produce “<i>almost narratives</i>” • males: tell more <i>danger of death</i>; <i>fight/argument</i> narratives • 9-11 year olds produce “<i>almost narratives</i>” • presence of <i>ring composition</i> and <i>parallelism</i> • females: tell more <i>embarrassing</i> narratives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • story topic • gender • story topic • gender • story topic • interview setting • story topic • age • story topic • age • interview setting • story topic • age • story topic

⁴⁴ Throughout this chapter, discussion will cross-refer to Tables, Figures and Texts.

<p>Story topic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Trouble” experiences <p>Danger-of-death Fight/argument</p> <p>Embarrassing</p> <p>• States:</p> <p>Happy Sad</p> <p>Funny</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • produces narratives • presence of <i>post-evaluation</i> • mostly produced by males <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • produces narratives • presence of <i>post-evaluation</i> • mostly produced by females <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • produces <i>recounts</i> • produces <i>recounts</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • produces <i>narratives</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • age • gender • interview setting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gender • age
<p>Interview setting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-to-one • Peer group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • produces <i>collaborative storytelling</i> • produces “<i>almost narratives</i>” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • story topic • age • gender

Table 8.1 Summary of findings showing types of variation in LGC narratives and how these correlate with speaker background, story topic and interview setting.

Table 8.1 is divided into three columns. In the *Causes of Variation* column, factors of variation are sub-divided into four broad headings: Culture, Speaker factors (i.e. social factors pertaining to an informant’s background), Story topic and Interview setting. The *Key Findings* in column 2 lists key findings, for example, the presence or absence of certain schemas and lexico-grammatical devices; whether the personal experience is a narrative or a recount; and whether variation pertains more to particular social groups, such as female informants. The final column, *Additional Correlation (with 1. Cause of Variation)* lists further factors that appear to interact with column 1. and are those factors found systematically and in significant proportions to warrant discussion both within and across the different informant groups in the study. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, *post-evaluation* (column 2) is a schema that is culturally specific to oral personal narratives of LGCs (column 1). *Post-evaluation*, however, is not present in all LGC narratives: its presence

correlates with speaker age, gender and story topic (column 3), in that it is associated with the narratives of adults, mostly males, and also found in personal narratives based on themes that describe “Trouble” e.g. danger of death, fight/argument and embarrassing experiences. *Post-evaluation* is also found under *Speaker Factors* where age is a variable, while column 3 lists story topic and gender as additional factors. Similar correlations can be found by looking at story topic as a cause of variation and finding *age* and *gender* in column 3 correlating with *post-evaluation* as an *Additional correlation*.

The structure of narratives of LGC adults and children can also be plotted on a table and compared with L&W’s narrative model to show which schemas are present or absent. A summary of the internal structure of elicited stories about personal experiences that are common to different informant groups provides a further, comparative analysis of narrative structure and a summary is presented below in Table 8.2. This Table also indicates the structure of non-narratives or recounts, a sub-genre of storytelling for further comparison. Where schemas are represented by a ‘-’, this means that they are present in some narratives but not all, while ‘*’ denotes that the schema in question is absent.

Key
√ Compulsory category (uniformly found)
- Optional category
* Absent category

Narratives				Non-narratives
	a. L&W's narrative model	b. Narratives of LGC adults	c. Narratives of LGC children ⁴⁵	d. Recounts
Abstract	√ ⁴⁶	- ⁴⁷	-	-
Orientation	√	√ (also woven throughout CA)	√	√
Complicating Action (CA)	√	√	√	*
Evaluation	√	√	-	√
Resolution	√	√	-	*-
Coda	√	-	-	-
Post-Evaluation		√	*	

Table 8.2 Comparative summary of schemas in narratives and recounts

Table 8.2 reinforces the importance of a *complicating action* and *orientation* in even the most minimal narrative. The presence of these schemas can be compared to the absence of a *complicating action* in *recounts* which create alternative and distinct storytelling sub-genres.

Not included in Table 8.2 are the categories of flashback and flashforward. These structural variations that challenge the temporal organisation associated with an

⁴⁵ It should be noted that the schemas found in narratives of children in the LGC community are similar to findings by L&W's in the personal narratives of their young informants.
⁴⁶ Although the *abstract* and *coda* are described as optional categories by L&W, they are nevertheless inherent to their six-schema framework. Omitting them from this table or referring to them as optional would misrepresent their notion of a "fully-formed" narrative structure.
⁴⁷ In a large number of personal narratives, the *abstract* was absent from the narrator's personal experience because it was either signalled by the interviewer's question or 'given' in the previous personal experiences in peer group settings that is, where the subsequent narrative is triggered by the telling of the previous one (see Chapter 7).

idealised narrative structure were omitted for the simple reason that they were not found in significant numbers in the personal narratives of any informant group, being present in just five percent of narratives by adult LGCs. This would suggest that these stylistic devices are not a systematic feature of LGC personal narratives, but are instead more likely to be specific to a given narrator.

8.2.1 A 'grammar' of personal narratives: Phrase structure rules, brackets and tree-diagrams

The broad question of how best to formalise the sorts of finding I am reporting remains. One linguistic model that might provide a useful analogy for narrative structure is that involved in Chomsky's (1957) 'phrase structure rules', a model which describes the generative nature of the grammar of a language. Phrase structure rules (or 'phrase structure grammar') represent internalised rules a speaker has of a language that make it possible to create or generate new and previously unuttered sentences. These rules comprise a limited set that can be expanded as 'rewriting rules' to allow for different options within each of the phrase structure rules⁴⁸.

One reason why Chomsky's 'phrase structure rules' present a useful analogy with narrative structure is that the components must follow a particular sequence to be well-formed. The assumption is that, in order for a language to be intelligible, it

⁴⁸ I will not be discussing the debates and controversies surrounding Chomsky's work here. His model of generative grammar is raised in this section to provide a possible basis for the structure of my revised model of narratives. Chomsky's notion of 'competence' in a language provides a useful analogy with "competence" in story grammars. Specifically, his discussion of generative grammar may provide helpful insights into how individuals 'generate' (and memorise and recall) narratives through knowledge that can be compared to phrase structure rules. (For a broader and more up-to-date understanding of Chomsky's work, see also, 1980, 1988)

must adhere to a pattern that users of a particular language recognise as grammatically correct. Consider the following example of a phrase structure rule for English, presented below in Fig. 8.1 (where S = sentence, NP = noun phrase, VP = verb phrase, art = article, N = noun, V = verb, A = adjective, deg = degree modifier; where a category in brackets is optional; and where * indicates any number of, also called recursion):

S	→	NP VP
NP	→	(art) (deg) (A)* N
VP	→	V (NP)
art	→	the, a, an
A	→	e.g. big, fat
N	→	e.g. man, chair
V	→	e.g. eat, speak

Fig. 8.1 Indicative English Phrase structure rules.

As Fabb (1994) explains:

The idea is that every sentence starts out as an S. An S can then be written as an NP followed by a VP. An NP can be rewritten as an article followed by a noun. A noun can be rewritten as *man*, and so on. By this means, S is eventually rewritten as one of a possible number of rewritten English sentences. (p.114)

If the various narrative structure categories are presented in a similar model, reflecting the sequential order of schemas in the LGC narratives, it would look like

Fig. 8.2, below:

Narratives of LGCs	→	(abstract) (orientation*) complication action (evaluation*) (resolution) (coda) (post- evaluation)
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Fig. 8.2 Narrative schemas of LGCs using the 'phrase structure rules' model

While narrative schemas given in structure Fig. 8.2 appear to conform to the principles of phrase structure rules, there are, however, several problems with the

analogy. Firstly, while narratives of LGCs can be broken down to show the seven schemas in a temporal sequence, this is not the same as syntactical order in phrase structure rules, which conform to grammar rules of a language. Schemas appearing in a different sequence would produce a story structure that might be viewed as non-traditional, but would not be “un-narrative”, whereas constituents in a sentence that do not conform to English rules of syntax would be described as “ungrammatical”. Moreover, unlike the NP in English sentence structure, which can be rewritten as: (art) deg) (A)* N, (where a category in brackets is optional), none of the narrative schemas can be ‘rewritten’ into smaller constituents, so that the *abstract*, for example, cannot be shown to be formed by *x y* and/or *z*. (Stating what the *abstract* does would provide a functional analysis rather than a formal notion of structure; and it is exactly formal rather than functional structure that phrase structure rules attempt to describe.) Secondly, recursion in Chomsky’s ‘phrase structure rules’ - denoted by an asterisk next to the constituent - is different from the notion of a schema recurring in a narrative. For Chomsky, recursion means repetition of the constituent at the same point in the clause or sentence. For example, in ‘the big, black, fluffy cat’ the three adjectives ‘big’, ‘black’ and ‘fluffy’ occur one after the other in the noun phrase. By recursion in personal narratives, on the other hand, I mean repetition of the same schema at different points of the narrative, for example the *evaluation* schema being inserted more than once in the narrative after different schemas. It would seem, therefore, that the analogy of phrase structure rules provides only a partial analogy, being problematic as a description of a grammar of personal narratives at both a formal and functional level.

Another inviting model, possibly providing a useful analogy for narrative structure, is that of ‘bracketed categories’ of sentence structure. In this model, each of the narrative schemas would be bracketed to show how it is one of several constituents that form a personal narrative. Such schemas - constituents representing narrative structure – would then be enclosed by a further set of ‘external’ brackets (in bold), and could be constructed to show which schemas are optional, compulsory, additional, omitted, or simply not yet acquired. See a. below.

a. LGC adults: structure of personal narrative (where all schemas are likely to be present)

[[abstract] [orientation]* [complicating action] [evaluation]* [resolution] [coda] [post-evaluation]]

In this above example, the structure of personal narratives by adult LGCs is shown with all seven schemas enclosed by ‘external’ brackets (in bold) to indicate that these constituents are typically present in a fully-formed narrative. The presence of an asterisk * besides various schemas signifies that they may appear more than once in the narrative, for example the *orientation* and *evaluation*.

Other levels of variation in storytelling structure, such as social factors and what they correlate with, could then also be represented using the brackets model. Narratives by LGC children, where only the *orientation* and *complicating action* are consistently present could be shown, as in b below.

b. LGC children (aged 9-11): structure of personal narrative

[[abstract] [[orientation]* [complicating action]] [evaluation]* [resolution] [coda] [post-evaluation]

In this example, the core, compulsory schemas in children's personal narratives are an *orientation* and *complicating action*, while *abstract*, *evaluation*, *resolution*, *coda* and *post-evaluation* are optional. (Only 3% of personal narratives produced by children in this age group were found to contain all six schemas.) The advantage of using this format to represent narrative structure is that compulsory schemas are foregrounded by being placed inside the bold 'external' brackets. One remaining problem with the brackets model, even so, is that the internal structure is shown as linear in that schemas are presented adjacent to each other in a sequential order that is commonly associated with more traditional styles of storytelling. While this may not be an issue with children's personal narratives, which conform to a fairly simple story structure, problems are more likely to arise when reflecting the more complex and varied permutations that exist in narratives by adults, particularly where a schema recurs. Despite these problems, the brackets model provides a useful starting point for a more sophisticated structure - a 'tree-diagram' - which is able to visually represent personal narratives and its range of variations and this will be the focus of the rest of this chapter.

Using a tree diagram to represent the structure of personal narratives is not new. Thorndyke (1977) developed his grammar rules for (fictional) stories into a tree model as a way to illustrate the generative nature of simple stories. The core constituents of Thorndyke's story grammar (Story, Setting, Theme, Plot, Episode, Attempt, Resolution, Goal) could be rewritten to allow each of these constituents to be broken down into smaller constituents. Specifically, in Thorndyke's tree diagram, nodes branch out from a single node representing the Story to form branches of the tree. These branches end as nodes (Setting, Theme, Plot, Resolution), which in turn

branch out to form other nodes (e.g. Character, Goal, Episode, Events etc.) some of which can be broken down further into smaller constituents, thus, creating 'layers' in the tree model. The final layer of the tree diagram presents the surface structure of the story in that the actual phrases of the story are given. (See Chapter 2, section 2.5 and Fig. 2.2).).

Thorndyke's story grammar presents a hierarchical diagram of story composition, where nodes can be rewritten until the actual phrases are presented for each constituent. While this structure provides a useful representation of the functional constituents of stories, it does not provide a schematic or temporal structure of narrative, which is linear rather than composed of subordinate levels of various functions. A tree-diagram of personal narratives, therefore, would need to show the temporal order of schemas to reflect the actual sequence of events as they occurred. It is possible to show this structure by adapting the tree-diagram model to one that provides a formal representation of narratives. To give an example, the personal narrative in Text 8.1 by an adult LGC (female, 35-49, peer group interaction) can be represented using the tree-diagram, as in Fig. 8.4, below.

1	(Int)	(Em okay can you think of a time where you were really embarrassed an experience that left you really embarrassed ...)	Abstract (given)
	G	The only one that springs to mind I think is um at school when we had to we had to get up and do a 3 minute talk and me being at the	Orientation
5		end of the register because my name was beginning –my surname began with a zed I thought I'm not going to prepare cause by the time she gets to me it'll be 2 days time	Orientation
		and we got to the class and she said "Okay I'll start from the bottom of the register" and I got	Orientation
		-and I was just so embarrassed um	CA
10		and got a detention for it	CA
		and next time I made sure I prepared	Evaluation
			Resolution
			Coda

Text 8.1 An example of a personal narrative about an embarrassing experience.

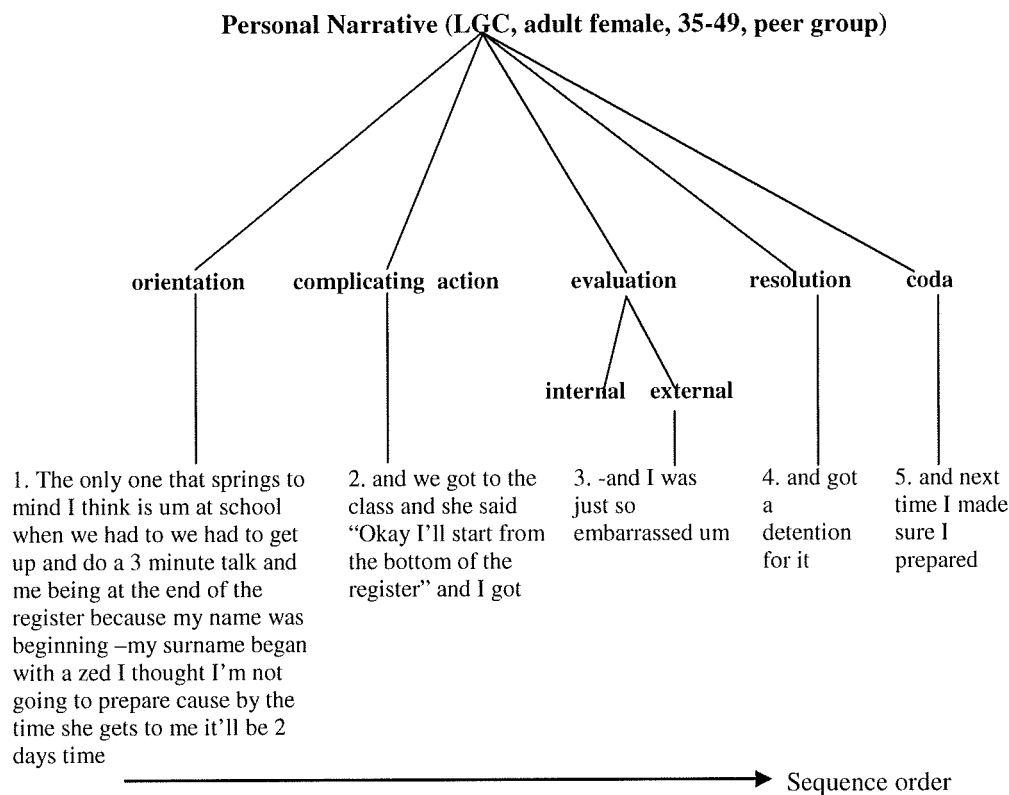


Fig. 8.4 Tree-diagram of personal narrative by an adult, female LGC.

In Fig. 8.4, G's personal narrative is represented in four 'layers', connected by branches. The top layer or node signals the personal narrative, while the second layer or nodes presents the actual schemas in the narrative, which in this case contains five of L&W's categories, and is minus a *post-evaluation*. The *evaluation* schema can be broken down further to show whether it is what L&W describe as external or internal categories of *evaluation* and gives the third layer. Where a schema appears to be 'broken down further' this is not the same as being "rewritten" in the Chomskyan view, which would allow for a further set of options, since *internal* and *external evaluation* are not constituents of *evaluation*. Instead, they are both specific descriptions and sub-categories of *evaluation*. The fourth layer of the tree-diagram model is the surface structure of G's personal experience, the narrative itself which is told in a left-to- right sequence.

Tree-diagrams can also represent personal narratives of children in the LGC speech community, as can be seen in Fig. 8.5. The tree-diagram below, is developed from the bracketed categories model in example b., below:

b. LGC children (aged 9-11): structure of personal narrative

[abstract] [**[orientation]* [complicating action]**] [evaluation] [resolution] [coda]

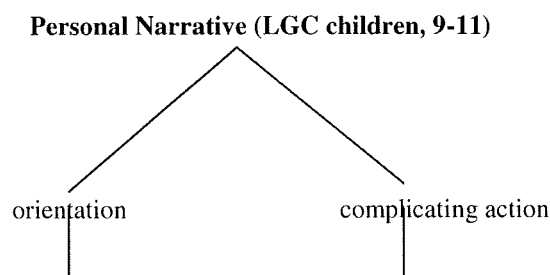


Fig. 8.5 Tree-diagram of personal narratives by LGC children showing core narrative schemas

While example b., above presents all schema categories as bracketed categories, only those found to occur regularly in children's narratives - according to the findings in my data - are enclosed in the bold 'external' brackets, thus foregrounding the common structure of children's narratives. Hence, the tree-diagram is shown with just two branches that form the *orientation* and *complicating action*. While this structure would appear to reflect a common pattern of children's personal stories, it does not necessarily reflect the range of possible variations that can be found in all children's narratives in an age group where cognitive development in story schema acquisition suggests that narrative structure is not uniform. Examples would include narratives that are more fully developed and comprise more schema elements, such as an *evaluation*, as well as those narratives that are less structurally sophisticated and contain just the *complicating action*, both of which are present in my data.

One suggestion for dealing with the range of schemas which may or may not appear in the narratives of speakers from the same social or cultural background is to present all schema categories together in the tree-diagram (as in the bracketed categories model, where both core and optional categories are shown) and foreground only those categories that are present. One possible way of foregrounding the core schemas in the tree-diagram is to represent those branches as “solid” lines, while optional categories are represented as broken lines. In this way, the actual internal structure of a narrative is highlighted through the use of solid lines for branches against a range of schema options. This model would not only be useful for illustrating the form of narratives for a particular cultural group or speech community, but is also useful for representing variations within that group e.g. differences which may arise because of differences at a social group level, based on gender, age or, other factors such as story topic. Narratives from individuals can also be represented using the tree-diagram, and this is particularly useful if their narratives differ in any way from a structure more commonly associated with that social group. An example is Text 8.2 below, represented in Fig 8.6, where C’s narrative (female, aged 11, one-to-one interview setting) has a more sophisticated internal structure when compared to G’s in Fig. 8.5 above, despite both children being from the same age group. C’s personal narrative contains four of L&W’s schemas (*orientation, complicating action, evaluation and resolution*); each of these is shown with solid branches to denote core categories, while those schemas (*abstract, coda, post-evaluation*) that are absent are represented as broken branches. (The narrative text below is analysed into clauses to foreground the different schema categories.)

1	Int	Yeah okay can you –were you ever involved in a fight at school or at home or you know in a situation that made you really upset	(abstract given)
	C	Yeah em last year em this girl started wrestling me she was pulling my hair	orientation
5		and em slapping my face and em	orientation
	Int	=(faintly) then what happened	
	C	em er I started crying and then I told my mum	CA
10		and then she spoke to a teacher and then she got told off	CA
		and she phoned the girl's mum as well	CA
	Int	and were were there any problems after that	CA
	C	erm no-o cause then she left the school	Resolution
15		so that's a good thing	Evaluation

Text 8.2 Example of a personal narrative about a fight containing an *orientation*, *complicating action*, *resolution* and *evaluation*.

Key	
Core/compulsory schemas	—————
Optional/absent schemas	- - - - -

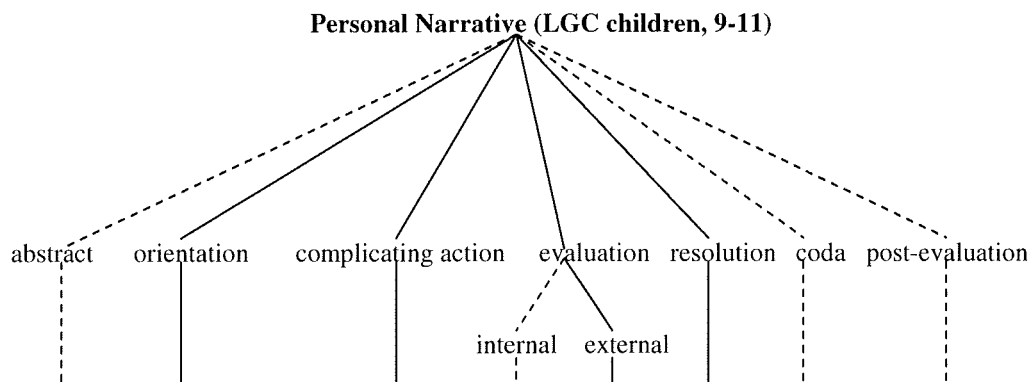


Fig. 8.6 Tree-diagram representing narrative structure (solid branches) in child C's personal narrative.

Clearly, the difference between the tree-diagrams in Fig 8.5 and 8.6 is that the former comprises only two schemas, an *orientation* and *complicating action*, corresponding to the largest proportion of children's personal narratives in this study. Conversely, Fig. 8.6 acknowledges that even within this age group, children's story structure may vary as children acquire story schemas and sophisticated

strategies for evaluating their experiences. (In this example, the subsequent *resolution* and *evaluation* were prompted by the interviewer's question in 1.13 and may have been absent had the interviewer remained silent.)

So far, my attempt to present a grammar of narratives has focused primarily on representing the internal schematic structure of narratives provided by members of sub-groups within the LGC community. My findings, however, also reveal that factors such as story topic and the interview setting contribute to variation in personal narratives. So how can these additional variants be incorporated in the tree-diagram structure so that the model accounts for a system of variation not only at the level of the speaker, but also in terms of, for example, story topic? This question raises a fundamental difficulty in attempting to represent more than one variable in a single tree-diagram, since a number of factors may interact together to create particular narrative structures, as pointed out earlier in this chapter, in section 8.2, and in Table 8.1. Specifically, *post-evaluation*, as has been shown, is mostly found in personal narratives

- i. by members from the LGC community;
- ii. by adults;
- iii. by males;
- iv. in the 35-49 age group;
- v. in personal narratives mostly about fights and danger-of-death experiences.

To complicate matters further, *post-evaluation* is also found in the narratives

- i. by members from the LGC community;
- ii. by adults;
- iii. by females;
- iv. in the 35-49 age group
- v. in personal narratives mostly about embarrassing experiences.

(*Post-evaluation* is also present in personal narratives of 18-21 year old males and females, but is not as frequent as those found in narratives by adults. See Chapter 6 and Graph. 6.3.)

Any attempt to formalise a comprehensive narrative grammar of a system of variation, where the occurrence of schemas results from different variables interacting is somewhat problematical and draws attention to the limitation of one model representing all narratives and their variations, a point that will be discussed further in the next section. What is required instead is a model that not only describes the internal constituents of narratives for a particular culture but also the variations that can be correlated with social groups among those members.

8.3 One model for all? A universal model of narrative structure

One of the key aims of this investigation was to establish how far a single model of narrative can describe the structure of narratives across differing cultures. My investigation of narratives from the LGC community has found the presence of an additional schema, the *post-evaluation*, which is not accounted for by L&W's existing model. Moreover, my findings have highlighted correlations between particular types of variation and a speaker's social factors as well as narrative topic. Clearly, such evidence of variation suggests the value of formulating a modified version of L&W's model to combine core and culturally variant features to reflect diversity in cultural storytelling.

One suggestion for developing a 'universal' model of narrative structure is to adapt the tree-diagram structure proposed in the previous section of this chapter into one that is capable of representing narratives of other cultures. This would mean modifying L&W's existing framework by broadening their range of schema options beyond those found in cultures they investigated in their studies.

As a way of illustrating this point, it is useful to recall 'extraposition', the structural feature Hymes (1996) found in the narratives of Native American Indians, as similar in function to L&W's *evaluation* schema although distinct enough to merit a category of its own. Hymes describes 'extraposition' as being similar to L&W's *evaluation* category except that in Native American narratives 'a line of action may be suspended without evaluation, and without a break in succession of temporal clauses. What happens is that realization of a formal expectation is delayed'. In other words, 'what is expected at one point is extracted and placed outside the sequence' (1996:194). Although 'extraposition' does not appear in L&W's model it can be inserted into the tree-diagram structure as an additional schema (after the last of the temporal clauses i.e. *complicating action* and *resolution*), similar to the way that *post-evaluation* has been added, so that what was originally a structure to visually present the narrative grammar of personal stories by L&W's informants, and then LGCs, now becomes potentially a model for other culturally variant features. Moreover, the narrative structure of Native American Indians can be isolated by using the system of solid branches to foreground compulsory schemas against those that are optional or absent and shown with broken branches. The tree-diagram representing their narrative structure may resemble Fig. 8.7 below. (The

five sub-categories of *post-evaluation* are also shown in this tree-diagram structure as broken branches.)

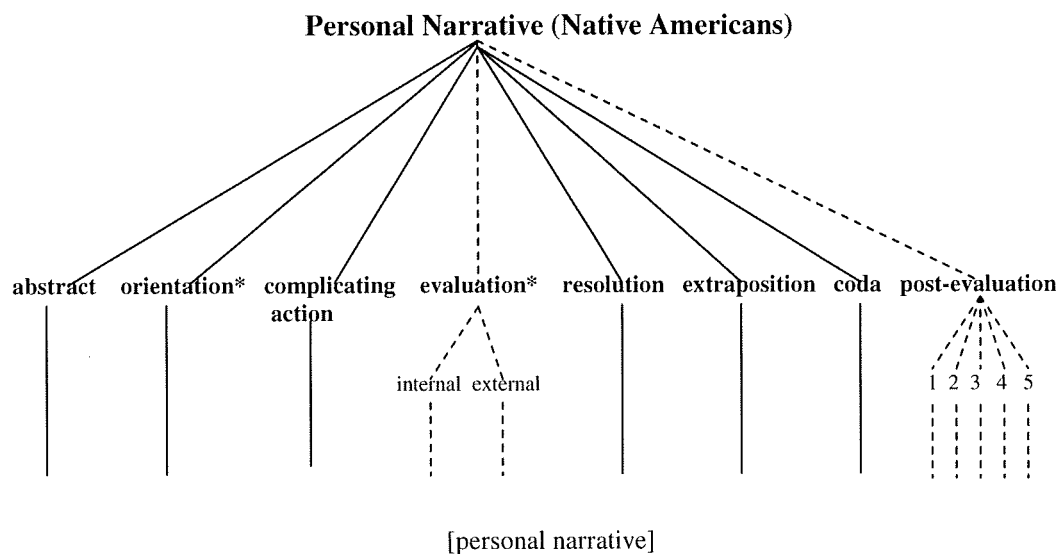


Fig. 8.7 Possible structure of Native American narratives (solid branches) showing the 'extraposition' category

The 'universal' model of narrative structure, according to the logic of my discussion, is not a fixed structure. It is instead an ongoing generalisation that requires the tree-diagram to be modified so that compulsory and optional schema categories from other cultures can be inserted into the model as research in the field reveals further insights into narrative structure. (It should be noted that the range of schema options is unlikely to expand indefinitely. Instead, a finite list of options would be expected such that eventually the structure of the tree-diagram would become fixed). This way, the proposed model can be adapted and updated to reflect a range of alternative storytelling patterns from other cultures. It would therefore seem that the term 'universal tree-diagram of narrative structure' is misleading and that a more appropriate name for the newly proposed narrative grammar would be a 'variationist model of narrative structure'. This model would function to describe not only

cultural models of narratives but also narratives that correlate with particular social factors, story topic and idiosyncratic story patterns from individual speakers.

Perhaps the best analogy for describing how the 'variationist model of narrative structure' captures features pertaining to various groups of speakers is to compare it to the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) chart (updated in 1996). The IPA contains the range of speech sounds produced in (all) human languages and from such an extensive chart, the sound patterns or phonemes of English can be identified, isolated and presented separately (say, for example, for the specific purpose of teaching English language pronunciation). Similarly, the 'variationist model of narrative structure' is composed of a 'stock' of schema options from which compulsory schemas of any one culture can be represented, as in Fig. 8.8, below.

VARIATIONIST MODEL OF NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

Personal Narrative (LGC)

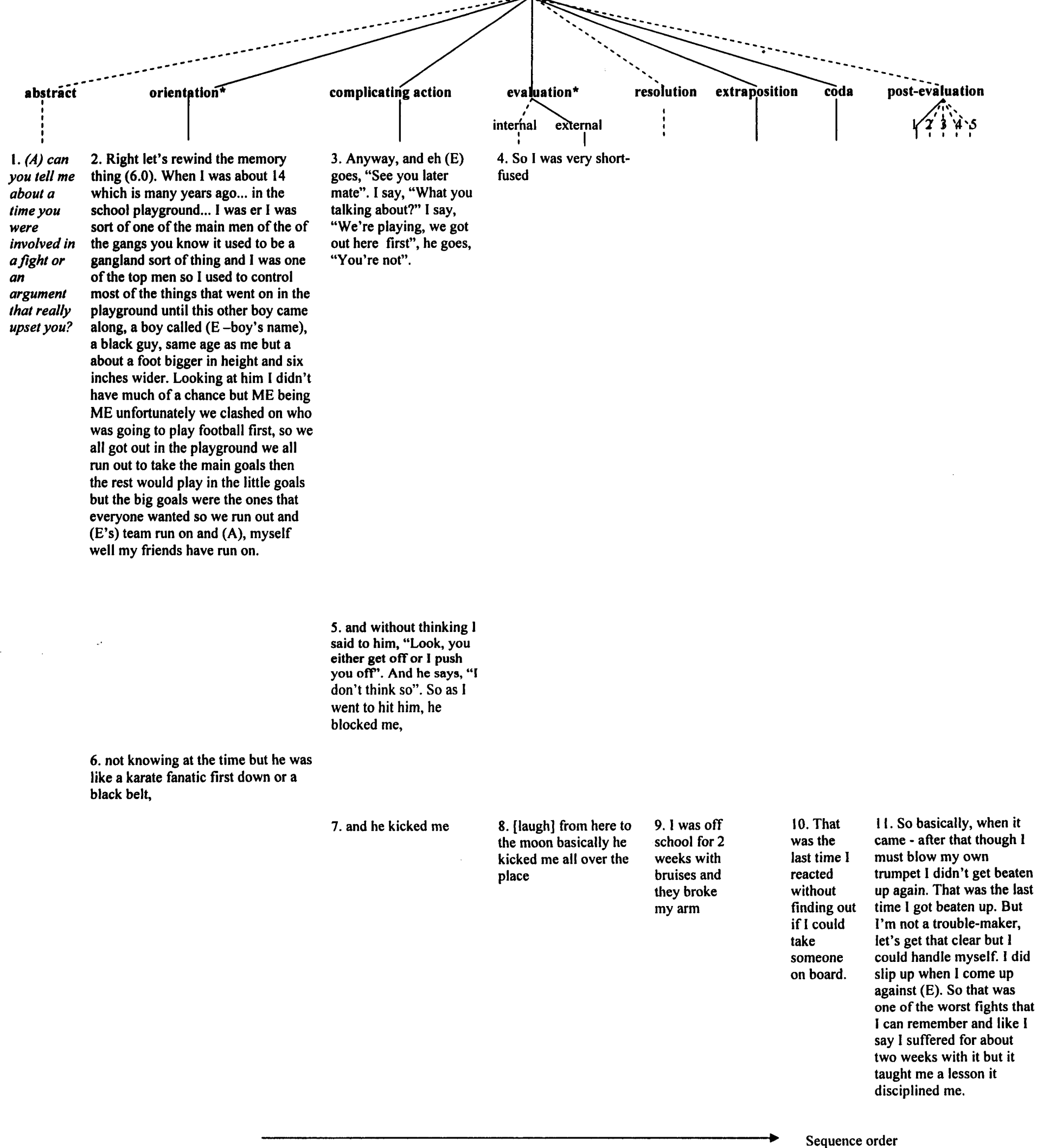


Fig. 8.8 'Variationist model of personal narratives' showing the narrative structure of LGCs from a range of schema options. (Abstract is given by the interviewer's question.)

In this example, speaker A's personal experience is foregrounded with solid branches so that it stands out from the range of possible schema options to represent the compulsory categories for LGC narrative structure. Included in the structure is the *post-evaluation* category and the five sub-categories that were found to be characteristic of personal narratives from adult LGCs. In the narrative below, A's *post-evaluation* comments can be described as sub-category 1. 'Reasserting the role of the narrator in a positive light'. While the story order at first follows a left-to-right sequence, the narrator inserts some *orientation* detail after beginning the *complicating action* to fill any information gaps that the listener might have (see 6). Thereafter, the narrative regains a left-to-right sequence until the *post-evaluation* stage of narration.

The variationist model of narrative structure can in fact be extended further to not only describe the linguistic features of a culture but also the different narrative structures from sub-groups of LGC informants. In other words, tree-diagrams that correlate with speaker age and gender can also be modelled, as can a structure reflecting story topic. To illustrate, the tree-diagram structure in Fig. 8.9 represents the personal narrative in Text 8.2 and Fig. 8.6, presented earlier in this chapter, as an example of the narrative structure of LGC children. The difference is that Fig.8.9 incorporates Hymes's extraposition category as part of the variationist model. Here, the deep structure of the narrative about a fight experience is given, with the surface structure, or the narrative, shown under the relevant schema category. Again the schema sequence follows a left-to-right order with the evaluative comments given at the end (rather than woven into the narrative). However, as pointed out in the discussion for Fig. 8.6, this particular informant, G, evaluates her experience and

provides a fuller account of her experiences (although it could be argued this was prompted by the interviewer). In contrast, children's narratives, however, tend to lack *evaluation* strategies. Differences in this sub-category of LGCs and in the presence of *evaluation* is likely to reflect more sophisticated storytelling practices and a more advanced level of story schema acquisition in the individual. (This child was in fact 11 years old and one of the oldest informants in this age group).

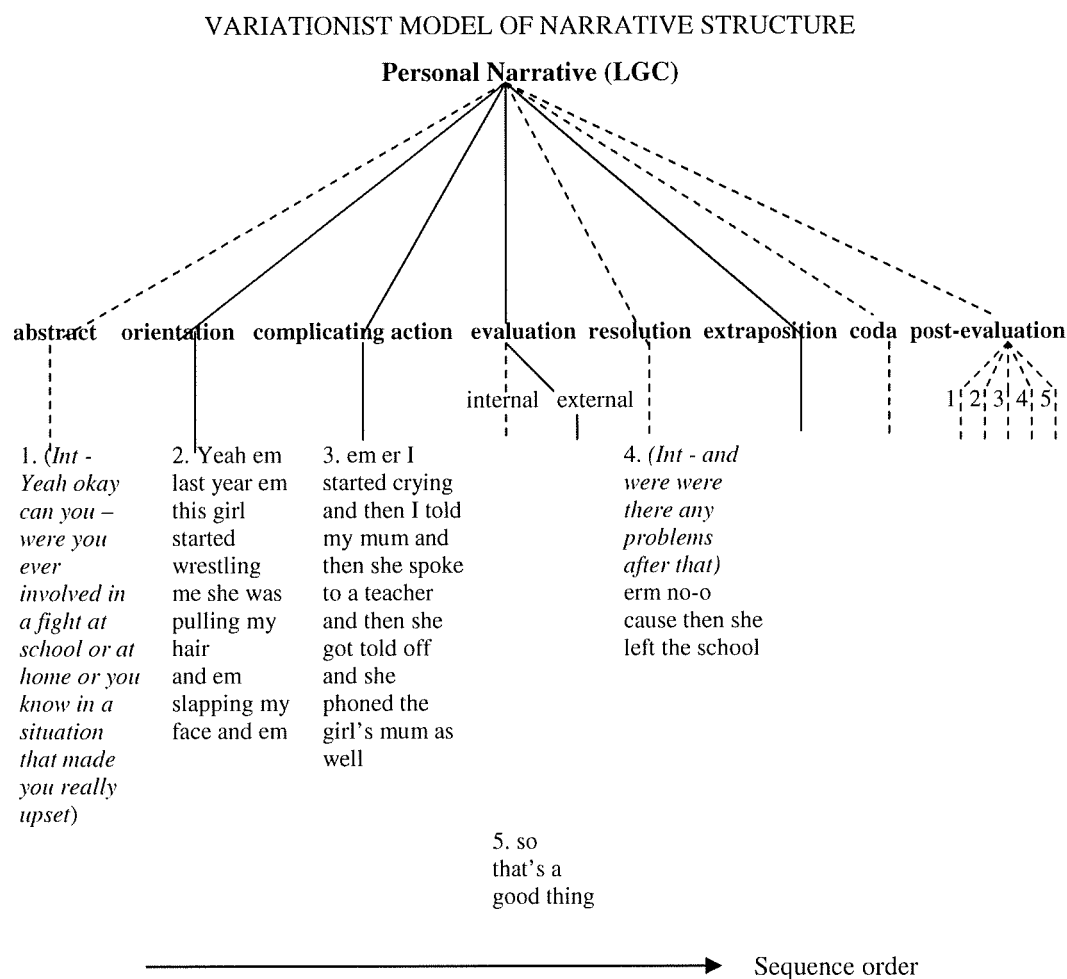


Fig. 8.9 'Variationist model of personal narratives' showing one type of narrative structure associated with children's personal narratives (aged 9-11) from the LGC community

There is a problem, however: attempting to represent the narratives of sub-groups of informants, based on a speaker's social background may lead to generalisations that

all the informants from the same sub-group produce personal narratives in the same way. Furthermore, is Fig. 8.9 a representation of children's narratives, narratives of only female children, or narratives about fight experiences? In other words how can the different variables (age, gender and story topic), which clearly interact in this personal experience, be isolated from each other and shown separately?

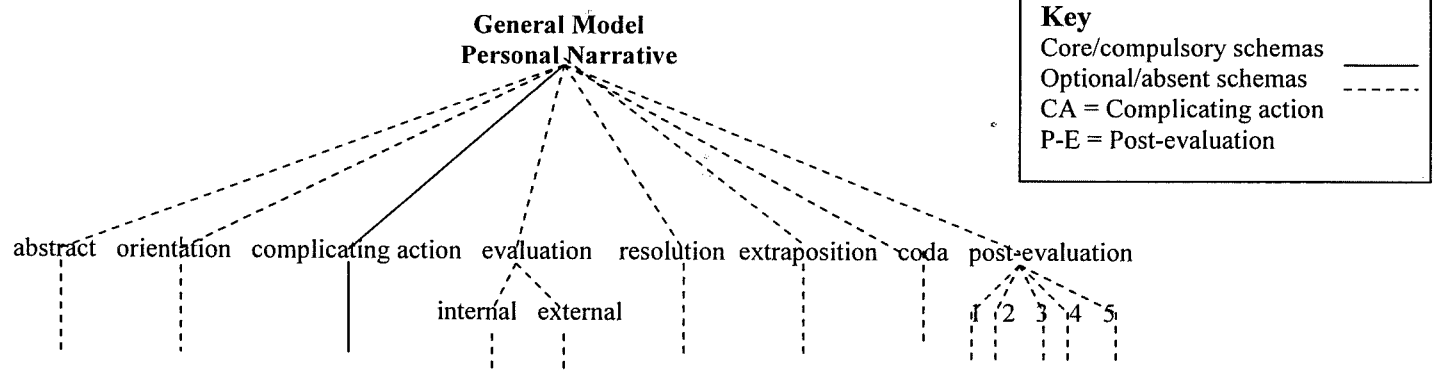
This is a complex issue: one possible solution is to develop a framework that is able to describe more than just cultural models of narratives. What is also required is a structure that models other levels of variation, including social factors and the story topic. The shape that the model should take is one that presents variables in separate tree diagrams but are nevertheless part of a much wider, hierarchical structure. Perhaps the best way to illustrate this is to consider the example of Fig. 8.10, below. The 'variationist model of narrative structure' has the 'General Model' of narrative structure as the superordinate tree-diagram and it is from this model that all other narrative structures emerge.

The 'General Model' in Fig.8.10a comprises all the possible schema options to describe narratives from different cultures and those from individual speakers, which can be presented separately. The range of schema options here is based on evidence from L&W, Hymes and my data, although as explained earlier, the model is not a fixed structure. It is instead simply an interim representation to which other schemas can be added as and when research into cultural models of narratives reveal different schemas not accounted for by the existing model. At this level the only schema present in all personal narratives across all cultures is *complicating action*, the only core narrative category and therefore, the only branch to be shown as a solid line.

Fig. 8.10

VARIATIONIST MODEL OF NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

This tree-diagram is composed of schema options based on evidence from L&W, Hymes and my data.



Key
 Core/compulsory schemas ———
 Optional/absent schemas - - - - -
 CA = Complicating action
 P-E = Post-evaluation

Fig. 8.10a Tree-diagram of a generalisation of personal narratives showing the range of possible schema options.

This tree-diagram makes generalizations consistent with evidence from the LGC data. (Only schemas found in narratives of the culture are presented.)

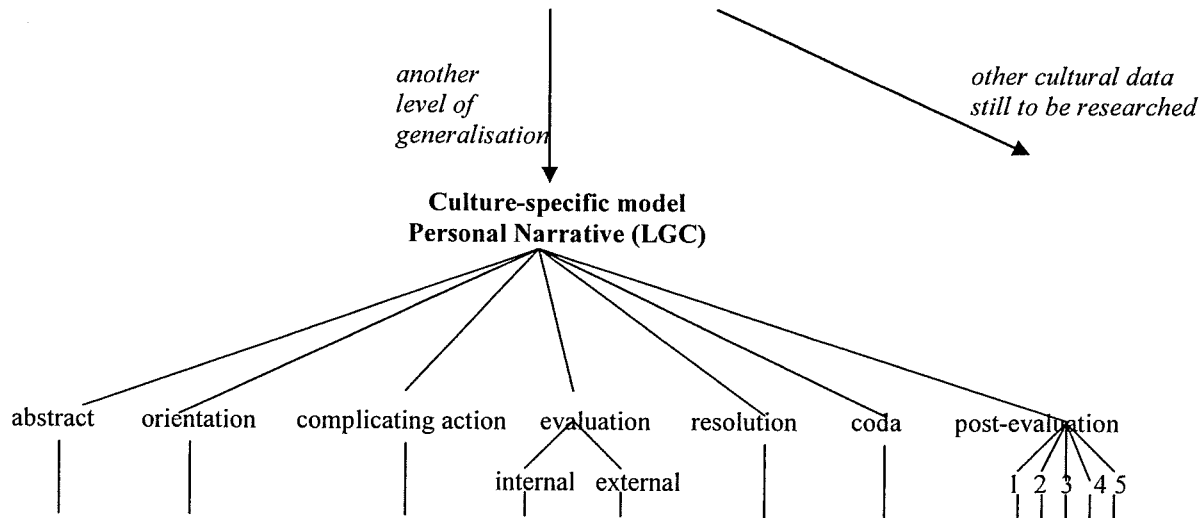


Fig. 8.10b Tree-diagram of all possible schemas options present in the personal narratives of LGCs.

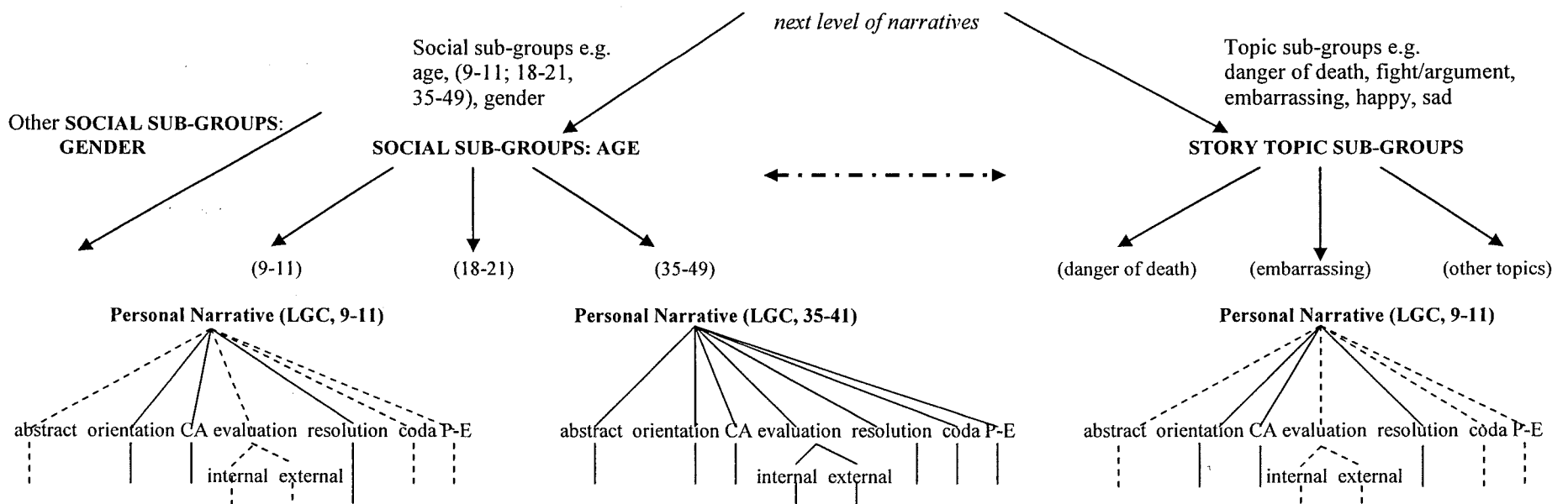


Fig. 8.10c Tree-diagram representing a child's personal narrative (showing compulsory and optional schemas)

Fig. 8.10d Tree-diagram representing an adult's personal narrative

Fig. 8.10e Tree-diagram representing a child's personal narrative about an embarrassing experience

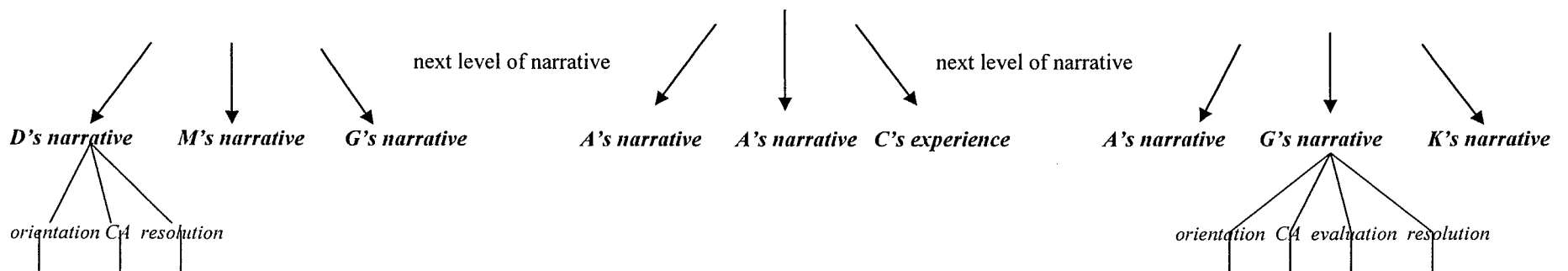


Fig 8.10f Tree-diagram representing narrative structure of individual speakers. (At this level only core schemas are shown)

The next level of generalisation that emerges from the 'General Model of Personal Narratives' is the 'Culture-specific model' in Fig. 10b. The 'Culture-specific model' presents narrative grammar consistent with personal narratives of members of a particular culture and is developed from the 'stock' of schemas in Fig. 8.10a above it. The level of the model is shown separately as a subordinate structure in the next layer of the variationist model. At this level, the variationist model begins to focus in from an overarching model of narratives to one that is specific to a culture and its speakers. As Fig. 10.b makes generalizations consistent with evidence from the LGC data, all seven schemas are shown with solid lines.

From the 'Culture-specific model' of personal narratives, another next level of narrative structure can be developed. These subordinate narrative models represent the range of narrative structures that correlate with a particular 'Social sub-group' of a speaker from that culture, such as age or gender, or the 'Story topic sub-group' such as fight or danger of death. At this level of generalisation, narrative structures are drawn from schemas found in the 'Culture-specific model' in this case study, the LGCs. Any variation caused by differences in speaker age, gender or story topic is foregrounded by the use of solid and broken lines in the tree branches to denote core/compulsory or optional/absent schemas, as can be seen in Figs. 8.10c-8.10e. One difficulty at this level of the model is relating speaker identity variables at a social group level to story topic variables without making generalisations, for example, that all males of a particular age group produce narratives about fights that conform to one pattern of narrative grammar. This problem was raised earlier as a fundamental difficulty in representing more than one variable in a single tree-diagram, and appears to be an unresolvable difficulty (hence the double-sided arrow

between the two sub-groups in Fig.8.10). A useful analogy with this difficulty can perhaps be found in trying to reconcile the relationship between an individual's register with their dialect. Dialect represents one description of a speaker's spoken or written language, and within that dialect, there are various registers an individual can draw on as they style-shift from one to another. What complicates matters further is that changes in register within a dialect also depend on a further set of variables, for example, norms, goal and genre of communication, none of which can be looked at in isolation as they all interact simultaneously in every communicative event. Perhaps the hierarchical nature of the 'variationist model of narrative structure' (with "Language" as the superordinate category) may offer a solution for a description of these language variables.

The final layer of the variationist model, in Fig. 8.10f, presents the narrative structure of individual LGC members and their narrative of personal experience. These individual models emerge from the various sub-group categories of Figs. 8.10c-e, and, at this level, only core schemas in each narrative are shown. Variation across narratives by individuals from the same social sub-group (age or gender) can be seen, as can variation across different story topics. For example, D's and G's narratives are structurally different, despite both speakers being in the same age group (aged 9-11), which illustrates the point that speaker social factors and story topic also contribute to variation at a schematic level.

8.4 Coda

Variations in the personal storytelling practices of different cultures lie at the heart of this study. Where such variations exist and how they can be accounted for are further questions investigated. But it is the notion that one model exists for all narratives, as a 'universal' narrative model, which prompted this research into oral narratives of personal experiences and led to the development of a 'variationist model of narrative structure'. While there is no doubt that L&W's six-schema model offers one of the most important descriptions of narrative structure we have, it provides only a basic description of an idealised narrative form rather than a 'universal' description or definition. My findings show that their model cannot capture variations that are culturally-specific or those differences among speaker sub-groups and individual speakers from within those groups. These factors, together with variations caused by story topic, have all been found to contribute to differences at a schematic level.

Bringing these findings together, a 'variationist model of narrative structure' acknowledges and reflects differences in a wider range of cultural narratives and at the various levels described above. Its hierarchical organisation allows narrative structures to be developed from one another, creating subordinate structures, with the effect that each model becomes the focus of a specific variable while existing as part of a larger structure. With the final level of description presenting only core schemas in personal narratives, the emphasis at this point is on individual speakers and recognition that even within a culture and its social sub-groups, variation at a schematic level is likely to exist among speakers. In this way the adapted model

outlined in this thesis allows for different representations of variants from a range of possible schema options (- core/compulsory or optional -) to be presented together in a structure that can be developed in a process of research that is ongoing. The result will be a more comprehensive description of narratives across cultures and its speakers as further insights in narrative research are reported.

APPENDICES

Appendix I. Participant's Letter of Permission

Appendix II. Tapescript: Tape 1 (Adults, males, aged 35-41, peer group interaction)

APPENDIX I

[MIDDLESEX UNIVERSITY LETTER-HEADED PAPER]

PARTICIPANT'S LETTER OF PERMISSION

PhD Research Student: Marina Lambrou

PhD Research: Narrative structure and storytelling patterns in personal narratives of LGCs (working title).

Thank you for taking part in my research which will investigate the structure of spoken narratives of personal experience. As I have chosen to analyse stories from members of the Greek Cypriot community in London, your participation is greatly appreciated.

For the research, you will be interviewed, either individually or with one or more people, and asked to recall one or more personal experience in your life. Your story will be recorded and may be reproduced for the purposes of this study. To ensure confidentiality, your name will not be used and any references to people and places in your story will be removed.

Please sign below if you agree to the above and give permission for the use of recorded material for the purposes of this study.

Name of participant (signature):.....

Name of participant (in capitals):.....

Date:.....

Age..... Sex Place of birth 1st /2nd /3rd generation LGC

Occupation.....

Highest qualification.....

TAPESCRIPT 1A

The following tapescript is given as an example of the 26 sociolinguistic interviews to collect spoken personal narratives from members of the London Greek Cypriot community in a sociolinguistic interview. This was recorded and transcribed in full, and represents the spoken data from a peer group interview with four male informants in the 35-49 age group. All informants in this example are 2nd generation Greek Cypriot, including the interviewer. All informants are known to each other. (A transcription key is provided at the end of the transcript.)

MALES; 35-49 (35-39 AND G AT 49)

PEER GROUP INTERACTION

INFORMANTS: (G) , (C), (M), (M)

INTERVIEWER: (INT)

ALL = EVERYBODY PRESENT

(7 PEOPLE PRESENT: 4 MALE LGC INFORMANTS: G,C,M, A; 2 WOMEN, NON LGC: X (PARTNER OF C) AND INTERVIEWER: INT;)

- 1 Int (G) ehm can you tell me about a time that you were involved in a fight or an argument that really upset you?
- G The one that really upset me was many years ago when I was at secondary school er basically because it was of a racist nature and basically since I was one of a very few, we felt picked on and it wasn't just a fight it just went on way after the fight and you were always called names *bubble and squeak, gypo* but it wasn't of a violent nature, the one that really got me was that it was of the mental anguish that it gave. Come on you lot join in I'm not gonna tell this all by myself (laugh)
- 5 C ... I'm really sorry for doing that to you (G)
- 10 All [loud laughter]
- Int Can you think of a particular incident?
- G The particular incident? Ha blimey you're asking! Don't forget you're now pushing my mind back...30...33 years
- M = I've got a good one! I give -I go -you can - a story for you
- 15 what happened to your 2 children when you went to a little ca - a little -you took them to a er a self-service restaurant and ehm and some old lady gave, was it (name of child) some hassle about him being Greek. Was that still - do you remember that one?
- G I remember but I don't remember when that was [clears throat]. That was an incident where we tried to sit down or-r-r we sat down ahh (name of child) had sat down to get us a table and we went to get, this is true, went to get food from the self-service restaurant a-and and old woman and her old man just went and sat at the table and then when we came and asked them "Look, this is our table", they said "*why? what right have you we have got more right than you have, we're English*" and this is in the restaurant and the worse bit about that was again that NOBODY but NOBODY, if you think that you're gonna get some HELP from anybody, NO - everybody just LOOKED but nobody made any comments
- 20 C How long ago was that?
- G This is when the kids were about 6 and 8 years old so [clears throat] it scarred them in the certain respect that all of a sudden they realised that they were DIFFERENT or they were made to feel different, lets not say that they are different, they were made to feel very, very different ahm and that was that was a specific incident ... Ahm fights it's too long ago really to go into detail. Why? I can't remember the last fights I had when I was at secondary school ...
- 25 Int Hmm
- 35 G ... a-and that was -as I said again because its a - you could say "big fat (G)" and various stupid things that went on ended up in -just ehm blows being exchanged but the worst one

C = (says name of another LGC known to everybody, but not participating)

G Sorry?

40 C (repeats name) is your one for fights

G Yeah, oh yeah

Int I'll speak to (name)

All []

G No -I its a -no I can't can't remember -I mean funny ones that that might be

45 Int = =okay

G = =funny ones was ehm we had a dear guy called er - I went to (name of school) or (name) as it was known, down (location) and 3/4 of Akanthou⁴⁹ went there as well [laughter] so we celebrated each other's birthday in the playground if you [laugh] want we didn't need to move that far. If there was 400 people in that school... 350 [laugh] were Cypriots and all from the adjoining villages. I'm not joking serious

50 Int = =Hmm

G But I remember...err his name was (name) he was better known as..

[?] []

G No he weren't [laugh] he was better known as shit actually [laughs]

55 All [laughing]

G [] and he managed to steal the football that we were playing and he managed to keep ahead of me starting from (name of street) to (name of another street) which is 2 miles, we ran it [laugh] at full speed and I still didn't catch him [laughing] and that was the - that's the funniest - I was really angry...he [laughing] was running for his life he

60 thought "if he ever gets hold of me he'll kill me" er but it's too long ago to remember a real -that -what (M) said, that's the only scenario I remember of getting into a fight recently and that one was about the 2 boys.

Int Okay, can you think of um an embarrassing experience that you had?

G Embarrassing?

65 Int Embarrassing

G ...Many I think [laughs]

All [laughing]

G It's on a daily basis each one

M = =[] [laughing] each one that I could possibly like am willing to like

70 divulge []

All [laughing]

C Ah dear..no!

G Ah [phhhh].. I don't - I mean there's so many you just - I can't even - The one that stands out mine is is that one's a personal one in a sense it's embarrassing between 2

75 people that killed themselves laughing and it happened over 20 years ago but its as if its fresh as my mind - it's to do with my father who's been dead for over 20 years. We both had both had the same green khaki trousers but if you can work out he was the third of my size and we were down by the beach and both went for a swim and both decided to get dressed at the same time, [movement to show trousers being put on]

80 there was my father standing with my trousers on out there [with arms outstretched to indicate a huge waist around the trousers] and there I was trying to get his trousers on that wouldn't fit and that of all the embarrassing situations that - I don't know because it's a pleasant one, maybe, I remember umm other embarrassing situations there's just too many [laughing] I can't even think of em somebody would have to start

85 C = = horse

riding [faintly] you went horse riding

G Oh that oh... oh yeah, here we go he'd see there - 'cause I told them the stories - like telling kids stories, it was in (country) we went horse - we went pony-trekking - weren't even horse-riding eh you get there they got this thing called a horse or pony,

90 so tall [indicates height with hand]. Anyway, there's 4 of us - we're all going along - there's 6 of us actually, and for some unknown reason the order was changed, and (name of LGC not present but known to all participants) horse was put in front of mine and the next thing I realised I was sitting on this bronco...it was going up and down, up and down I couldn't control it anymore it was going absolutely nuts. And it got to the

⁴⁹ Village in Cyprus where the parents of all the LG participants in this interview were born. The participants in this peer group interview are all first generation Greek Cypriots, born in London.

95 stage where I thought I've had enough of this I'm gonna get off. And everybody was killing themselves laughing cause I just couldn't control it. So the guy who was taking us round decided "hold on a minute I'll come and have a look", says "I realise what the problem is" I says "WHAT?" said "the mare in front in on at this present moment, your one's smelt 'er and he's on heat and that's why he can't keep still [laughing]. So that one I remember but as I said..near?...I can't I can't...Can you think of any that I've been involved in? You must

100 Int = =well actually (name) can you can you think of an embarrassing experience you've had?

M There's probably too many I'm trying to think of one that I'm willing to put on the tape [laugh]

105 All [laughter] []

M I'm trying to think of one ... Can you think of any any embarrassing episodes I've had? I've had loads

G = =to do with alcohol

M That's why I can't remember most of them ... and they probably weren't embarrassing at the time 'cause I was under the influence [laughing]...

110 Int Or funny incidents

M Funny incidents? Oh I remember one when I was sharing an apartment in (location) with 3 Scousers, as you do ah. Ehm , my... my room was near near the um er the attic and whenever the drunks used to try and get in the front door if they couldn't put the key in the latch they used to just kick the door in and then buy a new lock the next day but it was um what they'd done is over the roof you'd go up to the fire escape and you'd climb down a ladder and they'd snap the lock off of my window so whenever they wanted to like just come in they used to just open the window and and troupe into the flat. I remember one night when I'd just gone to bed there must've been about half a dozen women they were bringing back and they were just trouping through and "by the way this is (name of narrator)" [laugh] "Hi I'm just trying to get some sleep, you know don't worry about me" [laughing]

115 120 All [laughter]

M Er that was er that was one...episode living in that apartment. Er another funny one was er I suppose it was drug related that was quite funny. Er...it er was one of the lads who who lived in the flat he was always stoned out of his mind and er we used to live right opposite Ealing Broadway so he had massive windows in his room so he used to open 'em out and put his 2 speakers facing outwards onto the Broadway. And he was sitting on the ledge like just boogying away to the music and he'd obviously just had his rolly of the day and me and er me and the others were out shopping 'cause it was Saturday morning and we got back and he said, "*Hey guys you'll never never believe it!*" He said "*we just got raided by the, by the bizzies*" And I was going [rise in pitch] "*What you mean we just got raided by the bizzies?!*" And he said, "Well they got, got me me for noise pollution, 'cause even the tramp across the road was was playing the air guitar [laughing]"

130 All [laughing]

135 M ... he said "to the music" And er we said to him like "did they find anything?" And he said, he said, "No cause" he said "I'd lost my stash so I like ripped my room apart" and you walked into his room and it looked like it had just been trashed and it was er cause he had er cause he'd bought some stuff the night before and he couldn't find it and he just smashed his place up looking for it and it was lucky I suppose they didn't find it otherwise we could have been in some kind of trouble ... that was a that was quite that a funny episode [laughing].

140 Int [recovering from laughing] Can you em can you tell me about an argument or fight that you were involved in

M =I don't I don't normally get in arguments or fights, I was trying to think of one and I can't

Int Yeah

145 M Yeah

Int No dangerous incidences..that involved danger?

M I dunno, I can't think. As I said like probably the time of my life when I was involved in a few dangerous episodes I was too drunk to remember them [laugh]

All [laughter]

150 M [laughing] They've like gone been eroded away
 Int Okay, thanks very much. Em (C)
 C Hmm ...
 Int Can you think of an argument or a fight you were involved in that really upset you?
 C Really upset me? Ehmm the most, well the thing that's upset me most [laugh] is ehm
 155 I've fallen out with my in-laws
 (X) (So have I) [laugh]
 C ==[laugh] and er that's been going of for about a year now and that's
 Int =can you
 C ==[Its just
 160 frustrating 'cause its not moved in any way
 Int =can you tell me anything specific about
 C = ehm
 Int Can you kind of describe what happened?
 C Yeah my mother-in-law trashed me and her daughter stood up for me and it severed
 165 the family it's as basic as that [laugh]...for no reason Hmm its just been hard to get
 people to talk, people are too angry to do anything about it and eh it's just it's basically
 divided the family...and it's still very very painful for everybody involved and no-ones
 backing down...and the the worst incident was on the day that this happened I tried to
 get through to the people that I got on with and ehm the other brother-in-law who's
 170 (X) =[an asshole]
 C Yeah who's never been ahm sort of the most honest of people who's tried to keep the
 all the outsiders or the other brother-in-laws or in-laws away from the group to keep it
 for himself ahm he he loved the moment he abso - you know he was really smug about
 it and we had a big slanging match and it's still going on [laughing] so it's very serious
 stuff but that's I don't think anything has angered me as much as this and um it's sad
 180 very sad ... I feel very indifferent about it but for the people that are still family like my
 partner and [] it's an absolutely terrible situation at the moment its unattainable we
 can't do anything with it
 Int And it hasn't been resolved yet doesn't look as though it will?
 C =No and it it won't be it won't be ... it won't be
 185 [laugh]
 Int []
 (X) (And you keep asking us why we haven't got married [laughter] .Can you imagine
 having the wedding?
 Int =How awful
 190 C = = We won't we won't get married ...because I think we would regret it if
 we just went ahead and did it without...even though I honestly couldn't care less..I
 think [] would regret it. They've been very cruel to her and they've been very cruel to
 her other sister as well, and they just decided to make a stand you know, there was a
 lot of back stabbing going on. So I think if you have a daughter who is going against
 195 her parents, you know standing up to them, disagreeing with them, it's a very, very
 serious issue
 Int Hmm
 C Ehm yeah
 Int Okay
 200 C So [] not very light-hearted there [laugh]
 Int No, well ... fine, thanks, thanks for telling me that. Ahm can you think of ... an
 embarrassing moment?
 All [Laughter]
 M Think of a light-hearted one now
 205 C A light-hearted one [laugh] Err the most embarrassing moment of my life happened in
 December that just passed [laugh]. I was in France I went over for [laugh] was in
 France went over for a gig with my band ...
 (X) [Laughing continuously and banging table]
 C ... and we took all the girls with us, all the partners and um we went and had something
 210 to eat, we had breakfast and er I had terrible stomach pains and decided that I wasn't
 going to join the rest of the group for a little sight-seeing. Got in the car to drive back
 to the hotel which was from Boulougne to Calais and was mainly motorway and
 [laugh] basically shat myself...

215 All [Laughing]
 C ... in the car and [laughing] the funniest thing was I couldn't pull into a hotel or anything like that, I couldn't stop and go on the beach 'cause all the French were out flying their kites

220 All [Laugh]
 C and the funniest thing of all was (X - name of partner) holding a Tesco's bag open for me ... [laughing]

All [Laughing] []
 X [laughing] []
 C ... expecting me to aim into this ... [laughing]..

225 All [Laughing loudly]
 C So it was too ... laughing] it was too late I continued driving I was in pain I was mortified ... I was still going at it 20 minutes into the car journey ... we got back to the hotel and one of my friends the band member had actually come back to the hotel and was sitting in the car park so we couldn't do anything. My partner tried to convince me that in order to walk through the hotel foyer I should tuck my trousers into my socks ...[laughing]

230 All [Laughing]
 C ... but that didn't work, eventually [laughing] eventually the coast was clear I came through the hotel ehm 6 hours later I was feeling better. When I came outside ... there was a cleaner going at it hands on their knees trying to clean up and that was the most embarrassing moment of my life!

235 All [Laughing]
 Int [Laughing] Thank you for being so honest and er so detailed
 All [Interviewer]
 M At least it'll give you an idea of the title to your thesis

240 Int Yes!
 C My faeces!
 All [Laughter]
 Int Ehhh ... that's incredibly embarrassing. Can you think of a particular -a happy incident from your childhood ... a happy experience?

245 C Ooh a happy incident?
 G [faintly] When you got on the bus once
 C Yeah I I kept running away but I wasn't running away from
 G = =or was it trains, sorry, at Clapham
 C Junction

250 = =trains yeah, I kept running away but I wasn't running away from anything in particular, I just..you know, I'd just go off and do things and my dad would sort of lose me [laugh]
 All [Laughter]
 C Ehm..er

255 Int He didn't do it on purpose?
 C No he didn't do it on purpose but I caught a train when I was - at two and a half from Balham to Clapham Junction a British Rail train and ehm walked from Balham to my aunts house which is about half a mile so just used to get up to all sorts of things and I was a pyromaniac as well, I set alight to part of Epsom Downs once [laugh] I thought there was nothing wrong with that [3.0]

260 (?) []
 C But I was happy in myself it was just [laugh] ... everyone...
 All [Laughing]
 C It was just a -I didn't realise I was doing anything wrong
 Int Okay ... thank you (3.0) Thanks (C). (A) (3.0)...

265 A (Pauses tape for 1.0 second)
 G What about Greek school? There there's a lovely place? []
 Int (A) can you tell me about a time you were involved in a fight or an argument that really upset you?
 A Right let's rewind the memory thing (6.0). When I was about 14 which is many years ago ... in the school playground... I was er I was sort of one of the main men of the of the gangs you know it used to be a gangland sort of thing and I was one of the top men so I used to control most of the things that went on in the playground until this other

270

boy came along, a boy called (E -boy's name), a black guy, same age as me but a about a foot bigger in height and six inches wider. Looking at him I didn't have much of a chance but ME being ME unfortunately we clashed on who was going to play football first, so we all got out in the playground we all run out to take the main goals then the rest would play in the little goals but the big goals were the ones that everyone wanted so we run out and (E's) team run on and (A), myself well my friends have run on. Anyway, and eh (E) goes, "See you later mate". I say, "What you talking about?" I say, "We're playing, we got out here first", he goes, "You're not". So I was very short-fused and without thinking I said to him, "Look, you either get off or I push you off".

275 And he says, "I don't think so". So as I went to hit him, he blocked me, not knowing at the time but he was like a karate fanatic first down or a black belt, and he kicked me [laugh] from here to the moon basically he kicked me all over the place. I was off school for 2 weeks with bruises and they broke my arm

280 Int = =Goodness!

285 A That was the last time I reacted without finding out if I could take someone on board. So basically, when it came - after that though I must blow my own trumpet I didn't get beaten up again. That was the last time I got beaten up. But I'm not a trouble-maker, let's get that clear but I could handle myself. I did slip up when I come up against (E). So that was one of the worst fights that I can remember and like I say I suffered for about two weeks with it but it taught me a lesson it disciplined me.

290 Int Okay, thank you. Can you tell me about em an embarrassing experience that you had

A (pauses tape to joke with the others by replying "my wedding day").

All [Laughter]

A An embarra -[laughing] I've had ehm ... In fact ... I don't even have to think too far away and this is as true as I'm sitting here. Today, we was out shopping... that's me my daughter (name) (wife's name) and my mother-in-law and they was all in the car and I got out the car rushing around as per usual...I've done what I've done as I've come out the shop heading towards what I thought was my car I've opened this this car and there's a woman [laughing] sitting in the driver's seat honestly. She goes, "*Can I help you?*", I said, "*Oh sorry it's the wrong car*", but I was lucky 'cause I near enough jumped on top of her..

295 All [Laughter]

300 and that's as true as I can tell you you can go and ask 'em ... today [] and this woman's face obviously you can imagine, I went, "*OH! I'm so sorry!*" I thought, I was embarrassed -I couldn't look at her so as we drove by to leave obviously I bibbed and I said I'm sorry just to show I that I was genuine you know that I was with my family

305 (X) (Same car?)

A Yeah -no it was nothing to do like nothing like my car it's just that you know I was going in a shop that I thought my car was directly outside but it was off centre and I've just gone to the first car [laughing] I've opened it this woman's jumped out of her seat [laughing] THAT was one of the most embarrassing things even though as I say it's the most recent thing, but definitely it would be one of the most embarrassing thing. I was bright red from Palmers Green to about Haringey if you know North London that is

310 All [Laughter]

A That's the truth

315 Int Thank you

G = =[] well she did the same in a petrol station she actually got into a car right? And as she got into the car she walked out paid got into the car didn't bother to look, and said "*What are you waiting for? Drive on come on let's go!*". The guy looked at her thinking "*Who the HELL are you?*" [laughing]

320 All [laughing]

G She got in the car in front and (name) is still sitting

A = =it can happen you know if you're daydreaming like today I

325 G = =she didn't even look she just told him to get on with it and get going

A = = I told you this woman was like a foot away from me jumping on her lap cause you know when you I - you open the door you normally just dive in [getting up and sitting

330 down to illustrate action]. I go, "Ooh sorry!" [laughing]
 Int She said "Take my money! Take my money!" [laughing]
 A She didn't know what to say then after she was laughing because she was looking in
 the mirror just before we drove off I could see her looking where I was going..I got in
 335 the car and I explained to them my mother-in-law and (wife's name) they were all in
 stitches they loved it
 All [laughing]
 A ... I was so embarrassed
 340 Int Were you ever in a situation where you were in a lot of danger?
 A (Pauses tape to make a joke about his wedding day)
 All [Laughing]
 A [Laughing] Thinking about it... (3.0)
 345 M I've I've got a good story about being in
 A = =oh good please []
 M I used to go ahm diving quite regularly and we decided to go to Corfu with some some
 ah our friends with a club out there and we'd been on an inflatable boat and they'd
 taken us down to this island called Paxos and er and we done some diving down there
 350 on on one of the wrecks.. then er we were coming back and the eh there was a storm
 brewing we we said to the guy like "Is is this okay to go round this part the Island?"
 and he said " Yeah yeah we should be all right", and compared to like the south coast
 of England it was still quite quite calm but em there was some ah there was some
 Germans on board and they didn't like the look of it so they ha - they dropped them off
 355 [laugh] on the south coast of Corfu then carried on round to take us back to our our
 village where we were staying. And as where we were - we were going along and it
 was fighting the waves they were going up and down and you're quite used to like
 riding the waves and it was up to about a force four gale like by now and then
 suddenly you heard the engine just go "P-P-P-P" and just died and ah he got the little
 360 anchor it was only a little inflatable boat with like eight of us on board so he threw the
 anchor over must've been about a mile off off the coast. And we said "What's
 happening?" he said "I ran out of petrol" he said but um, "It happens quite regularly",
 he said eh " If we're not back by dark [laughing] they come looking for us. And you're
 thinking, "Oh Shit!", so and he was quite calm about it and we just turned round like,
 365 "Life jackets on chaps you know" [laughing] and em we started looking and the boat
 was going up and down, so first thing was like one of the said like "Can we can we try
 -one of swim for shore and raise raise the alarm?" And they said ah said ah "Nah nah
 you'd get taken too far south". So we said, "Okay, we've got radio on board why we
 don't just put out the Mayday call that that usually works, on you know normal
 370 frequency", and er we couldn't believe that []. And the guy turned round and said er
 "It's not worth putting out the Mayday on this part of the island 'cause they're only
 listening on the other side of the island for Maydays"..so eh [laughing]
 All [laughing]
 M So you're not allowed to call out a Mayday on that part of Corfu apparently 'cause
 375 they don't bother listening to it. So, ehm so we were quite quite frightened at the time I
 suppose. The guy eventually - they they radioed us when it got dark and we didn't get
 back we were about an hour overdue they er they they called us up and one of the guys
 come down with some petrol and I did a stupid thing was I got back to the eh got back
 to the hotel and eh rang my wife back up in England and I said, "Hey we had a bit of
 380 an adventure today like we thought we were going to DIE!" [laughing] ... and um she
 wasn't too chuffed about us carrying on diving after that but um it was frightening fore
 about an hour when you thought it was getting dark and you could see lights in the
 distance about a mile off and er it's no way to to get back, "We thought, " Ooh this
 might be a bit tricky"
 385 (X) []
 M Yeah then it was lucky like once the moon come up the storm died down and that was
 quite nice it was back to like your Mediterranean calm after that but still, you just
 thought well the current's going the wrong way, you can't you can't swim to shore
 yeah it was - that was a bit tough but we got through it...we look back on it and have a
 390 laugh but it wasn't it wasn't that funny at the time
 A You reminded me now going back to me even though I said at the time I wasn't sure []
 you got me out of trouble luckily you just reminded me. This is again another straight

genuine story. When I was at the (name) Hotel I was an apprentice electrician...ah this is going back now roughly ... 20 ... 20 odd years 20 ... 22 years ago. I was working with my boss who was an Indian man and he was training me on you know on how to learn the trade and I used to go to college one day release and it was studying the City and Guilds Electrical Installation anyway... we was rewiring a section of the main kitchen and it was ehm a suspended ceiling and we had to go in between the ceiling to get the wires in and the conduit which is where you run wires in at the time. Um I'm not claus -I don't suffer from claustrophobia but at that time for some reason ... you was literally looking at a maximum 2 inch -sorry 2 feet [gesturing width with hands]...um of height of the area you had to work in. all right I was a lot thinner then so it wasn't my weight that made it an issue it was just being within the area. When we got in I wasn't told but it actually narrowed and there was one time when honestly where there was literally an inch either side of my belly and my back clearance

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400

405 Int = =[faintly] Oh no!

A and I couldn't turn my head and I called him and there was no reply so I'm stuck in the middle of this ceiling right and I started to panic and I was - that's the worst thing you can do an all of a sudden I've tried to move my arms my leg I felt that someone trapped me. And in the end through panic I actually kicked through the ceiling and my leg [laughing] maybe it was funny now but wasn't at the time, my leg was actually

410 hanging through the ceiling in the middle of the (name) Hotel like with 30, 40 members of staff looking up at this leg. They said, "What's happened?", an' they goes, "Oh the electricians are up there", and luckily that was they way they -I got help -If it weren't for me using my loaf an' panic to smash something to get someone's attention,

415 no-one knew I was stuck 'cause my boss came away from the scene to go back to get some more stores thinking I had completed what he wanted me to do but I was stuck...an' they - it took over half an hour to get me out 'cause I was so...well sort of like you know anxious to get out I was panicking it was making things worse and they eventually they calmed me down and I did get out but that was the closest that I would say that I thought I was going to have a heart attack or something was going to go wrong yeah... and that - I say that's about 20 odd year ago ...

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Int [] horrible

A Yeah it was and now I avoid say small areas (tch) I mean going in a lift and that is not an issue but I'm talking about going under floorboards or in ceilings now I think twice, where before I would never worry about it until that happened to me. It felt like a straight-jacket job you get me? ...'cause I was panicking an' I was getting nowhere..You know, what do you do? You think you're you're stuck for life but obviously I wouldn't have been but that's what goes through your mind you know negative thoughts ...uh ...

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430 G Mine was mine's about fifteen years ago with dear old Pan Am again it's their flight and it - you've never experienced turbulence until you've been in a thing called a windsheer and when your in windsheers the aeroplane cannot climb or descend to get rid of it. And what happens is the plane doesn't get bounced it gets twisted turned in every direction as if the aeroplane's been pulled to bits and this happened as we were

435 coming down from Canada into State of Washington, we were 35,000 feet I'll never forget it 'cause I really did think we were going to die. [Clears throat]. As it was flying across the border suddenly we hit the windsheer and this is a Jumbo and every thing on this Jumbo was shaking from the rivets to the whole lot ... a-and people were being thrown all over the place it went on for the first 10 minutes he then he closed down service. It went on for 15 minutes and he ordered people back to their seats. People were beginning to panic they were vomiting everywhere there was people rushing back to the toilets they were going A-A-bs-olutely mad and it took about 40 minutes of being tossed and bounced all over the place and I mean VIOLENT really violent not just sitting there feeling it..you were holding on if you can imagine you were strapped,

440 but you're holding on to stay in your seat ... He then came on board, and I'll never forget and I won't forget his name because it goes something like this, "This is your Captain speaking, this is Captain (name)." And he stops. And that stop must have been about 2 seconds but because we'd been tossed and turned for about 40 minutes you thought this is the one call that I DON'T want to hear that we're going DOWN,

445 everybody looked at each other and just thought, "God this is going down". And it must've been about a split second and then he came up with the line that nearly got

450

him lynched, which was, "It's against Federal Aviation Law to be moving around in an aeroplane whilst in turbulence". So if you can imagine..that split second that something like 300 passengers thought they were going to die it's just the way he said it, "This is your Captain speaking, Captain (name)

455 A = =that pause
G = = stopped then everybody looked at each other as if to say, "He can't control this", then he said, "It's against Federal Aviation Law to be moving around in an aeroplane during a turbulence". Ye-ess ...

460 A So you all [laughing] you all eh you all rushed the cockpit I bet "Where is he?"
G = =and that was - although...in fact the guy I was travelling with on the way back he didn't sleep for 10 hours he just held just held on - it was a smooth flight but he was terrified he just held onto the seat. I have NEVER been in a flight like that. It is A-B-S-O-L-U-tley something not to experience a windsheer ... That was the nearest I think I've thought, "That's it! Its finished".... Next!

465 A = =That's so - Oh God that must
Int = =That's great

470 A Well you see that on the telly right a sort of similar thing and you imagine you think you know like you react sort of like "Oh God imagine being there" but poor you being in a situation like that like you say you blame the flight don't ya. You know one night if he couldn't control it you're finished it's all down to him innit?
G That's right
A = =That's the bottom line

475 G That - now you've started me I mean his (pointing to M) his father was - I had a Morris 1000 I took (name of LGC not participating but known to all present) to school coming back in (place) High Rd. Ehm... and again coming back what happened was that as - out of (place) Rd an Italian came in a Mini and hit the Morris Minor really hard, sma-ashed it [claps hands]. And the Morris Minor went up in the air like this [gestures with arms] there's bollards there. As it went up it came down and hit the bollards and this was before seat-belts and I felt of- holding on and stopping and I had concussion I remember that. And his father took me 3 days later to the garage to see the car and I remember in where my thumb and fingers were it was cut and I remember bruising all over my body and the funniest thing was I do remember actually seeing my life flash past me as the as the car was flying through the air. And then when we took me to see the car and (name of Ms father) will testify to this... the steering wheel was bent ... but I had managed to bend the steering wheel ... the back of the seat was nearly a 180 degrees and the brake in the accelerator pedal were both bent. What'd happened the story of the Incredible Hulk they say that you must wrap all your strength to survive I had mustered all my strength to secure myself in the seat [gesturing with arms] and lock myself I had bent the steering wheel, bent the pedals and bent the chair and that's why I had the cuts all over ...

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485
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Int When was this?
G This was - I was 21 when that happened that was 28 years ago [faintly] bloody

495 C = =a light metallic blue Morris Minor I remember it

A On accidents now you've just brought - you see its one story brings another but then again. When I was 17...I I was taking my driving lessons and when I passed my dad promised me that when I passed he would buy me as good a car as he could obviously what he could - you know what he could afford give the man credit anyway. He bought me a 5 year old car and I was 17 years I mean that was a result so I got it I dived in obviously you got a go and show the boys that was when we was training at Holloway (to M)

500
M Uh-huh

505 A yeah 'cause that was when - bringing Akanthou up now again as you say one story brings another, that's where the football originated from - remember Holloway School [pointing to M and C]? So I was driving to there to give it the big 'un and show the boys the cars you know what I mean? I've just passed and I'm Jack the lad. Driving up it was snowing [] icy and slushy it was just a nightmare to drive in I've only just passed and nowhere was going to deter me from speeding is it 'cause I'm Jack the lad sort of thing. So I'm driving down giving it the big 'un. And I remember this as true as

510

I'm here like I said to you, this is 22 years ago wherever it was. I'm driving down and on my right-hand side ... there was a motorbike and normally you should they should be on the left, yeah? And he was trying to overtake me and I wouldn't have it even thought he weather's like

515 All [laughter]

A So as he's like he's approaching me I can see him in my mirror I can see this motorbike getting close -I says -so I put my foot down obviously the weather wouldn't allow it and as I put my foot down..this is where it really got naughty, my back...tyres obviously the back of the car swung to the right hits [claps hands] this motorbike and I'm not being funny I'm looking I'm braking an' at the same time I'm looking at this bloke he flew through the air - on my life like you see on the telly - he flew over the front of me and his bike's skidded, it skidded about a 100 to 150 foot from where I stopped right? and it ended up under a Granada and it was like you know on the side imagine because of the impact, it's lifted literally the front two wheels of the Granada - now his motorbike and he's stuck under there..

520 A [faintly] Goodness

A the bloke was on the left-hand side so like the bikes gone right he's gone left and I've gone straight I don't know how it happened!

530 All [laughing]

A but that's as true as I'm telling - anyway I've got up and I've said, "I've killed him", you know 'cause the bloke was on the floor, obviously the tape can't see this but he was out like that [sitting back in in his chair with his arms and legs spread out]. I said, "ARE YOU ALL RIGHT MATE? he didn't budge. I thought , "Oh no I've killed him". I said, "[] mate?". He goes, "*WHO D' YOU HONESTLY THINK YOU ARE? YOU MAD?*", like that. I said, "Look mate forget that I'm sorry ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?" He goes, "Yeah", he got up and I thought - I literally I put a cross [crossing himself] "Thank God for that". anyway he goes, "Where's my bike? I said, "I think it's gone [laughing] it's gone ah somewhere down there". Anyway we walked up - it took no lie ... 2-3 minutes to actually get to this bike...

535 A [laughing]

A ... and it was under this Ford Granada and it lifted it literally [] the only thing I -like I say I've thank God was that if he was still on the bike he would've been crushed under this car and em sort of the good side to this was after he got up and that was the main thing and I was okay we said look, "Bike, cars, they're immaterial as long as we're okay, we can replace", anyway he and goes to me, "Lets change em insurance detail". I goes, "We can't do that!", he goes, "Why?". I said, "I'll tell you the reason being, my dad's just bought me this right

540 All = =[Laughter]

A and he's warned me a thousand times not speed not to do that and I've had it about 7 to 8 hours this car and I've written it off, I've written your motorbike off right and there's no way [laughing] I can turn up tonight and say, "Dad ... what's our insurance details, I've just had a smash!"...

545 All [laughing]

A ... So I said, "The only I can do is listen, I'll pay ya ... as best as I can", I was just I just started work I was getting like 2 bob an hour whatever it was you get me [laughing] I had no chance anyway. I had to go home and face the truth the music absolutely and I laid my cards on the table and I said, "Listen this has happened", he said, "Look it doesn't matter", and that was a shock of a life time 'cause normally under them circumstances my dad I thought would've like exploded, and it worked out great 'cause we went through insurance everything was done legally and safely, and cutting a long story short none of us were hurt but what - if you would've seen like I say the end result how it all ended up - my car how it was his motorbike and himself you would've said at least one of these people would've been you know severely hospitalised or been killed. Ehm ... that's the last time I sped in snow anyway

560 All [Laughing]

Int But that's great... thank you... you're full of stories...you're full of it [laugh]

A Yeah just yeah it reminded me

565 C = =We had a car crash on the way back from football didn't we? Were you in the car with us (to M) with (name of another LGC not present)? Eh []

as well ... Also it was a drunk driver he was
A = =who (name of LGC just mentioned)?
[laughing]

580 C = =no it was the second car going through a red light and we were going sort of straight on and he hit us on the side I wasn't, it wasn't whatever []

G = =[]

C It was a potentially dangerous situation but it wasn't that bad [3.0]

G My uncle (name) the best at that aint he?

585 M Tell you one of one of the saddest sad saddest days diving I've ever had was when there was er someone who died and they didn't find the body...

Int Ohh!

M and that was that was horrible was basically. What actually happened - we were about eight miles off Little Hampton in this boat. Ahm...we went down about 30 metres to

590 this wreck and we got down an' it was PITCH dark and you couldn't see a thing and all I could hear was someone banging banging on metal where he was obviously trying to take part the boat apart and an' bring it up. And eh so it was like fumbling around and you knew you were on metal because it it felt but you couldn't you couldn't see your hand in front of you it was that murky so I just thought "oh []" ... So after a

595 couple of minutes I thought that's that's you know I'm I'm not bothering with this I'm I'm going back to the surface so I signalled to ah to my buddy that it's time a time to come to the surface so we ah we started goi -started going up and we lost each other 'cause as I said like cause we were near enough holding hands and when we lost each other we just thought okay so you just go up nice and slow so you you survive kind of

560 thing. And we got to the surface okay and we we saw our boat so we signalled it over and we got on board ... and 'cause we'd only -we we'd only been down you know maybe all in all under 15 minutes which -we're supposed to be down gone for about 45 so 15 minutes - everyone else was still down there. God knows what they were doing. But we got on board had a nice cup of tea We were just like ... taking it easy

565 you know and it was nice weather as well so..and em..the others started coming to the surface and then this little inflatable come ah come alongside and said, "Have we seen any ehm any divers surfacing?", we said, "No we haven't seen anyone"... and er what happened was this husband and wife of 8 weeks had come to the surface..they'd hit problems and the guy had let go of his wife and she'd just gone down ...

570 Int =Oh! ...

M and that was it that was the last he saw of her". So he said like you know, "We've lost this guy's wife", so they brought him on board ahm and I'm sitting the guy down and the shock you know I mean he was in - he was completely gone ahm so they radioed the coast guard and and we spent it was probably the next 6 hours doing the figure of 8

575 sear- searching. There was there was us and another boat in the area and a coast guard and helicopter as well [] and just like you know just standing on the side for like and just like searching the sea like that you 'cause you don't realise how big it is until you're searching for someone's head or body, you know. And just going round round looking for 8 hours and you think like this is pointless cause we're never going to find her and ah..I've never felt so empty in my life you know because you're sitting there you got you got this guy on board who's like completely lost it and there [pause 6.0 as his child falls over and starts crying] ... Yeah and going ah -Even driving back that day was just it was horr -horrible 'cause even because because it was a body lost at sea

580 again you had ehm the police were waiting waiting for us when we got back to the port so they wanted statements of everyone and I've never been involved in anything like that before that ahh so they just wanted to know what was going on ... ah ... Driving back to to London was horrible. And then um..ah and then got back put Ceefax on and it was reported on Ceefax as well. And ah never never well they ah I don't think they they found the body to be honest.

585

590 Int (faintly) Gosh! ... Six weeks married (4.0)

M (faintly) [] yeah ... I just felt ... just felt (4.0)

G Right now we're all depressed

M (laughs)

Int Where's A I want a happy story!

595 M [laughs]

G You can have a happy story from me that'll really turn you off

Int A happy story?
G Ye- eah ...Couple
Int Give me a happy story give me a story about a happy experience (7.0)
600 G Aye yeah going an' seeing Chelsea beat Manchester United at Wembley that's a happy experience [laughing]
C Here's a happy one
Int A happy one?
C A good one ...Two two weeks ago ... X ... my partner's er sister gave birth at home in
605 Liverpool um we were all involved in that, we were there at the time ...Um the most amazing day I've ever experienced but I didn't actually - by default I didn't actually get to see the birth I'd been there doing all sorts of things helping the midwives making tea and stuff but it came one point about 6 hours into labour when X came running out of the room and said, "Quick we need some ice". So I went out on my mercy dash..went to every Off License I could find they didn't have any ice.
610 Eventually I ended up at Sainsbury's foud the ice rushed to the front of the queue said, "Look someone's in labour I need this ice", 'Course all the Scousers said, "*Hey go lad yeah*". So I'm driving back on two wheels through Liverpool, I'd been gone for about forty minutes I was getting really anxious thinking they need this ice. Burst into the
615 room with the ice, "So where d'you want the ice? Where we putting it? In the birthing pool", like that and looked down ...and eh the baby had already been born and everybody was laughing at me they needed the ice for drinks
All [laughing]
A [laughing] Nothing to do with the birth mate! For whiskey
620 C True story
Int That's great
C Two weeks ago that was
All (laughing and chatting amongst themselves)
A How long -how late was you?
625 C Pardon?
A How late are were you
C =about ten minutes I missed the boat by about ten minutes ... and er but it was it was absolutely amazing amazing day [3.0]
Int Thanks that's great lovely story funny story actually that comes under funny. (To A).
630 Uhm can you think of a funny no a happy...happy or funny..
A O-oh there's many happy obviously happy times in me life, all two of them [laugh]. Ehm I think the most happiest day was when (daughter's name) was born ... Ah ... she was born seven weeks early that was obviously the sad part bit because (wife's name) went for a routine check on you know having a scan and seeing how the baby's
635 progressing and they discovered that she's the baby'd stop feeding off the placenta and she'd have to deliver straight away and straight away was the next day. So it was like panic stations 'cause fate as it is that's the first scan I missed, I was at every scan for the baby [end of tape - tape turned over] ... you see that was the only scan that I missed
M [faintly) Can you rewind?
640 A just did it [laugh] the only scan I missed the only scan I missed rewind the only scan I missed [laugh]
All [laughing] no
Int it'll just be dots dots dots in my transcription
A right so um...I got the phone call at work you can imagine like (name of C speaker)
645 said you was driving I was driving on one wheel mate telling ya I got to Chase Farm in seven minutes from Muswell Hill and that's an average of a twenty to twenty five minute journey
Int Yeah!
A I got there in no time you no nothing was gonna stop me I got there an' they said "I'm
650 afraid to say the wife...you know (wife's name) goes "I've been admitted in and they gonna -tomorrow morning I'm going to have a caesarean" So this was obviously the sad part which is building up to the happy part and basically I was there for her AND (wife's name) went IN...obviously preparing I was trying to keep her as calm as possible things were going okay..er there was a Chinese anaesthetist and he was on the
655 ball this man knew his job and every time you know like things were getting a bit uh well he was checking the machine if you needed anything you know he was on the

ball. And he was like peeping like and he was going to me everything's going well.
 ME being ME there was a gap of about THREE inches on the screen you know they
 put the
 660 screen in front of (wife's name)... so it was (wife's name) head here [indicating with
 arm movements] and I was sitting behind her and the Chinese man behind me and
 there was a screen like that so (wife's name) legs were towards say that way [gesturing
 towards X] and the fate was there was about a 3 inch gap and every time there was a
 bit of movement I was sort of popping me head round [gesturing with body] to how
 665 things were going.. and it's not a nice thing to see I won't go too into details but it was
 a very SCARY thing what was going on inside of (wife's name) body you know into
 her belly an' all of a sudden he said, "*The baby*" an' the minute he said the baby I
 jumped up and I saw little (baby's name) and she started crying and that was the
 happiest day of my life one of the happiest moments and they actually brought her
 670 round to us for about 10 seconds just to see the baby but they had to rush 'cause of the
 circumstances to get the baby to make sure she was okay but the buzz of seeing the
 baby come out of her mum was just electric electric believe me it's an experience of a
 lifetime whoever's witnessed it would say the same thing but your own is always more
 special it's a natural sort of thing you know it's amazing that was the happiest day
 675 AND obviously getting married to (wife's name) was the joint thing as well [pauses
 tape and pulls a face]
 All [laughing]
 Int Thanks everybody that's been great
 A I hope that's sufficient

Transcription Key

?	question or uncertainty
!	surprise
WORDS IN CAPITALS	emphatic stress and/ or increase in volume
“ ”	indicates direct speech
<i>"italics"</i>	captures the marked change in voice quality in direct speech of narrator or when narrator mimics another
(names and places)	names and locations not given but indicated in brackets
[]	non-transcribable speech
[laughs]	paralinguistic and non verbal information
=	interruption
= =	overlap
...	pauses of under 3 seconds
(3.0)	pause of 3 seconds in utterance
[3.0]	interval between turns
-dash	false start/ restart
a-and	elongation of word

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