Narrative Works
Issues, Investigations, & Interventions

My Wartime Self: Meaning Construction in Narratives of World War II

Julie B. Wiest

Volume 3, numéro 1, 2013

URI : https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1062055ar
DOI : https://doi.org/10.7202/1062055ar

Aller au sommaire du numéro

Éditeur(s)

Centre for Interdisciplinary Research on Narrative, St. Thomas University

ISSN

1925-0622 (numérique)

Découvrir la revue

Citer cet article

Wiest, J. (2013). My Wartime Self: Meaning Construction in Narratives of World War II. *Narrative Works*, *3*(1). https://doi.org/10.7202/1062055ar

Résumé de l'article

We are all storytellers. We tell stories in a variety of settings, to a variety of audiences, and for a variety of reasons. We tell structured stories about personal experiences—narratives—as a means of understanding the past, constructing identities, and communicating ourselves to others. Drawing on social psychological literature on narratives, identities, and autobiographical memories, this study examines the construction, recitation, and evaluation of 28 World War II veterans' narratives. Findings indicate cultural influences in the ways these veterans constructed their war stories, the ways they constructed meanings about their war experiences, and the ways they constructed their identities in relation to those experiences.

NARRATIVE WORKS
Issues, Investigations, & Interventions

My Wartime Self: Meaning Construction in Narratives of World War II[1]

Julie B. Wiest
West Chester University

We are all storytellers. We tell stories in a variety of settings, to a variety of audiences, and for a variety of reasons. We tell structured stories about personal experiences—narratives—as a means of understanding the past, constructing identities, and communicating ourselves to others. Drawing on social psychological literature on narratives, identities, and autobiographical memories, this study examines the construction, recitation, and evaluation of 28 World War II veterans' narratives. Findings indicate cultural influences in the ways these veterans constructed their war stories, the ways they constructed meanings about their war experiences, and the ways they constructed their identities in relation to those experiences.

Storytelling can serve as a vehicle for understanding and communicating one's self to others and simultaneously establishing identities within a particular cultural and social context. People tell stories for a variety of reasons, but the storyteller necessarily presents some purpose or intention in narrative form and tailored to a particular audience. Narrative order increases the storyteller's ability to make sense of his or her experiences and identities, as well as increases the likelihood of audience acceptance of the story—and the aspects of the storyteller's self he or she wishes to convey through it. Cultural norms, values, and traditions influence what stories are told and why they are told, as well as what stories are not worth telling, and privilege particular stories over others.

[1]I would like to thank Dr. Suzanne B. Kurth, of The University of Tennessee, for her generous help with this manuscript and support of several other projects. I also owe a debt of gratitude to the honorable men who shared such an important part of their lives with me for this project; I am grateful for the opportunity to help document and disseminate their extraordinary stories.

The ways we tell stories and evaluate them are enormously influenced by the culture in which we live. Stories are structured according to a pre-established, culturally defined formula and assessed according to how well they fit with this narrative blueprint. The ubiquity of stories, starting in early socialization, encourages us to adhere to narrative structure in our storytelling as if it were instinctive, and routinely evaluate our own and others' narratives according to dominant cultural values. Narratives are not merely means of expressing information about our pasts, but they help us construct identities, relate to others, and assign meaning to experiences.

Drawing on social psychological literature on narratives, identities, and autobiographical memories, this study explores meaning construction in the war narratives of World War II veterans to further understanding about how culture influences narrative construction, the ways we interpret and share experiences, and the ways we construct our identities in relation to those experiences. The war story has become a type of dominant cultural narrative, despite the great variety of roles and circumstances that are part of any war effort, and its deconstruction is important for uncovering cultural meanings and narrative processes.

Literature Review

Much of the literature focuses on the effects of war on veterans' mental and physical health and family lives (e.g., Gimbel & Booth, 1994; Hendrix & Anelli, 1993; Ikin et al., 2009; Laufer, Gallops, & Frey-Wouters, 1984; O'Nell, 1999; Pavalko & Elder, 1990), though some scholars focus on the effects of war service on families (Dekel et al., 2005; Demers, 2009). Looking at World War II, Elder (1987) examined the differential effects of service by exploring whether the age at which men were mobilized affected the life course of survivors. After analyzing archival records of veterans from the San Francisco Bay area, he found that those who joined the military before age 21 experienced educational and developmental benefits, with few negative long-term effects, while those who joined after age 21 experienced few advantages and suffered occupational and familial consequences.

A study of World War II veterans conducted soon after the war rejected the idea that all or most veterans were affected by their wartime experiences in an identical way. Crespi and Shapleigh (1946) surveyed 199 veteran-students on their attitudes about family relationships, autonomy, religion, sex and morality, alcohol consumption, prejudice,

and need for entertainment, and found that veterans in their sample were differentially affected by the wartime experiences. In contrast to research emphasizing negative psychological effects of war, this study concluded that, for many World War II veterans, "wartime experiences have occasioned constructive changes in personality in respect to capacity for meeting the problems of postwar readjustment" (Crespi & Shapleigh, 1946, p. 372). The researchers encouraged an approach that emphasizes how veterans may see themselves in relation to their wartime experiences. Although survey data was utilized in this study, the authors' conclusions beg for qualitative inquiry. In a different line of inquiry, Onkst (1998) argued that African-American World War II veterans, especially in the South, experienced the return to civilian life differently. In particular, he argued that African-Americans in Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi were unable to fully use the G.I. Bill because of a combination of racial discrimination and poor administration of the Bill's benefits.

Some scholars have studied the effects of war on veterans' beliefs and attitudes. For example, Schreiber (1979) employed secondary data from three cross-sectional surveys of American adults to compare Vietnam- and World War II-era veterans with nonveterans to determine whether there seemed to be any differences in attitudes toward the military, the government, international affairs, authoritarianism, and violence. Except for a somewhat more favorable attitude toward the military among veterans, findings showed few attitudinal differences between veterans and nonveterans to the topics included in the study.

Much recent research on veterans' wartime experiences has focused on war stresses and traumatic memories. Parr (2007) interviewed thirteen New Zealand World War II veterans in the early 1990s and met with them thirteen years later to assess the impact of disclosing traumatic memories in the earlier interviews. She found that although most had discussed those experiences with her for the first time in those interviews, they reported relief for having done so but did not continue such discussions with others (e.g., friends or family). Burnell, Coleman, and Hunt (2010) examined narratives of 10 British male World War II veterans regarding their war experiences, traumatic memories, and experiences of social support in an effort to identify ways veterans' friends and family can provide support that will aid in reconciliation of traumatic memories. Other scholars have explored ways veterans manage stress and trauma associated with their service: Buntz (2003) examined the "discourse of trauma" in poetry written by Vietnam War veterans; Michel (2004) studied the reflection of war experiences in artwork

created by Vietnam War veterans; and Hopkin (2004, p. 188) examined memoirs written by 18th- and 19th-century French soldiers and sailors to uncover ways they "made sense of their experiences, expressed their understanding to others, and devised strategies to cope with the circumstances of their lives."

In addition to those already discussed (Burnell, Coleman, & Hunt, 2010; Parr, 2007), other scholars have used narratives or life stories as a method of analysis in studies of war veterans. Lomsky-Feder (2004) examined the life stories of 63 Israeli men who all served in the Yom Kippur War to explore how memories of war are socially constructed. O'Nell (1999) interviewed Native American Vietnam veterans to examine how they spoke about their combat experiences. Although she acknowledged cultural indictors within the narratives, she paid little attention to the structure of the narratives themselves. Hagopian (2000) examined war narratives of Vietnam veterans and found a strong adherence to narrative order, audience awareness, and social and cultural influences in the recounting of the stories. He found that veterans often recount their wartime experiences in typical story form—with a beginning, middle, and end—and that veteran-storytellers often embellish particular details of their experiences or adjust their stories to suit the perceived expectations of their audience. In addition, he found a recurring theme in the narratives, that of "Vietnam veterans as victims," a long-lasting stereotype of Vietnam veterans made popular in the 1980s by veterans' advocates (Hagopian, 2000, p. 595). This theme indicates a cultural influence on the veterans' recollection and interpretation of past experiences and construction of identities. If these veterans' stories were shaped by cultural meanings about the Vietnam War, then World War II veterans' narratives may also be influenced by well-established stereotypes of their cohort as "the Greatest Generation" and of World War II as the "Last Great War" or the "Good War."

Much scholarly research on veterans is based on survey data and attempts to identify psychological effects of military service during times of war or the consequences of military service on veterans as they readjust to civilian life and throughout the life course. Too few scholars have undertaken qualitative studies of veterans' descriptions of wartime experiences, which likely would lead to a greater understanding, not just of those veterans' experiences, but of social and cultural influences in the recollection, interpretation, and recounting of experience in general. Narrative analysis is a valuable tool for this pursuit, both because of the

depth of understanding it affords and because of the prominence of storytelling in American culture.

Narrative and Storytelling

Scholars in a variety of disciplines have theorized about the importance of storytelling and narratives as social and cultural phenomena (Berger & Quinney, 2005; Ewick & Silbey, 1995; Griffin, 1993; Harvey, 1996; Hollander & Gordon, 2006; Josselson, 2006; Maines, 1993; Maines, 1999; Maines, 2000; Maines & Ulmer, 1993; McAdams, 2001; Nelson, 2003; Ochs & Capps, 1996; Peterson & Langellier, 2006; Stanley, 1993), and many have employed narrative as a method of analysis (Arendell, 1992; Bamberg, 2004; Evans & Maines, 1995; Hole, 2007; Johnson & Paoletti, 2004; Johnstone, 2006; Labov, 2006; Mason-Schrock, 1996; Reynolds & Taylor, 2005; Stokoe & Edwards, 2006). Stories are ubiquitous in social life and have taken many forms, such as myth, gossip, epics, legends, literature, history, cinema, and traditions (Maines & Ulmer, 1993). Narrative scholars argue that stories serve as a fundamental means of not only making sense of our lives, but also for transmitting meaning to others.

Mead (1934) argues that meaning is only generated through interpretation—humans act first, and then interpret that action. This interpretation often is accomplished through stories. Remembering events and recounting them for others require the storyteller to make countless decisions, often without awareness. Decisions about what is worth remembering and retelling come early—during what Labov (2006) calls "pre-construction"—followed by decisions about who should hear the story; what details should be included; when, where, and why the story should be told; and what message the storyteller wishes to communicate. In this way, "stories *are* interpretation" (Maines & Ulmer, 1993, p. 118).

These interpretations are rooted in a particular culture and can never represent one "true" accounting of some past event. Ewick & Silbey (1995, p. 206) argue that "stories are always told within particular historical, institutional, and interactional contexts that shape their telling, its meanings and effects. They are told with particular interests, motives, and purposes in mind." Narratives are also social performances (Ewick & Silbey, 1995; Orbuch, 1997), and a storyteller varies his or her narrative performance according to the setting; the knowledge, familiarity, and status of his or her audience (Kraus, 2006; Maines, 1999; Ochs & Capps, 1996); and current social expectations, norms, and values.

The importance of storytelling is emphasized within American culture, which also influences what constitutes a "good" story. These values are taught early in life (Harvey, 1996; Ochs & Capps, 1996) through our interactions with parents and other caregivers. Nelson (2003) describes the emergence of a "cultural self" in children: "This process is slow and massively interactive, eventuating in a culturally saturated concept of self, an autobiographical memory self with a specific self-history and imagined self-future that reflects the values, expectations, and forms of the embedding culture" (p. 4). Thus, culture influences *what* we remember, *how* we remember it, and what significance we assign to it. Through socialization, we learn not only how to tell a story, but also how to evaluate one (Harvey, 1996; McAdams, 2001).

The features of stories are part of our socialization, and we anticipate them when a story is told and perhaps could not understand an event's recounting without them. Although "storytelling is a conversational activity" (Maines, 1999, p. 318), stories are not merely words, nor are they simply sequences of information arranged in chronological order (Maines & Ulmer, 1993). A story has a distinct beginning, middle, and end, and within the story, a plot is established, characters are introduced, complications arise and are resolved, and some message is transmitted. These features of a story are widely recognized and likewise acknowledged as essential elements in narratives (Griffin, 1993; Hart, 1992; Maines, 1993; Maines & Ulmer, 1993; Nelson, 2003; Peterson & Langellier, 2006). Because of the centrality of stories and time in modern life, the use of the narrative form is an appealing way to recount our personal past experiences (Stanley, 1993).

Narratives incorporate three minimally necessary elements (Ewick & Silbey, 1995; Maines, 1993; Maines & Ulmer, 1993). First, a narrative must focus on some experience selected from the past for the purpose of description. Second, the events included in the experience must be arranged in story form—with a distinct beginning, middle, and end, and an established setting, plot, and characters. Third, the events must be somehow linked to one another and arranged in chronological order "so that questions of how and why events happened can be established and the narrative elements can acquire features of tempo, duration, and pace" (Maines, 1993, p. 21). Of these three elements of narrative, the second, or "emplotment" element, is the most important (Maines, 1993; Maines, 2000; Hart, 1992), for this is where meaning is created.

Although we tell narratives to make sense of our experiences and lives and convey meaning to others (Fischer & Gorblirsch, 2006;

Freeman, 2006; Zerubavel, 1997), we are selective about who should receive particular messages. For various reasons, we include some in our audience and exclude others. Examining when and why stories are told may further reveal the intentions of the narrator.

The cultural and social contexts of a story also allow for comparisons or valuations of experiences. Storytellers must first decide that the particular event or series of events they are preparing to describe is tellable, or worth reporting (Bamberg, 2004; Labov, 2006; Shuman, 2006), though this decision is most often implicit and influenced by cultural norms. Some stories are privileged over others (McAdams, 2001), typically those that "embody cherished values, represent dominant ideological beliefs, and represent ways through which national and cultural identities are created and sustained" (Maines & Ulmer, 1993, p. 120). Not only are particular narratives privileged over others, but some narrators seem to be permitted over others to tell particular stories (Ochs & Capps, 1996; Shuman, 2006; Strauss, 1982)—again, typically those who most strongly adhere to cultural ideals.

Stories about major life events, such as weddings, graduations, and retirements, are so ubiquitous that we have come to understand new ones as merely versions of a common story. People often use "master story-patterns," or a dominant narrative, to construct their own version of a culturally familiar story (Mason-Schrock, 1996; Nelson, 2003; Ochs & Capps, 1996; Peterson & Langellier, 2006). They may describe their own wedding, graduation, retirement, or any number of other experiences according to some idealized narrative circulating in the culture as a way to frame their experience and make it meaningful to themselves and their audience. Adherence to a dominant narrative also provides a framework for evaluating stories in comparison to the idealized version.

Stories both constitute and interpret human lives, as "stories describe the world as it is lived and understood by the storyteller" (Ewick & Silbey, 1995, p. 198). Berger and Quinney (2005) argue that "storytelling secures and increases our consciousness and extends the reality of our experiences" (p. 8). Because we cannot revisit past experiences, we use stories to preserve our pasts (Maines & Ulmer, 1993) and even to construct our memories (Bamberg, 2004). Further, narratives are also a means of constructing identities and finding meaning in our lives (Berger & Quinney, 2005). "By telling what happened to us once upon a time, we make sense of who we are today" (Mason-Schrock, 1996, p. 176). The self is established, maintained, and adapted through interactions and discourse with others, and the stories we tell about our

lives contribute to an understanding of the world, of others, and of ourselves (Fischer & Goblirsch, 2006; Kraus, 2006).

McAdams (2001) argues that "identity itself takes the form of a story, complete with setting, scenes, character, plot, and theme" (p. 101). In late adolescence and early adulthood, people begin to construct a narrative of self (McAdams, 2001) that makes sense of past events, experiences, and identities (Orbuch, 1997). This is how we come to know ourselves and relate to others (Ochs & Capps, 1996). Maines & Ulmer (1993, p. 118) argue: "The self-abstracted person, so clearly seen in adulthood, is one who has acquired a biography and thereby can tell his or her life story. A definition of what it means to be human, therefore, must include the idea that humans are self-narrating" (p. 118).

Selves do not remain the same across time, however, and selves from the past do not necessarily coincide with those of the present. Thus, "we use narrative as a tool for probing and forging connections between our unstable, situated selves" (Ochs & Capps, 1996, p. 29), or for reorganizing our many selves into a unified whole (Kraus, 2006). Often, people divide their life story into chronological chapters (Conway, 1990; Conway & Pleydell-Pearce, 2000; McAdams, 2001) and confine their storytelling within those autobiographical timeframes and their understanding of situational norms. "Lifetime periods mark off relatively large segments of autobiographical time: 'when I was in elementary school,' 'during my first marriage,' 'when the kids were little,' and so on" (McAdams, 2001, p. 108). Arranging self-narratives in this way provides a means of understanding various situated selves and evaluating lifetime periods (Conway & Pleydell-Pearce, 2000; Ochs & Capps, 1996). Conway (1990) argues that this organization of our past selves also aids in memory retrieval.

Many scholars believe people have a conception of some "true self," which is the self they believe is most in line with their closely held values and beliefs and that which remains constant across social situations (Erickson, 1995; Mason-Schrock, 1996; Gecas & Burke, 1995). The notion of having a "true self" also provides an evaluative tool when looking at past selves to identify undesirable behaviors or experiences as "not me."

Instead of telling their audience that a particular experience or behavior in their narrative is "not me," people may also adjust their narratives to represent a "truer" self. This is particularly common in narratives of older people (McAdams, 2001). As people age, they may become more concerned with leaving a message or image for the next

generation and may adjust their early-life and middle-life narratives to provide a "good ending" (McAdams, 2001, p. 107).

Finally, narratives frequently are substantiated with "things." Photographs, videos, and audio recordings are tools that serve to "capture the past" so we can remember past events and people and provide access to those memories for others (Zerubavel, 1997). Objects "embody goals, make skills manifest, and shape the identities of their users" (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981, p. 1). Without words, things tell us and others who we are, what is important to us, and why (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981). In their research, Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton (1981) found photographs to be extremely important things in families' homes, for reasons including their perceived contribution toward preserving the memory of close relatives and personal ties, contribution to a sense of personal continuity, and influence on the future identity of descendants.

Methodology

This study analyzes war narratives to explore: (1) cultural influences in the ways veterans construct their war stories; (2) the ways veterans construct meanings about their war experiences; and (3) the ways veterans construct their identities in relation to those experiences. In the spring of 2004, I was asked by a minister at a church in Knoxville, Tennessee, a medium-size metropolitan area in the Southeast, to write a book compiling the World War II experiences of the veterans who are members of the church. I began recruiting veterans by briefly speaking about the project at the weekly meeting of an all-male Bible class at the church, and 12 initially agreed to be interviewed. More veterans heard about the project through an announcement in the church bulletin or through other church members and contacted me to be interviewed.

In-depth interviews were conducted during the summer of 2004; each interview lasted two to three hours on average, and all were audio recorded. Twenty-three of the interviews were conducted in an office at the church, four were conducted in the veterans' homes, and one was conducted by telephone. After transcription and editing, the stories were compiled and published as a book (Wiest, 2006). Because the veterans knew their stories were going to be published, they were aware that I, as the interviewer, was not their only audience member. The anticipated audience also included family members, church members, and other regional residents. Participants also were invited to bring to the interview

any war mementos (e.g., photographs, documents, medals, etc.) they wished to show. Thirty men were interviewed, but two were eliminated from this analysis because they were not active members of the military during World War II and instead filled other roles during the war (one was a newspaper war correspondent, and the other worked on the Manhattan Project in Oak Ridge, Tennessee). The sample for this study includes 28 white men ranging in age from 77 to 91.

Not only are interviews a frequently employed scientific method, but our "interview society" means people are accustomed to telling "their story" to an interviewer. We are used to responding to questions about our experience, and we are used to attempting to contextualize and otherwise make meaningful that experience for our interviewer and audience. An implication is that we have come to expect that interviews generate information about experiences that is useful and applicable to others (Atkinson & Silverman, 1997; Denzin, 2000). Therefore, interviewees frequently speak in generalities rather than specifics—even about their own experiences—because they assume that is the interest of the interviewer and audience (Chase, 2005). Although frequently employing the interview method, narrative analysis assumes a somewhat different approach to data collection. Chase (2005) argues that "think[ing] of an interviewee as a narrator is to make a conceptual shift away from the idea that interviewees have answers to researchers' questions and toward the idea that interviewees are narrators with stories to tell and voices of their own" (p. 660). Narrative researchers, then, must invite interviewees to tell their specific stories (Chase, 2005), or become narrators, to break free from the question-and-answer format and begin simply *narrating*. This often means the researcher must prepare for the interviews by uncovering the parameters of the story that the narrator has to tell and developing broad questions to support the narration when needed. Above all, the narrative researcher must be much more a listener than interviewer or active member of an interview conversation.

In this study, each veteran initially was asked to "tell me about your experience in the war." Not only is this a common interviewing technique for narrative analysis, but it allows participants the "possibility of presenting themselves by elaborating past events in narrative, events that are important for their self-understanding" and allows for "reactions in any thematic or temporal order" (Fischer & Goblirsch, 2006, pp. 30-31). When needed, probing questions were asked throughout the interviews. Probes generally only requested more specific information (e.g., "Can you give me an example of that?") or were based on

parameters of the "World War II story" to help guide the narrative (e.g., "What did you think about the bombing of Pearl Harbor?"; "What were you doing on D-Day?"; "Do you remember your reaction when you heard about the atomic bomb?").

Analysis of narratives requires listening to the narrators' voices—both within each narrative and across narratives. For this analysis, I listened and looked closely within and across narratives for indications of cultural influences on the ways these veterans constructed their war stories, the ways they constructed meanings about their war experiences, and the ways they constructed their identities in relation to those experiences. Three themes consistently emerged within and across narratives, which are described next: (1) constructing the war story; (2) substantiating the story; and (3) presenting the "wartime self" as a situated self.

Findings

Constructing the War Story

Every veteran in this study followed narrative order when recounting his war experience. Nearly all began their story at the time they joined the military, described their war experiences in chronological order, and ended with when they were discharged from service. The typical cast of characters included family members, girlfriends and wives, and close war buddies. Some included characters that seemed to fill a familiar role in a war story—villains, heroes, and cowards. Several forgot some details, such as dates or names, or remembered events out of chronological order. Whenever they recognized these lapses, however, they became visibly upset and asked to "go back" so they could include the details in sequential order. This indicates a strong adherence to narrative order and the storytellers' desire to tell their stories "accurately."

Because they assumed many of the settings would be unfamiliar to their audience, most of the veterans included detailed descriptions of the topography, weather, and mood to set the scene. Al Holmes, who headed an Army bakery unit in New Guinea and the Philippines during the war, described the unusual weather in New Guinea:

> Shortly thereafter I was shipped overseas to the southwest Pacific, and the first place I went was New Guinea, and this place was

> supposedly the second-wettest place in the world—I believe it because it would pour down rain, then the sun would come out, and two hours later the trucks would roll down the road in a cloud of dust. Then it would rain again. It was so damp that all your leather and everything else would mildew. I had a GI haircut when I was in OCS and then I let my hair grow when I got to New Guinea, but a few days later I discovered long hair was not the thing to have because it would mildew—everything would mildew.

The metaphoric description used by Jim Talley, a navigator in the Army Air Corps, depicts a typical day at his first training facility:

> They woke you up every morning with Glenn Miller's "Sunrise Serenade" over the loud speaker. I mean, it was the country club of the U.S. Air Force at Coral Gables.

This description by Wallace Baumann, a member of the Army's 10th Armored Division, creates a clear image of the scene of his departure:

> We all got on this big, long troop train, and the funny thing was, it was in the middle of the day, and right in the middle of the morning, we went right across the main street of Augusta, Georgia —Broad Street—and all the people in town were looking at us. We were hanging out of the windows, and all the people were waving "goodbye," and I'm sure they hated to see us go. We were a big boost to their economy. Every weekend, we'd go in town and go to the movies, restaurants, and whatever they did.

Every veteran appeared to be aware of his audience—primarily perceived to be both me, as the interviewer, and church members—and tailored his story accordingly. Many referred to me by name or other form of address (e.g., "young lady"), and some of their descriptions indicated their awareness of my relative age, status as scholar, and familiarity with the Knoxville area.

Joe Brownlee, an aviation engineer in the Army Air Corps, first asked about my affiliation with the local university, and then acknowledged my familiarity with the campus and the age difference between us:

> So you're familiar with the campus. Well, it's a much bigger campus now than it was in 1947 or '46. At any rate, I was in school and I had classes at least one class once or twice a week at Ayres Hall.

Kay Ogden, an Army soldier who spent most of the wartime in medical school, acknowledging my familiarity with the Knoxville area and the university, discussed well-known local people, including university personnel and a local businessman:

> You may know Ed Boling, who was president of the university—he was in basic training with me. Charles Brakebill, who was Boling's right-hand man, was in basic training with me. Doug Matthews, who started the Brown Squirrel [furniture store], was in basic training with me, and we went through Ft. McClellan in the heat of the summer in Alabama.

Gordon Ford, a member of the Navy, described the differences in going to the movies in the 1940s and now. Including this explanation indicated his awareness of our age difference:

> At that time, every movie between showings there would be the newsreel and a comedy. There was always a comedy, and they always had the newsreels. The comedy and newsreel were, sometimes, better than the movie itself. But, there were some good movies in those days.

Relating to their audience of church members, many included information that emphasized their religious identities and their relationship with the church. This awareness may have been heightened because most of the interviews took place in an office at the church. The following examples make clear the importance in storytelling of establishing a personal connection between the storyteller and his or her audience.

Jim Talley and Bill Tate, both navigators in the Army Air Corps, each discussed a Bible they received from the church, emphasizing its importance:

> I had a little New Testament that Dr. McGukin had given me from First Presbyterian Church, and I kept that in a locker all the

> time—it was kind of a security thing for me. I would hear from the church every now and then. [My wife] and I were born into the First Presbyterian Church—we've been there all our lives.
>
> [Being in a prisoner-of-war camp] made a lot better, stronger Christian out of me. I brought my book, but I've got this little Testament that this church gave me . . . and it is absolutely falling to pieces.. . .They let me keep that little Testament and my toothbrush. There is not enough money to buy that little Testament from me, and, like I said, I read a little of it just about every night.

Those who joined the church later in life also tended to offer proof of a bond with church members or tie to the church. Ed Coleman, who served as a dentist in the Navy, established a connection through his wife's membership:

> I am from Plainview, Texas, originally; I'm not a Knoxvillian. My wife is a Knoxvillian—she was born here, and they belonged to this church all their lives.

Al Holmes, though not a life-long member of First Presbyterian Church, emphasizes his and his wife's commitment to the denomination:

> I grew up in Broad Street Presbyterian Church in Columbus, Ohio; came down here and joined the Presbyterian Church in Knoxville; went to Florida on a business trip; called on some former neighbors of mine in Columbus, Ohio, who had moved to Florida in retirement years. While I was in their living room visiting, this pretty little girl walked in. She was the daughter of their neighbors. Right then and there, I decided I needed to really work on that Florida territory. So, we were married in St. Petersburg, Florida, at the First Presbyterian Church of St. Petersburg, where she was a member. So, we're solidly Presbyterian. My background is Presbyterian, and hers is too.

Most included funny anecdotes and culturally familiar stories in an apparent effort to make their experiences more relatable to their audience:

> We were in Zamboanga, and as the story goes, Zamboanga is where the monkeys have no tails. Have you ever heard that song? They're bitten off by whales. All I can say is, a lot of monkeys lost their tails on account of that song. (Al Holmes)

> We had the Glenn Miller Band onboard ship—Ray McKinley had taken over the band when Glenn Miller died in the war. We had the Glenn Miller Band with Johnny Desmond, the singer, and the actor Broderick Crawford was on it. He later won an Oscar for a movie. But, anyway, every afternoon at about 5:30, the band would play for about an hour for us on the top deck, and then we would get in the mess line and go down and have your mess—your supper—then you could go back and listen some more. They played for us every afternoon, and it was wonderful. (Wallace Baumann)

Common characteristics that stood out the most in the veterans' wartime narratives were descriptions of routine events and the transformation of extraordinary events into ordinary ones. The former is consistent with depictions of military life, which tend to include mostly boredom highlighted by action. Some discussed the horrors they experienced, but most of the narratives incorporated in-depth descriptions of everyday occurrences, or a onetime event that was, for some reason, significant for them. When an extraordinary event was recounted, the veteran typically downplayed its significance. It is possible that some of the veterans discussed mundane details as a means to avoid telling distressing or tragic stories, likely not the types of stories they wished to preserve.

Tom Dempster, a member of the Naval Air Corps, describes an otherwise unremarkable mealtime experience, except for a detail that was notable for him and helped establish a connection with his audience:

> One day, we were on a mission. We had made our bomb run, and we were returning home, and we broke out lunch, which was what was called a C-ration. It was a little box with some dry food in it. One of the things in there was a piece of chewing gum. So, after I had finished eating all this dried stuff that they had furnished for a bite of lunch, I popped that piece of chewing gum in my mouth and chewed it up, and it just fell apart—crumbled—it was like sand in my mouth. And I said, "This is horrible. They call this

> chewing gum?" And I picked up the wrapper and looked at it, and it said "Walla Walla Gum Company, Knoxville, Tennessee."

Jim Talley describes how a common habit nearly kept him from his chosen branch of the military. In this case, his foresight seemed to be a source of confidence and pride:

> I used to bite my fingernails as I was growing up, and I knew ahead of time what was going to happen, so I quit biting my fingernails. The first thing they did in classification was to tell you to put your hands on the table, and they checked to see if you bit your fingernails, and if you bit your fingernails, they didn't want you in the Air Force—nerves.

Conway Garlington, a member of the Naval Air Corps, described a favorite pastime that earned him some free meals and also reiterated his religious identity and connection with his audience:

> Another thing we used to do when we were still cadets in Columbia when I first started: we'd get off on a weekend, and we used to go to church, and then we would come outside and sort of stand around, waiting for someone to ask us to go home for dinner. We got a lot of invitations. People wanted to help these young men in the service.

Although most of the veterans volunteered for the military, several shrugged off their willingness to join and serve during the war as something "everyone" did, thereby making their own behavior seem ordinary:

> Before I went into the Army—that spring and summer of '42—if you met a friend, you didn't ask him if he was going into the service, but what branch of the service he was going into. You assumed that everyone was going in; there wasn't any dispute about if you were going in. Nobody even considered that they wouldn't, and people who, for some reason, could not get in the service—had physical problems or something that kept them from being eligible to go into the service—they were terribly embarrassed, and we felt sorry for them that they couldn't go in the service and serve the country. (Joe Brownlee)

As previously suggested, examining when and why stories are told may further reveal the intentions of the narrator. In this study, the veterans were asked to share their wartime narratives. Although there appeared to be factors that led them to agree to tell their narratives, the recruitment process alone may have pressured or otherwise influenced some of the veterans to share at that particular time. Some of the veterans mentioned that they had never shared their war experiences with anyone before. Wallace Baumann seemed to imply that he would have been willing to discuss his war experiences, but only if asked:

> I guess [my family was] so glad to have me back that we just never talked about it. If we did, I don't remember. So, you are probably the first person that I ever really sat down and talked to about a lot of this stuff. . . . When I came home, you know, it's funny, nobody in my family ever asked me to tell them what we went through, what we experienced, what we saw. We really were so glad to be home that we really didn't care to talk about it. I guess, on rare occasion, my cousin Fred . . . told me a little bit. . . . I'm sure he must have asked me a few things. But, my mother and father, my grandfather never asked. I never discussed it.

Perhaps war veterans find it difficult to discuss traumatic memories until later in life. Another explanation for their decision to share their experiences after so much time is because, mostly in their 80s, they were at an age when many people begin to face their mortality. As people age, they try to make sense of their life experiences and often want to ensure that others, particularly members of younger generations, hear their stories and carry on their messages. Peterson and Langellier (2006), argue that narratives provide a way to order lived experiences and meanings "into a cultural form that can be understood and passed along to succeeding generations as it is told and retold over time" (p. 179). Several of the veterans mentioned the increasing death rate among World War II veterans in general and their friends or war cronies in particular, indicating that they may have been increasingly aware of their own mortality.

> [At a reunion], I ran into a couple of fellows from my squadron. One fellow whose picture I've got, a fellow named Hill that lived in California, was there, and he was with his son and his wife, and they practically had to carry him around, he was in such bad

> shape. He had Alzheimer's and Parkinson's. He shouldn't have been there, but he had enough sense in him back in his head that he wanted to go to the last reunion. He died shortly after that. No, we are at that age—I read in the paper the last few days that World War II veterans are dying at the rate of 1,000 a day. (Tom Evans)

> Now I'm spending most of my time going to funerals. All my friends are dying now. I had this great class at McCallie—there were 99 in my graduating class, and I think there are 12 of us left, and there's only one left in Chattanooga. I went to a funeral the week before last, and I'm going to a funeral this afternoon, and my friends are dying off rapidly. And, of course, every time I put on the TV, they remind me there's at least a thousand veterans a day from World War II dying. You have probably heard that on television yourself. I'm trying to postpone me being a statistic for a while anyway. (Jim Talley)

Ochs and Capps (1996) found that "narratives are often launched in response to current worries, complaints, and conflicts" (p. 25). The war in Iraq may have influenced some of the veterans' decisions to tell their wartime stories. (At the time of most of the interviews, during the summer of 2004, the United States had been at war with Iraq for a little longer than a year.) Those who mentioned the Iraq war made comparisons with World War II and their experiences and expressed strong feelings about the perceived differences. Their veteran status may have created a feeling of authority or entitlement to convey their feelings about the current war:

> The vision of seeing literally thousands of troops on that ship panic and running and jumping off while we're shelling them, and just seeing them slaughtered like that, was a vision you just don't want to think about. And that's the thing that most men in combat come away with—the vision of things like that. That just tells you never, never go to war unless it is the last resort. We made a foolish error in going into Iraq. It's been nothing but chaos since. (E.B. Copeland, who served with the Army's 244th Coast Artillery Corps)

> I also went to a school called the Air Inspector School that was—you could compare it to the FBI—a group of people who go around and inspect to see that the rules are carried out in the various Air Force bases. For instance, this thing that got so much publicity that happened in Iraq in the prisons there—the hazing, I call it. I don't think they hurt those guys; they just humiliated them. It was a terrible thing to do. If that had happened on an Air Force base, the air inspectors should have known about it. (Tom Evans)

The veterans in this study showed a keen awareness of a dominant war narrative. They framed their own narratives in relation to their understanding of what a war story "should be" and evaluated their own and others' narratives according to that awareness. Several described quite clearly what they understood a war story to be, both its narrative form and what should be included, such as combat, danger, and bloodshed.

Tom Evans, a pilot in the Army Air Corps, described how a war story is typically defined in American culture:

> This is a little bit different from the usual run-of-mill, where a guy is trained to fly an airplane, he goes overseas, flies a bomber, comes home, gets out of the service, raises a family, and forgets World War II until it is all brought up again.

Many of those who did not see combat mentioned that fact right away, as if offering a disclaimer that their war story was not going to be a "good" one:

> I can't think of anything else that you might be interested in. I wasn't in any combat. … I was close to some, but I don't have any horror stories of war because I was fortunate enough to not get personally involved in that. (Al Holmes)

> During the whole war, I never did ever see any actual fighting, I never did carry a weapon, I never shot at anybody, and nobody shot at me, so I didn't have anything too exciting. (Paul Richards, who served as a doctor in the Navy)

> I was never in combat. The only danger I was ever in is when we ran into some floating mines. A sharpshooter on the ship would shoot and blow them up before we got too near to them. (John McDow, a member of the Navy)

What a storyteller chooses to leave out of his or her story also is a fundamental part of storytelling (Hollander & Gordon, 2006). After each veteran was given the opportunity to review and edit his chapter, a few indicated that they wanted to omit some information because they deemed it irrelevant to their war story. Often this included personal details, information about life after the war, or side stories that they decided weren't pertinent to their narrative. Some preferred to make public only the "war chapter" of their lifetime story.

One veteran mentioned a personal interest but quickly discounted its value to his war story:

> In San Diego, I boxed for my company. I don't want that in here at all—I just liked to box.

Another deemed irrelevant an experience he discussed in detail during the interview:

> I worked in a clinic, and one time on a Saturday, the doctor there called me up and said, "Could you come down and assist me? There is no one here at the hospital; it is Saturday, and everybody's gone." I said, "Well, OK." So, I go down, and he has me retracting while he's doing an appendectomy. And you don't need to put this in your report, but anyhow, he said, "Would you like to complete this appendectomy?" And so, you know, they tie off the appendix on one side, and then they tie off the other side, and you cut in between. It comes out, and there is no bleeding. It's all in the bag.

Another asked to exclude all experiences he discussed that occurred after the war, all of which detailed personal information he felt was unrelated to his "war story." For example:

> When I got back home, I had a scholarship offer to Duke University to play football—when I was in high school, I played

> football, baseball, and did track, too. But I didn't like it at Duke, so I came back.

"The hero" is a central character in any war story in American culture. Several of the veterans used the term as an assessment of their own and other veterans' contributions to the war. Some veterans pointed to others as heroes, but, no matter how heroic his own efforts, no veteran would label himself a hero. Further, many devalued their own experiences when comparing them to the experiences of peers whom they thought served in more dangerous situations or performed more heroic acts during the war.

Ed Coleman identified two veterans included in this study and explained why he considers them heroes:

> Guys like Jim Talley and Bill Tate are the real heroes. They're the guys who flew the airplanes and were shot down—I mean, it was really, really rough for them. I had it easy compared to many of these guys. But then, we could have been bombed and sunk, too, so who knows.

Tom Evans describes what he believes a war hero to be:

> But I didn't have the problems that some guys had—some of them had it awfully rough. I'm sure you've seen the movie *Saving Private Ryan*. Those guys—those were the heroes of the war. Coming out of those landing boats under fire like that and going through the water; some of them were dumped out in water so deep that they went straight to the bottom—they had all that heavy stuff on them. Some of them were killed before they could get out of the water. Those guys had it rough. I imagine those that survived had a time getting over that.

Later, he compares—and devalues—his own actions:

> [Discussing a museum curator's interest in his bombing missions]: He elaborated a little on it and almost made it look like I was a hero, and all I did was "drive a truck," so to speak. I learned to "drive a truck" pretty good. Other people would load it up, and I would take the load over and dump it out in Burma, India—I was

> stationed in India at that time—and then I would fly back. That is what I did in the war—just piloting this airplane.

Several downplayed the significance of medals they were awarded:

> They were just about automatic. I think there was an Air Medal for the first 10 missions you flew, and every five missions after that, there was another cluster—it was for successfully completing a combat mission. It really wasn't for heroism like the Silver Star or anything like that. (Jim Talley)

> [Regarding his Air Medal]: Yes, that's routine. That's not for bravery. After you've gotten 25 combat missions, you are given a medal for that. So that's just routine. (Tom Evans)

Substantiating the Story

The veterans in this study were invited to share wartime mementos they had saved. Nearly all had kept photographs from their time in the war, though their seeming concern with the photographs' preservation varied—some veterans brought yellowed, crinkled photographs to show, others brought some kept in good condition inside an envelope, and others had elaborate photo albums and scrapbooks. Most had written dates, locations, and names on the backs of photographs or off to the side in albums and scrapbooks, but some had not. In addition, most veterans had kept a wide variety of other mementos from their wartime service, ranging from common items like discharge papers, medical records, official orders, identification cards, journals, medals, pins, patches, and uniforms to more unusual items, like those described below. These souvenirs helped them remember their wartime experiences, identify their wartime selves, and transmit messages about themselves and their experiences to others:

> Here's a picture of a dead soldier. He'd been dead for maybe a day or two. His helmet was there—I got his helmet. I have it down in the basement. I put it in an old footlocker that I had. . . . I don't know why I took it. (John Moore, a member of the Army's Corps of Engineers)

> I later found something among my papers, and it's signed "A. Hitler." That's his signature. We found it in a German home. I guess it's valuable; I don't know what to do with it, but I've got it. I also have an old swastika banner that members of my platoon signed. (Wallace Baumann)

> Some had engine trouble, and some had bad flak damage. We had holes—I'll show you a piece of flack I've got in a picture frame that came through the ship and almost took my head off. I saved it . . . and I'll show you. (Jim Talley)

Fred Vance, who was involved in heavy combat situations throughout the war and faced a narrow chance of survival, did not save any objects from his war experience, indicating that collecting mementos is done when a future life is anticipated. If one does not believe there will be a need for later memory retrieval, then collecting mementos is useless:

> I didn't keep any pictures or mementos from the war because I wasn't sure I was going to get out of it. (Fred Vance)

The "Wartime Self" as a Situated Self

Most of the veterans described situated selves during the war, along with behaviors that fit that "wartime self" but were "not me." The behaviors seemed to be understood as acceptable as part of the "war chapter" of their lives, but not behaviors in which they would engage under "normal" circumstances. Most pointed out that behaviors in which they engaged that they apparently considered undesirable were not part of their selves in previous life chapters and did not carry over into later selves. They indicated that certain activities (such as smoking, drinking, and swearing) are acceptable for certain people (including military members and young men) in certain circumstances (like wartime), which demonstrates their use of situated selves in their narratives. In this way, they could position particular behaviors outside of their current identities, or as not part of their "true self."

Joe Brownlee admitted smoking during the war, but judged the behavior undesirable and not part of his true self:

> The only bad things that happened, I thought, was they gave us cigarettes at every opportunity. The K-rations had a pack of

> cigarettes, and we were encouraged to smoke. Practically everybody smoked. I never got the habit myself. I had a smoke, of course, but I never got the habit.

Wallace Baumann worried that he would continue using the "bad" language he used during the war, but explained that it was merely part of his wartime self and did not affect his true self:

> We sat around sometimes and were worried—it's been so long, and you heard all kinds of bad language. You must have heard all the bad words constantly. We thought it will be so embarrassing if we came out with a bad word in front of our family. You know, the minute you got home, you just reverted right back to where you were before. I know we used to laugh about it, but it didn't happen.

Fred Vance, a member of the Army's 82nd Airborne Division, mentioned dating while overseas but was quick to point out that his true self is not a so-called lady's man or deviant:

> I had a girlfriend or two there, but I was of the age when you're supposed to. I wouldn't have been normal.

The use of what Klapp (1962) calls social typing also is evident throughout the narratives. Klapp (1962) argues, "In our society we do not have, as one might at first suppose, freedom *from* typing but a *choice* of type" (p. 2). We routinely attempt to "fit" people we meet and hear about into types, assigning various characteristics to them to aid in our understanding of them and so that we can feel like we know what to expect from them. We also type ourselves—our *self* is a type. Because we type ourselves and others, and others type us, we often wind up with at least two selves (Klapp, 1962): the self we define and the social self defined by others.

Typing is common in storytelling, particularly when relating a version of a well-known story. Social types are culturally defined and encompass groups of characteristics—desirable or not—that we use to understand others. Types, or characters, in war stories commonly include villains, cowards, comrades, and heroes. Most of the veterans in this study "fit" people into these types. Anyone they described who wasn't a family member fit neatly into one of these familiar types. Their

commanders were either heroes or villains. Fellow service members were comrades, cowards, or not worth mentioning.

When self-typing, nearly all of the veterans fit themselves into the culturally popular "Good Joe" type. Good Joe characteristics include: "dislike of bullies, snobs, authoritarians, and stuffed shirts; sympathy for the underdog; and liking for the good Joe or regular fellow who, for all his rough-and-ready air wouldn't try to dominate anybody" (Klapp, 1962, p. 108). This is a safe type in which to cast oneself, for this is a likable character who is generally good but not extraordinary, who is not outspoken but not a pushover, who follows the rules but stands up for what is right. For those who like to think of themselves as good but unextraordinary, this is an appealing type.

Many members of their audience, however, would likely type most, if not all, of the veterans as heroes, and the veterans themselves were quick to type others as heroes who would not type themselves as such. To understand this apparent discrepancy, it is useful to examine how a hero is defined in American culture. Klapp (1962) identifies five types of heroes that have long been recognized in American culture, although the "group servants" type is the closest to the traditional image of what our culture defines a hero to be: "a person with a strong arm and a heart of gold, tirelessly serving his group" (p. 46). A hero is strong, moral, a defender of good, an inspiring leader—and modest. Modesty is key in this case because it suggests that a "true" hero could not possibly classify himself or herself as such. It actually makes a hero seem *more heroic* when he or she points to another as a hero. While all of these men certainly are heroes, and likely would define each other as such, part of the cultural definition of a hero forbids them from defining themselves in that way.

In contrast to Vietnam veterans' narratives, these veterans never cast themselves as victims. Many described themselves as "lucky" and said they felt sorry for those who could not enter the service because of physical ailment. The cultural perception of that cohort as "the Greatest Generation" and of World War II as the "Last Great War" or the "Good War" almost certainly influenced their narratives. Had they been treated negatively because of their service at the time or since, or had the war been widely thought of negatively, they likely would have seen their roles differently.

Conclusions

All of the veterans in this study, in addition to their church and community memberships, have something in common—they served in and survived World War II. Yet they each experienced the war differently. Their war narratives present interpretations of each veteran's experience, and these interpretations are rooted in American culture and thus influenced by its norms, values, and traditions.

Particular story elements are ingrained in our culture and must be followed to create meaning and convey messages. The veterans shared their narratives as if from a social script—there seemed to be a consensus about what constitutes a war story, where it should begin, what should happen, and when it should end—and each adhered to this narrative structure. They used pictures, documents, and other souvenirs to substantiate their narratives and made a great effort to form connections with their audience. Recognizing characteristics about their immediate audience—me—and an audience composed of members of their church, they repeatedly made references to their religious faith and local landmarks—several named Knoxville streets, businesses, churches, and schools. It is unlikely that they would include the same details if sharing their narratives with an audience of non-Christians or out-of-towners. If still deemed pertinent to their narratives in another situation, the information likely would be rephrased—instead of saying, "I graduated from Knoxville High School," one might say, "I graduated from high school in Knoxville, Tennessee," or, "I graduated from a school in Tennessee called Knoxville High School." They clearly assumed their audience had some familiarity both with them and with particular settings in their stories.

The veterans undoubtedly had a dominant "war story" in mind. Of course, not every veteran experienced this version of the story, but those whose experiences deviated from the "classic war story" remarked about it. Those who were not involved in combat tended to point out that fact very early in their narratives, devalued their role in the war, and told shorter stories. We have culturally defined expectations for stories about major events, and those stories that most closely resemble the dominant narrative are privileged over others—even those with an atypical story appear to agree.

Despite how they evaluated their wartime experiences, the veterans demonstrated a desire to preserve their stories, as indicated by their willingness to be interviewed about their wartime experiences and

have those stories published. Thus, it was important for each to tell a "good" story—one that resembles the dominate war narrative as much as possible and that is entertaining and relatable—and cast himself and others in particular ways. This helps explain why none of the veterans' narratives emphasized depressing, brutal, or otherwise tragic experiences, because those are not the stories they wanted to preserve. The narratives also indicate that each veteran incorporated an image about his wartime self that emphasized characteristics about himself that he found desirable and wished to preserve. Examining these characteristics aids in the recognition of cultural values incorporated within narratives and the importance of story preservation.

The veterans in this study incorporated their war experiences and World War II veteran status as part of their identity, though they clearly make distinctions between pre-war, war, and post-war selves. They take pride in the cultural value of their veteran status but do not define their wartime selves as their true selves. They reconcile undesirable behaviors as merely part of their wartime selves and integrate desirable characteristics associated with war experiences—such as dedication, hard work, and morality—as part of their post-war self and identity. The characteristics of the wartime self incorporated into the post-war self tend to be culturally esteemed and are emphasized in the messages their narratives convey. Through their narratives, these veterans perpetuate the values and ideals of the culture of which they are a product.

These veterans were not merely telling stories. They knew that their stories would be published, thereby creating a large audience and providing a means for story preservation. They shared stories that will remain unchanged, even long after they are gone. This knowledge certainly factored into what they decided to share, as it was important to construct a story that established an image of their experiences and themselves by which they wanted to be remembered. Yet, at the same time, each was careful to frame his "wartime self" as a situated self that did not necessarily represent his "true self," or the self for which he wanted to be most remembered.

References

Arendell, T. (1992). The social self as gendered: A masculinist discourse of divorce. *Symbolic Interaction, 15*(2), 151-181.

Atkinson, P., & Silverman, D. (1997). Kundera's *Immortality*: The interview society and the invention of the self. *Qualitative Inquiry, 3*, 304-325.

Bamberg, M. (2004). Form and functions of "slut bashing" in male identity constructions in 15-year-olds. *Human Development, 47*, 331-353.

Berger, R.J., & Quinney, R. (2005). The narrative turn in social inquiry. In R.J. Berger & R. Quinney (Eds.), *Storytelling sociology: Narrative as social inquiry*. (pp. 1-11). Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Bryman, A. (2001). *Social research methods*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Buntz, V. (2003). "Hammered out of artillery shells": The discourse of trauma in Vietnam veterans' poetry. *Amerikastudien / American Studies, 48*(2), 227-248.

Burnell, K.J., Coleman, P.G., & Hunt, N. (2010). Coping with traumatic memories: Second World War veterans' experiences of social support in relation to the narrative coherence of war memories. *Ageing & Society, 30*, 57-78.

Chase, S.E. (2005). Narrative inquiry: Multiple lenses, approaches, voices. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*. (pp. 651-679). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Conway, M.A. (1990). *Autobiographical memory: An introduction*. Philadelphia, PA: Open University Press.

Conway, M.A., & Pleydell-Pearce, C.W. (2000). The construction of autobiographical memories in the self-memory system. *Psychological Review, 107*(2), 261-288.

Crespi, L.P., & Shapleigh, G.S. (1946). "The" veteran—a myth. *The Public Opinion Quarterly, 10*(3), 361-372.

Csikszentmihalyi, M., & Rochberg-Halton, E. (1981). *The meaning of things: Domestic symbols and the self*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Dekel, R., Goldblatt, H., Keidar, M., Solomon, Z., & Polliack, M. (2005). Being a wife of a veteran with posttraumatic stress disorder. *Family Relations, 54*(1), 24-36.

Demers, A. (2009). The war at home: Consequences of loving a veteran of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. *The Internet Journal of Mental Health, 6*(1). Retrieved from http://archive.ispub.com/journal/the-internet-journal-of-mental-health/#sthash.RoliZ7E8.dpbs

Denzin, N. (2000). The cinematic society and the reflexive interview. In J.F. Gubrium & J.A. Holstein (Eds.). *Handbook of Interview Research: Context & Method* (pp. 833-847). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Elder, G.H., Jr. (1987). War mobilization and the life course: A cohort of World War II veterans. *Sociological Forum, 2*(3), 449-472.

Erickson, R.J. (1995). The importance of authenticity for self and society. *Symbolic Interaction, 18*, 121-144.

Evans, W.J., & Maines, D.R. (1995). Narrative structures and the analysis of incest. *Symbolic Interaction, 18*(3), 303-322.

Ewick, P., & Silbey, S.S. (1995). Subversive stories and hegemonic tales: Toward a sociology of narrative. *Law & Society Review, 29*(2), 197-226.

Fischer, W., & Goblirsch, M. (2006). Biographical structuring: Narrating and reconstructing the self in research and professional practice. *Narrative Inquiry, 16*(1), 28-36.

Freeman, M. (2006). Life "on holiday"? In defense of big stories. *Narrative Inquiry, 16*(1), 131-138.

Gecas, V., & Burke, P. (1995). Self and identity. In K.S. Cook, G.A. Fine, & J.T. House (Eds.), *Sociological perspectives on social psychology* (pp. 156-173). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Gimbel, C., & Booth, A. (1994). Why does military combat experience adversely affect marital relations? *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 56*(3), 691-703.

Griffin, L.J. (1993). Narrative, event-structure analysis, and causal interpretation in historical sociology. *The American Journal of Sociology*, *98*(5), 1094-1133.

Hagopian, P. (2000). Voices from Vietnam: Veterans' oral histories in the classroom. *The Journal of American History*, *87*(2), 593-601.

Hart, J. (1992). Cracking the code: Narrative and political mobilization in Greek resistance. *Social Science History*, *16*(4), 631-668.

Harvey, J.H. (1996). *Embracing their memory: Loss and the social psychology of storytelling.* Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Hendrix, C.C., & Anelli, L.M. (1993). Impact of Vietnam war service on veterans' perceptions of family life. *Family Relations*, *42*(1), 87-92.

Hole, R.D. (2007). Narratives of identity: A poststructural analysis of three deaf women's life stories. *Narrative Inquiry*, *17*(2), 259-278.

Hollander, J.A., & Gordon, H.R. (2006). The processes of social construction in talk. *Symbolic Interaction*, *29*(2), 183-212.

Hopkin, D.M. (2004). Storytelling, fairytales, and autobiography: Some observations on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century French soldiers' and sailors' memoirs. *Social History*, *29*(2), 186-198.

Ikin, J.F., Sim, M.R., McKenzie, D.P., Horsley, K.W.A., Wilson, E.J., Harrex, W.K., Moore, M.R., Jelfs, P.L., & Henderson, S. (2009). Life satisfaction and quality in Korean War veterans five decades after the war. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, *63*(5), 359-365.

Johnson, G.C., & Paoletti, I. (2004). Orienting to the category "ordinary but special" in an Australian-Italian courtship and marriage narrative. *Narrative Inquiry*, *14*(1), 191-218.

Johnstone, B. (2006). A new role for narrative in variationist sociolinguistics. *Narrative Inquiry*, *16*(1), 46-55.

Josselson, R. (2006). Narrative research and the challenge of accumulating knowledge. *Narrative Inquiry*, *16*(1), 3-10.

Klapp, O.E. (1962). *Heroes, villains, and fools.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Kraus, W. (2006). The narrative negotiation of identity and belonging. *Narrative Inquiry*, *16*(1), 103-111.

Labov, W. (2006). Narrative pre-construction. *Narrative Inquiry*, *16*(1), 37-45.

Laufer, R.S., Gallops, M.S., & Frey-Wouters, E. (1984). War stress and trauma: The Vietnam veteran experience. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, *25*(1), 65-85.

Lomsky-Feder, E. (2004). Life stories, war, and veterans: On the social distribution of memories. *Ethos*, *32*(1), 82-109.

Maines, D.R. (1993). Narrative's moment and sociology's phenomena: Toward a narrative sociology. *The Sociological Quarterly*, *34*(1), 17-38.

Maines, D.R. (1999). Information pools and racialized narrative structures. *The Sociological Quarterly*, *40*(2), 317-326.

Maines, D.R. (2000). The social construction of meaning. *Contemporary Sociology*, *29*(4), 577-584.

Maines, D.R., & Ulmer, J.T. (1993). The relevance of narrative for interactionist thought. *Studies in Symbolic Interaction*, *14*, 109-124.

Mason-Schrock, D. (1996). Transsexuals' narrative construction of the "true self." *Social Psychology Quarterly*, *59*(3), 176-192.

McAdams, D.P. (2001). The psychology of life stories. *Review of General Psychology*, *5*(2), 100-122.

Mead, G.H. (1934). *Mind, self, and society*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
Michel, K.F. (2004). Drawing on experience: A study of Vietnam veteran artists. *Studies in art education*, *45*(3), 189-205.
Nelson, K. (2003). Narrative and self, myth and memory: Emergence of the cultural self. In R. Fivush & C.A. Haden (Eds.), *Autobiographical Memory and the Construction of a Narrative Self* (pp. 3-28). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
Ochs, E., & Capps, L. (1996). Narrating the self. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, *25*, 19-43.
Onkst, D.H. (1998). "First a negro . . . incidentally a veteran": Black World War Two veterans and the G.I. Bill of Rights in the deep south, 1944-1948. *Journal of Social History*, *31*(3), 517-543.
O'Nell, T.D. (1999). "Coming home" among Northern Plains Vietnam veterans: Psychological transformations in pragmatic perspective. *Ethos*, *27*(4), 441-465.
Orbuch, T.L. (1997). People's accounts count: The sociology of accounts. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *23*, 445-478.
Parr, A. (2007). Breaking the silence: Traumatised war veterans and oral history. *Oral History*, *35*(1), 61-70.
Pavalko, E.K., & Elder, G.H., Jr. (1990). World War II and divorce: A life-course perspective. *The American Journal of Sociology*, *95*(5), 1213-1234.
Peterson, E.E., & Langellier, K.M. (2006). The performance turn in narrative studies. *Narrative Inquiry*, *16*(1), 173-180.
Reynolds, J., & Taylor, S. (2005). Narrating singleness: Life stories and deficit identities. *Narrative Inquiry*, *15*(2), 197-215.
Schreiber, E.M. (1979). Enduring effects of military service? Opinion difference between U.S. veterans and nonveterans. *Social Forces*, *57*(3), 824-839.
Shuman, A. (2006). Entitlement and empathy in personal narrative. *Narrative Inquiry*, *16*(1), 148-155.
Stanley, L. (1993). The knowing because experiencing subject: Narratives, lives, and autobiography. *Women's Studies International Forum*, *16*(3), 205-215.
Stokoe, E., & Edwards, D. (2006). Story formulations in talk-in-interaction. *Narrative Inquiry*, *16*(1), 56-65.
Strauss, A. (1982). Social worlds and legitimation processes. *Studies in Symbolic Interaction*, *4*, 171-190.
Wiest, J.B. (2006). *We were there*. Knoxville, TN: Tennessee Valley Publishing.
Zerubavel, E. (1997). *Social mindscapes: An invitation to cognitive sociology*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Julie B. Wiest, PhD, is an assistant professor of sociology at West Chester University. Her primary research interests are in culture, technology, gender, and deviance. Wiest published a book in 2006 titled *We Were There*, which is based on the interviews analyzed in this project, and won the 2007 David R. Maines Narrative Research Award (sponsored by the Carl Couch Center for Social and Internet Research) for an earlier, unpublished version of this manuscript. Wiest's most recent book, *Creating Cultural Monsters: Serial Murder in America*, was published in June 2011.