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Revising the past: A performance-centered analysis of personal experience narratives about divorce

MacDaniel, Elizabeth Jo, Ph.D.
The Ohio State University, 1989

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REVISING THE PAST: A PERFORMANCE-CENTERED ANALYSIS OF PERSONAL EXPERIENCE NARRATIVES ABOUT DIVORCE

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of the Ohio State University

By

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* * * * *

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To My Parents
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past fifteen years or so, a growing interest in the performance of folklore has accompanied an increased acknowledgment of the importance of context in folklore research. During these years, the scope of folklore study has gradually broadened to include genres not traditionally considered to be within the realm of folklore, areas such as graffiti and xerox-lore, personal experience narratives, and conversational genres. Folklorists attempted to define their field but became embroiled in an apparently endless pursuit of a definition as additional aspects of and areas of cultural interaction were determined to be of interest to folklorists. Performance and contextual studies were centrally involved in this expansion of folklore study. The increasing number of performance studies published each year has been accompanied as well by a widening range of focus. Initially, performance studies examined formal and public performances, usually of more traditional folklore genres, such as tall tales, legends, and proverbs. However, the understanding of performance theory has expanded from including only these more formal kinds of performances to
encompass as well the informal performances, such as storytelling, that take place in both public and private areas of everyday life. Studies now can be found that address issues such as the function of storytelling, how a person chooses what to tell and to whom, and how participants interact as tellers and listeners. In other words, folklorists are now involved in studying the various functions that performances of a multitude of folklore genres play in people’s lives. I myself have been interested for several years in how and why individuals create and perform narratives out of their own experiences.

As in any field, with a shift in emphasis of study—either within the accepted canon or in terms of theoretical approach—comes debate, the course of which can be traced in professional journals and books. With the move in folklore study toward examining the performance of folklore and related contextual issues, there arose a debate centered around the text/context controversy (see, for example, Wilgus’ "The Text is the Thing," a response to Ben-Amos, et al.; Steven Swann Jones; and Katherine Young’s "A Notion of Context"). Although many issues were involved in this debate, the main question concerned a notion of primacy—what some saw as a struggle between the primacy of the text and the primacy of context. Katherine Young’s article, "A Notion of Context," contains a rather
even-handed assessment of the controversy, pointing out some weaknesses in both camps' positions. More importantly, however, in this article she defines the key concept which, until that time, had not been defined: Context. Until her article, the term "context" and what was meant by it had been somewhat hazy, with a something of an implicit assumption underlying its use, an assumption that all folklorists knew what the term meant. Thus it is not surprising that there was little agreement concerning how much of what was felt by some to be context actually influenced a particular performance. Young suggested that the important issue ought to be the interdependent relationship between texts and contexts rather than claims and counterclaims of the primacy of one over the other. She inserted a needed element of precision as well in her differentiation between an event's "surround" and its context: "context is a matter of relevance ... a context is whatever bears on the event whether it is contiguous [i.e. is in the surround] or not" (116). Therefore, "contexts must be regarded as multiple," for they are composed of various kinds of present and remote contexts, some of which are "contexts-of events" while others are "contexts-for perceivers" (116-117). In this way, too she brings to the forefront the notion of the active audience and its influence on the performance.
Richard Bauman, one of the pioneers and chief proponents of performance theory, directly addresses the question of the interrelationship of text, context, and performance as he examines this triad in various ways in his many articles and books. "Verbal Art as Performance" is, in fact the seminal work on performance theory. Through his efforts, many folklorists recognize that behind the move toward a focus on performance lies an attempt to "go beyond a conception of oral literature as disembodied superorganic stuff and to view it contextually and ethnographically, in order to discover the individual, social, and cultural factors that give it shape and meaning in the conduct of social life" (Bauman, Story, Performance, and Event 2). An important point in Bauman's explanation of this approach is that a focus on performance provides folklorists with a way to put the person, the individual back into the fabric of what is studied, and put him or her back in a very real and important way.

Relatively recent folklore scholarship that has the individual as its perspective rather than primarily the text contains discussions of and research into a whole range of related questions, all of which spring from the conception of folklore as a dynamic process. Essays in collections such as Dan Ben-Amos' and Kenneth Goldstein's Folklore: Performance and Communication and Richard Bauman's and Joel Sherzer's Explorations in the Ethnography
of Speaking consider the dynamic aspects of folklore communication, as is apparent from these titles. Within the range of these works and others like them are ideas and theories which have been adapted from other disciplines that have similar concerns, disciplines such as linguistics, anthropology, psychology, and rhetoric. Dell Hymes, a sociolinguist and folklorist, has considered how an individual indicates that a performance is about to occur within conversation ("Breakthrough into Performance"). Susan Ervin-Tripp, another sociolinguist, has analyzed the cultural "rules" that govern spoken communication. A group of sociolinguists and folklorists, Harvey Sacks, Emmanuel Schegloff, and Gail Jefferson, have identified a cultural "system" by which individuals organize turns at talk in conversation. Folklorist Roger Abrahams has drawn from the work of rhetoricians in developing a rhetorical conception and definition of some folklore genres ("A Rhetoric of Everyday Lives: Conversational Genres"). It can be seen, then, that folklorists have recognized for some time that their work is interdisciplinary, rooted as it is in cultural dynamics. Indeed, Richard Bauman calls for a return to the "integrative vision of language, literature, and culture in which folklore was itself first conceived" (Story, Performance, and Event 114). Thus it is not surprising that we find folklorists using research by psychologists,
sociologists, sociolinguists, and others, as they delve into the how and why of folklore performance.

When we consider contemporary folklore scholarship on storytelling, two key ideas, dynamics and communication, are found again and again. These ideas continue to have a tremendous impact not only on the methodology of folk narrative study, but also on the very kinds of stories that are considered to be appropriate material to be studied with this methodology. The greater acceptance of less traditional folk narrative genres thus set the stage for a movement toward the study of personal experience narratives situated within conversation by folklorists. Folklorists grew more attuned to the subtleties and intricacies which were involved in everyday interactions and began to attend to personal experience narratives in their studies of multiple repertoires. In the process, folklorists perhaps overcame a facet of what Brian Sutton-Smith refers to as "the triviality barrier."

In *Taleworlds and Storyrealms*, Katherine Young considers, among other things, the various realms of discourse, their relationship to one another, and how we as tellers and listeners follow and participate in these shifting realms. In doing so, she draws upon Erving Goffman's work on frame analysis. Different types of interactions are set off from others by "frames," such as a story frame. By stepping into a story frame, the teller
indicates to the listener what kind of discourse he or she can expect. At times, however, a teller will draw attention to the fact that the ongoing interaction is "story," by means of metanarrative devices. Barbara Babcock established the framework for analyzing the use of metanarrative devices in folk narrative in her article, "The Story in the Story: Metanarration in Folk Narrative."

A metanarrative device is one that comments upon the narrator, the narrating, and the narrative. It is an element that calls attention to the speech event—the total performance—as performance and to the relationship between the narrator and the audience. One frequently used type of metanarration concerns evaluation. The narrator may evaluate some aspect of the speech event or the narrated event, the story of the past event in his or her life. Richard Bauman breaks down the speech event even further, seeing in the various facets of it specific elements which can be profitably analyzed. In fact, the title of one of his books sets out the different elements: the story, the performance, and the event. By presenting a metanarrative evaluation of any portion of the performance, the teller of the story can indicate to the audience his or her reason for telling the story—its meaning.

William Labov and Joshua Waletzky analyzed the structure of personal experience narrative texts. They determined that for a narrative text to be complete and
fully developed, it had to have as part of its structure an evaluative section. They also found that narrative texts provided necessary background information in an orientation section that preceded the body of the narrative. Richard Bauman modified their findings in terms of performance structure, with which modifications I have worked with my analyses. The audience and the relationship between the audience and the narrator must be considered in a performance-centered analysis, for each participant judges the performance according to his or her role at the moment. Thus the evaluative portions and the orientation and introductory sections of a narrative are much less static and situated than Labov and Waletsky found. Again, the key ideas of dynamic process and communication are central.

The evaluation of certain events as "storiable" and of others as not is another aspect of the dynamics of storytelling in which we have seen recent attention, particularly in the work on personal experience narratives. William Labov states that only extraordinary events are appropriate matter for the telling of these stories. On the other hand, John Robinson discusses other classes of narratives and narrative situations that can be judged "storiable," such as victimization experiences. Livia Polanyi, too, recognizes that the commonplace may be suitable for telling when she makes a distinction between culturally interesting, socially interesting, and
personally interesting topics ("So What's the Point?"). My
own work and that of three colleagues concerning women's
personal experience stories about "growing up female"
supports the notion that ordinary, shared experiences are,
indeed, events which are frequently "storied" ("Should I
Tell the One About?"). Sandra Stahl has long been at the
forefront of work with personal experience narratives. In
fact, she led the way toward establishing the folkloric
characteristics of the personal narratives, providing those
whose work has followed with some basic principles with
which to examine this genre. Susan Kalcik's work with "rap
groups," consciousness-raising groups, in the 1970's
contains important insights into the dynamics of group
narrating. Accompanying this focus on how and what an
individual chooses to "story" is an interest in exploring
the reasons why people tell stories about events in their
lives: the function of storytelling.

The study of storytelling from a performance
perspective has a wide range of possible applications. A
study might focus on the formal telling of stories and the
repertoire of an accomplished and publicly acclaimed
storyteller or it might focus on the informal telling of
stories by an individual who is attempting to make sense of
a portion of his or her life. In either case, any number
of aspects involved in storytelling can be examined, not
the least of which is that apparently very human impulse to structure and frame, to somehow set apart from surrounding discourse, experiences—both personal and others'—as narrative. I have been working in the area of storytelling for several years, and, in particular, I am interested in personal experience stories embedded in conversation. Some of the issues involved in this kind of a study include turntaking, keying the story and thus signaling the other members of the conversation group that a longer turn at talk is needed, using particular rhetorical strategies at a given moment in the speech event, and the evaluative roles participants are required to play.

Another important aspect which needs to be addressed when studying the performance of personal experience narratives concerns the function storytelling of this kind plays in people's lives. When a person structures a past experience in the form of a narrative, a certain distance is created between that person as narrator and that event. Thus in a sense the teller objectifies not only a portion of his or her life but also the self which is reformed into a character in a story. When using this experience for the material of a story, the teller, of necessity, is restructuring the past, for in order to create a coherent whole in terms of what a story is perceived to be, any apparent inconsistencies in actions and reactions must be accounted for. To be author of a story, even when that
story is own's own, the teller must be in control of forces which, in the real world of the experience, he or she was not. In this way, the act of creating personal experience narratives should be thought of as an act by which an individual, consciously or not, "fictionalizes" his or her life. The teller does not "fictionalize" only the experience, however. The teller also creates a version (or multiple versions) of himself or herself throughout the course of a speech event. Thus during the performance of these narratives there is a self-as-character and a self-as-narrator, and the distance between these two can be manipulated by the teller so as to create a greater or lesser degree of identification between the two. Erving Goffman has pointed out the importance of attending to how and why an individual develops a role in everyday interactions (The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life). Katherine Young expands upon Goffman's concept, in Taleworlds and Storyrealms, when she examines presentation of self as one of the aspects of narrating.

Given the fact that the act of "storying" an experience exerts some control over the event and the characters, the teller is able, through narrating, to create a structure in which he or she can place a version of the past self--as character in the story--alongside the teller's conception of the present self, the narrator, into some pattern of a coherent whole. Barbara Babcock's
concept of narrated and speech event parallels this structuring, for the teller as character in the story belongs to the narrated event, while the teller as narrator of the story belongs to the speech event. In this way, for example, a cause-and-effect relationship can be established or patterns in longstanding relationships which helped create particular climates for actions taken or not taken can be identified. This ability to feel a sense of some control over past selves indicates that particularly traumatic events would be experiences that would often call for "storying."

Within this large area of traumatic events, one rather widespread experience in particular stands out, for a number of reasons, as potentially containing a wealth of stories: divorce. In the larger context of our society, the role of divorced person, male or female, has the effect, to varying degrees, of putting that individual outside the community. As a divorced person, I have felt this way myself. I agree with Florence Kaslow and Lita Schwartz's findings that despite the fact that in many social circles the stigma of divorce has diminished as divorce laws have been liberalized and the frequency of marital dissolution has escalated, the traumatic impact of divorce does not seem to be lessened on the individuals who experience it. (23)

Divorced individuals are placed, or have placed themselves, in a position in which they must somehow incorporate a new
version of themselves—a version held not only by them but also by others with whom they come in contact—with earlier, pre-divorce, version or versions of themselves. This incorporation of various versions is necessary, for by doing so the individuals will be able to see themselves and their actions as part of a more coherent pattern. Thus many "late stage of marriage" and "early stage of divorce" stories are explanation or justification stories. However, the diminishing of stigma that Kaslow and Schwartz mention does indicate that these is, within the larger society, an increasing freedom to talk about divorce, just as the increased number of divorced persons means that divorce has become a more acceptable, although still traumatic, topic to discuss.

Helen Rose Ebaugh examines the psychological effects of feeling "marginally" attached to one's past self in her study Becoming an Ex. She finds that the process of role exit depends a great deal upon the degree to which the individual defined himself or herself by that role. Thus, there are varying degrees of identification of the self with a role. The greater the individual's identification with the role, the greater difficulty he or she will experience during the process of redefining the self. And, I believe, the greater need that individual will have to tell stories about his or her experiences related to that
role exit.

Part of this strong urge to tell, to "story" can be explained by the concept of "liminality." Anthropologist Victor Turner defines what he calls the "liminal phase" as the point when the state of the subject becomes ambiguous, when he or she passes through a realm with few or none of the attributes of past or coming states, when the subject is "betwixt and between" all familiar lines of classification. Turner sees liminality as applying to all phases of cultural change, secular as well as religious, when previous ordering of thought and behavior are subject to revision and criticism (The Ritual Process, 95-96). A divorced individual may, in fact, experience a feeling of being only marginally connected with his or her past life and thus be in a "liminal phase." If "storying" the experience can help construct connections which may then lessen the feeling of being "betwixt and between," we can begin to understand the need to "story" the divorce experience.

I conducted my fieldwork by collecting and taperecording divorce stories over a period of several months. I contacted a number of divorced individuals, male and female, with whom I was acquainted, asking for their assistance. I decided to work only with people I know or with people who are friends of some of my friends, for
these stories can become quite personal. A person who tells stories about his or her life places himself or herself in a potentially vulnerable position. When the subject of those stories is divorce, the degree of potential vulnerability and distress increases. Therefore I realized that a divorced person would be more likely to agree to talk to me, in a manner which would more closely correspond to the usual manner, if I were not a stranger. In addition, my own status as a divorced, single parent allowed me to establish immediately another tie with each informant—I knew what it was like to have a marriage "fail" and become divorced, so it was unlikely that I would be unsympathetic when hearing their stories.

I made a number of trips to surrounding states for my fieldwork, as well as one trip to the east coast. I did not want my informants to be too similar in background or experience, and felt that the best way to counter a possible "advanced degree, academic" predominance in my informants' background was to range further from central Ohio in my collecting. My one trip to the east coast was to collect from the woman who had given me the seed from which the idea for this project sprang. I had met "Claire Jones" one New Year's Eve a few years ago. During that evening, she told me stories about her entire life, all told from the perspective of having become divorced.
Therefore, when I decided upon this project, I knew that I wanted to include "Claire." I collected from her and four other women and from four men during individual sessions and from five women, including myself, during a group session.

When I collected the divorce stories, I tried to create a sense of the usual performance context. Thus, whenever possible, I met the informants in their homes or the home of another friend, unless the individual suggested otherwise. My presence as a folklorist and that of the taperecorder, of course, had some affect on the stories, particularly with regard to the individual sessions. However, the ties I already had established with the various tellers somewhat decreased that affect. In fact, I had already heard some of the stories prior to some of the collecting sessions, and since the time I collected, I have heard more from several of the participants. From this other contact with some of my informants, I have been able to double-check the validity of my work. Of course, one important aspect of performance theory is the realization that every performance will vary depending upon changes in the multiple contexts that influence a given speech event. Thus my presence—including my gender, my divorced status, and my personality—influenced the performances of these stories as well. However, what I am focusing on in this study is the creative, dynamic process by which individuals
tell stories about their divorce experiences, so that these performances by these tellers, with these particular multiple contexts are the vital elements to keep in mind.

In transcribing the tapes, I used pseudonyms throughout to protect the identities of my informants. I transcribed the exact words of each individual, using punctuation only where it seemed to be indicated by the voices of the speakers and for clarification. I have indicated pauses in a person's narrative or statements by the use of ellipses. Whenever possible, I have tried to capture the texture of the language and the performance. Changes in tone of voice are indicated by a brief description within brackets. When one teller uses a very slow delivery style to indicate the character's psychological state, I have used letters spaced apart. When called for, I indicate a sudden emphasis on a particular work by underlining. I show false starts or mid-word changes by including the part of the word which was spoken followed, by a dash. In my transcription, as in my analysis, I have attempted to be true to my informants and their words, for ultimately, these stories are symbolic expressions of these individuals' attempts to create and communicate a coherent sense of self.
CHAPTER I
THE TELLERS AND THEIR TALES

Between April and August of 1988, I collected personal experience narratives about divorce from fourteen individuals. The duration of the various sessions ranged from one hour to three and one-half hours, the longest one being a group storytelling session with five participants, including myself. I collected narratives from people from a variety of backgrounds: men and women of different ages who grew up and currently reside in communities of different sizes in different parts of the country, who were from different socio-economic levels, who were members of families of various sizes with different religious affiliations, who had had one marriage and divorce or several, who were still single or had remarried, and who had a variety of educational backgrounds and careers. Even with the range, however, I do not see this as a statistical or sociological cross-section.

When I began to approach potential informants, I initially used the word "story" to describe what I wanted them to tell me. I quickly realized, however, that I had to use descriptive terms rather than a word about which
people sometimes have a narrow and specific definition. This became clear when one woman said that although she would be glad to participate, her divorce was boring and couldn’t possibly be interesting enough to have stories about it. Once I began to use phrases like "the kinds of things you talk about when you talk to friends about your divorce," however, she and the other informants shared with me interesting personal experience narratives of various lengths, with varying degrees of detail and development.

Nine of the fourteen storytellers talked to me individually for a period of time that ranged from one and one-half hours to four hours. The other people participated in a five hour-long group conversation (which is the subject of Chapter Four). The actual duration of taping, however, was less in many cases, for I chatted with each person for a while to lessen any feelings of self-consciousness that he or she might have been experiencing. The nine individual storytellers are friends or acquaintances of mine. In fact, I had heard some of these stories previously in social situations, and since the time of the collecting, I have been told more stories, often including "updates" about ones I had already transcribed. Because of our established social connections, the informants felt relatively comfortable telling me their stories. As we probably all know, anyone who tells a personal experience narrative places himself or herself in
a potentially vulnerable position, and that potential vulnerability increases when the topic of the story is one that touches on an area of intimacy in that person's life. Several of the storytellers expressed concern not only for their own privacy, but also for that of others who were characters in their stories. Therefore, in order to protect their identities, I have used pseudonyms and have disguised places that they mention in their stories and that I include in their biographies. However, the details of the relationships and divorces, both in the encapsulations in this chapter and in the stories, come directly from interviews and from transcriptions of the recorded storytelling sessions.

Claire Jones

The first person from whom I collected stories was Claire Jones. I met her through a mutual friend who had heard many of her divorce stories, having known her for about fifteen years. I first met Claire prior to beginning this project. At the home of our mutual friend, we talked for at least two hours one evening after dinner, during which time she told me dozens of divorce stories. When I decided to study divorce narratives, I contacted her to see if she would be willing to tell me her stories once more. I collected narratives from Claire one morning a few months later, sitting on the patio behind her home in a
large town in Maryland. The session lasted for about one hour, ending because she had to leave to take her dog for a walk.

Claire, 37, was born in Kansas in 1951. The only daughter in a family of five children, she belongs to a large, close-knit extended family of Irish Catholics. She met her husband in 1971 while she was a student at the University of Kansas. They lived together for a time, then married when he pressed her to do so. After the marriage, they lived in a number of places in the university area, moving to College Park, Maryland in 1974 so that she could pursue a graduate degree in English at the University of Maryland. While a student at Maryland, Claire and her husband separated after he stated that he needed some time alone, that he felt he was having a nervous breakdown. Claire agreed and found a roommate to share expenses, another woman who was newly separated from her husband. Claire and her husband continued to see each other occasionally, and he moved back into the house temporarily when he became ill. After he had recovered, he moved back to his apartment, which he shared with two men. One evening shortly after this, Claire and her roommate went to the apartment so she could check on his health. She found him in bed with a woman, left, and began to date other men, feeling, she said, justified in no longer wanting to be married to him. Several years later she filed for divorce,
having at that time decided to remarry. She is currently married to that second husband.

When she told me her stories, Claire started by giving a brief overview of the entire marriage and divorce, continuing with an overview of her present marriage. She then went back to the earliest point in the relationship and "filled in" with expanded stories, partly in response to my questions when I did not understand the overview, but more frequently of her own accord. The beginning of the "fill in" portion of the session continued to follow a chronological ordering, although the texts of the stories themselves often did not, for she moved through time to embed narratives where she felt they were appropriate. As she continued to talk, she began to tell stories that were themselves out of chronological sequence, but, instead, were related thematically. Throughout the session, Claire's stories emphasize herself as character's lack of responsibility for marital problems, focusing on her past inability to perceive correctly and on her reliance instead on others' perceptions. A continued repetition of "sight" and "knowledge," both literal and metaphorical, permeates the stories and the interwoven discussions and evaluations, with the narrator revealing the perceptions she has now gained.
Paula Martin

I met Paula Martin several years ago when she began to work for a friend of mine, an optometrist in a small Illinois town. I have had limited social contact with her, and, other than what she told me during the session, much of what I know of her and her divorce has come through second- and third-hand stories related to me by my friend and his wife. I collected stories from Paula during the work day at the office, in a storage room of the office. She was extremely anxious to help me, but felt that she would have nothing of interest to tell me. She said that although she talks about her divorce with friends, it was so boring and uneventful that nothing she told could be a story.

Paula is 49 years old and lives in the small Illinois town where she was born and raised. She met her husband while in high school and married upon graduation from high school. Her husband joined the Air Force and after basic training was stationed overseas. While her husband was in the service, Paula moved into her husband's mother's home. She did not join her husband overseas, as she had one child, a boy, one year after the marriage and another child, a girl, two years later. After his return to their hometown in 1961, her husband worked in a factory shop and she had a number of jobs in offices in town. She stopped
working in each of the offices, however, because of her husband's jealousy. Eventually she began to work in women's dress shops, which she continued to do for the next several years. Paula and her husband had a traditional marriage in terms of gender-related roles performed by each until she discovered that he was having an affair. She decided to stay with him after she confronted him with her knowledge, partly because he had been hospitalized due to a motorcycle accident and partly because their children were young. Her perception of the marriage, her husband, and herself changed after this time, resulting in her asserting herself. Two years later she discovered that he was again having an affair. After she once more confronted him with her knowledge, he moved out and they began to seek counseling. She learned, however, that he continued to see the other woman, so she filed for divorce.

Paula began telling her stories with an overview of the marriage, beginning not with the beginning of the marriage, but with the beginning of the end: her discovery of his affair. She periodically told a brief narrative when she arrived at a particular event during the initial overview, then she continued, following a generally chronological order. However, Paula did not necessarily retain a chronological ordering in telling a narrative, for she sometimes embedded other narratives within the primary one so as to provide needed background information,
and she occasionally jumped forward in time during her narrating to draw an analogy or parallel to what she was telling. After the overview portion of the session, she returned to particular points and told a few highly detailed narratives, often elaborating upon a comment or incident not previously developed. As she told her stories, Paula made frequent comparisons between the state of the marriage and relationship before the affairs and after, between herself as character before the divorce and after, and between her husband and the man she is currently seeing. She created distance between that earlier self, the later one, and herself as narrator through a gently humorous performance of the stories, implicitly emphasizing her increased strength and self-awareness as she showed the character's progression and development in her narratives.

Laurel Graves

I was only slightly acquainted with Laurel Graves when she volunteered to tell me her divorce stories. During a chance encounter, I had been bringing her up to date on my recent activities when she announced to me that she was divorced, had been married three times, and would talk to me if I liked. Laurel thus had more knowledge about this project than other informants as well as a concept about personal experience narratives. She told me two brief
narratives as examples of the things she could tell and assured me that she had many more. Laurel loves to entertain people with stories she tells about her life, so when I collected narratives from her in her home in central Ohio a few weeks later, the session lasted for one hour and forty-five minutes, ending only because I had an appointment in another part of the community.

Laurel, who is 49 years old, was born in 1939 in Raleigh, North Carolina. Her parents, she says, were "southern country," and lived in the same rural area of North Carolina all of their lives. She is the oldest of the two surviving children, her parents having had a daughter who died at age five weeks, before Laurel was born. Her surviving sister is six years younger than she. Although Laurel grew up in a small town in North Carolina, her three marriages and two divorces took place in other towns, and in the cases of the last two, in other states as well. She married her first husband in 1960 at age 21 and was in the process of divorcing him when she was widowed in 1962. He had not been cooperating with her attempts to get a divorce, and therefore, although she considers the marriage to have ended in divorce, legally she was his widow. She married her second husband in 1965 in New York and was divorced from him in New Jersey in 1970. He, not she, had wanted this divorce, although by the time they were able to get the divorce, their relationship was quite
amicable. Because "no fault" divorces did not exist at that time, she and her husband had to stage an elaborate charade in order to end their marriage. She married her third husband in 1972, moved out of their home in 1974, and divorced him in 1976 or 1977 (she could not remember which), all in Florida. As with the first marriage, she had difficulties obtaining this divorce, for her husband would not cooperate. After he became involved with another woman, however, Laurel was able to rush the divorce through the courts. During her first and third marriages, Laurel had affairs with other men, which contributed to her wanting divorces. Although she did not have affairs during her second marriage, her husband did, which again led to the divorce. She has moved around a lot over the years, saying that she once thought that every time she broke up with a man she had to go away to start her life over again. As a result of her moves, she has had a number of types of jobs, ranging from cocktail waitressing to office work. She also attended a community college during these moves, eventually earning first an AA degree and then a BA in 1986 at an Ohio university. Laurel emphasizes that maintaining ties is important to her, stating that she has remained friends with her second and third husbands and their families, corresponding with them and frequently visiting them. Besides the three husbands, she says that she has had three "unofficial" husbands, one from 1970 to 1972, one

Laurel began her storytelling with a brief overview of the number of marriages and divorces, then returned to each marriage in chronological order to talk about how and why each ended. Throughout all of her stories, she maintained a dramatic, humorous presentation, giving few of the details about what led to the divorces and none of what she calls "the ugly things." Instead, she focused most of her attention as narrator on how the character attained the divorces, the actual ceremonies and behind the scenes work that had to be done to set things up, and what happened after the divorces. There was little character development as the storytelling continued; instead, I as listener heard stories about a character who allowed little of what occurred in her life to touch her. These were experiences on which the character immediately turned her back--both literally and figuratively--yet without allowing every aspect of the relationship to disappear, as is seen in the narrator's repeated statements about her continuing contact with her ex-husbands and their families.

Karen Woods

I have been acquainted with Karen Woods for a number of years, but do not know her well. About twenty years ago she worked for a doctor in a small Illinois town who was a friend of my family. She later worked for two years for
another doctor in the same community who is a friend of mine. Thus, because she worked for people with whom I am acquainted, I know about her more than I know her. I have heard bits of her stories over the years from the second doctor and his family, for Karen has maintained her friendship with them and periodically stops by his office, telling the doctor and his nurses about the latest events in her life. I had never spoken with her about her personal life, however, other than the superficial incidents acquaintances generally exchange when running into one another after some time. Several people, including Paula Martin, had suggested that I contact Karen, assuring me that she would have a lot to tell me and would not hesitate to do so. Karen agreed to tell me about her divorces—she has been married five times, four ending in divorce and one with the husband’s death—and met me at the home of my friend and her former employer, who lives in the same small town in Illinois in which she resides. We spoke together and I collected her stories one Saturday afternoon as we sat in the den of my friend’s home for about two hours.

Karen is 49 years old, the only child of a farmer and a factory worker. She mentioned several times that she was not like her parents, for she refused to be satisfied with her station in life: she always wanted more. She met her first husband right after high school and married him when
she was twenty. She immediately became pregnant, had a son, and two years later had a daughter. Although she had worked prior to the marriage, she quit her job to become a full-time wife and mother. Just prior to the birth of her son, she caught her husband with another woman and threatened to leave him after the baby's birth. They reconciled, however, and she decided to stay with him. After the birth of her daughter, she began to work again and realized that she preferred the way her colleagues treated her to the way her husband treated her. She divorced her husband, and soon after met and married her second husband. This, she said, was the best marriage of the five. Three years later he died, and soon after she married again. The third marriage lasted only about one year. Karen said it was a confusing and problematic relationship which she ended after a female friend told her that her husband was gay. She said that she did not doubt her friend's statement, for she realized that her doubts and confusion about the marriage were explained by this disclosure and that "everything suddenly made sense." She did not confront her husband or question him. Karen divorced him and he did not contact her again, except to send her a card on what would have been their wedding anniversary. Four years later she met and married her fourth husband, to whom she was married for five years. This was a physically abusive relationship which she had
great difficulty in ending. She finally ended the marriage after her children forced her to confront the nature of the situation and to act to protect them. Two years ago she married her fifth husband, and she said that she quickly realized there were problems with the relationship. Unlike the fourth marriage, the abuse in this one was psychological. She ended the marriage about one year ago and is still single. As did many of the storytellers, Karen initially gave a brief overview of the marriages and divorces, although hers was interspersed within a philosophical monologue about relationships and people's needs. She then returned to the chronological beginning to fill in some details before she told many stories. Thus, she actually recapitulated the chronological order three times during the session. Within this chronological ordering of the session, the narrator often moved from one time period to another within the context of a single marriage—at times through embedded narratives—and also moved at times from one relationship to another without identifying for me the listener to whom or to what she was referring. During the storytelling session, Karen frequently returned to a topic or theme already brought up and told more stories that further developed earlier ones. Her most detailed, and most numerous, stories were those which concerned her fourth marriage and divorce. Interwoven among many of the stories, except for the
central abuse narratives in marriage number four, was conversation about her thoughts on marriage, on men in general, and on the variety of problems facing women today.

Ellen Beck

I have been acquainted with Ellen Beck, the fourth woman from whom I collected stories, for about two years. I did not know that she had been divorced (for she is currently married) until, after asking me about my work one day, she volunteered to tell me about her divorce and, like Laurel Graves, provided me with a sample of her divorce experience. She therefore had some idea about the general focus of my project. At her request, I met her in her office one morning two weeks later and she told me stories about her marriage and divorce for about one hour and fifteen minutes.

Ellen, 35, grew up in a medium-sized Michigan city, one of four children of a highly successful and wealthy businessman and a traditional housewife. During her formative years, her father became an alcoholic. As a result of this, she and her younger sisters were left on their own much of the time, her mother being involved with the father's problems to the exclusion of all else. After her father became a recovering alcoholic, the parents attempted to regain parental authority in the family, a move which Ellen and her younger sisters resisted. Her
parents insisted that she attend college after high school, with the provision that she could quit after one year if she desired. While attending a local college, she met her future first husband and soon after moved out of her parents' home. Shortly thereafter, her future husband moved in with her and she quit school. Both worked at a variety of jobs with the intention of saving enough money to move away from their hometown. They married and one year later, in 1973, left on a trip to find where they wanted to live. Ellen said that she gradually realized over the course of the next year that her husband was becoming more traditional and his goals were growing closer to those of her parents, whereas she wanted to explore the various possibilities that might exist for her. In early 1975, her husband agreed to try a temporary separation, which was quickly followed by her request for a divorce. She had no children from that marriage, had several long term relationships in the years after, and married for the second time four years ago. When I collected her stories, she was expecting her second child. She is presently living in Ohio and working on a graduate degree in art history.

Unlike many of the storytellers from whom I collected, Ellen did not begin the session with an overview of the relationship or divorce. Instead, she began by talking in general terms about her age when she married for the first
time and related that to her family situation and home life. Many of her stories had few transitions from the surrounding conversation into the story frame. However, almost all were followed by long and detailed evaluations of the experience, setting the specific narrated event in the overall context of her life story, often establishing a connection between the narrated event and her relationships with her family. She used embedded narratives fairly frequently, making a number of chronological jumps to provide background information and/or rationales for the character's actions in the narrative. She continued to emphasize rationales for the events, and, by setting them in the context of her life, created an intricate system of consequentiality.

David Porter

A mutual friend introduced me to David Porter at a social function during the time I was collecting divorce stories. All that David was told about my work was that I was talking to people who had been divorced. After our first meeting, David informed our friend that he would be happy to tell me about his divorce if I were interested. Two weeks later, David and I met one evening, at his suggestion, at a neighborhood bar in the midwestern city in which he now lives for me to collect his stories. We talked and he told me about his divorce for the next two
hours. The bar was quite crowded and noisy, and, being so, the atmosphere helped create a degree of intimacy that might not have occurred otherwise: we were forced to sit very close and hold our heads and faces near each other's in order to hear all that was said.

David, 29, is the youngest of four children. He was born and raised in a small Indiana town. His parents, both schoolteachers, became Baptist missionaries when he was six years old. He has had difficulties with severe depression for much of his life, particularly from the time he was in eighth grade. His father drew upon fundamentalist religious beliefs in response to his son's mental illness, repeatedly telling David that some hidden, unrepented sins were the cause of his troubles. David accepted his father's statements and struggled with a belief in his sinfulness while finishing high school. He entered a large state university, continued to suffer from depression, was disenrolled from school, and was then reinstated one semester later. David met his future wife, also a student, in the fall of 1978. They married the following June. He remained in school, graduated with a BA, enrolled in graduate school, and earned a MA in French, while suffering two more severe depressions. After graduation in 1983, he attempted suicide and was hospitalized in a private mental hospital for three months. He states that his wife stood by him during these troubles and, after he was released
from the hospital, advised him to get a job rather than continue with school, which he did. He worked for a large textbook publisher as a salesman for two years, hating his work and growing further from his wife as she became more and more a traditional wife. Because she continued to stand by him and be supportive during his depressions, however, he felt unable to be open about his dissatisfaction with their relationship. She was, he said, too perfect. He was promoted to editor by the publishing company, moved to the home office in New York City, where his son was born. Six months later he suffered another severe depression which lasted twenty-two months. He was hospitalized for three months. He managed to escape—to manipulate the system to engineer a false release—from the hospital and lived on the streets of a southern city for eight months, during which time he quit the job he hated and had no contact whatsoever with his wife and son. As he stated, she did not know where he was or even if he was alive. He returned to his home state in December, 1986, contacted his wife, and was hospitalized for three days, checking himself out against his doctor's advice. He left the state and lived for the next six months at the Salvation Army in New York City. During this time, his wife informed him that she wanted a divorce, which was finalized in March, 1987 while he was still living in New York. He returned to his home state, where his ex-wife and
son lived, in June, 1987, and attempted suicide for the second time. He was hospitalized at a state hospital for three months, during which time he was frequently visited by his ex-wife and son. Upon his release he was employed for one year as a high-rise window cleaner. He is pursuing a graduate degree at a midwestern university.

David sees every aspect of his life as interwoven, as inextricably connected, and the variety of stories that he told me when talking about his divorce confirms this. Although at one point he said that what he was telling me sometimes had nothing to do with his divorce, he continually made connections between all facets of his life, and, at another point, stated that for him "absolutely everything is connected." This belief is born out by the lack of transitions between many of his stories, so that a number of them can be thought of as a series of episodes in one longer narrative. David created a fabric of interlinked events, with the links formed in part through the creation of a sense of consequentiality. All of the narrated events--his marriage, his jobs, his suicide attempts and depressions, his divorce--were connected in his storytelling through the creation of a character who repeatedly attempts to control his life, only to fail and fall under the control and power of others. Only when the chronology of the storytelling reached events close to the present was David the character depicted as gaining control
over events in his life.

Nick Sanchez

I have known Nick Sanchez rather well for several years and had heard many of his divorce stories previously. He loves to tell stories about the many experiences he and others have had, which is apparent in his performance style, for he is an entertaining storyteller, acting out various parts and dramatizing the voices of his characters. He was glad to talk to me about his divorce, not just as a favor for a friend, but also to have an opportunity to talk. At his request, we met at his home in central Ohio one afternoon. I spent several hours at Nick's home, although the actual duration of the session was two hours and ten minutes. We stopped taping a few times during the afternoon for him to take a break from talking, get a beer, think of more he wanted to tell me, or get some supper.

Nick Sanchez, 36, is the son of Spanish immigrants. A British citizen, he was born in England in 1952. He, his younger sister, and his parents moved to a large eastern city on Thanksgiving, 1962, where he lived for the next fourteen years. He had a rather unhappy childhood, with two strong-willed parents battling for domination over each other. His parents divorced in 1968, when he was 16. His father remarried several years later; his mother did not. After he graduated from a local college, he attended
graduate school at a midwestern university, where he earned his MA and PhD in 1982. He met his future wife in early 1981 while he was a visiting instructor at a university in another state. They began to live together shortly thereafter. Nick said that he had not had much success in relationships with women up until that time and wanted very much to be married and have a family. He previously had told me several times that he had wanted to correct his parents' mistakes and have the kind of family and home life that he did not have while growing up. In the summer of 1981, the two of them moved back to his university community for his last year as a graduate student and one year as an instructor. Despite the many problems and arguments they had begun having after their move from her hometown in 1981, on the first day of spring, 1983, they married. They moved in early July to a midwestern city where he had a teaching position as an assistant professor. Their marital problems intensified after the move, and on February 8, 1985, they divorced. She immediately returned to her hometown, and he has not seen her since he took her to the airport after they left the courthouse.

Nick did not follow any chronological ordering in his body of narratives. In fact, he apparently thinks of each as a separate and complete item, for he refers to most of them by titles. There were, however, thematic links between many of the stories, all of which worked to help
create a portrait of Nick as a character who has been victimized. The main themes were his wife's jealousy and her irrationality, his inability to assert himself in their relationship, and the various changes in himself as character that he later realized occurred as a result of her actions and demands. Within the body of narratives, despite the lack of chronological ordering, a sense of the chronology does emerge, in part because of the repetition of common themes, but also as a result of the evaluative discussions that frequently occurred after stories. These discussions served to link stories from widely divergent time periods, so that I as listener could see the developing problems in the marriage which led to the need for the divorce.

**Jesse Smith**

I have been acquainted with Jesse Smith for about four years, but until I collected stories from him, I did not know him very well. This was another case in which I knew more about him from others than from Jesse himself. He had heard about the topic of my study—but not the focus—from a mutual friend and he immediately volunteered to be an informant. I met him one afternoon in his office, as that was the location most convenient for him. He talked about his two divorces for about one hour and ten minutes. Since that time, I have talked to him about the divorces and
other personal topics, both in the office setting and in other more informal settings. As a result of these other, unscheduled interactions, I learned that the stories I collected are not discernibly different in kind and in manner of presentation from others he tells.

Jesse, 46, was born in 1942 in a large city in Indiana. He is the oldest of five boys, children of an ex-chief petty officer and building superintendent—a non-Catholic—and a traditional, very devout Catholic housewife. Jesse grew up being groomed for the priesthood by his mother, attending Catholic elementary school and high school. He states that he had an unhappy childhood, being dominated by an overbearing mother and having an overweight alcoholic for a father. In 1960, he went to a Catholic university for his BA and MA, but by this time had successfully resisted his mother's attempts to persuade him to become a priest. While a student, he met his future wife, a fellow student, and married her in 1965. In 1966 he entered another midwestern university as a PhD student. He graduated in 1969 and became an assistant professor at a university in Montana, where he taught for eight years. During this time, he and his wife considered divorce, for they had been having many problems, but in 1971 she became pregnant and gave birth to a son, and, in 1973, their second child was born. Jesse, his wife, and their children moved in 1977 to a city in Wisconsin where he had a
professorship at another university. The unhappiness in
the marriage continued to grow. Jesse had an affair and
realized in 1978 that he wanted a divorce immediately. He
moved out of their house and within one year had custody of
their two children. In 1985, he married for the second
time. That marriage, which he states was made out of
despair and self-hatred, lasted less than one year. He is
single and states that he will not remarry.

Jesse Smith followed a basic chronological ordering in
his body of narratives. Later in the session, however, he
moved about through time periods, going back and forth to
tell other stories, often about a few pivotal moments,
developing each one differently according to his purpose
in telling it each time. In this way, one narrated event
was the material from which he told several very different
stories. Throughout his narrating, Jesse created a
portrait of a character who was victimized and whose
periodic attempts to act were blocked or rendered
ineffectual by the women in his life. The usual opening
formula for his stories was "it was/is interesting," an
evaluation through which the narrator attempted to distance
himself from the narrated events. This attempt to assume a
distant analytical stance toward his stories generally
failed, however, due to the intensely involved tone with
which he told them. Jesse usually followed a narrative
with an evaluative discussion, frequently relating a
particular narrated event to other stories he had already told, which then led into the next story. His storytelling session ends with a general consideration of marriage as an institution, both historically and in today's society, drawing comparisons to his own and others' situations.

Patrick Roberts

The ninth individual who told me his stories was Patrick Roberts. I have known Patrick for three years and had heard him talk about his marriage and divorce a number of times. He was a bit nervous about talking to me about his divorce for my project, because, he said, he was also talking about his ex-wife and he did not want to be unfair to her. Although he had readily agreed to participate, he felt uncomfortable during most of the hour that the session lasted. I realized after the session ended, however, that he felt uncomfortable at least in part because he wasn't sure if he was telling about his experiences "correctly," for during the last fifteen or twenty minutes of the session he began to tell what he felt were amusing pieces. Once he had told the first of these stories, he quickly told several more, excitedly introducing each by stating "I have another one, a story for you" or by making similar statements. Like Nick, he gave titles to these pieces, and thus was able to distance himself as narrator from them.
Patrick, 47, is the only child of a railroad worker and a schoolteacher. He grew up in a small town in Georgia. Because his father was often away from home, he and his mother formed a very close relationship: he was made her confidant. The family had financial difficulties, and, as a result, he traveled from his home only rarely until he went to a neighboring state to attend college. While a student at the university, he met and courted his future wife, a classmate. From the beginning of their relationship, Patrick said, there was fierce competition between them. They married the day after they both graduated with BA degrees in 1963. Patrick then spent two years in the service, as he had been in ROTC as an undergraduate, to finance his education. He lived with his wife in a city on the east coast until his release from active duty, at which time he and his wife entered a university in Iowa to begin graduate school. His wife received a graduate degree and began teaching while he continued with his education and earned a PhD in Philosophy in 1969. Their only child was born during this time, in 1967. Patrick and his family moved to a neighboring state in 1969 when he began his teaching career at another university. His wife taught for a few years, then returned to school to earn a professional degree. Patrick and his wife had gradually become estranged during the course of their marriage until they reached the point of divorce. He
had had numerous affairs during the marriage and later learned that his wife had had at least one. They separated in 1978 and divorced two years later. Although he has had a few long term relationships and a number of shorter ones, he has not remarried.

Patrick provided me as the listener with a brief overview of the relationship when he began telling me about his divorce experiences. He stopped periodically in the chronological overview to tell some relatively brief stories for which he provided the meaning and his purpose in telling them. Many of these linked his relationship with his parents, in particular his mother, with the specific narrated event involving his wife. Throughout the storytelling, Patrick created a portrait of himself as a victimized character. Although he frequently depicted Patrick the character as dumb and naive, those very characteristics allowed him as narrator to paint his ex-wife as a villainess of sorts, for he was well-intentioned as he tried without reward to be the kind of husband he felt he ought to be. His wife was subtly portrayed by the narrator as rejecting Patrick and his efforts, having neither the sensitivity nor the breeding to recognize their value, and his. The several amusing pieces or anecdotes he told near the end of the session were initiated by my question concerning any particular incidents or events that he might tell his friends about. At that point, he grew
quite lively and excited, telling me several stories with titles in quick succession. He started each with a lengthy introduction, explaining what each meant and why he likes to tell it. He ended the session shortly thereafter, indicating that he was tired and wanted to talk no longer.

The stories as performed by each of these nine individuals share some common patterns: thematic, structural, and style of performance. Most of the storytellers began with a brief overview which allowed them to orient me, the listener, as well as to emphasize immediately the events and particulars which they felt were most significant. The overarching chronological order used by most of the tellers, whether or not it was accompanied by the overview, served, again, to orient me, and, in addition, allowed the teller to structure the body of narratives with the chronology as the organizing principle. All of the storytelling sessions included a high degree of discussion and evaluation of the meanings of the narrated events and the stories about them. By doing this, the narrators were able to create a sense of consequentiality, making meaning out of the experience, often fitting specific stories into the larger context of their divorce and, at times, into the even larger context of other people's marriages and divorces. By telling their stories, these individuals answered for themselves a question which one of them asked me: "Does this make sense to you?"
CHAPTER II
END-ORIENTED NARRATIVES: THE SYNTHESIS ENDING

The telling of stories about divorce is influenced in a variety of ways by an issue which I see as central in the performance of personal experience narratives: establishing a sense of control over the recalled experience. The teller of the story creates a structure in which he or she places a version of the past self—as character in the story—alongside the teller's conception of the present self, the narrator, into some pattern of a coherent whole. Any experience retold as a narrative requires that the teller establish narrative control, but especially traumatic events in a person's life, events such as divorce, create an atmosphere in which an individual would feel a greater need to exert some sense of control over the past. Divorce can set an individual apart from past relationships--family, friends, colleagues--requiring a redefinition of who the individual is and others' perceptions of the divorced person. "Storying" an experience like divorce helps construct connections between these before, during, and after states, which can lessen the feeling of being "betwixt and between" (terminology
which Victor Turner uses in *The Ritual Process*). The past is brought into the present, and the storyteller can construct relationships between events so that they make sense, and thus the past experience seems to be under the teller’s control. Barbara Myerhoff has made a similar observation in her work with narratives told by members of an elderly Jewish community:

> [the narratives] were efforts at ordering, sorting, explaining—rendering coherent their long life, finding integrating ideas and characteristics that helped them know themselves as the same person over time, despite great ruptures and shifts. (Number Our Days 59)

The individuals from whom I collected divorce stories use a number of rhetorical strategies in telling their narratives. They embed narratives within the initial or primary narrative, sometimes embedding as many as two or three within one story. These individuals often dramatize their stories, adding oral and physical imitations of various characters during reported speech segments of the narratives. They manipulate the narrative point of view, creating a variable range in the degree of identification between the self as character and the self as narrator of the story. At especially critical points in the narrating, a teller may even step into a story, taking the role of a participant, when the teller in actuality did not participate in the narrated event. Strategies such as foreshadowing, repetition, metanarration, and parallel structure are also used frequently by the tellers of these
divorce stories. One particularly important strategy, used in various ways by all of the tellers, is the end-orientation of the narratives.

The use of this strategy—the presentation of the sense of the story's ending in its beginning—is directly linked to the issue of the storyteller's control over both the narrated event and the narrative event. By end-orienting a divorce story, the narrator of the story controls the structure of the text, the restructuring of the narrated event, the initial presentation of the point of the story, and the initial reception of the story by the listener. Thus it is understandable why this strategy is used, through a variety of methods, in stories in which the narrator wishes to exercise some degree of control.

I have identified two basic sub-genres of divorce stories in this collection, both of which are end-oriented. One is the personal experience anecdote, a relatively brief, rather compact narrative, usually involving two characters (the teller as character and one other individual, frequently the ex-spouse). In the anecdote, there is a high degree of reported speech, a focus on a specific event, and the last line of the story consists of a final line of reported speech. These are usually humorous stories, and their surface point is the presentation of that final line of speech. These personal experience anecdotes are similar in some respects to the
anecdotes Richard Bauman examines in *Story, Performance, and Event*. They are "highly end-oriented" because everything within the narrative—at least at first glimpse—focuses on the presentation of the last line, the punchline, "a bit of quoted speech" (59).

However, another kind of "end-orienting" also takes place in divorce narratives, one which differs in essential ways from that discussed by Bauman. Although this different type of orienting occurs to a limited degree in the personal experience anecdotes, adding another level of complexity, it operates more completely and is more central in the second sub-genre. This sub-genre consists of extensive narratives, much longer than the anecdote, usually with more than two characters, and this kind of story focuses on several related narrated events. The majority of the stories I collected fall within this second sub-genre, which I refer to as the multi-focal story. This large group of divorce stories is oriented in an entirely different way from stories like Bauman's anecdotes which have as their whole purpose the presentation of a very specific ending. In these stories, a sense or idea of what that end will be is presented in the beginning, so that the end-orientation is more tangibly present and diffused throughout the entire story. The ending is not a single line of dialogue but rather consists of gathering the strands of the narrative into a coherent pattern by the
story's conclusion. I have coined the term "synthesis ending" to describe this technique and to differentiate between it and Bauman's concept of end-orientation.

In this chapter I examine and analyze the various methods by which four tellers of divorce stories oriented their narratives toward a synthesis ending. The performances of these four individuals are representative of the range of performance styles used by all the informants. Their stories are also representative of the two sub-genres of divorce stories and the range of methods (nine are used in these narratives) chosen to orient the narratives toward their endings. David Porter and Laurel Graves tell both kinds of stories, while Karen Woods and Claire Jones tell multi-focal stories exclusively. During these collecting sessions, I was the only person to whom these four individuals told their stories, although each one, to varying degrees, has stated that he or she tells divorce stories to others.

A large percentage of the divorce stories are specifically oriented toward the synthesis ending. The remaining narratives are not told until at least one-fourth of the way into a session, by which time the general tone of the session itself has, to a certain degree, oriented the listener toward the outcome of the stories as a whole. Thus, I, as the listener of the stories, initially oriented these other narratives toward a synthesis ending myself,
following the established pattern created cumulatively by the preceding stories. In establishing the pattern of movement toward a synthesis ending, the narrator does not provide the complete end of the narrative in its beginning. The end is hinted at—albeit at times rather strongly—in a variety of ways as the teller orients the story toward its end. I have isolated nine basic methods used by the tellers to implement this strategy.

One: The Ending Within the Story

One way to orient the narrative is to situate the ending within the story itself, as an integral part of the narrative. David, in particular, uses this technique in a number of his narratives. In one of his early stories, David tells of a change in the marital relationship, relating it to the onset of his mental illness. For the story to make sense to the listener and to set up the ending, he must begin the story with a segment that describes the "before" relationship, then proceed with the deterioration segment, linking portions of the two parts implicitly as cause and effect. David carries this implicit cause and effect linking throughout the rest of his stories.

David: We were real happy, I was ... happier than I'd ever been in my life
EM: Uh hm.
David: Uh ... and then in 1983, I had just finished my Master's, ... uh, I did a li-, I had a really severe weight loss, the last quarter of
my Master's degree, I dropped from about a hundred and eighty pounds to a hundred and twenty two, uh, and
EM: Oh my God.
David: um ... I wo-, I had, I was suffering re-, from a really bad depression

In this beginning, contained within the narrative itself, David paints, although briefly, a rather idyllic portrait of his early marriage. The use of the past tense, however, indicates that this positive portrait will not continue. The transition of "and then" along with the reference to a specific time sequence, "in 1983," reinforce the sense that the story is actually about the beginnings of unhappiness. After the narrator tells about the specific surface problem, "I had a really severe weight loss," he leaps chronologically ahead in the story to provide a hint of the diagnosis of the problem, thus instilling a sense of what the unfolding of the narrative will bring: "I was suffering re-, from a really bad depression." It gradually becomes clear, however, that this diagnosis is his own interpretation of the problem, for after the story returns to its chronological sequencing, David presents a detailed picture of his debilitating illness, including an enforced stay in a mental hospital. When the narrator finally gives the official diagnosis, I, as listener, have thus been prepared for a somewhat different and more serious one than he had indicated previously: "They wouldn't let me out [of the mental hospital] for three months, and they, the diagnosis was uh, manic-depression, ... with strong
suicidal ideation." In addition to presenting the diagnosis, David as narrator is perhaps suggesting that the idyllic time was itself manic.

The story, it seems, ought to end at this point toward which the beginning has oriented the narrative. However, the story does not end precisely here, for the second part of the narrative concerns the period of hospitalization which began with the diagnosis. David has interwoven these events into one narrative, which can be seen by this second movement out of the chronological sequence: in the narrated event, the diagnosis of the manic-depression actually precedes the enforced hospitalization of three months. The narrated event ends with a repetition of the length of the hospitalization, "So, uh, ... so I was there for three months," within the story frame. The narrator's metanarrative evaluation of the significance of the narrated event closes the narrative event as he steps from the story frame to inform me, the listener, that "um, that's really where it kind of all started." Thus, the narrative's ending is presented within the beginning of the story proper, a sense of inevitable decline and loss that culminates with David's assertion, as narrator, at the end of the story that "that's really where it kind of all started."
The sense of the ending of a story can be suggested in an initial situation, as a prelude to the narrative action, thus providing a necessary introduction to the story. The stories which are oriented in this way are often episodic, for the narrator can refer to an earlier story in the initial situation of the one he or she is about to tell. Most of the nine storytellers use this initial situation method at least once in their narrating, although Karen Woods uses it more frequently than do the others. In one story, Karen tells about the ending of her first marriage, presenting it in terms that justify her decision to divorce. In the initial situation, she introduces the main characters in the story: herself at age twenty-one, a husband, and children. She characterizes herself as weak and lonely, thus at the mercy of the husband. This information, given prior to the beginning of the story, sets the stage for the events that follow.

Karen: On the first marriage, uh I was twenty-one, and uh I wanted children right away, I just wanted them, I was an only child
EM: Uh hm
Karen: so I wanted to have children ... uh
EM: Uh huh
Karen: and I thought I could have someone, something to cling onto, so, um, ... I had two children and ... uh, I think Joe had turned three, and my husband had, ran around ... uh
EM: Uh huh
Karen: and drank
EM: Uh hm
Karen: and bowled, and played cards.
With the words "so, um ... I had two children," Karen has moved into the story proper. Prior to this, however, the narrator has established a number of things for the listener: she has been alone for much of her life and even before the events about to be recounted occurred the marriage was not happy (her desire to have children as "something to cling onto"). Her immediate juxtaposition of herself with the children versus her husband running around sets up more explicitly a contrast that implies the potential for future conflict.

At this point in the narrating, without any marked transition, the narrator tells an embedded story in which she goes back in chronological time to provide background information for the primary story. In order to involve fully the listener's sympathy and support, she must emphasize the length of time she has worked on the marriage and the repetition of the husband's actions which undermined her attempts. One of the rhetorical goals of all of the storytellers is to engage the listener in this fashion. Thus the narrator's actions as character in the narrated event have to be justified because of the stigma society places on divorce. Karen continues with the contrast between herself and her husband, here with two conventional images: the wife who remains at home and the husband who runs around. Thus the action in the embedded narrative parallels what she has begun telling in the
primary narrative, each reinforcing the other.

Karen: and uh, when I was pregnant with Joe, he came home, about five o'clock in the morning, and he got out of the backseat of the car with another woman, so
EM: Oh my God
Karen: Yes. So he came in the door, I said, "Soon as this baby's born, I'm going to get a divorce." Cause I was about to go to the hospital then, cause I was way out to here [indicates with hands how large she was].
EM: Oh my God, that's horrible.
Karen: Yeah, it was. And, uh ... but then, he started straightening up.
EM: Uh huh.
Karen: So, I had Joe, and tried again, ... I wanted another child so I had Stacey, and then, he still, would run around, he didn't want to stay home for more than a little while. And I, I had worked, previous to getting married, so I wanted to go to work, so, I started working, and I realized that, that there were other people out there who treated me nice, and I, I was somebody,
EM: Yeah, uh hm.
Karen: and he was treating me like I was a nobody.
EM: Uh huh.
Karen: And then I realized how unhappy I really was.
EM: Yeah.
Karen: And so, so I, I filed, I filed for divorce.

As Karen continues with the embedded story, she focuses very briefly on the conflict, the reconciliation, the birth of the son and of the second child, bringing the events quickly back to the chronological time of the primary narrative. She again uses parallelism for the purposes of contrast: "there were other people out there who treated me nice, and I I was somebody"; "and he was treating me like I was a nobody." She continues the quick movement through ensuing events, linking the embedded and primary
narrative actions through emphasis of repetition, ending the story with the blunt statement: "And so, so I, I filed, I filed for divorce." The narrator's final hesitancy, incorporated in the blunt statement of action without details, together with her brief clauses between which I, as listener, provided feedback, parallel the internal struggle in which the character is portrayed as having been involved from the beginning of the story.

Recent sociological research on domestic violence, focusing on "battered woman syndrome," provides some insight into the internal struggle Karen displays throughout her narrating. Lynne Bravo Rosewater writes about the traditional values and stereotypic beliefs about women's roles in marriage held by members of our culture:

Women, via their social and cultural conditioning, are taught that their expected role is to be wife and mother and that keeping the family together is their responsibility and obligation. A battered woman [, victim of either psychological or physical battering,] is in a Catch-22: If she does not take care of her family, she is labeled a failure; if she does not take care of herself, she is labeled a masochist." (91)

The complexity of Karen's position as narrator of this story is similar to the situation described by Rosewater and apparently experienced by Karen as character in the narrated event. She must attempt to clarify--and justify--not only why she decided to divorce her husband, but also why she had remained with him for as long as she did. Thus as narrator she displays through her narrating an
ambivalence and hesitancy which she depicts in her portrayal of herself as character.

Three: Ending in a Preceding Statement

Sometimes the ending is presented in a statement that announces the story's immediate beginning. Most of the narratives with this method of orientation are personal experience anecdotes. Except tangentially, neither the story nor the statement is linked to preceding discussion or stories. The beginning statement is one of two kinds: either a metanarrative evaluation of the story about to be told or a straightforward statement. One of Laurel Graves's stories provides a good example of a metanarrative evaluation.

Laurel: Um, in fact I think probably the worst thing I ever did, the, the most un-, the most trashy, I guess, thing I've ever done, oh that's not the word I want, but maybe you can supply the word, the most unethical thing I've ever done, is that when I was married the second time, I asked my, I wanted to leave him, I didn't have any money, so I asked his mother [laughter in voice] to lend me some money so I could leave him.

EM: Laughter

With pronoun shifts--"I" to "you" and back to "I"--the narrator makes reference to the narrative event and pulls the listener into the story frame as she returns to narrating.

Laurel: She she turned me down, but but
EM: and you told her why you wanted to borrow?
Laurel: Yep, yeah. She went, "Well, no, I can't do that, Missy."
EM: Laughter
Laurel: and [laughter] the-, the-, I I was that close to her that I, it would have been like asking my mother, but I forgot that she's probably going to side with him. EM: Laughter Laurel: [laughter in voice] regardless of how much she likes me, so it it, and she told me that, and they they were mad with me for a while.

In this personal experience anecdote, the narrator ends the story proper with a punchline: "She went, 'Well, no, I can't do that, Missy.'" She also keeps the structure of the narrative event parallel, for just as she begins with an evaluation of her action as a character in the anecdote prior to entering the story frame, she follows the end of the frame with an evaluation of the narrated event.

Four: Ending Announced After a Pause

Many of the straight-forward announcements that orient synthesis ending narratives begin after a brief pause in the storytelling session. Claire Jones begins one of hers in this fashion. In this particular story, in which she tells about seeing her ex-husband one night, she ends the narrative with a strong echo of its beginning announcement.

Claire: ... I haven't seen him [Jim, her ex-husband] ... for years.
EM: Uh huh.
Claire: except for one bizarre night, it was real strange. The night, you know I came back here uh, ... to go to business school,
EM: Uh huh.
Claire: and after about a month I just really hated it and all and wanted to get out, that was here in Maryland, from Dallas, and Bob and I were in Dallas, and came back here about five years ago, four years ago, and ... so, I was trying to decide what to do, I knew I hated the business
school, but I felt like, God, we moved all the way back here, and I missed it, so I was over at this restaurant, with Bob and Larry, one of our friends from graduate school days, and the woman who was the cook at this restaurant was a friend of mine from long long long time ago, I'd worked with her, and the four of us were sort of sitting around, and it was about twelve o'clock at night, trying to figure out what I should do, and these various people would come out, like these other cooks would sort of come out, and offer their advice.

EM: Yeah.

Claire: Real strange. And then, way do-, I looked up, and way way down at the other end of the restaurant I saw Jim walk in, and stand around and talk, and first I thought I must be seeing things, so I said to Larry, I said, "Is that Jim or is that?" And of course Bob wanted to go down and visit with him. [laughs]

EM: Laughs

Claire: But they, it was and they confirmed that it was, and that was the only time I've ever seen him since we came back to College Park.

As part of a very tightly constructed outer structure, the actual end echoes the end contained in the announcement at the beginning of the story: "I haven't seen him ... for years. Except for one bizarre night"; "and that was the only time I've ever seen him since we came back."

However, within this structure, Claire tells a very rambling narrative. All of the essential pieces of information are provided, but in an apparently random manner. For example, the narrator moves between various time frames, checking herself at times to fill in details I might not already know. Most of Claire's stories convey a sense of greater narrative control, but this story depicts a character who is searching for some direction in her life. Thus, the apparently random structure contained
within the rigid end-points parallels the sense of "controllessness" that the character apparently feels, which is reinforced by the repetition of "real strange." Indeed, she is so unsure of herself and her sense of judgment that she requires confirmation from others that the man she sees is, in fact, her ex-husband, having thought to herself, "I must be seeing things." Claire the narrator, however, uses repetition to distance her present self, in both time and space, from the "directionless" and "control-less" character of Claire and from the narrated event: "a long, long, long time ago"; "way way down at the other end." The emphasis on extreme distances, even to the point of exaggeration, allows Claire to present herself as separate from the person she once was.

Five: Combination of Two Introductory Statements

An infrequently used method of orienting a story consists of combining the two types of introductory statements. At times, as with one story told by David Porter, an announcement of what is to come is made at the beginning of the narrative, followed by a brief pause, then a clearly evaluative comment. In this story, David tells about how he happened to have had an affair.

David: I cheated on her once ... that was the worst mistake in my life. She never knew. Still doesn't know. Uh, ... I haven't talked about this with anyone either, ... I was the editor of a literary magazine, at school, in fact, Jake
[a mutual friend] was the uh, this is how I met Jake.

The combined initial statement, "I cheated on her once ... that was the worst mistake of my life," begins a long and intricate synthesis ending narrative which contains two synthesis ending embedded stories. The first of the embedded narratives begins with a focal movement to Jake. Seeming at first to be primarily a digression, this embedded narrative gives some necessary background information (although in much greater detail than is necessary) while at the same time it actually foreshadows David's sexual encounter with a student photographer. Here the narrator details Jake's sexual encounter with a student writer which involves a photograph, an encounter which in the narrative event contains many parallels between the two narrated events. The forshadowing increases the sense of the ending of the primary narrative as the narrator finishes the embedded story. The primary narrative resumes with a repetition of words from the first portion of the narrative, pulling the diverse strands of the narrative together: "I was the editor of a a literary magazine" becomes "When I was uh, head editor." The narrator tells how the two main characters in the story met, recreating the sense of mystery and allure which he as character experienced in the narrated event. In this portion of the story, the narrator is relating how the blind judging of art work for the literary magazine takes place.
David: Well, we got in, three photographs, from the same person, same number, and they were, um, really phenomenal photographs, they were not only ... uh, the best that we had gotten, they were the best that I`d ever seen.
EM: Yeah, uh huh.
David: They were really, uh, gorgeous, so anyway, ... uh, we published the magazine, and, right before, when we had made the final decisions, we put names on, you know, on the pages, I found out it was by a woman named Bridget Long, but I had never heard of her, I didn`t know who she was.
EM: Uh huh.
David: Um, I played pinball, every day between two and three, at the student center. And one day, right after the magazine came out, we had t-shirts and I had a Scope t-shirt, it was the name of the magazine, Scope, I had a Scope t-shirt on, I was playing pinball, ... this absolutely, stunningly beautiful woman, uh comes over, and uh uh, asks if she can play a game of pinball with me, so I said, "Yeah." So we started playing a game of pinball, and she said, "I was published in there." And I said, "Really? What`s your name?" She said, "Bridget Long." So, that`s how I met her."

At this point in the narration, David embeds the second story, one which might counter any charge of premeditation that might be directed toward David the character, therefore functioning overall to allow him to avoid guilt and blame. The brief narrative also heightens the sense of the primary story's ending, particularly through words chosen to emphasize the contrast between David the character and David the narrator.

David: I was so religious at this time, this was, I was, this was my senior year, that uh, I was determined to memorize the entire book of Romans, in the New Testament, and I I put each separate verse on a 3x5 card, and I had them all on a big ring and when I would walk, like to to home or to classes, wherever I would walk, I would flip through those verses, in order, and
and I I was trying to mem--,
EM: Oh my God
David: and I had like, three chapters memorized.
EM: Wow.
David: So, I wasn’t looking for anything.

In the first two lines of the embedded story, David uses the past tense “was” five times, creating a sense of distance between the narrator and the character. However, he links the past to the present, by also using the demonstrative “this” three times in the same section, thus creating a conflicting sense of immediacy in the narrative. The implicit conflict enhances the increasing sense of the primary story’s ending. The narrator moves back into the primary narrative, providing a detailed account of the prelude to the sexual encounter.

A key detail is given at this point which will allow the narrator to allude to the sex act later in the narrative without having to give any specific details and without having even to state explicitly at which point it occurred. In this segment of the narrative, David and Bridget have met accidentally at breakfast one morning. While they eat together, she learns that his wife is out of town and he learns about a dream that she has had about him. A traditional motif in seduction stories is the “dream” which the potential seducer relates to the chosen “victim.” Here the traditional roles are reversed, however, with the woman as the aggressor.

David: Uh, she said, “I had a dream about you last night.” I said, “Really? What was it?”
And she started to tell, to graphically describe this uh ... this love-making session, and she went into de-, I was really embarrassed.
EM: Oh my God.
David: She, she went, one of the details that she mentioned was that I was wearing a Lone Star beer t-shirt, and nothing else [chuckles]
EM: chuckle

The two characters make plans to have dinner together that evening at her home. The narrator provides few details at this point, moving quickly to the climax of the story. After the narrative ends, David closes with a brief evaluative section that structurally parallels the beginning evaluative statement. The final evaluation contradicts that initial statement, although carrying within it a potential indication of some moral self-condemnation.

David: And uh, I I went, and um, ... I had a great time, I was feeling really good, she was drinking wine, I wasn't drinking any wine, but, I I still felt, a little bit drunk, just being with her, she was she was so beautiful. Um, and she said, "Hang on a second, I'll be right back." And she went upstairs and she came, when she came back downstairs, she threw something in my face, and it was uh, a Lone Star beer t-shirt.
EM: Oh.
David: and she
EM: Oh God
David: she said, "Put it on." ... And it was all over.
EM: Yeah, yeah.
David: So, I was, I was sucked into it.
EM: Wow.
David: uh, ... and after that, ... I was never the same, after that, because ... it was probably in a lot of ways, it was the best thing that could ever have happened to me, because, ... um, I thought I was above ... that.
The structural and thematic repetition in this narrative helps to draw the various strands together to reach the synthesis ending toward which the entire narrative has been oriented. The contradiction in the final evaluation—"that was the worst mistake in my life" becoming "It was the best thing that could ever have happened to me"—also indicates that the repetition, the developing structure of the narrative, and the ending orientation need not be completely constraining forces, for in this narrative David as narrator has come to a new realization about the event through his narrating of it. David's pensive tone and frequent pauses show that at this point in the story, the end and his evaluation of significance of the narrated event as he has narrated it, he is involved with its effect on him and his later life. Sandra Stahl and Katherine Young each address points similar to this one. Stahl writes that

existentially, the personal experience narrator not only acts or experiences, but "thinks about" his action, evaluates it, learns from it, and tells the story—not to express his values, but to build them, to create them, to remake them every time he tells his stories. ("Personal Experience Stories" 274)

In Taleworlds and Storyrealms, Young writes about the "objectification of experience" that occurs during narrating. This happens, she states, because an actual shift takes place within the narrator's consciousness: "narrativity shifts [the teller's] attitude to life from
Six:Explicit Link With Preceding Conversation

Two similar techniques draw attention to the relationship between the narratives and the conversation in which they are told. These stories are not isolated narratives inserted at the whim of the teller. As Gillian Bennett has pointed out, "where narratives are embedded in extended expositions and are functionally related to those expositions, ... the surface form of the narrative takes on some of the characteristics of explanatory speech" (418). I would go further to state, based on my work with divorce narratives, that an even closer relationship exists that greatly influences the choice and performance of stories. Frequently the surrounding conversation includes discussions of stories already told and allusions to others, as well as clues to the topics of the following stories. In fact, another technique used to orient the story toward a synthesis ending situates the story as an example linked to preceding talk between the teller and listener. With this method, the story is used as an example of larger, more general principles or points being made in the conversation. In one of her stories about her ex-mother-in-law, Laurel Graves uses this technique. In talking about her second husband, she has been discussing the relationship between his parents and has classified it
as a state of war with temporary truces interspersed. The
state of war erupts with particular violence at holidays.

Laurel: and, uh, every holiday, invariably, she
plans a huge event which he would much rather,
but, he has no say, in anything, she's totally
the the boss, and then, inevitably, the day of
the event, I mean this happens, I mean you can
predict the the, we've seen it happen like a
hundred times, and and it's it's still happening
today.

The parallelism the teller uses here--"happens," "happen,"
and "happening"--emphasizes and supports the point being
made in the narrative. Laurel continues to add more
details concerning the explosions and resultant chaotic
atmosphere, with the ex-mother-in-law always attempting to
make her husband appear to be the instigator of the
extravagant celebrations. After the teller spends another
minute or so reiterating the kinds of scenes that follow,
she tells a story as an example.

Laurel: and one one Christmas, my third husband
and I were invited to one of these things, and
when we walked in, it it had be-, be-, the blow­
up had just happened, just happened, she was
sitting out on the porch crying, ... and he, Ed
[the ex-husband] met us at the door, and went,
dug his nails into my arm, and maybe he met my
husband, "Come in, come in, come on, don't leave,
it's just happened again."

Laurel's use of the word "these" rather than "those," along
with "and one one Christmas," the transition from the
general talk into the story proper, creates the link
between the conversation and the narrative as example. Not
only does the teller provide the end in the beginning
through that link--for she has talked about the explosions
in the preceding conversation, but she also emphasizes the sense of the ending by the repetition of "just happened, "further linking the conversation and the narrative: "the blow-up had just happened"; "don't leave, it's just happened again."

Seven: Implicit Link With Preceding Conversation

At times, the end of a story is presented in general conversation at the end of the previous story, but without a statement of the connection. Yet, as with the more obvious linking, the story is again an example of the general principles or points under discussion in the conversation. In addition, through the intervening conversation, the story is often linked with the story that preceded it. In discussing a similar technique, Katherine Young refers to the specific use of one story as prologue to the next as "end-linkage"(178). Claire Jones uses linking through conversation at one point in her storytelling when she discusses the difference between what her estranged husband thought he should be able to do and what he thought she should not do. This general conversation follows a turning point story in which she explains when and why she began to date again. Claire begins to tell the story using only the word "so" as a transition into narration. The preceding talk, however, allows me as listener to immediately grasp the sense of the
ending, aided, in addition, by the use of "so" in its capacity to indicate sequentiality/causality in a story.

Claire: He wanted to kind of his his, I guess this is typical of men of a certain category, but, of a certain mindset, but he wanted to have his ... have a period of freedom,
EM: Uh huh.
Claire: be able to do whatever he wanted to do. And it turned out, of course, that he'd been doing what he wanted to do all the time we were married but I didn't realize it
EM: Oh, yeah.
Claire: at the time. But he wanted to be allowed to go off with and do what he wanted to but he didn't want me to ... to do anything.
EM: Yeah.
Claire: So the first time that I started to see, the first person that I started to see, he called, he was in Kansas City,
EM: Uh huh.
Claire: he called the house and Robbie [her female roommate] said I wasn't there, it was late at night, he guessed that I must be seeing somebody ... so
EM: Uh hm.
Claire: so the next day, he started calling early in the morning.

The conversation ends and the story begins with Claire's statement "So the first time that I started to see," clearly an indication that the story will provide an example of the conversational topic. In the rest of the story, the teller recounts how the phone calls continued until she responded. The estranged husband's persistence early in the story prepares the listener for the ending, particularly in terms of his characterization. The teller's emphasis on the great distance between their two locations, however--she is in Maryland, he is in Kansas--seems to exclude as possible what she reveals in the
story's end: he flew to Maryland to confront her.

Claire: and he said that he was go-, he was on a flight the next day and was coming out to ... College Park, to talk about this.
EM: Oh, my God.
Claire: So he arrived in College Park, and spent, you know, about four days stalking the halls of Prescott [chuckle]
EM: [chuckle] Oh no.
Claire: and try-, you know, trying to make me feel like I shouldn't be seeing anybody else. He came out there really just to find out if I was seeing somebody else. And to let me know that I shouldn't be doing that.

As with many of the stories, the end is followed by a brief discussion in which the teller presents her interpretation of the significance of the narrated event. The discussion also functions to return the teller and listener to the conversational realm.

Eight: Ending in End of Previous Story

At other times, the ending of a story is contained within the end of the previous story. This method is used most frequently with groups of episodic stories in which there is little, if any, transition between the narratives. David Porter, in particular, orients many of his stories his way. In fact, many of his stories can almost be grouped into cycles, each one focusing on a particular aspect of his adult life, but all eventually intertwined so as to comment upon his marriage and divorce. David himself notes the interrelationship of all of his stories. He replies at one point to a remark made by his girlfriend
(who joined us briefly) that these stories have nothing to do with his divorce by stating, "Well, uh, the two are kind of inextricably combined. ... Well, for me they are."

Early in his narrating, David moves from specific divorce stories to stories about his mental illness, hospitalization, and job. He ends a story about being hospitalized against his will with the statement "so I was there three months," repeating for the fourth time this specific amount of time. He follows the story's end with a metanarrative comment on the significance of the narrated event: "and, um, that's really where it kind of all started." After this evaluative statement, the narrator immediately begins the next story, linking them through a continuing repetition of "three months." The repetition, by tying the two narratives together, serves to orient the second narrative initially toward a similar ending.

David: Uh, ... I got out of there, I was there for three months, and uh ... I took a job with Norton, I wasn't sure whether I wanted to go on and get my doctorate, or if I wanted to work, and uh, my wife's name was Susan, she really strongly suggested that I get out of school, find a job, so I started working for Norton, and ... um ... they weren't really sure they wanted to hire me.

David drops the repetition of "three months," and begins another repeating phrase which furthers the sense of the story's ending: "I wasn't sure"; "they weren't really sure." This movement through repetition is a rather complex orientation toward a synthesis ending which continues to be refined and modified throughout the
narrative. The narrator continues to create a sense of a foreboding conclusion when he increases the lack of certainty and control experienced by David the character:

David: and I hated it, oh God I hated it so bad. But, for some reason, I was really successful, I did, I did A1-, a whole lot better than othe reps had ever done ... so after a year, uh, they transferred me to San Diego ... and it was the best territory in the United States, and I hated it even worse ... and um, th-, it seems the more I hated it and the less I did, like ... the less I did, the more orders came in.

The contrasting links between the conjunctions "and" and "but," followed by the repetition of another set of contrasts, "less" and "more," intensify the listener's expectation that conflict and/or confrontation of some sort will occur. The outcome for David as character is expected to be negative, for the narrator has created a narrated event in which the character is lacking in control. This story, linked to the preceding narrative about his enforced stay in a mental hospital, thus becomes another episode in a larger cycle of narratives. Both through repetition and through situating the sense of the end of the second story in the end of the first, David creates a sense of inevitable decline in all aspects of the character's life.

Nine: Ending Indicated By Tone of Voice

The sense of inevitability in the ending of a story can also be introduced by the tone of voice used by the narrator in the beginning of a narrative. Karen Woods, in
particular, uses tone of voice to indicate the ultimate outcome of the story, especially as the narrated end affects her as character in the story. However, the details, the specifics of the story and its end, unfold during the telling. At times a heaviness or weight appears in Karen’s voice as she begins a story. Her voice starts very softly and slowly, with syllables, words, and phrases drawn out to the point where it almost becomes impossible for me as listener to follow the story. The ultimate effect, however, is that I attend to the narrative and the narrating with a heightened sensitivity and experience empathetically the hardships the narrator recounts. Karen uses tone of voice to orient the narrative most frequently when she tells stories about physical and psychological abuse.

Karen: And then, [after her third marriage ended in divorce] you know, I met someone else. EM: Uh huh.
Karen: Okay. And he, he, we, were married five years, and he became, uh very abusive you know, the last two years that we were married, abusive to my children. EM: Uh hm.
Karen: and, ... would, ... well, he would chase my son around the house with a heavy ball bat, threatening to bust his knees if he... EM: Oh, my God.
Karen: came back in the house.

Karen uses tone of voice very effectively here, drawing out syllables (indicated by the spaced letters in certain words) and "weighting" other words (indicated by underlining) by infusing them with an emotional heaviness.
The narrator proceeds with a story as an example of the abuse she indicates above. As the story develops, the narrator no longer uses the tonal method of orienting the narrative toward its end, relying instead on the effect she has already created to carry over into this narrative.

Karen: And uh, then one night he had uh, his, Joe's arm locked behind him, had his hands up to his throat, and Joe was crying, and I went to the bedroom and I said, "What are you doing?" He said, "You just get out of here, I'll handle this."
EM: God.
Karen: Well, I was scared of him.
EM: Uh huh.
Karen: And I was nervous.
EM: Uh huh.
Karen: And, in fact, I was on nerve pills.
EM: Uh huh.
Karen: And that was when I was working for the Doctor, and I took off working because I was sick, because he told Joe to get out and not come back. Joe left home.
EM: Uh, how old were your kids then?
Karen: Joe was fifteen.

The narrator realizes at this point that she needs to reintroduce use of tone to develop the narrative and to direct me, as listener, in the direction she wants to proceed. My question has indicated that my interest and sympathy lie with the boy, not with Karen the character. Karen's response to my questions clearly indicates as well my influence as listener on what is said and on how the story is told. In the conversation which intervenes between this and the next narrative about the abusive husband, Karen emphasizes the positive qualities of the man, her attempts to "fix" the marriage, and her feelings
for him. She does this, however, with a similar heaviness in her voice, indicating, by the beginning of the next story, the ultimate ending of these narratives.

With all of these choices available, how does a storyteller decide which method to use to orient a particular telling of a particular story toward the synthesis ending? For within each corpus of stories, each storyteller uses a variety of these methods to orient the narratives. In other words, no one teller uses one method exclusively, although many tellers do seem to have a preferred method or two. The method chosen to orient a narrative seems to be highly dependent upon several elements, some of which are text-specific and some of which are context-specific. One of these elements is the particular conversational context in which the story is told. For example, if a teller is discussing an aspect of the relationship, he or she may feel that a story is called for as an example to support or elucidate the discussion. In this situation, it is essential for the teller to make a clear connection between the discussion and the story as an example. Claire Jones uses a story to support her comments about her family’s supportive reaction to the divorce.

Claire: It’s funny because that, all the time I was thinking that they’d be horrified if I got a divorce, they were so happy about it, that, I mean, not ha-, not ha-, not happy about it, but I mean they were great.
EM: Uh huh.
Claire: And ... were ... delighted that it happened. In fact, my two little brothers who were both at home then, still at home, Ben was in high school, and Mike was still in grade school, uh when they heard the news, that Jim had moved out, I told my parents almost immediately, we had boar-, my mother had a board, hanging on, in the den, that had photographs of the family all over it, and it was just stuck up there, so Ben and Mike went down and took down all the photographs that had Jim in them and cut Jim out of them [chuckles].

EM: Oh my gosh [chuckle]
Claire: So there was, you know, you'd go, even now, it's real funny, because some of them are still up there, they're still up there, they're photographs of me, I'm there but, or the, there's a big hole next to me. [laughs]

Claire follows this narrative with additional comments about her family's reactions to the divorce, stating a number of times that hers was the first in her family. She tells two other similar stories as further examples of her point. Claire belongs to a large Irish Catholic family and, knowing the assumptions made by many about Catholics and their attitudes about divorce—assumptions she herself acknowledges to have made—she feels a strong need to prove the validity of her non-stereotypic experience. This story, although told as a personal experience narrative, is not one. Claire has incorporated it, and a number of other similar narratives, into her repertoire of stories, telling each as if she were an observer of the narrated event, when in fact what she observed here was the result of the narrated event.

Sometimes the teller's memory is jogged by the telling of other stories and he or she wants to tell a narrative
that is not connected to what has been told previously. Or
the teller sometimes reaches a point where he or she feels
able to introduce an uncomfortable topic that is not likely
to come up naturally in the session. In either of these
situations, the teller may pause briefly (thus maintaining
position as active teller, preventing questions from the
listener and loss of control of the direction of the
session) and then announce the topic of the next story
along with its end. For example, David Porter uses this
method when he introduces the topic of having had an
affair. There was no preparation for this announcement in
any of the previous discussions or stories. As he tells
the story, he quickly embeds two narratives within it that
not only provide some background information, but which
also allow him to reach the climax of the primary story
fairly gradually. Prior to beginning this story (about an
event which occurred fairly early in the marriage), David
talks briefly about the dynamics of the latter part of the
marriage.

David: I would just not say anything [about a
"trivial" thing that bothered him]. Well, after
a while, that builds up, and and little things
build upon little things, and then finally
there's one more little thing, and I'm ready to
explode. But I couldn't, because she hadn't done
anything, that I could explode about.

He talks a bit more about related matters, then pauses
briefly before announcing, "I cheated on her once." This
is a case where the narrator has told enough stories (he
has been talking for forty-five minutes by this time) to feel comfortable introducing a topic which would most likely never have been introduced otherwise. He wanted to tell this story and could only do so by first abruptly announcing it and then slowly working his way into and through the narrative.

Another element that influences the chosen method of end-orienting a story is the teller/listener context of the performance. For example, the teller may believe that the listener does not fully understand the teller's interpretation of event, may not completely accept the interpretation, or may think less of the teller for a comment he or she has made. In this situation, the teller needs to use a specific story as an example either to clarify or to prove what precedes the story. Another facet to the teller/listener context concerns the teller's presentation of himself or herself through the narrating. An individual telling a personal experience story is even more vulnerable in this respect than the teller of other kinds of stories. The narrated event and the roles played by the various characters as well as how the narrator—as a person—presents these interwoven elements, directly affects the listener's reception of the teller and of the tale. For example, Claire Jones makes what she feels might be perceived as a catty or unkind comment about her ex-husband, although she feels certain enough of its validity
to continue. In fact, her acknowledgement of the potential negative interpretation of herself as teller draws attention to the statement which she must quickly validate. Apparently feeling ill at ease, for the narrator is visibly uncomfortable at this point, she tells a story to prove that she is simply being honest, not unkind.

Claire: And I think ... this is going to sound real tacky, ... I'm going to say it anyway,
EM: Yeah, go ahead.
Claire: Uh, one of the things that Jim ... did, I think was, I think he was attracted to women who were smarter than he was,
EM: Uh huh.
Claire: and Jane Young [her ex-husband's girlfriend] was. She was real capable and very bright, and ... and so I could see, I remember one night, I sat down, I I sat down with them.

With her statement, "I remember one night," Claire proceeds to tell a narrative that proves her "tacky" statement is not unkind, but instead is an insightful comment about her ex-husband. Through this meta-comment about being perceived as "tacky," she provides me, as listener, with an acceptable reason for believing her interpretation and also with a picture of her as a narrator who can be relied on to tell unbiased stories--the "truth"--even about her ex-husband.

The content of the story and the point or points which the teller wants to make can also influence how the teller chooses to orient a particular story. For example, the teller may want to create a sense of inevitability within the story. Here the teller may use tone of voice, as Karen
Woods frequently does, or, in order to exercise more control over the narrative event, the teller may want to use a more explicit form of orientation toward the ending, such as David Porter's use of repetition in his story about taking a job with a publishing company. Here, too, however, the teller/listener context can be seen as influential. For example, one of the points David consistently tries to establish in many of his stories is a portrayal of himself—as a character—as an individual without control during the narrated event. In the Norton story, the narrator repeats the phrase "not sure," frequently hesitates in the narrating, and portrays the character as one who allows others to make decisions for him, as with his wife telling him to take the job rather than go to school.

David: Uh ... I got out of there [a mental hospital], I was there for three months, and uh, ... I I took a job with Norton, I wasn't sure whether I wanted to go on and get my doctorate, or if I wanted to work, and uh, my wife's name is Susan, she really strongly suggested that I get out of school, find a job, so I started working for Norton, and ... um, ... they weren't really sure they wanted to hire me.

Despite the characterization of himself in the narrated event as indecisive and lacking in control over his life, the narrator maintains a firm control over the narrative events, using repetition, foreshadowing, and embedded narratives to develop each story at the pace he deems requisite, always moving toward the synthesis ending. Thus
David, as narrator of his stories, presents a portrait of an individual who is vastly different from David, the character in the narrated events.

Once the ends are set-up in the beginnings of the stories, how are they reached, and how completely are the announced endings fulfilled in the true endings? For example, some of Karen Woods's stories just "fade-out," although they are oriented similarly to others she tells. She tells one story as an example of the financial difficulties women with children face after a divorce.

Karen: So, uh, then, after that [the divorce], there you are, you know, and the kids are growing and they need new clothes.
EM: Uh huh.
Karen: I know that uh, Bill, ... the children's father, would, was only paying twelve dollars a week per child, for eighteen years,
EM: Oh my God, that's outrageous.
Karen: but when Joe went into the army after he graduated, ... he was paying the twelve dollars per child, I told him, I said, "Don't you feel, embarrassed to go down there and pay twelve dollars of support?" So I told him I was going to see about having it increased, so he increased it another twelve dollars, which, he'd always paid twenty-four, so he was still paying twenty-four dollars support. Which he is now, which I feel like if I wanted to, I could take him to court to get more support.
EM: Oh, because she [the daughter] is in school?
Karen: Uh huh. But he has not missed a week in that whole eighteen years. Not missed a support. So I took that into consideration. But there were times when I felt like he could, you know, buy a winter coat for school, or clothes for school, or, you know, things like that.
EM: Uh huh.
Karen: He never did do that. And so uh, so I went and asked him for more support
EM: Yes, uh huh.
Karen: which I probably should have, you know, and uh if you take the kids to the doctor, and uh
medical bills, dental bills, and uh, optical bills, and they gripe about that because they have to pay for that
EM: Right.
Karen: you know, usually it's in a court order.
EM: Uh huh.
Karen: but it's, ... uh ...
EM: Yeah.

These "fade-out" narratives Karen tells, however, tend to occur only early in the session: the longer she tells stories, the more frequently the announced endings are reached. The "fade-out," then, may be related to an initial feeling of discomfort or a hesitancy to tell her stories to me in a "created" situation.

On the other hand, some of David Porter's stories are so tightly structured that the endings contain echoes or repetitions of the beginnings. Claire Jones is another teller who uses repetition in this fashion. For example, she begins one of her "family reaction to the divorce" stories with a transition that links the story to the preceding conversation.

Claire: And in fact, my mother told me that after ... we separated, her friends, people started, realized that we were separated, this woman that she had known ... who was a housemother for one of the fraternities in, at Kansas for a while wha-, while we were there, ... had come and told her that some of the kids that I had grown up with were in that fraternity, some of the guys were, and they said to my mother that they had been very upset that when I married Jim, not because they, I mean, just because they were friends,
EM: Uh huh.
Claire: and they thought it was, and that, ... he had been seeing other women all of the time we were married, so my mother was looking to tell me.
The narrator begins and ends the story with almost identical phrases: "my mother told me"; "so my mother was looking to tell me." Within this structure, however, the narrator can ramble, pulling together various threads of information that finally make sense as she reaches the end. These neat wrap-ups with ends that echo beginnings are unlike the actual endings of most of the divorce stories I collected. However, even without this tight structure, most of these narratives are, to varying degrees, reflexive. This reflexivity is created either by the elaboration and validation of the initial tone of the story or by the sense of completion reached by the end of the narrative. The reflexive nature of these personal narratives, in which the ending contains something of the beginning, establishes the teller as one who controls the narrated event through the narration of it. This feature is indicative of a need in the teller to control the outcome of the narrative event. By controlling the narrative, the narrator can reshape the narrated event and thus present his or her perception and interpretation of it.

Through the use of orientation toward a synthesis ending, the teller also controls, at least initially, the point or meaning of the story. If the interpretation of the story is implied, as it frequently is, rather than explicitly stated, the listener is freer to agree or
disagree with it, based upon an evaluation of the narrating. The teller can, of course, present his or her interpretation of the story in an explicit fashion, and this does, in fact, occur, although infrequently. Often this explicit interpretation occurs after the narration ends. When the teller of a story places an explicit interpretation in the story's beginning, the narrator actually takes a greater risk--illogical though it may seem at first--by, in a sense, forcing the meaning on the listener, rather than telling the story in such a way as to elicit more freely from the listener the validation of the narrator's implied interpretation. If he or she implies, by situating a story within a conversation, for example, that the story is an example of what is being discussed, the listener is oriented, at least initially, toward accepting it as such. But because the interpretation is implied rather than stated, the listener feels he or she will be allowed to disagree. Because of the initial orientation, the narrator can work toward maintaining his or her interpretation. Of course the teller must maintain a degree of congruence between initial orientation and the unfolding of the narrative, for the listener does expect the story to "make" the particular point. Thus, although the teller establishes a realm in which he or she has control over the narrative and thus over narrated event and the initial interpretation and understanding of that event,
the same rhetorical strategy also increases the teller's responsibility to the listener.

Realization of this greater responsibility as well as the awareness of the potential for disagreement about the listener's interpretation of the story prompts the teller to periodically address the listener directly, asking for a sign of verification of understanding or agreement or for a signal of validation. For example, Laurel Groves frequently asks me, in the middle of a narrative, "You know what I mean?" to which my reply of "Yeah, uh huh, I do" prompts her to continue with the narrative. David Porter asks, sometimes while narrating, but more frequently between stories, "Does that make sense to you?" Once I indicate agreement and understanding, he continues. However, when my response indicates that I either do not agree or do not understand, the teller stops, fills in with more information or provides greater clarification, and does not continue with the narrating until I indicate a more complete acceptance of the narrative message. In fact, at one point, Karen Woods stops telling a brief story to explain to me why she did not mention the abusive nature of any of her marriages during divorce proceedings.

Karen: Most of mine [problems in the marriage], was abuse.
EM: Uh huh.
Karen: Yeah, and uh, you don't tell that in court. ... Uh
EM: Why? Why is that?
Karen: I did not want to tell in the courtroom that this man is abusive to my children.
EM: Uh hm.
Karen: And I didn't want to say he was abusive to me.
EM: Well, why was that? You know?
Karen: I, I didn't want to make him look bad.
EM: Oh. Oh really?
Karen: Uh huh. You know, I was afraid there at one time that he would be charged with child abuse
EM: Uh hm.
Karen: and and I depended that time on him
EM: Uh huh.
Karen: so so I more or less tried to clean up it, to clean up all of it, ... uh
EM: To protect everybody and keep everything nice?
Karen: Uh huh. Yeah. And, uh, I guess because I'm not devious a person and I I didn't want to bring all that out.
EM: Yeah, uh huh.

Not until I intervene and rephrase some of her statements does Karen feel free to return to the interrupted narrative, for by doing so I have implicitly accepted and validated her interpretation.

Thus, with the orientation of a narrative toward its end, the listener has another area in which to evaluate of the telling of the narrative. In addition, this orientation adds a further layer to the complexity of the storytelling process. How can the teller create the necessary suspense in a narrative when the listener knows in advance the general ending of the story as well as the point the teller intends the story to make? Part of our esthetic requirement for a story to exist in recurring performance—as I learned many of these narratives do—is that it be gripping and hold the listener's attention throughout.
To hold our attention, we expect a story to have some degree of tension and suspense incorporated within it. Because the listener is oriented toward a particular end and a particular point which the story is to make, the listener anticipates their presentation in the unfolding of the narrative. However, if the listener knows that a particular point or end is coming, but doesn't know when or how, the listener's attention to the narrative will be heightened. The listener will be compelled to pay even greater attention to the telling of the story as he or she waits for the expected revelation contained in the unfolding of the narrative. Again, however, there is danger for the teller in creating suspense and anticipation, for the teller must maintain even greater control over the telling, as well as over the listener.

In order to help maintain narrative control, some tellers opt to use stalling devices to regulate the growth of suspense in the narrative and anticipation in the listener, devices such as embedding narratives, going into apparent digressions, and deleting details that turn out to be important pieces of information. Tellers of these stories sometimes choose to use devices that direct the attention of the listener, rather than stall the progression of the narrative, devices such as repetition and foreshadowing. By consciously using these devices, the teller can gauge the relative degree of anticipation in the
listener and can shape the narrative where necessary.

One story Claire Jones tells presents a good example of control over the development of suspense, as well as an example of storytelling itself as a means of control. In this story she leaves out a bit of crucial information as she tells about her visit to check on the health of her estranged husband. Claire provides me as listener with the degree of information which she as character has during the narrated event as it proceeds. This technique, similar to that discussed by Bauman in his analysis of "prank stories" in *Story, Performance, and Event* (33-53), recreates the listener's experience of the narrative event as parallel to that of the character in the narrated event.

Claire: At first [after the separation from her husband], that was, I was thinking that he was to move back in eventually, and that you know, and we were still seeing each other occasionally, well, then, ... he ... got sick, got tetanus or some, went to Tennessee, drank some bad water and got something. It was awful. And, ... he stayed at our house for a while and ... until he got a little bit better and then he went back to the apartment he was living in with these two other guys. And, ... so I went over, I was going to go over one night and check on him, and Robbie [her female roommate] was with me, it was a Friday night and we went over to the apartment and I walked in and one of the guys said, "Oh, Jim's in the back bedroom." So I walked back to the bedroom ... and he was in be-, oh, in bed watching T.V., and it wasn't like they were making love or anything, but he was in bed with this other woman that I had met one time. EM: Oh my God.
Claire: And they were sitting in there sort of watching television, he was still sick, but she was quite relaxed
EM: Oh my God.
Claire: like she'd been there before. And I
remember I walked in and I sort of stood there and then I thought, ... I I don't know what I thought, but I just kept thinking, "This is not what I'm seeing." And
EM: Yeah.
Claire: I kept trying to remake the scene
EM: Yeah, yeah.
Claire: you know, so that she wasn't there, and this, finally I just turned around and I walked out, except I got lost on the way out and I tur-, ... I turned the wrong way, and I ended up in in a bathroom, there's a
EM: Oh my God
Claire: a bathroom at the end of the hall and I walked right into the bathroom, just that I didn't want to walk by that room again.
EM: Yeah.
Claire: Well, I locked the door, Robbie's out in the living room in the meanwhile, waiting for me and Jim came to the door and started knocking on the door. Finally, I let him in and he tried to talk me out of what I had seen.
EM: Yeah.
Claire: He's a real jerk that way, it's like ... like
EM: Like you hadn't even seen it?
Claire: Yeah, well, it was like I I shouldn't take it for what I thought it was, this woman, Jane--he's married to--had just come over to sort of help him and just just
EM: Happened to get in bed.
Claire: happened to get in bed, right. So Robbie and I left, and that was for me, I think that was the point at which I realized that I didn't need to feel, I could cut this off and never feel guilty about it, cause he was, ... uh ... he was, all this time I'd been thinking, "Well, we need to try to kind of work toward getting back together again." Well, I realized that he wasn't working towards getting back together, or I felt that he wasn't and somehow I felt justified in not wanting my marriage anymore.

The evaluative comments Claire makes at the end of the story present clues as to why she has chosen to develop the narrative this way. This is her turning point story, the one that, in her own words, lets her feel "justified in not
wanting my marriage anymore." Helen Ebaugh's research concerning the psychological process through which an individual "becomes an ex" stresses the importance of this same realization: the turning point allows the individual "to justify and rationalize the decision to exit, to self and to others"(134). Therefore it is crucial that I, as listener, accept and validate her decision. I order to insure that I will accept her decision, the narrator controls the information she gives me. Just as the character slowly gains insight and knowledge during the narrated event, so do I as listener during the narrative event. Thus I as listener feel not just sympathy for the character, but also empathy, having vicariously experienced the event during the story.

The teller of this kind of divorce story (which is explanatory rather than exploratory) wants to know that these narratives, these stories which are "his" or "hers" in a very personal and intimate way, are going to turn out right. The teller needs to know that the listener will get the right "point" and that there will be no real conflict or contention between them about this. So, in the narrative, the teller creates a sense of inevitability, a sense of unfolding of connected layers, a sense not just of sequence, but of consequence. In Taleworlds and Storyrealms, Katherine Young examines the beginnings and ends of stories. She states that "construing consecutive
events as causally related gives stories their consequentiality" (28). This is an artifice, however, for when beginnings and ends are created in a story, events which are "merely consecutive" are "render[ed] consequential" (31). The sense of causality established in the narrated event is mirrored in the relative symmetry and neatness of the narrative's structure. And, in some of the stories, the symmetry created is so perfect that the very words which begin the narrative are used to close it.
CHAPTER III

THE PRESENTATION OF SELF THROUGH NARRATING:
MANAGEMENT OF POINT OF VIEW

As with the end-orientation of divorce narratives, management of narrative point of view in the stories to be considered is intricately linked to the issue of narrative control. The aspect of narrative control in this chapter, however, focuses on the presentation of self through the act of narrating. The development of the teller as a character in the narrative, the type of relationship established between the teller and him- or herself as character, and the dynamic interaction between the teller and the listener, affect and reflect the narrator's presentation of self.

The complexity of the teller's task is further complicated— as is the task of the folklorist who studies this issue— by the fact that the development and presentation of self through the act of narrating is not a static feature of the narrative event. Rather than establishing a set "story self" which would then remain the same throughout the telling of the story, the storyteller develops a "self" which is an intricate and dynamic part of
the process of narrating. The result of a fluid, although often not "logically progressive," act, it changes throughout the narrating process whenever a variation in any of the impinging contexts warrants a change. As listeners and tellers of stories, we participate in this flowing movement, recognizing almost without being aware of it, that, for example, at one point the teller might closely identify herself with herself as character, but a bit later, she--the teller--might distance herself from particular thoughts or particular actions.

This fluidity in the management of point of view creates a state in which, at any given moment, the relationship between the teller and self as character, between the teller and narrated event, or between the teller and the narrative event--and thus the listener's response/participation in the narrative event--may change. The change may be due to any number of the various factors that influence a given performance of a given story. The contexts which comprise these impinging factors are, as Dan Ben-Amos notes, completely integrated with the text and its performance ("The Ceremony of Innocence" 50). Katherine Young writes that a single and discrete context does not influence the performance of a story, but rather that "contexts must be multiple" ("The Notion of Context" 116). In addition, "the number of possible contexts for an event is limitless ... [but] the number of relevant contexts for
understanding that event is limited" ("The Notion of Context" 117). In other words, the folklorist must initially attend to all of the possible contexts which may have influenced the performance of a particular story and then determine which ones were actually relevant to that particular performance. In reference to contexts, not just of stories, but of a wide range of utterances, Barbara Herrnstein Smith states that "the context of an utterance ... is best thought of not singly as its gross external or physical setting, but rather as the total set of conditions that has in fact determined its occurrence and form" (94). Although it is clear that she recognizes the existence of multiple contexts, her phraseology--"the total set of conditions" and "determined its occurrence and form"--implies a somewhat static set of contexts for a particular utterance and therefore does not capture the fluidity of the process of narrating that is, in part, a result of the multiple contexts and of the fact that the listeners of stories are active participants in the narrative event.

What, then, are some of these contexts which may impinge on the performance of divorce narratives? In his *Guide for Fieldworkers in Folklore*, Kenneth Goldstein lists a number of contexts to which a folklorist needs to attend. These are primarily "surround" contexts and include the physical setting, the interaction among the participants, and the time and duration of the performance. In addition
to these are contexts which Katherine Young classifies as "internal" and "external." The internal, which are carried by the individuals into the performance situation, include the mood, personal history, cognitive style, and past experiences of the participants. The external contexts, which are encountered by the individuals as they participate in the performance, include the relationships among the participants, interactional strategies, postures, gestures, and spatial arrangements ("The Notion of Context" 120). A crucial addition to the internal, with regard to the divorce narratives which I collected, is psychological. More than mood, yet related to that and to personal history, the current psychological state of the participants and their perceptions of past states is a highly influential context which turns upon feelings of "liminality" and cultural stereotyping discussed in previous chapters.

The interplay of impinging contexts and text affects an important key to the performance of these divorce narratives: the degree of distance or closeness to the narrated event and the self as character that is displayed by the teller at a particular moment in the performance. How closely does the teller identify with the self as character and/or with the narrated event? In other words, the teller of a story may establish a degree of closeness or identification with himself or herself as character
(particularly in terms of the emotional aspects of the experience which the character displays) and yet create a greater distance, as teller, from the narrated event (as in emphasizing what he or she learned from the experience and therefore what he or she would do differently today).

What is the teller's perspective on the event, and how does this influence the listener? We can examine the movement of the teller's management of point of view within a single narrative and within the body of his or her narratives and thus gain a greater awareness of and insight into the act of narrating one's own story.

A basic difficulty involved in studying management of point of view in these narratives is the problem of the identification of various roles which the teller may have played in the narrated event. Sandra Stahl implicitly acknowledges by her differentiation between "self-oriented" and "other-oriented" narrators ("Personal Experience Stories" 270) that not all personal experience narratives are the same. One of the distinguishing features of the two "kinds" she identifies is derived from the relationship between the teller and the tale: "the 'self-oriented' tellers delight in weaving fairly elaborate tales and build upon their own self-images and emphasize their own actions as either humorous or exemplary," while "other-oriented" narrators as those who "underplay their personal role in the story to emphasize the extraordinary nature of things
that happen in the tale" ("Personal Experience Stories" 270). What she describes is true in her examples as well as in some other narratives. However, the "self-oriented" and "other-oriented" dichotomy does not adequately describe the numerous types of narratives we call personal experience, it does not account for the various other possible functions of telling personal experience narratives, nor does it provide us with an adequate tool for analysis.

Richard Bauman notes, in *Story, Performance, and Event*, that two assumptions are commonly held about the personal experience narrative: "the event recounted in these narratives is purportedly one in which the person telling the story was originally personally involved, and the point of view from which the event is recounted is that of the narrator by virtue of his or her participation in that event" (33-34). However, when personal experience narratives are told, a number of what Labov refers to as "vicarious stories" ("Narrative Analysis" 18) are included by the tellers. These often are performed so as to comment upon the teller's own experiences in some way, so that the teller remains the focus of the stories and the storytelling session. By implication, then, a number of the narratives which we--as tellers and listeners--refer to as personal experience, are, in actuality, not personal experience stories at all, a fact which is apparent in the
corpus of divorce narratives which I collected. Rather than throw out or disallow these "non-personal experience" narratives, however, a closer and more detailed examination of them is needed, for they are told as if they are not significantly different from other divorce narratives told in the same session. Why, when, and how are they told? What purpose do they serve in the larger body of divorce narratives that an individual may tell? To better understand their uses and inclusion with "true" personal experience narratives, we need to examine all of the narratives which these divorced "folk" tell as part of their story.

In order to distinguish between the various kinds of personal narratives within the corpus of texts I collected and thus to examine a narrator's presentation of self, I focus on the relationship between the person telling the story and the event which he or she recounts. I have uncovered seven different roles of the teller as character which the narrators of these stories have used. These roles correspond to a generally increasing distance from the narrated event, ranging from the teller/character as central actor in the narrated event to the teller's complete absence from the narrated event. During the performance of a story, however, the created distance fluctuates, as, at times, does the point of view. In fact, although it does not happen frequently in these narratives,
a single story can move from one type to another. More frequently, however, an individual narrator uses other techniques to manipulate the narrative point of view, at times moving rapidly from telling one type of story to another within the body of his or her narratives. In keeping with the complexity of this process of narrating, there is a wide diversity of narrative points of view within each of the seven divisions as well. For example, some of the narratives are told not only from the self-as-character's perspective, but also with no discernible distance between the teller and character. And in other narratives, the teller adopts another character's perspective to tell a story about a narrated event during which the teller had not been present but had only had reported to her.

Type One Narrative: Narrator as Main Actor in Narrated Event

The first type of narrative is one Richard Bauman refers to as the "preconceived" type (Story, Performance, and Event 31). Here, the teller of the story is the actor of the main action in the narrated event. Thus within both the narrated event and the narrative event, the narrator as character is the pivotal character, instigating the action of the story. However, the teller can still have greater or lesser distance from himself or herself as character
within this type of narrative. And keeping in mind the fluidity constantly possible in this distance, a wide range of distances is possible. In other words, we might think of a telescoping distance is the potential constant, a dynamic movement between close identification and objective distancing and the range between the two extremes. It is also crucial to remember that the telescoping can occur at any time during the process of narrating.

The first story that Paula Martin tells is a type one narrative in which, during the first portion of the story, she maintains a relatively consistent degree of remote distance from the narrated event and from herself as character. As the story progresses, however, particularly during the second part of the story, her perspective as narrator shifts, moving closer to that of the character, yet still maintaining a separate identity from that of the character. At times she breaks the story frame to address me as listener, checking to see what type of a response her telling of the story is eliciting from me. The distance from the character as well as her concern about my response is understandable, for, prior to telling me her stories, she was adamant in insisting that she has had no problems with her divorce and that she has an amicable relationship with her ex-husband. Thus, she must simultaneously justify the reasons for the divorce while avoiding depicting either herself as true victim or her ex-husband as true villain.
Paula: Well, I guess it [the divorce] really all started probably back in about 72. That's when I first found out that my husband was going out with ... with other women.

EM: Uh huh

Paula: Uh, when I found out, he'd had a very bad accident and he was burned real bad and was in the hospital. So we agreed that ... it was ... all over with, and that we would keep on trying [to work things out].

EM: Uh hm

Paula: Up until then I had been uh the type of wife that I didn't do anything that my husband didn't want me to do. I didn't have any extra friends, I didn't go to the show, I didn't belong to any organizations, I didn't do anything because he believed that a wife should be at home, should have his meal waiting for him, he should come home, there was a song that uh Tammy Wynett had that was about "Stand By Your Man,"

EM: Yeah, yeah, I know that one

Paula: Well, that was his motto for us, he thought that's the way all women should be (with chuckle in voice), no matter what the man did, she stood right by him.

Once she has made the bald statement in this introduction to her narrative that her husband had been having affairs, Paula's tone becomes lighter. She breaks the story frame to provide background information, simultaneously creating distance between herself and the narrated event. She distances herself from the character in the story, particularly the "before" self, through repetition of the "didn't" statements, implicitly indicating that she is no longer this way. She creates a list that corresponds to the husband's list of what a wife should be. Her inclusion of the title of a popular country song as a parallel to the life he expected to lead and as an encapsulation of his expectations about the role of a wife distances the
narrator even further. The narrator's response, a chuckle, is therefore not unexpected, despite the seriousness of the subject. The narrator thus laughs not only at the unrealistic expectations of the husband, but also at herself as character for having tried to fulfill those expectations. Before she reenters the story frame, the narrator continues with the explanation of why she agreed that "we should keep on trying."

EM: Uh huh
Paula: And she supported him. That's the way I was, for a long time. And then when I found out uh about the girl he was going with, well, I guess that just really sort of shook my world up.
EM: Uh hm
Paula: But my kids were small, I had, hadn't done anything, I me- I had good jobs uh when we were married, and before I got married I was a private secretary to a head of an organization, so I had a good job there, and I had a good job at the phone company,
EM: Uh huh
Paula: and uh he wanted me to quit it because the guys came and told him stories about coming in and talking to me and things.
EM: Yeah.
Paula: But he couldn't handle that. He couldn't handle me talking, having anything to do with any other men. So I quit there. And when I found out, I hadn't ever done anything except that, and it had been like uh ten years, just didn't think I could go back to work. The only thing he had let me do was where I had worked in dress shops. So uh I didn't get, I didn't divorce him, we stayed together, but I think I lost a little bit of respect or something for him.

The teller has repeated the key phrase "when I found out" four times in this first section of the narrative. This creates a sense of inevitability, in terms of the next statement she makes, especially after the emphasis she has
placed on the unrealistic and repressive relationship. At this point in the narrating, there is a dramatic shift in the tone of voice the teller uses. She begins to speak more loudly and decisively. Her use of verbs changes to include ones that carry the connotation of strength: from "I found out"; "I hadn't"; "I didn't think" to "I stood up"; "I talked back"; "I went out." There are more frame breaks in which she uses humor as evaluative comments, further increasing the distance between herself as narrator and as character.

EM: Uh huh
Paula: and uh after that I stood up for myself, I talked back to him, I uh you know I'd go out with my friends, and and so it never really was like (chuckle in voice) making up like he wanted.
EM: Uh huh, uh huh. (chuckle)
Paula: And so and uh in about '81 I was uh putting clothes in the laundry and I found a ... a letter fr-, from a woman in his pocket.
EM: Oh, no.

Very briefly, at the actual beginning of the narrated event, the distance between the narrator and the character closes. Paula's voice grows softer and her speech slows. In order to get me as listener to sympathize with her character at the time, she gets closer to the character. I respond to the decreased distance in the performance here, and imitate the tone and speech pattern. However, once I have indicated empathy for the character, the narrator begins to increase the narrative distance, to which I again respond.

Paula: Uh huh, and uh he was in the shower and I confronted him with it and he told me that it was going on, and that, but he still loved me, he was
all mixed up and he loved both of us and didn't want to lose either one of us, and all that stuff
(starts to laugh)
EM: (with chuckle in voice) Oh, no.

Again, the laughter indicates that the narrator's perspective is distinct from that of the character, and the tone of the telling does not replicate, nor does it attempt to replicate, the mood of the narrated event. As the story continues, however, the shifting perspective continues as well. Paula's statements about her thoughts and fears, together with a closer identification between the narrator and character, foreshadow the event that leads to the final confrontation. She has created a sense of inevitable decline, yet at the same time she has created a portrait of herself as capable and strong.

Paula: And uh, we went through counseling, and... I don't know, counseling maybe helped some, but uh I... wasn't, I just, I think my trust was just so completely destroyed that I don't believe I ever could have trusted him again.
EM: Uh huh
Paula: Even, no matter what he'd told me and said, I'd sat there thinking, "You're probably lying to me." You know?
EM: Yeah yeah, oh.
Paula: I just didn't believe him at all. And uh, so I quit going to the counselor. ... Uh he, Bill came and he begged me to go back, he said he didn't want to lose me and the kids, he wanted us to stay together. So I went back to the counselor. I was trying to... It seemed like Bill and I were getting along really good, and then uh... someone called me on the phone one morning and told me to take a drive out to where Bill was staying, that uh that his girlfriend had spent the night out there.
EM: Oh, no.
Paula: So... I confronted him with this, course we were separated, we were having a trial separation, ... and he says, "Nothing went on,"
you know, that she just came there to talk. But uh, he had told me that until we got things straightened out that he would stay away from her.
EM: Uh huh
Paula: Because I just said, "I'm tired. I don't want to fool with it anymore. I want a divorce." And ... this was in August, and I filed for divorce in May.

This long type one narrative which Paula told during the initial "overview" portion of her storytelling session, illustrates the sense of movement from distant character to present self which reflects the process of struggle in which she as character had been involved during the narrated event. The presentation of the struggle as a type one narrative in which she as character was the primary actor, rather than just a character who reacted passively, is crucial to her initial presentation of herself: she is a strong, yet not aggressive woman, who was willing to attempt to maintain the marriage for as long as her self-esteem would allow; she will fulfill her role as wife, but requires that her husband fulfill his role as well.

Another storyteller, Nick Sanchez, also told several type one narratives, although typically his narratives are type three. He created more of a sense of powerlessness in the overall session than did Paula. However, in these two related stories, "Sawing Logs in Minnesota" (versions one and two), the Nick as character is portrayed as taking decisive and correct action.

In the first story, Nick as narrator remains
relatively distant from himself as character and from the narrated event. Only when the narrator tells about angry scenes does the point of view shift momentarily to be closer to that of the character. Nick as narrator breaks the frame rather frequently, often with a direct address to me as listener, to provide me with information, to elaborate particular points, or to evaluate my response to the story and to the teller. He generally maintains a different perspective as teller than he had as character, which is apparent from the light tone used in narrating and in the use of humor. The different perspective emphasizes the distinction he wants to make, and have me as listener accept, between his past self and his present self. Nick gradually narrows the focus of the story, centering narrative attention on himself as character, as can be seen through the change in pronouns, from "we" to "you"—which pulls the listener into the story—to "I." This narrowing of the focus and isolation of the character from his wife parallels what Nick tells about the relationship in this and other stories.

Nick: Okay, the first one's says, well, well, the first one I wrote down says, uh, Saw Log in Minnesota, oh oh yeah, ... I I'm sorry,
EM: That's okay
Nick: Uh, ... alright, I'll just do the story, I was thinking of the interpretation part of the story.
EM: Okay
Nick: Uh, okay, we, we're out in the pig van and driving around the back roads, the logging roads of Minnesota, looking for, uh i-, if you'd, if you're, we, we used to call ourselves, it seems
to me, the wood scavengers, because people cut wood, legally, in the national forest, and then, split it and everything, and sometimes feel that, end up cutting too much, end up with, I don’t know, something like 20 pieces of split wood just lying there.

EM: Uh huh
Nick: And Sara and I would, after we’d go hiking, and then later on in the day, in the last hour or two, we’d drive around, and pick up, like, you know, full van loads of wood, that we’d, we could just pick up.
EM: Uh huh
Nick: You know, sometimes it was uh uh actual logs, you know actual trees that would fit, as much as we could fit into the van, we’d get them in there and uh uh plan on sawing them at home
EM: Uh huh
Nick: so you’d fill up quickly. Anyway, so so uh, we ended up actually, I don’t want to be misleading you or anything, we ended up mostly with logs that I had to saw at home.
EM: Uh hm
Nick: Now, I didn’t have a buzz saw, all I had was a little camp saw,
EM: Oh gosh
Nick: and some of these logs were, uh, ... oh, about like that [indicates the size of the logs with his arms],
EM: Uh huh
Nick: Uh, what would that be, about uh uh, ...
I’d say about that big [again indicates size]
EM: Yeah, 12 inches across, 15.
Nick: almost, yeah, and uh, they were stacked outside on the, on the, in the carport, and uh, oh, and uh, as I as I cut them into regular size, you know, logs, to go into the fireplace, I had a stack of those, but ... the point here is that, there were there were always tons of logs that needed to be sawed up, ... and, uh, it ended up being my release from her, from whenever she would act lunatic, ... I would have to get, first of all, get out of the same environment, because there’s no way in the world I was ever going to hit her, I’m not that kind of a guy,
EM: Uh huh
Nick: But I was very angry. So I would just, you know, leave the room, and uh, and she never bo-, it was almost like a ritual, it was almost, I do-not a ritual, it was like she knew not to not to come out to where I was sawing wood
EM: Uh huh
Nick: uh, and my point is, that I remember cause I'm right handed, (chuckle) and my muscle on my right hand, was like (chuckle), I was like, I was walking like lobsided
EM: laugh
Nick: (chuckle in voice) you know, because on this arm, you know all I ever did was lift a few logs, it was like you know, my usual puny teacher arm, the other one was like "Ohh, Bunyan!"
[dramatizes with voice] (laughs)
EM: laughs
Nick: you know, and sawing, I would saw, I would saw a lot of wood, a lot of wood, uh, and, to the point where I think sometimes when I'd come back in she was a little fightened, where you know, she'd, maybe be over her fit, or whatever she was going through, and was surprised I had been out there sawing wood for that long,
EM: Uh huh
Nick: and and she'd look at me and that look on her face would be, you know, sort of, she might still be a little mad, but she was st-, uh not fightened, but a little, uneasy
EM: Yeah
Nick: which is fine with me, you know (slight chuckle)
EM: chuckle
Nick: "I'm going through enough shit, you want to be uneasy, I'm not going to grieve for you."
EM: chuckling
Nick: Uh, but that was what the the uh uh Sawing Logs in Minnesota is about.

Nick's reflexive performance has definitely metanarrative closure. This and other features, such as the opening metanarrative comments, indicate his self-consciousness as narrator and his awareness of the story as story. In his highly entertaining performance, during which he used voice imitations and gesturing as he acted out he scenes, Nick does not present the listener with a portrait of a realistic event. Rather, he distances himself as narrator from the narrated event through tone of voice, humor, and exaggeration, adopting a perspective unlike that of the
character in the story to create a cartoon-like story. However, the repetition of "the point here" and "my point is," the movement from "we" to "I," and the repetitions that emphasize the amount of hard physical labor of the character indicate an underlying seriousness in the telling of the story.

In the second "Sawing Logs in Minnesota" story, told a few minutes after he finishes the first, the narrator aludes to some of the points he makes in this first narrative, indicating that this is another version of the story. The tone of isolation is carried into the second story, again through movement from "we" to "I," although the focus "zooms" onto the teller as character much more quickly. A distanced narrator is also created and maintained rather consistently in the second story. This narrative, again told "to make a specific point," indicates again the narrator's sense of the story as story. Here, the character's actions are vindicated and his powers of perception are affirmed. In this "tricking" tale, the narrator focuses on a series of fortuitous incidents that show the antagonist (the wife) outwitting herself by pitting her skills and perceptions against those of the character. Nick clearly enjoys telling this story, as can be seen in his long discussion about the story after it ends as well as in his repetition of the main points of confrontation and victory.
Nick: Uh, ... oh yeah, I I mixed up stories before, about the wood?
EM: Uh huh
Nick: Uh, uh I got to the end product too quickly, there was a particular time and I wanted to make a particular point about it
EM: Uh hm
Nick: that we went and we, I seem to have started the story

Note this statement the narrator makes regarding the fact that the story began before he had intended to start it. He displays again his consciousness of the role he is playing as narrator and his performance of the story.

Nick: we were driving along a particular road, in the back woods, and there was a tree had fallen across the road, but it was not a, it was thick for sawing purposes, but not too thick where I couldn't saw, so I knew that I could use this wood.
EM: Uh huh
Nick: So I picked this spot, on the tree, where I would cut so it would fit in the van

The rapid movement from "we" to "I" corresponds to the rapid "panning" of the narrator's eye, moving from "particular" to "particular," until it focuses on the spot on the tree that will be the center of the coming conflict.

EM: Yeah
Nick: and I picked, as it turns out, the exact, right spot
EM: Uh huh
Nick: and, I´m, oh that´s something I I'll always, I'll even boast about, is that I´m really good at spatial things, I, like even when I was bagging groceries at the supermarket for whatever time, for 5 years when I was a teenager,
EM: Yeah
Nick: I would , I could put everything in one bag, almost always, you you know, boxes, i-, it was almost like a cha-, every bag was a challenge, I I I like that
EM: Yeah
Nick: and and it was like jigsaw puzzling
EM: Yeah
Nick: so, I I’ve always been good at space, like packing the van, well, someone will say, "Oh, that box won’t fit in that space."
[dramatizes voices— a "bitchy" female and a confident male] "Oh, I think it will," and it just sque-, it just goes right in
EM: laugh
Nick: you know, I mean I can even pick out of out of a number of boxes, that’s the one I want and I I really am good at that.

Here the narrator has briefly jumped back and then ahead in chronological time to provide me as listener with validation of his ability and then with information that the character did not have access to at that moment, for the doubting incident he mentions here occurred some time later in the marriage. Thus, I am drawn into the "game" that the narrator is telling. This device of using differential information levels is similar to that discussed by Richard Bauman in Story, Performance, and Event in his chapter on stories about practical jokes (33-53). Daniel Barnes has found a similar use of information levels and degree of knowledge in some urban legends (personal communication, Columbus, Ohio, 1989). The narrator has to decide whether to have the listener gain knowledge in the manner and at the speed which he or she as character did, or whether to bring the listener into the story in a more privileged position. By saying that he chose “the exact, right spot," Nick allows the listener to have some foreknowledge—and more than he as character does—but does not provide the listener with equal
knowledge that he, as teller, has. In order to validate
the claims he, as narrator, makes to me as listener, he
embeds two images that illustrate his skill at "spatial
things." In the second image (almost a mini-narrative),
the disbelieving voice, unidentified by name but
identifiable to the listener through the narrator's use of
a "bitchy wife voice," foreshadows the source of the
conflict that the listener realizes is coming.

Nick: So what happens is that I pick the exact,
right spot, to cut this tree, and she goes "Naw,
but, Nick, you can cut more than that, come on,
you you," [dramatizes voice] brr, or whatever,
"Alright, alright." So I, I swear, I move, I
moved it up about that much [indicates amount
with hands], like she told me to
EM: Uh hm
Nick: we go to put it in the van and (chuckle in
voice) and yo- you can, and the greatest, the
wonderful, the wonderful
EM: laughs
Nick: [gets up to demonstrate] proof is that I
had started to cut in my ideal spot, so
EM: Uh huh
Nick: there was the mark.
EM: Yeah
Nick: There was how we knew,

The information which the narrator has kept from me as
listener is that Nick had begun to cut the log before his
wife made him move the saw. The listener's surprise
parallels that felt by the wife, although the source is not
the same, nor is the reaction. Although the narrator is
quite appreciative of the character's skills, he maintains
some distance, in varying degrees, from the character and
the event during the narrating. In this way, he can avoid
any accusations of being boastful, while at the same time
bask in the character's achievement. The humor displayed by the narrator indicates that his perspective is not that of himself as character, as can also be seen by some of the narrator's comments during the storytelling and after. Again, he creates almost a cartoon of the narrated event, dramatizing the voices, repeating key phrases and points, and laughing both at the narrated event and at himself as character.

Nick: and we put the tree in and all she could say was "Oops!"
EM: laughs
Nick: (chuckles) when you could see that just the, it was sticking out of the van, that much [indicates with hands]
EM: exactly that same amount
Nick: and it was a thick log, so I wasn't going to waste all that labor, so I had to cu-, had to make another cut right then and there, rather than do it at home where I I might do half a cut and then maybe, unless I'm mad and her and then can do it all at once
EM: Uh huh
Nick: you know, if I was just sawing wood as uh, for exercise or something like that, you know, I I every once in a while, I'd, mostly I was mad at her (chuckle)
EM: Chuckle
Nick: but every once in a while I'd just saw some wood. You know, maybe we needed it that night for the fireplace that particular night.
EM: Uh huh
Nick: so, uh, uh, I had to make another big cut, then, when I didn't particularly want to do it, I'd rather do it at home, when, and that's what I was thinking of, make three, do it, you know, do it in three attempts or something
EM: Uh huh
Nick: Uh, uh and I can remember just looking at her and she just, she said "Oops!" and it was a little funny [dramatizes with voice] but
EM: chuckle
Nick: for me it was funny.
EM: Yeah
Nick: Uh, uh cause, I mean, here's my cut and I
mean my my it's just one of those things I'm really good at, spatial stuff
EM: Yeah
Nick: and, I got to admit, I was amazed that it was that close, but it was, I mean my cut was perfect, it was absolutely perfect.
EM: Yeah
Nick: I mean, give or take, perhaps, an inch, of getting it in or out of the van, and it was perfect.
EM: Yeah
Nick: and and I I you could see how off I wa-, you know, the part that was sticking out of the van, the part that she, "Arr"
EM: Yeah
Nick: I'm rehashing it just cause I'm, you know, I'm still, in some ways, I'm still rankled, and, that uh, that she had no faith in my abilities.

Nick's long and seemingly endless discussion and evaluation of the narrated event indicates the importance with which he views the event and the story he tells about it. He has indicated to me that this type of interaction was quite common during the marriage. Nick's intense involvement in the storytelling suggests that he needs to ascertain that I as listener, and as his friend, accept his presentations of himself. By telling these two versions as type one narratives, Nick tempers the potential image of his past self as weak or passive through the action he takes and his victory over his wife, and the distance he creates during his narrating also protects his present self from that potential image.

In the next two stories to be considered, Laurel Graves as character plays a trickster-like character. In the first story, she and her husband join together to outwit the legal system. This story, one of the first she
told, seems to be a narrative that is evolving as it is told. (She has told me that she tells other stories—such as the second trickster-like tale—more frequently than this one.) Note the "false starts" as well as the changes and additions she makes as she tells the story. These all contribute to a very distant narration, created and maintained rather consistently by the objective and seemingly uninvolved narrator.

Laurel: and uh, ... when we got divorced, the second time, at that time they didn't have "no-fault" divorce laws,
EM: Uh hm
Laurel: we were divorced in New Jersey, so I didn't want to be-, I didn't want I wasn't asking for an-, I mean I trusted him, that he would sell the house and and just, he, he was, he just wouldn't have been the kind of person who wouldn't have have done that.
EM: Uh huh
Laurel: so I didn't feel that I needed a lawyer, but then you couldn't just say, "I want a divorce because I don't want to be married anymore." You had to have charges, so we had to sort of, I didn't even have a lawyer, I I used his lawyer, and he told me what to say,
EM: Uh huh
Laurel: and I deci-, and they just said that they thought it would be better if when we went in to ask for the divorce that I would be painted the villain, and I said that was fine, so I got a girlfriend to go with me who who had to testify that that he had treated me bad
EM: Uh huh
Laurel: but really, she didn't even, she didn't even know him, so it was just a formality, at that time, and uh, so you know, it was real friendly and he came over and got us, we we were living in New York by that time, my girlfriend and I, and he came over and got us, and drove us to the di-, the court, and then I went in and, oh shoot, I didn't even have to go in, I stayed out in the hall, I didn't even have to appear
EM: Not at all?
Laurel: His lawyer said, "She left him on
Christmas Eve" and this, and the girlfriend went up and said, uh, or oh, the girlfriend had to say that that uh, I think that the girlfriend had to, had testified for him, that's how it went, she agreed to, yeah, she was an actress as a matter of fact.

EM: chuckle
Laurel: and and uh, she testified for him, it's been so long since I've even thought about that, and said, "yes, she she treated him really bad and" uh
EM: Uh huh
Laurel: Yeah, yeah, that that was what it was, but really she was my friend, she was just doing it as a favor for me, just to get the divorce over with.
EM: Uh huh
Laurel: so it was over in like 10 minutes, tops, and the divorce was granted, and that was all.

In the second story, Laurel outwits a husband who has not allowed her to get a divorce. This story is much more polished, with few false starts, indicating that it is told more frequently than the previous one, as she told me.

Laurel tells it with much more relish than the other, dwelling on particular details involved in her planning and emphasizing the roles she played in manipulating the husband through exaggeration and dramatization of voices. Laurel emphasizes all humorous aspects of the narrated event, poking fun at herself as character, at him, and at the situations she develops in the story. Because she loves to entertain her friends through storytelling, and usually tells stories in which she plays the central role, it is understandable that she would more frequently tell the story in which she acts alone to outwit her opponent rather than the one in which she is acting upon another's
directions. Only at one point in telling the second story does the facade of jokester fall, but still the narrator maintains considerable distance between herself as character and narrator.

Laurel: And then for the third one [the ending of her third marriage], it was real different, completely different, uh, ... he, was mad with me and didn't want me to leave him
EM: Uh hm
Laurel: and would never sign any papers, ever, he said, and he said he was going to kill me, too, [stated in a calm neutral tone, without any emotion] so that
EM: Oh my God
Laurel: so that
EM: seriously?
Laurel: well, I don't know, it's conceivable that, I mean that I I wasn't sure, though, uh uh I was scared for a long time to mention divorce
EM: Uh hm

During this exchange, a frame break which I as listener cause by my question to her, Laurel steps from her role as narrator momentarily and reacts to the content of the event--as I have. At this point, during her answer to my insistent question, her voice falls and falters slightly. As soon as she has answered, however, her voice raises and she reenters the story frame.

Laurel: and then I heard by the grapevine, I I was separated, and I was living with someone else, that I had left him for
EM: Uh hm
Laurel: and that was one reason why he was so mad, and uh, and so I I didn't even dare approach him for like two years, and then I heard by the grapevine that he had girlfriend, and I knew it wouldn't last, but I knew that maybe it would last long enough for me to slip in a divorce without him, without, with him being in a real up-mood, so I didn't have any money, to pay for
it, and it was 600 dollars, this was Florida, so I, my mother paid a third, of of it and I paid a third and my boyfriend paid a third, so we scraped up the money
EM: Uh hm
Laurel: and uh, so I called, called him up and said, "Look, I don´t want you to look on this as a hostile act," (chuckle)
EM: chuckle
Laurel: "but would you sign divorce paper, and" cause I knew he was real excited about this new girlfriend Pat, Patty
EM: Uh huh
Laurel: I´ve always been so grateful to Patty!
[stated dramatically]
EM: laugh
Laurel: and uh (chuckle) so he said, uh "Yeah, oh sure, yeah." And I knew "Now I gotta work fast." But I went to a lawyer and I said, "I don´t ca-, I wo-, I want this fast as possible, just get this rushed through, it´s not gonna be contested, just please!" So he said, "Okay, but there´s a three week waiting period, after the papers are served on him, he has to wait three weeks." By, by this time they had no-fault
EM: Uh hm
Laurel: which no one had to trump-up grounds or anything [alluding to situation in previous story]. So he said, uh uh "But, that can be waived, if both parties will agree," so I called him up and said, "Look a sheriff is gonna serve papers, but don´t look on it as me sending the police after you." [a bit dramatized here]
EM: (chuckle) uh huh
Laurel: (slight chuckle in voice) Cause you know how it might look if a sheriff goes over to, you know. I said, "It´s, he has to do it, it´s the law. Would you be willing to sign a paper, no contest and no waiting period, and waive the waiting period, and get it like in a week?"
And he said, "Yeah, sure." And I was thinking, "Oh, God, please don´t break up with Patty, yet." And so uh, ... the, he did and uh at, I, he didn´t even have to go to court, I I went, and it was just a formality and uh I had to talk to a judge for about 1 second and he said, "Uh, um, do you want to change your name? If you want to now, you can have it done right now, it won´t cost you anything, if you ever change yo-, later if you want to do it, it´ll cost you." And I thought, "No," said, "I´ll just keep it." In fact, that´s the name I have now, Graves.
EM: Oh.
Laurel: Yeah, cause it's kind of an unusual name
EM: Uh huh
Laurel: so uh ... I said, "No, it's" you know, it just went like, two seconds, and it was, divorce granted, with no with no charges having to be
EM: Yeah
Laurel: with no actresses having to say, "Oh yes," you know, or anything.
EM: Uh huh
Laurel: And I remember that, this was in Dade County where everything in the world happens, there anyway, it's a real big courthouse, so, I stood on the steps and and did a Martin Luther King speech, "Free at last!"
EM: laughs
Laurel: I really did, really did, my friends were with me, you know, I thought, I just thought it was a gay occasion.

A third story Laurel tells is ostensibly told to explain the kind of person her third husband had been. However, she tells a story in which she is the actor, the main character. She portrays herself in a rather unsavory light—if judged by traditional conventions—thus presenting a problem in terms of Labov's and Stahl's contentions that a narrator will always present a portrait of him— or herself in a manner which reflects self-aggrandizement (Labov, "Narrative Analysis" 20; Stahl, "Personal Experience Stories" 270). Laurel, however, due to the distance which she maintains during the telling of this story, presents a portrait of herself which she as narrator evaluates as "really tasteless, I admit." This evaluation is not, however, a harsh indictment of the character or her actions. Had she intended to condemn the character, the narrator could have told the story from the
husband's perspective, focusing on him and his responses and statements. It is possible, however, for a narrator to display ambivalence toward a character, even when the character is himself or herself (Mullen, I Heard the Old Fisherman). Because Laurel knows that some listeners might evaluate the actions of herself as character as "tasteless," she protects herself as narrator by immediately acknowledging that fact. However, part of my enjoyment as listener is that very audacity of the character who would act and do what she wanted, rather than be constrained by conventions. By focusing on the character as free spirit, the narrator manages to tell a story about a questionable topic without having the character condemned and, even more importantly, without having herself as narrator condemned.

Laurel: But but this is the kind, but even after I met, this is the kind of guy this guy was [3rd husband], even after I met this new boyfriend, and and had seen him a few times, behind, his back, uh uh, and then I wanted to spend the whole weekend with the guy and so I told my husband, "I'm spending the whole weekend (slight chuckle) with this guy," and
EM: Oh my God (with chuckle in voice)
Laurel: I I said, "If you throw my clothes out into the street, I wouldn't blame you, but," I said, "nothing is going to stop me, I'm going." So he went "Hhh." (she exhales quickly to illustrate)
EM: Oh my God

At this point in the telling, I, as listener, begin to respond not just to the telling but also to the content. Her dramatization makes the husband too real for me not to
sympathize and begin to identify with him. The narrator
does not dramatize the voices again, and she includes the
negative evaluation of the
character's actions, anticipating a potential negative
response by the listener.

Laurel: Yeah. And then, so I got dressed and he
even said, "You look really nice." See what I
mean, that that that's, really tasteless, I admit
that. And so he said, "You look really nice" and
I said, "Well, thank you." And I really expected
when I came back that Sunday night, that my
clothes would be out in the street. I would have
thrown his clothes out in the street, probably,
or moved, or, you know,
EM: Yeah
Laurel: but he uh he was just sitting there,
said, "Well, I'm glad you're back."
EM: Oh my.
Laurel: That was, you know, that was an
extraordinarily nice person.
EM: Yeah, he must have been.
Laurel: Yeah. And uh, I said, uh, I knocked on
the door and said, "Do I still have a home?"
[dramatized voice] You know, I figured, I
wouldn't have been surprised at anything, and
wouldn't have blamed him. But then, I left soon
after that, to move in with the other guy.

By telling this story from her perspective as character,
yet also including the negative evaluation of her actions
as character and emphasizing her husband's willingness to
accept her actions, Laurel also illustrates how desirable
she was: her husband loved and wanted her so much that he
would accept even these actions of hers. Because she is a
distant narrator of this story, Laurel can emphasize the
extent to which she could sink, yet the "slime" will not
transfer to her present self. Instead the listener is
entertained and remembers Laurel as an extremely desirable
woman who is a true free spirit. Yet despite the degree of
distance the narrator has establishes, she still identifies
with this former self, not only with the freedom, but also
with the nerve and the "balls." Thus she metaphorically
reveals an aspect of herself: she is fulfilling a masculine
gender role and part of the enjoyment and present
identification comes from the role reversal--he remains
passive and she is the active fornicator.

Another type one narrative is told by Ellen Beck. In
this narrative, a "turning point" story, the distance
between the narrator and herself as character varies,
although except for an embedded narrative it is
predominantly distant. Ellen uses some frame breaks and
metanarration, along with an initially dispassionate tone,
to create the distance between herself as narrator and the
narrated event. Unlike many of the other narratives
presented thus far, there is no humor in this story.
Instead, Ellen uses language symbolically to represent the
ending of the relationship.

Ellen: So we were only married for two years
EM: Uh huh
Ellen: ... and to make a long story short, ...
well, I can tell you ... a very strange moment I
had, that changed everything for me, ... we had
been camping various places, we'd been, this is a
long story
EM: Uh huh
Ellen: We'd been camping in Death Valley, for
several weeks, several, close to a month, I
think, and pretty much done Death Valley, it was
in the winter, you know, December, ... we'd gone
to my grandfather's in Iowa, we'd gone to
Colorado, we'd gone to northern California, ...
and ... when you’re out way, for me, anyway, when I’m way out, mostly out in the desert, in winter, cold and empty, something inside me just clears, just completely clears,

EM: Uh huh

Ellen: and we left there and went to Joshua Tree National Monument, which is higher desert, and colder, it’s cold, we’d been camping in the cold and we were kind of used to it, we were the only people in Joshua Tree National Monument. ... Except for rangers.

EM: Uh huh

Ellen: and we were there a week, ... and I woke up one morning, ... it was about 5 o’clock in the morning, and just sat bolt upright, and just started to cry, and I could not stop crying. We were going into Indio that day, and probably coming back to town soon, ... and he was just beside himself, and I I couldn’t even talk, I was just crying so much, ... we got into the van, and we were driving into Indio, and Tom said, "What’s wrong? What the hell is wrong with you?" And I said to him, ... "I know that we’ll never be happier together ... than we are ... right now.“ ...And this, it was like, it’s peaked

EM: Uh hm

Ellen: And now the only thing for it to happen is to have it be over.

EM: Yeah

Ellen: and it was not in my head, it was, it was one of the most, I mean I have had powerful intuitions. I knew when my grandfather ... had a stroke, in almost the same hour, across the country. I woke up hysterical, I had to get on the phone and call someone because I knew.

EM: Uh huh

Ellen: And and I think when you’re out in the boonies like that, sometimes you can just get clear of everything else and you come face, you come up against

EM: Uh huh

Ellen creates a symbolic landscape in this personal narrative: Death Valley and its environs. Described by words whose connotations are deathlike, one desert area in exchanged for another, each one using language that consistently creates images of death: cold, colder, empty,
winter, desert. The dirge-like tone and repetition of "we'd gone" anticipate the narrator's statement that tells of the death of the relationship: "and now the only thing for it to happen is to have it be over."

Ellen: and that happened, I mean that, I was sure. He said, "You know, you're going to make a self-fulfilling prophecy out of this." And he said, "There's no ..." I mean, this isn't me, I can't transfer this knowledge to you, it isn't, I mean I can point at it, but I can't, you know, give you the sense that it just happened, that it's, you know, gonna, you know just jolted me out of my sleep. And I was really ... uh ... affected by that.

EM: Uh hm
Ellen: ... so we did come back to town, we were, I was pretty much done with camping.

Ellen's periodic shift from using the pronoun "I" to "you" draws me as listener into the narrative, a move which parallels the decreasing distance between the narrator and herself as character. Ellen's insistence that I as listener accept and believe her statements indicates that there is more of a personal investment in this story than in other, non-turning point narratives which she tells.

The importance of this story to the present Ellen is evidenced in the number of comments she makes as she breaks the story frame to directly address me. In her final sentence, a curt summary of the final result of the narrated event, Ellen as narrator attempts to reinstate some distance in her narrating: "I was pretty much done with camping."
Karen Woods is another individual who told only a few type one stories, for most of her narratives depict Karen the character as a victim. However, this next story is an interesting type one narrative with a point of view that becomes fairly distant. The distance created by the narrator is puzzling in view of the fact that this is clearly to be a "Karen in charge" narrative. The narrator breaks the story frame frequently as the narrative progresses, often addressing me as listener at points which seem to undercut her attempt to develop and to present a portrait of a strong character. Karen thus presents an ambiguous narrator-character relationship. Rather than necessarily indicating a lack of narrative control, however, this ambiguity reflects the conflicting norms that the narrator is attempting to resolve. A similar ambiguity, also present due to conflicting norms, occurs in a number of her other stories which will be considered later in the chapter.

Karen: When I filed for divorce this last time, it's just, you know, I have filed, went in there, well, I took off a few days,
EM: Uh hm
Karen: and then went in there and I told Tommy [her boss, a lawyer] that I wanted a divorce. I said, "Draw up those papers."
EM: Uh hm
Karen: He prepared the papers, I took them over to the courthouse, myself,
EM: Uh huh
Karen: and filed. Took them upstairs to the judge, had him sign them, and took them back down. Took them over to the sheriff's office, took them right to the sheriff and said, I says, "You be sure he gets these by six o'clock."
Karen: But I did that in **one hour**.
EM: Uh hm
Karen: When it usually takes someone, two days to get all that done.

Karen seems to be depicting a decisive, strong woman up until this point in the story. However, as the narrative progresses, a pattern emerges that gradually undermines this portrait. The first hint of it occurs in the second line of the story with the word "well." The narrator’s use of this word introduces an element of tentativeness or hesitation in the character’s portrait. As the story progresses, Karen as narrator continues to fluctuate between creating an assertive character and emphasizing that same character’s weaknesses. The emphasis on hesitancy usually follows immediately after the character has taken action or a forceful stance with a male.

Karen: Well, since I work in an attorney’s office, they
EM: Yeah
Karen: they know me and they just, and I was just shaking
EM: Uh hm
Karen: and in fact my girlfriend, that was with me and I was so happy she was because she was kind of helping me along
EM: Uh hm
Karen: she gave me a nerve pill, but I was just like this [demonstrates how much she was shaking]
EM: Uh huh
Karen: I was just shaking, but I just had this determination that I was going to go and do this
EM: Yeah
Karen: and I’ll be **damned** if I’m not going to do this and was going to let him get away with doing me this way.
The character's ambivalence is forcefully captured in the sentence "I was just shaking, but I just had this determination," with the parallel structure and the repetition of "just." The distance between the narrator and the character diminishes through such devices as conversational historical present and tone of voice, although the high number of frame breaks emphasizes distance and directs attention to the fact that this is narrative.

Karen: cause I went out there, cause uh, I had left that week, and then I went back out there the next week to get some more of my clothes
EM: Uh huh
Karen: and he had me locked out.
EM: Uh hm
Karen: He had the storm door and everything locked.
EM: Uh hm
Karen: And that made me mad [spoken slowly and decisively]
EM: Yeah
Karen: him wanting to do me like that ... I called him so many bad names, I cussed so bad
EM: Yeah
Karen: and then I walked right back into town, well, I didn't walk, I drove right back into town, walked right into the attorney's office, and filed.
EM: Uh hm
Karen: Made me so mad. I ... I, I wasn't going to,
EM: Uh huh
Karen: but when he locked me out, ... I thought, "Alright, I'll show you."
EM: Yeah
Karen: and so I filed.

The narrator has continued to undercut a potential portrayal of herself as a strong and decisive character. Only by including and emphasizing aspects of weaker, more
stereotypically "female" behavior, such as her shaking and her stated need for "nerve pills," does Karen feel comfortable providing details of herself taking action when as character she has been forced to do so by the behavior of the husband.

The next example of a number one type of narrative is quite different from the previous narratives, for there is very little distance created and maintained between the narrator and the character throughout most of the story. Claire Jones tells this "turning point" narrative in a close up, slowly unfolding manner reminiscent of a camera's panning technique. The narrator follows a strict chronological ordering of the sequence of events, and although she tends to order most of her stories chronologically, this is the only one in which the order is not breached at any point. She provides me, the listener, with precisely the same amount of information she as character would have had at any given moment in the narrated event, withholding only once some critical information for a few seconds. As this is the story which she tells to justify her decision to end the marriage, it is understandable that the narrator would so slowly advance the narrative, for it is crucial that she gain and maintain the listener's empathy. By carefully guiding the pace of the narrative, she can help insure this empathy by having her listener experience the narrated event in the same
manner as the character. A potential problem with slow pacing, of course, is that the listener’s attention will stray. Claire, however, maintains the listener’s interest, for by withholding the bit of information, she jolts the listener when it is revealed.

Claire: at first [after her separation from her husband], I was thinking that he was to move back in eventually and that

EM: Uh huh

Claire: you know, and we were still seeing each other occasionally, well, then, ... he ... got sick, got tetnus some, went to Tennessee, drank some bad water and got something

EM: Oh

Claire: it was awful. And ... he stayed at our house for a while and ... until he got a little bit better and then he went back to the apartment he was living in with these two other guys

EM: Uh hm

Claire: and ... so I went over, I was going to go over one night and check on him, and Robbie was with me, it was a Friday night and we went over to the apartment and I walked in and one of the guys said, "Oh, Jim’s in the back bedroom." So I walked back to the bedroom ... and he was in bed, watching T.V. and it wasn’t like they were making love or anything

EM: Uh huh

Claire: but he was in bed with this other woman that I had met one time

EM: Oh my God

The narrator’s sudden revelation affects me as listener with an impact similar to that which she as character feels. The effectiveness of this slow unfolding, coupled with the withholding and then revelation of the woman’s presence, is, in fact, so powerful, that I do not immediately apprehend what is occurring, just as the character does not, either. Claire has thus created in her narrative and in my response a situation analogous to the
"double-take." Despite periodic frame breaks, such as the narrator's "I remember" and "I thought," the narrator's perspective stays very close to that of the character until the husband acts.

Claire: and they were sitting in there sort of watching television, he was still sick, but she was quite relaxed
EM: Oh my God
Claire: like she'd been there before. And I remember I walked in and I sort of stood there and then I thought,... I I don't know what I thought but I just kept thinking "this is not what I'm seeing." And
EM: Yeah
Claire: I kept trying to remake the scene
EM: Yeah, yeah
Claire: You know, so that she wasn't there
EM: Uh huh
Claire: and this, finally I just turned around and I walked out, except I got lost on the way out and I turn, ... I turned the wrong way
EM: Uh huh
Claire: and I ended up in in a bathroom, there's
EM: Oh my God
Claire: a bathroom at the end of the hall
EM: Uh huh
Claire: and I walked right into the bathroom
EM: Uh huh
Claire: just that I didn't want to walk by that room again.
EM: Yeah
Claire: Well, I locked the door, Robbie's out in the living room in the meanwhile, waiting for me and Jim came to the door and started knocking on the door. Finally I let him in and he tried to talk me out of what I had seen
EM: Yeah
Claire: He's a real jerk that way, it's like
EM: Like you hadn't even seen it?
Claire: Yeah, well, it was like I I shouldn't take it for what I thought it was, this woman June--he's now married to--had just come over to sort of help him and just just
EM: happened to get in bed
Claire: happened to get in bed, right. So Robbie and I left, and that was for me, I think that was the point at which I realized that I didn't need to feel, I could cut this off and never feel
guilty about it
EM: Uh hm
Claire: Cause he was ... uh ... he was, all this
time I'd been thinking, "Well, we need to try to
kind of work toward getting back together again."
EM: Uh huh
Claire: Well, I realized that he wasn't working
towards getting back together, or I felt that he
wasn't and somehow I felt justified in not
wanting my marriage anymore.

During this part of her story, Claire the narrator
distances herself from the narrated event and slightly
decreases the identification with herself as character.
The sarcastic tone directed at the situation and at her
husband as character are indications of that distancing.
However, the sympathetic portrayal of herself as character
and the emotion in her tone of voice when she tells about
the dilemma of Claire as character are signs that a similar
distance is not created with that relationship.

Type Two Narrative: Narrator Is Object of Action

The second type of narrative which I have isolated is
told with the teller of the story presented as the object
of action that takes place while the teller as character is
present during the narrated event. These narratives are
quite interesting, for the teller has about the same
latitude in narrating these, in terms of potential degree
of distance or closeness to the character and to the
narrated event, as he or she does with the type one
narrative. Thus we find a wide variety of stories with
fluctuating identification and/or distance in the telling,
along with the potential for various management of point of view through use of degrees of knowledge.

The first story presented here is told by Jesse Smith. This is one of five stories which he tells at various times during the storytelling session about the night he left his first wife. In this narrative, he focuses on his request that his wife allow him to be the one to talk to their two children about the separation. Jesse begins the story with his usual opening formula, "It's interesting." He uses this formula not only to announce a narrative, but also initially to evaluate it as storable, and, even more importantly, to attempt to distance himself as teller from the character and the narrated event and to attain objectivity. However, as he tells the story, distance and objectivity fall away quickly, and Jesse the teller identifies himself very closely with Jesse the character. The tone of voice becomes tense and intense, creating an emotion-laden narrative.

Jesse: It's interesting in terms of who told who, the night that I uh, just one night I, I announced to my, to Ann, uh, I said, "This can't go on. I'm leaving, I'm leaving tonight and I'm not, not coming back."
EM: Uh hm
Jesse: "Since I'm doing this, I will be back tomorrow afternoon," it was about 8 o'clock one night
EM: Uh hm
Jesse: "to talk to the kids, to explain to them what I've done."
EM: Uh huh
Jesse: "And please respect that." Uh, and uh, she didn't, she told them both that night.
EM: No
Jesse: and uh, and so when I came to tell them, they already knew, and uh, and you know, ... we had some rough times, in terms of me and them
EM: Yeah, oh yeah
Jesse: for a while because uh, I only saw them then on the weekends and uh, and it was uh, strained because uh, ... kids will uh, they take it, they take responsibility
EM: Yeah yeah
Jesse: for it. They feel, in fact both of my kids, to a certain degree feel that they were the cause of it although I I've tried very hard to indicate to them that it's not the case
EM: Uh huh
Jesse: Uh, ... I had worked out what I was going to tell them,
EM: Uh huh
Jesse: and uh, but then I didn't get that opportunity.

The first portion of this can be seen as a short narrative based on something that did not happen, followed by a summary of the consequences. It is during the summary portion that metanarrative evaluation is provided for me as listener. The teller's evaluation not just of the effects on him, but also of the long-term effects on the children, together with his use of the present tense, draws the narrated event into the present time period, creating a lack of narrative distance.

A story Jesse tells about one-third through the session is related to one of the first stories he tells, in which he talks about his brothers' "almost divorces." In that story, he tells about his mother's advice to the wives of the brothers: "If you want to save your marriages, get
pregnant." In this story, the narrator tells about a time when their marriage almost ended. Here Jesse as narrator is an unemotional, uninvolved teller of the narrated event. The detached narrator displays no involvement with himself as character.

Jesse: Uh, the marriage might have ended about four years into it, uh, which was the year of Cambodia
EM: Uh huh
Jesse: and and the, because I became ... fairly active politically, with protest politics, and she's always been afraid of anything like that, so uh, ... we were diverging at that point, and I remember, she uh she said, "You want to keep up this, maybe we shouldn't be together," uh and we were considering that and then discovered that she was pregnant.

Jesse refers to their relationship in the first line as "the marriage," rather than "our" or "my." Later in the story, the narrator has the wife use a euphemistic phrase which carries little or no emotional weight, "maybe we shouldn't be together," to which the teller says "we were considering that," another emotionless, vague word. In this manner, Jesse establishes and maintains a distant point of view, while simultaneously depicting himself in a more positive light than his wife, for, unlike her, he is not afraid to take a stand, nor is he manipulative and designing, as the woman, by implication, is.

The last story that Nick Sanchez tells me during the collecting session is clearly a type two narrative. The narrator uses it to sum up the two portraits he has been creating during the storytelling session. The husband, a
kind-hearted, sensitive man, has been a victim of the wife's psychological and emotional abuse. The narrator begins somewhat distant from the character, but after two frame breaks, the first to articulate Nick the character's state of mind and the second to evaluate the wife's action prior to telling the listener what that action is, the narrator, and the listener, are drawn closer to the character's point of view. Thus I as listener empathetically experience the culmination of the character's story.

Nick: Alright, uh, no, this is something that she actually, she did with her hand that I'm going to imitate
EM: Okay
Nick: Uh, we'd gone to court, we'd just, the judge has just said, "Are you sure?" "Yeah, yeah, we're sure, just give us the divorce."
EM: Yeah
Nick: And I'm, in spite of what I've just said, I'm feeling kind of emotional about it, not not that I'm crying or anything about it, you know, but, unsettled.
EM: Yeah
Nick: And, I could not have done what she did, we just walked out of the doors, we're walking down the hallway, and she says, "Look," [dramatized voice] and I say, "What?" and she's waving her, her left hand at me [he demonstrates] EM: Yeah
Nick: and, and no ring on it. And I didn't even think about my ring for like, you know, six weeks, maybe, or, I mean I didn't take it off. I found uh some uh packing tape, some nice, good, strong, coarse packing tape and I taped it to the divorce decree, and that's where it is right now. The ring is still sitting there. [points upstairs]
EM: God, I can't believe she did that.
Nick: Yeah, and and it, and in my face, too, "Look!" "What?" and then this hand right in my face, like [demonstrates].
The repetition of the ending and the dramatizations, coupled with the intensity of the narrator's tone of voice, enhance the sense of the movement of perspective to that of the victimized character.

Another story told by Nick, the first one he told me, is an example of the kind of story he generally tells, for he depicts himself as character as the victim of a jealous wife. Yet, unlike the preceding story, the narrator distances himself from the character and from the narrated event, using humor, exaggeration, and irony. Prior to entering the story frame, he introduces the story by the title he has given it and explains why he tells it.

Nick: Uh, um, the first one that I thought of was about, involves basketball. "Sex and Basketball." And it, it's just an indication of how jealous my wife was, uh, to the point where it was redicu- I mean, not sane (slight chuckle). Uh, um, one time when we were living in Seaburg, I went to, this is about eight blocks away, I we-, I went down to there to play basketball, and uh, ... uh, I played for about two and a half hours, and it was about 90 degrees, and you know, a million percent humidity, whatever it is in the midwest in like August, the depths of August, and it was around the middle of a Saturday, uh, uh it was around noon, right? (slight chuckle) It was hot. And I don't care, I mean I still like, I still love to play. I I just want to play, and that's all I care about. So, I played for two and a half hours, and when I got back to the house, and you can imagine what shape I was in, I was dripping wet and I was like really [holds shirt away from self to demonstrate how wet it would have been]
EM: slight chuckle
Nick: you know, sticky, horrible, I was accused of being unfaithful.
EM: Oh, no! (with slight chuckle in voice)
Nick: (chuckles) I couldn't believe it. So I said, uh, I had to say something like, "Huh, are
you kidding?" Like, uh every guy likes to think he's good, but how good could I be? I mean, look. (with chuckle in voice) You know, I've lost like billions of calories, you know, uh, and uh, she just did not believe me. She just had it in her mind that I uh had been unfaithful, which was something I would swear on anything I care about on this planet, I never was unfaithful. And uh, never, and got accused of this so many times, and that's another little incident, that one time I even said to her, I said, "Look, I think I'm going to go out and find someone to be unfaithful with so that when you scream and yell, you'll have something to scream and yell about, not these wild theories that you spin in your head."

Despite the fact that the character is portrayed as a victim, the final picture is not of a pathetic individual. One implication in this and in many of the other narratives Nick tells is that he is important to his wife. No matter how irrational she might be, he is valued and desired. In fact, his very desireability helps create her irrationality and jealousy. Another implication, of course, is that he has the opposite characteristics of his wife, that he is as rational, stable, and sensitive as she is not, so that he can, without much difficulty, create an extremely positive portrait of himself.

Patrick Roberts is another storyteller who creates a positive portrait of himself by telling a story about his wife's actions. In this story, he tells about himself as character in the role of the "dumb but trusting" husband who is deceived by his wife. Prior to telling this narrative, Patrick had displayed a lack of ease during the session, created in part by his inability to distance
himself as narrator from the character and the narrated events. He wanted to entertain me with his experiences, but seemed to feel he had not done so previously. At this point, however, when we had been about to end the session, he grew excited after remembering that he had begun to tell his friends a few entertaining divorce stories.

Patrick: Oh, I know a a story
EM: Yeah?
Patrick: I know a story I've started to tell a little bit
EM: Uh huh?
Patrick: Uh, ... this is a story about uh ... I'm analyzing why I tell the story now, even before I tell you the story, I'm just, think I've just figured it out.
EM: Oh? Well, tell me why, why you think you've figured out why you tell the story.
Patrick: (chuckle) because it puts both of us in a bad light.
EM: Oh?
Patrick: chuckle
EM: and that would be, that's important?
Patrick: Well, it allows me to be, uh ... to get out my uh, basic uh, ... criticism, but to do it in such a way that I don't, pretend to be totally uh, ... uh ... sterling either.
EM: Uh huh
Patrick: So, which, ... takes the sting out just a little bit, I want to do both, I think, I want to uh, ... but this is the, this is the story of uh, ... this is a story of infidelity.
EM: Oh, oh
Patrick: chuckle
EM: Oh, tell me more. (chuckle in voice)
Patrick: (chuckle) Uh, the, uh I discovered, three years or so, after ... I can't remember whether it was after the separation or after the divorce, I think after the separation,
EM: Uh hm
Patrick: that right at the end of, of our marriage, my wife had been having an affair with a mutual friend, and the story is is that I I remember that a, one night, when uh, she and he uh, had to gone out to a party together
EM: Uh hm
Patrick: and, the the phone kept ringing hourly,
saying, she was supposed to be home at at ... 9 or 10, let's say
EM: Uh huh
Patrick: and at 10 the phone rang and she said that well, the party was going strong and they were all, uh having a a big time, so she was going to stay another hour.
EM: Uh huh
Patrick: and, then at 11 the phone rang, and she said that nobody had left yet and she was going to stay on a while, and uh, I think the phone rang maybe once more and, before I went to bed at midnight, and uh, and I uh, ... she said that there was still no end in sight and would it be okay if she just stayed longer? And not only did I say, "Yeah, sure," I said, I encouraged her to stay and have a good time, (chuckle)
EM: chuckle
Patrick: that uh, ah, with each one of these phone calls I, instead of telling her to come home, I just said, uh, ... uh, "Well, stay as long as you want." Uh, I prided myself on being, a an unjealous husband
EM: Uh huh
Patrick: and, she was just out with uh, for a few drinks with her friends,
EM: Uh huh
Patrick: and uh I and I, and she, that she was so unaccustomed to doing this, that she was calling me every hour out of abject fear, I'm sure (chuckle)
EM: (chuckle) uh huh
Patrick: well, not too abject, because I guess they'd had plenty to drink, but I mean, she was worried enough that I would be upset and suspicious, and she was definitely covering her tracks, and the thing is that I didn't even realize that they were tracks, that that's the funny part, looking back
EM: Uh huh
Patrick: uh, I had no idea that this was anything but uh an innocent uh, evening,
EM: Uh huh
Patrick: which, and I was encouraging it, and I think she came home at 2:30 in the morning, or something, and I was ... not at all suspicious.

Patrick's relatively distant point of view as narrator protects him from a potentially negative response by the listener. Thus the characterization of himself in the
story as the "dumb and trusting" husband who is oblivious to what is occurring around him does not attach itself to Patrick as narrator. Instead, the narrative distance implies that he is a wiser man today. Because he tells the story with humor, while at the same time he indicates that he is striving for total recall of details (such as the times at which the calls came), Patrick has created a portrait of himself as likeable and reliable.

In another example of a type two narrative, Karen Woods creates a complex relationship between herself as teller and as character, and between herself as narrator and the narrated event. She tells about a confrontation between herself as character, her husband, and the lawyer. Karen the character attempts to act but is blocked by the other characters' actions, so that in essence she is the victim both of the men and of circumstances she cannot control. Initially, the narrator is distant from the character, directly addressing me to provide background information, but she quickly decreases the narrator's distance from the character's perspective and from the narrated event. Karen's tone becomes impassioned, particularly as she recites the litany of her troubles.

Karen: uh, we [she and her fourth husband] used the same attorney
EM: uh huh
Karen: there we were, both sitting in the attorney's office, and he says, [narrator turns to face me as listener more completely] now, I wasn't working at the time, and I was getting the social security for my children.
EM: Uh hm
Karen: He says, uh, "You can have the house, he can pay half and you can pay half." I said, "How can I pay half of this payment? Bills and bills,

Note the use of the pronoun "he" as the narrator proceeds. At times it is initially impossible to distinguish between the two male characters and to determine which one is speaking.

Karen: "when I'm not even working?" He says, "Well, you're just going to have to find a job and pay this." It really upset me.
EM: Oh yeah
Karen: Here he, here Ted was, working at Ford, you know, making good money.
EM: Oh yeah
Karen: And he said, uh "Well, you're just going to have to pay half. You're living in the house, you're going to have to pay half." Well, I had got up to walk, to walk out of the attorney's office
EM: uh huh
Karen: I thought, "I'm not putting up with this." He said, "Karen, you just sit down here. Now, I'm representing you." And I said, "Well, then, act like it."
EM: Yeah, exactly.

At this point in the narrating, Karen's voice has grown strong and harsh, indicating that the character's attempt at action will likely succeed. Immediately afterwards, however, her voice falls, grows softer, mirroring the action in the narrative.

Karen: Then it didn't work out that way. Because he said, "This is what's going to happen." ... So, I had to sign the papers over to him, as far as the cars is concerned, and I had a car in my own name.
EM: You had to sign over your car to him?
Karen: Well, we had two cars,
EM: Oh, oh
Karen: and my name was on the cars, so, you know
EM: Oh, oh
Karen: I had the car in both our names. We used to sign each other to the car, so I'd have a car and he'd have a car.
EM: Right.
Karen: Well, he didn't pay the car off. Well, there I was, in this house, this 6-room ranch home, total electric, well, my stove went out, and then my refrigerator went out
EM: uh hm
Karen: then my washer went out, my dryer went out, and my television quit working, the pump went out on my, on the water heater,
EM: Whew
Karen: so here I had all of these bills, and all these repairs, plus I wasn't working at that time.
EM: Uh hm
Karen: ... But I still went down there and put half down on the mortgage,
EM: uh huh
Karen: until it got to the point where he moved to North Carolina, quit his job and moved to North Carolina, and he quit paying on it. So I went in the bank, tried to give them my half, of the payment, and the woman,
EM: uh hm
Karen: she shoved it back, she says, "That's not enough. You might as well put it in the bank and use it." They were going to foreclose.
EM: Oh no
Karen: So there I was, with a car I hadn't paid four hundred dollars on, and by that time I was working, I'd gotten a job,
EM: uh huh
Karen: he ends up in the hospital, a heart attack, and, they told me, his psychiatrist told me, he says, "Karen, doesn't make any difference whether or not you wait until he gets out."
Cause he was in there in the psychiatric ward,
EM: uh huh
Karen: "Doesn't make any difference, you can get the divorce now or later. The point is, you might as well go ahead, since you're going to get it." So I did.

This story Karen tells, like her other ones, indicates a sense of ambivalence, both in the narrative event and in the narrated event. The parallelism accentuates the sense
of identification between narrator and character that is reflected in the narrating. As in most of her stories, this one presents a portrait of a woman attempting to deal with conflicting norms, two different views about what it means to be female in today's society. Independent action is blocked and this action by men is accepted with acquiescence, yet independence and strength are also valued. A woman should be guided by a man, yet to accept this guidance also shows weakness and leaves the woman vulnerable.

Type Three Narrative

Several of the stories told by a number of the tellers do not comfortably "fit" into either of the two first types of narratives. However, they are related, for the tellers as characters are closely involved in the narrated events. The type three narrative has a combination, a change, or a movement of teller as character in the role of actor and/or as object of the action during the narrated event. For example, some of the stories in this category have the narrators as characters acting, but only in response to external forces. Other type three narratives contain an almost equal distribution of acting shared by two characters, one of whom is also the teller, with both characters thus acting and also being the object of another's action. Still other narratives consist almost
entirely of dialogue between the teller as character and another character in the narrative. But in all of these variations of type three narrative, the tellers of the stories as characters are intricately and directly involved in the action of the narrated event.

Nick Sanchez tells a number of type three stories in which he focuses on interactions between himself as character and the character of his wife. Prior to telling the following story, he has been talking about her extreme jealousy and about how she tried to control him, even to the extent of attempting to control his style of driving. In this story, however, Nick tells about a time that his wife was the one driving. As in many of his stories, the narrator is fairly distant from the character at the beginning of the narrative.

Nick: Uh, ... and when she was, wa-, uh, when she was driving, she was constantly looking at me, (slight chuckle in voice), making sure I wasn't checking out women and getting some free looks. EM: Really, you're kidding? Oh, my God. Nick: And she says things when she caught me (slight chuckle), EM: (laugh) Oh, no! Nick: I mean, it's, it's not like I turn my head all around with my tongue hanging out, but she could tell that something got my attention, you, in, in fact it was great, because one time she said, "What are you looking at?" and there was nothing out there but an, this neat looking German Shepherd (laughs)
EM: laughs
Nick: the dog, you know, it was like, sweet ten-, I liked his ears, and I was looking at the dog and uh, she goes "What're you looking at?" And she felt so embarrassed when she saw that there was nothing there but the dog (laughs) EM: laughs
In this tale about a villain who outwits herself, Nick identifies with the character in that he appreciates and enjoys the tables having been turned on the wife, without the character having had to do anything except what he would normally do. The narrator uses highly dramatic language when telling this story and acts out what he as character did not do: "turn my head all around with my tongue hanging out." The evaluative comment the narrator makes—"in, in fact it was great, because"—allows the listener to be in on the "set-up" of which he as character, apparently, was not aware.

Another example of a type three narrative, also told by Nick, begins with an introduction by the narrator during which he announces that he wants to tell me about the time his wife hit him. Both he as character and his wife act in the story, but his action is not blocked by her, as it frequently is in his narratives. Rather, he blocks hers, and the implication in the story is that he has somehow instigated the conflict. Despite its title—"The Time She Hit Me," as the story unfolds I, as listener, learn that she actually does not hit him.

Nick: Oh, Oh I know what I was going to mention another time, there was one time that she hit me. Oh, that story is is
EM: Yeah, she she actually hit you?
Nick: Well, she tried, I I mean it was kind of a joke, because she's five one, and, not that I'm any strong man (chuckle in voice) or anything, but, I remember sitting in a chair, and it was
just something that didn't make sense at all, you know, and I was just sitting there, I was kind of bemused that she was getting so exercised about something that didn't matter
EM: Uh hm
Nick: and and, you know, some little thing, uh, and then all of a sudden just something just snapped in her and she came flying at me, like this little windmill, with arms flaying, so I just, with my long arms, I just sort of held her at bay (chuckles)
EM: chuckles
Nick: and she really couldn't do much, and so I wast-, I waited until the rage was spent, which was not quick, because I had to laugh a couple of times (chuckle)
EM: (chuckle) and that made it, made it worse
Nick: Yeah, that made it worse. You know, "You, you laugh at me!" [exaggerated imitation of voice] (laugh)
EM: laugh

As in the story previously examined, the narrator is distant from himself as character. Using a highly dramatic tone of voice, and acting out the parts, he creates a cartoon-like story. Only after he tells this story and begins an extensive evaluation, talking about her actions and reactions, and his, does he lose that distance. Thus, when the narrative portion ends, so does the humor. Nick talks in general terms about her anger and the conflicts that had become almost constant, using the story he had just told as an example, but now referring to it very seriously. He ends the evaluative portion with the statement, "it it's just too emotionally roller-coasting, you know." He then repeats the opening line of the narrative, with a return to his humorous tone, "so that was the time she hit me."
Another example of a type three narrative is told by Paula Martin. This narrative, according to content, ought to be considered a type two (narrator as character is object of action), for she tells a story about being hit by her husband. However, her performance of the story and her presentation of herself during it, make it a type three, for as character she acts as well.

Paula: And uh they [her two children] knew, that, ... afterwards I found out that they knew, one night Bill and I went out on a date, uh when we were trying to get our relationship started again,
EM: Uh huh
Paula: uh, well, I don't even remember what happened, but I know when we came back home, ... uh ... somehow, for some reason, he hit me. He
EM: Oh my gosh
Paula: uh I didn't tell the kids, but I found out later that they knew.

Knowledge is a recurrent theme in Paula's stories. The repetition here of her children's knowledge, "I found out later that they knew," coupled with her own statement, "I don't even remember ... but I know," indicate the value of knowing, for then an individual can act.

Paula: He hit me he hit me several times, actually.
(chuckle)
EM: He did?
Paula: Yes.
EM: Oh my gosh, Paula.
Paula: So he was, uh, he was under a lot of stress,

At this point the narrator addresses me as listener, responding to my comment that indicted shock and dismay, in an attempt to explain the reasons for his violent action
against her. She may also be anticipating a response related to a rather commonly held belief, discussed by Lenore Walker in *The Battered Woman*, that women who are hit somehow deserve it, for Paula goes on to state that she cannot remember "why it was" (my emphasis).

EM: Uh huh
Paula: uh and right now I can't remember why it was, but he kept telling me, I wouldn't, we'd gotten in an argument and I was arguing back, he kept telling me to shut up and I wouldn't shut up (slight chuckle)
EM: Uh huh
Paula: and uh he'd hit me and tell me to shut up (chuckle) and I wouldn't shut up, I'd just keep on, and uh ... so he'd hit me again. ... I remember that real well.
EM: Oh, yeah.
Paula: ... That time, I think if I'd had a gun I would have killed him or something.

As listener, I have continued to respond primarily to the content of the story, rather than to the narrator's manner of telling it. My response leads Paula as narrator to take at times a more serious tone in the story. The serious tone is one which is closer to the character's perspective, for Paula as narrator states what action she as character would have taken had it been possible.

EM: Oh, oh, yeah.
Paula: Yeah, I could have. But he never did that anymore.
EM: Uh huh
Paula: He was really, I, uh in fact, uh I wouldn't be alone with him anymore after that. (chuckle)

Paula as narrator has maintained a fairly constant degree of distance from the character and from the narrated event, despite her movement in and out of a humorous presentation.
She chuckles at moments which seem incongruous when compared with the seriousness of the situation in the narrated event. The laughter, however, can also be seen to indicate admiration for the strength displayed by herself as character.

A fourth example of a type three narrative, a story told by Jesse Smith, consists primarily of dialogue between himself as character and his wife. He as character is the object of the discussed action, in that she is attempting to make him agree to keep only a small portion of his salary for himself after their separation.

Jesse: and she kept wanting me to sign away everything
EM: Uh huh
Jesse: and I kept saying, "well, I got to have something." In fact I remember, the the night I went home and told her I was leaving, ... said, "I'm leaving, I'm not coming back, ever," she said, "Well, we've got to deal with the financial ... side of this, right now," and I said, "Well, you know, can we talk about that in in a day or two?" She says, "No, I've got to talk about this right now." Well, she brought out some figures and she said, "Can you live on five hundred dollars a month?" I said,
EM: Oh my God
Jesse: "I have no way of knowing what I can live on." She said, she said, "Well, I'd like you to give, I'm going to need, uh, al- all the rest of your money, other than five hundred a month to cover the kids," I said, "Well
EM: Oh my God
Jesse: I cannot give you any kind of a promise on that, because I have no idea"
EM: Uh hm
Jesse: "what I need." So in some ways, the dissolution, uh, took so long [about two years] because uh I was waiting for there to be terms that I could live within.
Jesse depicts himself as acting, in that during the dialogue—and afterwards as well, he implies—he resists her urging. Perhaps because the story consists almost entirely of dialogue, Jesse creates and maintains for himself as character a sense of control over the narrated event that is rare in his stories. The narrator maintains a relatively stable distance from the character and the narrated event during this brief story, with an objective tone of voice, formal language, and repetition of the tag lines "she said" and "I said."

Type Four Narrative: Narrator Observed Action

The fourth type of personal experience divorce narrative involves the teller as observer of the action. In other words, the narrator as character was present during the original action about which the narrated event is centered. Thus, the narrator, in terms of the narrated event, is more distant from that event than he or she was in any of the first three types. There are fewer type four narratives than any of the previous three, for some of the narrators tell only stories about which they were either the main actors or the object of action.

The first example of type four narrative to be examined is told by Laurel Graves. The conversational context has focused on good and bad marital relationships, with Laurel searching for possible explanations for her
multiple marriages. She tells this story as an example of the kind of relationship she grew up observing. This narrative is somewhat similar to Sandra Stahl's "other-oriented" narratives ("Personal Experience Stories" 270-272). However, rather than underplaying her role in the story, peripheral though it is in terms of the actual event, Laurel maintains herself as character and, through frame breaks, herself as narrator, as the focal point of the narrative. Laurel draws attention throughout the narrating to her purpose in telling the story: to explore and attempt to explain why her marital relationships ended in divorce.

Laurel: They had a stable, solid, ... never argued, maybe three arguments ... that I deliberately stirred up, between them when I was a kid, you know,
EM: Uh huh
Laurel: you pit one against the other.
EM: Yeah
Laurel: The only arguments they ever had were over me, and I can remember, many times, seeing my mother, and f-, I've done so much thinking about this, really.
EM: Uh hm
Laurel: Uh, I can remember seeing my mother, seeing them have like a discussion that might start to heat up,
EM: Uh hm
Laurel: and I st-, I can just see her, like almost shifting gears down, "Okay, okay, just, alright," and just stop, and it wasn't in a mean way, either, but I could just see her training of, whatever her mother taught her, come in and say, "Don't argue with your husband, you know, you just agree, he's right or even if he is not, shut up," you could see her going through it and "Okay." And just, she'd shut her mouth and that would be it,
EM: Uh hm
Laurel: and she wouldn't be mad, and they never
got mad and not spoke, they never did any of those things, they never.
EM: That's amazing
Laurel: I know, it is, they never were angry, they never, ... had tiffs and or they never took potshots at each other, they never were, never. And it is amazing, and now that I look back, it is amazing, terribly amazing. So I had, I didn't come from a lifestyle of, of uh, divorce.

The narrator maintains great distance from the narrated event, yet draws me as listener into an observer role as well by frequently addressing me directly. She emphasizes her reliability as a witness to the narrated event by repeating "I can remember" and "I can just see," which also contribute to her distance from the event. At one point, following the emphasis on her role as eyewitness, the narrator imagines an internal monologue taking place within her mother, as the narrator's explanation for her mother's behavior. She then tells, as explanation for that imagined monologue, an imagined dialogue between her mother and her mother's mother. The weight of this intergenerational tradition about the proper behavior of a wife increases the distance between Laurel, both as character and as narrator, and the narrated event. Because she has convinced me as listener of her reliability as an observer, I accept her imagined discourses as representative of the reality of the narrated event.

During her storytelling, Karen Woods tells stories about being the observer of abuse in her home as well as the "recipient" of it. At various times, her fourth
husband abused both her and her children. There is a strange perspective in these stories, one that has to do, once again, with her feelings of ambivalence and confusion created by the conflict of roles experienced by her as character. This type four narrative, told with overtones of a type two inserted periodically, is followed in the session by her "turning point" story.

Karen: Okay, and he, he, we were married five years, and he became uh, very abusive, you know, the last two years that we were married, abusive to my children,
EM: Uh hm
Karen: and, ... would, ... well, he would, ... would chase my son around the house with a heavy ball bat, threatening to bust his knees if he came back in the house. And uh, then one night he had uh his, Rob's arm locked back behind him, had his hands up to his throat, and Rob was crying, and I went to the bedroom and I said, "What are you doing?" He said, "You just get out of here, I'll handle this."
EM: God

At this point Karen realizes that my response might indicate some degree of condemnation of herself as character, since she realized that I knew she had stayed in the marriage for several years while abuse of her children continued. As narrator, therefore, she inserts a defense of herself as character.

Karen: Well, I was scared of him,
EM: Uh hm
Karen: and I was nervous
EM: Uh hm
Karen: and, in fact I was on nerve pills
EM: Uh huh
Karen: and that was when I was working for the Doctor, and I took off working because I was sick, because he told Joe to get out and not come
back. Joe left home.
EM: Uh, how old were your kids then?
Karen: Joe was fifteen.
EM: Oh, my God
Karen: and uh, ... and then, then we tried to
work things out, and I quit work, to stay home,
and I took care of the family and my husband,
cause I really loved this person,
EM: uh huh
Karen: uh, probably more so that I did in any of
the other marriages
EM: Uh huh
Karen: and uh, ... he was really a very loving
person, but then he´d take it away, you know,
he´d give you love and affection and the next day
he´d treat me like dirt.
EM: Uh hm
Karen: And he did the same things to my kids.
EM: Uh huh
Karen: In fact, Joe, to this day is, still has
problems with this,
EM: Uh hm
Karen: because he was, his first, most crucial
five years of his life, as a teenager
EM: right
Karen: that he hurt and abused, he would call
Joe, "ignorant," "stupid."
EM: No
Karen: "You´ll never amount to anything," "You´ll
never grow up to be anything," "You´ll end up in
jail, before you´re eighteen." Just all these
things, you know. Well, I was scared.
EM: Uh hm
Karen: And uh, he would hold me down on the bed
and leave bruises on my arms, you know, and,
seemed like he was more or less just, all of a
sudden, going crazy.

By interweaving aspects of type two narrative—Karen the
carer as victim—within this story of child abuse,
Karen successfully sets the stage for her "turning point"
story, providing me as listener with sufficient insight
into that relationship to validate the choice she as
character makes to end the marriage. By ending the story
with a clear focus on herself as character, her perspective
as observer has become that of participant, again important in the story she tells next. This narrative, then, can be seen as an introductory sequence that sets the stage for another, more critical narrative.

In another example of a type four narrative, Claire Jones tells a story from a far different point of view than that with which she as character experienced it. In fact, the narrator's perspective actually becomes that of another character, Bob, who was also present during the narrated event. In order to understand her adoption of this other character's perspective, it is necessary to know that she was dating Bob and later married him. Thus, in telling the narrative, she validates and confirms the correctness of his perspective rather than that of her own as character, elevating the perception of her future husband. Prior to beginning the story, Claire includes a long introductory section that provides important background information.

Claire: and he [Jim, her first husband] had left a lot of furniture in our, in the house,
EM: Uh hm
Claire: And he also had a lot of his art stuff, a lot of his stuff stored in the basement of this house
EM: Uh hm
Claire: so he would just kind of arrive at, it used to drive Robbie [her female roommate] crazy, cause he would just arrive at different times without any forewarning
EM: Uh hm
Claire: Show up and want his stuff. He was real big
EM: Uh huh
Claire: so he was kind of a, one of those people who intimidated you by hulking
EM: Yeah
Claire: over you.
EM: Yeah
Claire: He used his size to intimidate and ... so finally she told him, Robbie and I told him that we just wanted him to get all of his stuff out of the house.
EM: Uh huh
Claire: And that pissed him off, of course, because that ... seemed to indicate that we were ... you know he had moved out,
EM: Uh huh
Claire: that seemed to indicate that we were throwing him out.
EM: Yeah
Claire: And so he came over and got most of his stuff, but he had left some things
EM: Uh hm

Claire's abrupt change from the possessive pronoun "our" to "the house" and "this house" contributes to the movement from the character's perspective to another's, as it depersonalizes place. Claire as narrator's use of "you," directly spoken to me as listener, breaks the narrative frame as she describes her husband, evaluates his motivation, and foreshadows the confrontation to come. Claire also changes her statement about which character acted in this confrontation scene, moving from "she" to "Robbie and I," to "we," finally having herself as character and her roommate sharing responsibility and also perspective.

Claire: and ... he came over one morning, Bob had spent the night, he arrived at like eight o'clock in the morning and Bob and I were sitting at the kitchen table
EM: Uh huh
Claire: and ... Jim came in and wanted to get some stuff he had left there in the basement
EM: Uh hm
Claire: and he saw Bob when he came cause he had to pass by the kitchen in order to get to the
basement door

EM: Uh hm

Claire: so I just, you know, let him go on in,
didn't say anything, just said, "Sure, go on down
and get the stuff" and ... (chuckle in voice) Bob
and I were sitting at the table having a cup of
tea and all of a sudden there was an enormous
commotion down in the basement, just stu- sounded
like I don't know what, and ... so I got up and
went (chuckle in voice) over there where there
was one of those tiny kind of bolt lock things,
you know

EM: Uh huh

Claire: just that doesn't hold anything out

EM: Yeah

Claire: and I (chuckle in voice) went over and
locked the door cause I was terrified he was
going to come up and start, you know, beating up
me or Bob

EM: Uh huh. You mean like he was throwing things
or

Claire: Yeah, yeah, the sink.

EM: Oh?

Claire: There was an old sink that they had taken
out, we found out la-, we discovered later that
when we went down to see the sink, to see where
he had thrown it. There was an old sink that had
been taken, had been taken out of the kitchen.
You see,

EM: Uh huh

Claire: the people before we had moved in had
remodeled the kitchen.

EM: Uh huh

Claire: You know, it was one of those old
soapstone kind of sinks that hang with the ... 
board for the,

EM: Oh, yeah

Claire: like those old-fashioned things,

EM: Yeah

Claire: and it was down there and he he had
picked that sink up and just started throwing it
around all over the basement.

EM: Oh my God

Claire: Just being an asshole

EM: Oh my God, that's horrible ... I can see why
you'd want to put, to close the bolt

Claire: Bob just howled. He said "That's not
going to do a bit of good." (chuckle)

EM: chuckle

Claire: "That's not going to keep him down
there."

EM: Yeah
Claire: But he was, he was, you know, real jerky. He was uh ... it was strange.

As narrator, Claire's laughter indicates that she is not telling the story through her perspective as character, for at the moment she laughs, she says of herself as character, "I was terrified." This and other evaluative metanarrative comments (such as "he was, you know, real jerky"), coupled with the performance style, present graphically the transfer of dependence from one man to the other which has occurred by this time. While her introduction to the story functions in part to justify the fear she as character exhibits (the "old Claire), her distancing of her present self from herself as character, from the narrated event, and ultimately from her husband illustrate her future alignment with Bob, her future husband.

Type Five Narrative: Narrator As Absent Subject

The fifth type of narrative has the teller as the "subject" of the action. The teller, however, is not present during the action of the narrated event, but instead hears about the event later or sees the results of the action. As the "subject" of the action, he or she is still central to it, even though absent. The narrator is of necessity more distant from the narrated event even though central to it, not having witnessed it. The role of absent focal point, however, does allow the narrator,
without much difficulty, to make a story about the event
his or her own.

In the first two stories of this type to be examined,
Claire Jones tells about events that occurred inside her
parents' home as a result of her separation and divorce.
The first story concerns her brothers' reaction to the news
of her separation and is told in response to a question I
as listener had asked regarding her family's reaction to
the ending of her marriage.

Claire: In fact, my two little brothers who were
both at home then, still at home, Ben was in high
school, and Mike was still in grade school, uh
when they heard the news, that Jim had moved out,
I told my parents almost immediately, we had
boar-, my mother had a board, hanging on, in the
den, that had photographs
EM: Uh huh
Claire: of the family all over it and
EM: Uh huh
Claire: it was just stuck up there, so Ben and
Mike went down and took down all the photographs
that had Jim in them and cut Jim out of them
(chuckles)
EM: Oh my gosh (chuckles)
Claire: So there was, you know, you'd go, even
now, it's real funny, because some of them are
still up there, they're still up there, there are
photographs of me, I'm there but or the (chuckle
in voice) there's a big hole next to me. (laughs)
EM: (laughs) There's obviously someone was cut
out of them.
Claire: (chuckles) Yeah.

In this brief story, the brothers act out symbolically what
Claire as character has done: they cut the husband out of
the photographs and thus out of their sister's life and of
the family. The narrator's point of view here is distant
from the narrated event and captures nothing of Claire as
character's emotions during the time period of the narrated event. Her emphasis in the story is on her present self, for her repetition of "even now" and "still up there" quickly bring the narrated event into the present, from which the narrator's perspective comes.

The second story is a second response to my question and illustrates Claire's statement that her parents did not disapprove of the separation and divorce. As narrator, Claire is not as distant from this narrated event as in the previous story, possibly because this one touches more directly on herself as character and has the potential to reflect more upon her present self as well.

Claire: But afterwards [after the separation was announced], then my mother said that they really hadn't liked him
EM: Uh hm
Claire: and, in fact my mother told me that after ... we separated, her friends, people started, realized that we were separated, this woman that she had known ... who was a housemother for one of the fraternities
EM: Uh huh
Claire: in, at Kansas for a while
EM: Uh huh
Claire: wha-, while we were there, ... had come and told her that some of the kids that I had grown up with were in that fraternity, ... some of the guys were,
EM: Uh huh
Claire: and they said to my mother that they had been very upset that, when I married Jim. Not because they, I mean, just because they were friends
EM: Uh huh
Claire: and they thought it was, and that ... he had been seeing other women all of the time we were ... married. So my mother was looking to tell me (chuckle in voice)
Claire as narrator hesitates more in her performance of this story than in the previous one, suggesting an apparent lack of narrative control. The frequent pauses and absence of humor until the end of the narrative indicate that she feels a degree of closeness to herself as character and discomfort about the narrated event. This was a difficult story for Claire to tell, for she is revealing to me as listener that in the past she had not known some important facts about her husband and their marriage, facts that outsiders, however, had known. Her discomfort or uneasiness is also reflected in the frame break during which she as narrator addresses me as listener, emphasizing the kinds of motivation behind the various characters' actions: thus making a dramatic contrast between herself as character and her first husband. He had had numerous affairs while she, as the narrator makes explicit, had had male friends on a non-sexual level only. Thus in this story Claire is able to make a dramatic contrast between herself as character was—and her present self, through a degree of identification with herself as character—and her first husband.

The last example of a type five narrative is told by Nick Sanchez in response to my question about his reaction to the marriage's ending and his perception of his wife's reaction. He tells this story about a phone conversation which his wife had had with her mother soon after they had
met, concerning Nick and his Hispanic origins.

Nick: Well, this,... I think she was more in love with the idea of marriage than she was with me. In fact, I don't think she was in love with me, uh, but uh, she uh, she didn't want the divorce for a while, because for her it was a personal defeat, she had married two spics and now she was going to be divorced from both of them.

EM: Um.

Nick: Uh, ... so uh, especially with her parents, uh, they're very cold people too, especially her mother, very cold parents, uh, and when she was divorced from her first husband, who was a Mexican-American, and uh, she divorced him because he was an alcoholic, or at least that's what I was told.

EM: Uh huh

Nick: Uh and uh, the uh, the mo-, she called her mother, she told me, to say that she had met this real nice guy and she was real, you know, happy with me and all this, and she she wanted uh to introduce me to the parents, she was telling all this to the mother, and then the mother sa-, her first question was, "What's his name?" And then she said, "Nick." And she said, "No, what's his last name?" Then she said, "Sanchez." Then there was this icy silence on the phone, and it's like, "Oh, no, you've married another spic, ah, didn't you learn from the first?" You know, all of that was in the silence.

Nick as narrator attempts to distance himself from the narrated event by gradually reducing his wife's relationship with her parents through a movement from "her parents" and "her mother" to "the parents" and "the mother." While he does this, he simultaneously emphasizes that he, as character, is the subject of their bigotry and implicitly includes his wife through his use of "she" to refer to his wife and to his mother-in-law. At the same time, Nick as narrator decreases the distance between himself as narrator and himself as absent character, moving
from a third person reference to himself, "this real nice
guy," to an exclusive use of "me."

Type Six Narrative: Narrator As Past Listener

In the type six narrative, the teller as character was
a listener in the past to another character telling him or
her about the action of the narrated event. The difference
between this category and the type five narrative is that
the teller as character here is not the "subject" of the
action. The teller is, nevertheless, tangentially related
to the action in the narrated event and/or to the
characters in the narrated event. Thus the narrator does
have some kind of a link or relationship, most often
familial, to the narrated event. This distinction about a
tangential relationship is important, for it provides the
narrator with some degree of inside knowledge which in turn
allows him or her to forge a connection between the
narrated event and his or her performance of "true"
personal experience narratives.

The first type six narrative to be examined is one
told by Paula Martin. She tells a type six story with a
type three narrative as an introduction to it. She stays
rather distant from the narrated event, laughing at times
when she tells about receiving phone calls from confused
and concerned friends. Only at the end of the story, when
she describes her husband's girlfriend, does she decrease
her distance from the narrative.

Paula: ... Uh, he [her husband's girlfriend's husband] tried, Ellie's hu-, Ellie was also married at this time—the girl he [her husband] was seeing?

EM: Hm. Oh, oh she was?

Paula: Yes, ... uh, her husband called me up one night, in the middle of the night, and wanted me to go, to go to her, to their apartment and confront them [her husband and his girlfriend].

EM: Uh huh

Paula: And uh ... he finally agreed, but he doesn't speak to me to this day. (slight chuckle in voice)

EM: Because you weren't cooperative?

Paula: Yes, he he thought that I I should have gone to fight to get Bill back so he could fight to get Ellie back.

EM: Oh wow.

This type three narrative, used as an introduction to her next story, is told in a fairly distant manner. Paula as narrator develops the character of the girlfriend's husband as slightly ludicrous—even, as narrator, laughing at him and his attempts to force her to act. Thus her next statement, her transition into the following story, is quite unexpected.

Paula: Uh, ... he became, I guess, really bad about that time. He threatened to kill Bill ... in that period.

EM: Wow

Paula: And uh ... there was a a union thing in Washington D.C., where all the lobby union members went, and they had a march, uh down Pennsylvania Avenue, it was on all the news, it was

EM: Yeah

Paula: a real big thing, and Bill and I had been supposed to go and I didn't go. And uh afterwards, I found out that Bill took Ellie. Well, at that time, no one knew ... that we were separated.

EM: Ah

Paula: So all our friends on the bus were just
totally confused. (slight chuckle in voice)
EM: Oh, I bet.
Paula: You know, really. "Who is this woman Bill has brought on the bus?"
EM: Uh huh
Paula: And uh ... she went with him because uh her husband had called and threatened the two of them. To kill them.
EM: Wow, so she so she went along just to
Paula: Uh huh
EM: to, for safety.
Paula: For safety. Yeah, I didn't know, I didn't know she'd gone along. I didn't know until everyone come back, and then people started calling me (starts to laugh)
EM: chuckle
Paula: and telling me.
EM: Saying, "Did you know?"
Paula: (chuckling) Yes.
EM: And that sort of thing?
Paula: Yes.
EM: Oh, wow
Paula: She had uh, at that time she was in her 20's, you know, her late 20's, but she looks younger, she's only maybe about 5-3,
EM: Uh huh
Paula: and she's got long platinum blond hair, and uh, she looks like she's about 20.
EM: Uh huh
Paula: So they had, at first they thought that Bill had Donna [their daughter] with him. (wry chuckle)
EM: Oh, my gosh
Paula: So then, so then, well, some people that knew Donna said, "No, that isn't Donna." Cause Donna has blond hair, long blond hair.

As in a number of her other stories, Paula emphasizes knowledge and the lack of it. Initially, as narrator she chuckles at the confusion and guessing of friends who lack knowledge about the state of her marriage. However, as the story progresses, her distance from the narrated event decreases until by the time she begins the last sentence of the story, her distance from the narrated event and from herself as absent character has closed. Paula's tone of
voice has grown softer as she repeats elements of her description of her husband's girlfriend: the stereotype of the older man having an affair with a younger woman, young enough "to be his own daughter." After a long pause, Paula talks about her insecurities concerning her age and how these were exacerbated by the age and appearance of her husband's girlfriend.

Karen Woods tells about the "turning point" of her fourth marriage in a type six story that shifts to become a type three, an excellent example of complex management of point of view. Karen as narrator recounts a story that she was told by her husband about an argument he had had and a beating he had given her son. She moves consistently closer to the narrated event, initially telling the story from a second-hand listener's perspective, then adopting a closer, observer's perspective, and finally telling the narrative from her husband's--not her son's--perspective.

Karen: So, one night, when Joe came back home [after he had been kicked out by his stepfather], we were trying to work everything out, so I had sorority that night, and uh, Stacey was at volleyball practice, and Joe was at football practice, and I came home from my sorority meeting, and uh, Ted said, "Well," he said, "I have a problem." He said, "We got a problem." And I said, "What is it?" And he said, "Joe and I got into a fight." And says, "Oh, no." And he says that Joe came home from football practice, and he was hungry so he was in the kitchen fixing himself something to eat. He told Joe, he said, "You're making too much noise." Joe says, "No, I'm not." Joe was already defensive EM: Right
Karen: from all the things he'd been through. EM: Uh hm
Karen: He says, "I'm not making any noise." He says, "Yes, I told you you're making too much damn noise." [dramatizes voices] Joe says [said with a muted yell], "I am not." He yells, and Ted gets up, goes in the kitchen, picks up the electric, or the iron skillet off the stove that Joe had been fixing his hamburger in, and he starts at, starts at Joe with it.

EM: Oh, no
Karen: Well, Joe shoved a kitchen chair in front of him and fell back, hit his back on the back of the refrigerator,
EM: Uh hm
Karen: and uh, Ted said, told him to get out, he said, "If you don't get out," he said, "I'm going to kill you." Joe says, "You wait until my mother hears this." And he says, "Yeah, you run and tell your mom." So, ...

Here the narrator breaks the story frame to directly address me as listener, to attempt to make herself as absent character's actions, or rather past inaction, comprehensible. She then explicitly states the conflicts felt by herself as character and follows that with a jump in chronological time to tell a brief embedded narrative as an example of the effect of the conflict.

Karen: See, I didn't want to divorce him,
EM: Yeah
Karen: I wanted to make it work, because I cared about him so much.
EM: Yeah
Karen: And I cared a lot for my kids,
EM: Yeah
Karen: but I was torn between the two
EM: Yeah, oh yeah.
Karen: desperately.
EM: Yeah
Karen: Because I seen where they were suffering, and I was suffering. And I remember sitting in the bathroom, on the floor, trying to make a decision, about what to do, and crying,
EM: Yeah
Karen: and shaking, and vomiting.
EM: Oh, my god
Karen: because I knew I had to do it, and I
didn't want to do it [with emphasis]
EM: Uh huh
Karen: I cried and cried, I just didn't want to
do it.
EM: Yeah
Karen: But I had to.
EM: Uh huh
Karen: I had to. There was this person that was
tearing our lives up.
EM: Yeah, right.

The portrayal of Karen's ambivalence and apparent inability
to leave the abusive relationship creates some difficulties
for her as narrator. As Lenore Walker, Mary Ann Douglas,
and Lynne Bravo Rosewater, researchers of "the battered
woman syndrome," have discovered, a cycle of abuse and
dependence is often established which is frequently
misunderstood by outsiders. The response of "Why doesn't
she just leave?" makes the woman's burden even greater, for
she carries within her the knowledge of potential
condemnation whenever anyone learns of her situation
(Walker). Thus Karen as narrator must establish a clear
picture of the domestic situation, emphasizing in turn her
attachment to her husband as well as her love and concern
for her children, who were also the victims of the abuse.
Because she is creating a portrait of her past self that
many would find incomprehensible, she must continue to focus
attention on herself and her reactions even while telling a
story that is about the abuse of her son. Until as
listener I provide her with enough security by a
sympathetic and supportive response, Karen as narrator must
return again and again to a focus on her being "torn
between the two." Once she feels that it is safe to do so, she returns to the primary narrative.

Karen: So, when he told me that, I went looking for Joe, when he told me that they had this scuffle, I went looking for Joe, and uh, I found him, I had to go pick Stacey up at volleyball practice, and I found him and then, and we were all in the car talking, and Stacey, my daughter said, "We've been through hell for five years, Mom, and I don't want to go through it any more." EM: Yeah
Karen: And Joe says, "That's right, I don't want to either." So then I knew I had to make a choice.
EM: Yeah
Karen: And my children were first.
EM: Yeah

The narrator's perspective shifts during this scene to come closer to that of Karen who is no longer an absent character. This is the point when the narrative shifts to a type three, for as we can see, the action Karen takes in the narrated event occurs due to pressure from her children to rescue them.

Karen: So I went home that, he [her son] stayed with his friend, I went home that night, uh, I slept on the couch,
EM: Uh huh
Karen: uh, first time I'd ever done that, so, ... next morning, he got his coffee, he went to work
EM: Uh huh
Karen: and I stayed home that day, I wasn't working then, I thought about it all day long, and I thought, "Well, I have to do this."
EM: Uh hm
Karen: So when he came home that night, I told him, I said, "I can't really condone what you have done to my children." And he said, "If you don't like it, let it go out." ... I had to, had to make myself get mad.
EM: Yeah
Karen: Because I'm a very passive person.
EM: Uh hm
Karen: So I thought, "Karen, you've got to get
Karen: And I wasn't.
EM: Yeah
Karen: I was still in love with the man.
EM: Yeah. ... You were just hurting inside, too?
Karen: Yeah. So I got up and uh, I said, "If you
don't like it, you can get out."
EM: Uh hm
Karen: So he put his foot across me, and he said,"You don't have to be so mad." I said, "I never
really wanted to." I said, "Well, I think you'd
just better leave."
EM: Uh hm
Karen: So he goes back and packs his stuff. And
well, I get scared.
EM: Uh huh
Karen: So I tell my kids, "Don't come home."
Cause I was afraid he'd come back.
EM: Yeah
Karen: So I packed some things and my daughter's
clothes. And Joe wasn't home,
EM: Uh huh
Karen: he was with a friend, and I went and got
them and stayed at my mother's for a week.
EM: Uh huh
Karen: and went and filed.

Karen's statement about "being torn" provides a clue to
this complex, and puzzling, perspective change, for, as
narrator, she is faced with conflicting norms. She "needs"
to be both a good wife and a good mother, but to satisfy
one need she must violate the other. In some abusive
relationships, the woman is psychologically capable of
leaving only when motivated to do so by an external and
powerful force (Walker, ). Such seems to have been the
case with Karen, for she finally acts in response to her
children's demands. Even after the narrator states that
Karen as character has decided to leave, she still seems
unable to accept completely the degree of violence that she
has depicted as having existed in her home. The narrator calls the fight, during which her husband beat and threatened to kill her son, a "scuffle" and later has the confrontation with her husband proceed with little sign of violence, either verbal or physical, despite the narrator's statement about the character's fear for herself and her children.

Two of Nick Sanchez's stories are variations of type six narratives. The first of these involves an appeal to an outside authority, a friend of his in Minnesota. He uses Roy's response as evidence to prove to me, just as the narrated event proved to Nick as character, the validity of his reactions to his wife's unstated actions. This type of variation has an unstated embedded narrated event as the topic of this particular narrated event. Only because Nick has told me so many stories about his wife's anger am I able to understand this one.

Nick: It [his wife's extreme anger] was like, uh uh, my friend Roy in Minnesota, cause there was one time when I had a a kind of a fit about this and feeling like I was getting squelched and I just took off and rode my bike to to Roy's house, and uh and uh, we were already engaged and the wedding was probably about three weeks away at this point, in fact, I I kind of remember three weeks, and uh, I I remember, uh Roy's description of, you know, from what I said, he says, he says something. "Jeez, you you can't live like that, walking on eggshells all the time." And that's exactly what it was like.

The second variation of type six narrative Nick tells is similar, in that it, too, involves another implied
rather than stated narrated event as the basis for the narrated event in this story. However, I have more difficulty understanding this variation, as can be seen in the many questions I ask Nick as narrator. Here the narrator tells about being compared to an uncle when he was growing up. Through allusions to the marital relationship of this uncle and aunt, the narrator reveals his fear that the childhood parallel will continue and, indeed, perhaps already has.

Nick: Yeah, so I'm sitting in there [after his wife demanded to know if he wanted a divorce] and I'm thinking and the minute's going by in my head, and ... that's wh-, what, part of that's part of the process of how I resolved it. I said, "Don't buckle under this time." Oh, oh also uh also, my uncle, who is sup-, who people tell me is very much like me, my mother's brother, EM: Uh huh Nick: is, hen-pecked is a very mild definition of what's happened to him EM: Oh, oh Nick: and people have always compared us. My grandmother did, uh even my mother always compared me to her brother. EM: Now, this was, compared you when you were married to her or just all your life? Compared you to her brother. Nick: Oh, well, no no no, this, all of my life, my mother and my grandmother, lots of people in the family have compared my uncle and me, EM: Yeah Nick: and in my mind, ... I see, I, well, he's a very nice guy, but I see him as virtually castrated EM: Uh hm Nick: and um, um, ... and not happy because of the tremendous pres-, influence his wife exerts. EM: Yeah Nick: I didn't want that to happen to me, cause I see him as like, you know, like ju-, just the thought, the image that I could become like him, given the,
EM: Oh, yeah, yeah
Nick: was horrifying.

This can be seen as one of Nick’s "turning point" narratives, as can the previous one considered, for in them he as narrator is presenting the character’s rationale for finally reaching the point of being able to say "yes" to divorce. Prior to telling these two stories, Nick dwells quite a bit on the image of himself which he fears he projects in his narratives. For example, during evaluation portions of some stories, as narrator he says he is afraid that he has created a portrait of a "wimpy guy." He is concerned that he portray his present self as a balanced male, one who is strong yet sensitive to others’ needs and feelings. Thus through these more removed narratives he is able to explain the reasons for his fear as well as maintain an image of himself as understanding and sensitive. He can only act when pushed so far that he as character feels he has no choice if he is to survive and avoid the "virtual castration" his uncle suffers. Yet despite the fact, or perhaps because of the fact, that these narratives are more removed from the initial narrated event from which they arise, Nick as narrator is much closer to himself as character and to the narrated events--both initial and particular--than he is with most of his other stories. These are serious narratives, told without the use of humor, and seem to arise from the narrator’s deepest fears.
Type Seven Narrative: Narrator Incorporates Another's Story

The seventh type of narrative has a teller who incorporates another person's story into the speech event and presents it as parallel or in some way analogous to his or her own story. Thus, as with the type five and six narratives, the narrator is not in the initial narrated event. With this type of story, however, there is not even a tangential relationship between the narrator and the initial narrated event or the characters in it. Instead, the narrator seems to be indicating that his or her own story and divorce experience is something of a microcosm which is related to others' stories and experiences.

Two of Claire Jones's narratives provide the best examples of the use of type seven during the individual sessions. In the first story, the narrator refers to a married couple about whom she had told me the previous time we had met. Claire uses their marriage as an example of how good a marital relationship can be—a model of what she wants, she implies.

Claire: once Jim [her first husband] ... once Jim had moved out and I started seeing other people, who were together, and uh meeting other people who were married
EM: Uh hm
Claire: who got along real well.
EM: Uh hm
Claire: Uh, I remember one time Karen, my friend, ... Da- you know, David and Karen, the people that we talked about that lived in in Richmond,
EM: Uh huh
Claire: friends of ours, and when Bob and I were
living together, they lived in the apartment right behind us, and they're birders, and she's in the English department, and he was in the French department, and so we just had a lot in common and
EM: Uh huh
Claire: he's also a wonderful cook. And so I remember one time Karen said that ... she and David were just extremely lucky that they just got on very well, that it had nothing to do with any adjustments that they had to make. She said "If we had to make any adjustments, we're both so lazy, that we'd get a divorce immediately."
EM: chuckle
Claire: (chuckle) "We wouldn't be able to make adjustments."
EM: Uh huh
Claire: "We just happen to live together very comfortably." And I thought, "God, that's so wonderful, that, to live with somebody and not find constant annoyance in stuff and things about them. That you actually enjoy living with them."

Both Claire as narrator and I as listener share a similarly distant appreciation of the story. Although Claire as character did play the role of listener in the specific narrated event—Karen telling her what Claire as narrator tells me as listener—Claire is emotionally detached from the narrated event, from the characters in the story, and from the story that her story told to me is about. A similar detachment occurs with the telling of the second type seven narrative, which almost immediately follows in the storytelling session. This other story focuses on a second couple she knew when married to her first husband, a couple she as character felt unable to use as a model, for both individuals were bisexual.

Claire: We [she and her first husband] didn't know anybody who was married. We knew one other couple who were married, and they were older
than, considerably older than we were,
EM: Uh huh
Claire: about seven or eight years older than we were
EM: Uh huh
Claire: and they lived in ... Kansas City. And they were sort of an odd couple because he was gay and she, they were both gay.
EM: But they were married.
Claire: But they were married, I mean there weren't ... they were, what was it, when you're both
EM: Bisexual?
Claire: Bisexual, yeah.
EM: Uh huh
Claire: And... they got along real well, but since they, I knew they were both gay .... You know, I sort of made an exception of them, and thought (with chuckle in voice) "Well, maybe" ...
EM: Yeah?
Claire: "If you marry somebody who's gay,"
EM: Uh huh
Claire: "you get along or something."

In this story, Claire as narrator laughs at herself as character/observer of the initial implied narrated event, for she is quite happy in her present marriage. She therefore distances herself from the naive assumptions made by Claire as character along with the unhappiness indicated by the character's thoughts. The story not only points out the contrast between her available models of good marriages during the two relationships, but it also illustrates through that contrast the isolation she experienced during the first marriage, reinforcing the sense she works to establish throughout her stories that her decision to divorce was justified and correct.
By the end of each storytelling session, each of the tellers of these divorce narratives has created something of a composite portrait of him- or herself both as a character and as a narrator that is as complex as the issue with which I have been grappling here. There is not just one Karen or one Nick, for example, but rather ever-changing versions of each teller that taken as a whole reveal something of the individual's perception of self. The tellers of these divorce stories, through their choices and use of storytelling techniques, reveal underlying psychological patterns as well. Those individuals with whom I have maintained close ties since the collecting have continued to tell me stories about their lives, which has further enriched my understanding of these. Thus they, and I or whoever they allow to be their listener, participate over and over again in the dynamic process of narrating through which each storyteller recreates and interprets his or her life.
CHAPTER IV
THE GROUP CONVERSATION AS PERFORMANCE CONTEXT

Group conversation is a common performance context for the telling of personal experience narratives about divorce. During a group storytelling session, a variety of elements come into play, each potentially affecting the performance of an individual's narratives. Although a number of these may also be found in the telling of stories during an individual session, the dynamic interaction of the participants in the group conversation adds an additional complexity that must be addressed as a central influence on each person's performance.

These narratives are closely tied to and affected by the conversation in which they are embedded. Katherine Young implicitly refers to the interrelationship between narratives and their surrounding conversation when she writes that "narration is not continuous nor are narrators singular" (Taleworlds and Storyrealms 157). Not only are topics carried from one area of discourse to the other, but the actual ebb and flow of the conversation are reflected in a story's development and the participants' exchanges. Many interruptions by the participants and exchanges of
control of the floor in the midst of storytelling occur, so that some stories are left "unfinished" or "incomplete." Sometimes an "unfinished" narrative will remain that way if the teller is not allowed to return later to finish the story. This aspect of the interaction involves relative power, however, for strong storytellers will be able to retain control and finish their stories. Stories told during a group conversation are at times less fully developed than those told in individual sessions: fewer details may be provided and less background information may be given in an introductory portion. Some of the narratives must be considered "minimal" stories at best, although the tellers do not seem to make a distinction between them and more fully developed ones. In addition, "kernel" stories, to use Susan Kalchik’s term, are told during a group conversation ("... like Ann’s gynecologist or the time I was almost raped...”). Kernel stories actually are references a teller makes to narratives which are not told during the session, but which are responded to as if they had been told. The response indicates the existence of a network among the participants outside the storytelling context which influences the performance of the stories. In other words, the listeners in the group session I collected were able to respond to a divorce kernel story because they either knew the story or had had a very similar experience and thus drew upon shared
knowledge in order to know the story without it being told.

Some divorce "kernel" stories told during the group conversation, however, might be termed "potential" narratives instead. Rather than merely making a reference to a known story without actually intending to tell the story, the teller of a "potential" story implies that she would develop it further if the listeners indicate an interest by responding in a positive fashion and allowing her to maintain control of the floor. Thus she is offering the potential divorce narrative to the other participants for their acceptance. However, the potential teller does not make this offer in a passive manner. She refers to a narrative expecting, and wanting, to tell the story. This type of interaction is again related to the issue of power, the power of the storyteller within the group.

A sense of conflict developed during the group session, with the participants "jockeying" for control of the floor. This "fighting" for the right to tell corresponds to my findings in a previous study in which I examined the group dynamics involved with the telling of personal experience narratives about a different topic ("Should I Tell the One About ... ?"). Conflict would occur when a pause in a story or in the conversation developed or when a story's ending had potentially opened up a slot for storytelling. The participants in the group conversation would then struggle among themselves for
control of the floor: for the right to tell a story. A secondary struggle might also develop during the telling of a story, with the power focusing on the right to direct the responses to the story. A fluctuating degree of competition occurred during the session as a whole, with various individuals in essence "arguing" about who would tell the next story or dominate the ongoing conversation. Because the participants wanted the storytelling session to continue, however, they would stop competing for the right to narrate a story when it became apparent that another person had the stronger, more dominant position at that time. Thus an individual's need to narrate at a particular time, powerful as it was, became less important than the desire to maintain the viability of the session.

Given the overall atmosphere of congeniality that permeated the collecting session, how might we reconcile this with the competitiveness of parts of the session and come to a greater understanding of the interactive dynamics? In "Art, Performance, and Praxis," folklorist Simon Bronner writes about the need to attend to power relations as he discusses "praxis," a concept developed by behavioral psychologists, and its applicability for folklore study.

In praxis, culture is not divided into levels or small groups, but into social systems that appear as power relations of subordinate and dominant attitudes. Individuals engage in activities that bring into play different kinds of networks and social structures and these
Bronner's reference to overlapping social structures corresponds to the attention folklorists pay to the variety of contexts which may influence a particular performance. The power relations involved in interactions mirror those which exist between the various social structures, structures of which the individuals themselves are part. The subordinate and dominant attitudes would be carried into the power relations as they exist and develop among the participants, for "in praxis is the idea that individuals form customary modes of behavior and thought in response to the social and economic organizations in which they operate" (93). Bronner's work on praxis also provides a clue to the participants' final willingness to "give way" and let another gain control of the floor: "the final product is not the sole end, but ... the doing, and the experiences and symbols involved, are equally important. [Thus] the process takes on a symbolic significance for its exercise of personal control" (93). Therefore, although the exercise of personal power and, through it, the ability to gain and hold the floor are critical for each individual participant, other elements of the interaction and of the relationships among the participants which are related to the process come into play as well.

The nature of group conversation and its influence on the performance of divorce stories also allow for the
development of a supportive network among the participants. A social framework, built upon the knowledge of shared experiences, leads to an atmosphere of acceptance and sympathy which creates the possibility of dual storytelling. Despite a confrontational aspect in the dynamics, cooperation during narration does arise as well. At times, however, the agreement and cooperation are reached only through a process of negotiation, due in part to the high degree of listener participation. Since the narratives are part of a conversation, frequent discussions between or among the individuals often focus on generalizations that the teller may have made or statements that a listener might feel are not accurate. Another potentially cooperative or confrontational characteristic of narratives told in this context is simultaneous storytelling, with a conversation-like turn-taking movement between two tellers. In other words, one person tells one line of her story, followed by the second person telling a corresponding line of hers. In some situations, two simultaneous tellers are in fact competing for control of the floor, while at other times two tellers engage in a type of collaborative, albeit parallel, storytelling.

Tellers of personal experience narratives about divorce seem to feel more free to refer to others' experiences during a group conversation than those who tell their stories in individual sessions. Not only did the
women from whom I collected divorce narratives during the

group session frequently refer to other friends' and

acquaintainces' marriages and divorces, but they also

referred to famous people (like Paul Newman) when retelling

stories originally heard on television or radio shows.

On September 2, 1988, I joined a small group of women

at the home of an acquaintance, Ida Jones, in order to

collect personal narratives about their divorces. The

three women, Ida, Sue Brown, and Cathy Hays, meet fairly

regularly on weekend evenings, taking turns preparing

dinner for the others before going to a nightclub or party.

This aspect, the regular gathering, is the outer context

which influences the inner performance context. A fourth

woman, Mary Leeds, who arrived about two hours after the

session started, does not usually join the other three for

these "nights out." She joined the others this particular

evening, not to tell me stories (although she readily did),

but to spend some time with Ida, a close childhood friend.

Although they knew, in general, why they were meeting

me at Ida's, the women wanted to know "what I wanted from

them." I asked them just to talk to me about their

divorces, to tell me the usual kinds of things they talk

about when they talk to each other about their divorces. I

did not use the word "story," nor did I when I had spoken

with Ida the previous week. At that time I had told her
that I could not find any people who would talk to me about their divorces in a group setting. After deciding that what I needed was "a kind of 'Tupperware Party' where people get together and talk and have fun but don't have to buy anything," she told me about a group of friends and offered to arrange an evening get-together.

One of the women, Sue Jones, 46, has been married and divorced six times, four of which involved the same man, her first husband. According to Ida, Sue usually says that she has been married three times because, as Ida put it, "Sue thinks since four were to the same man, they don't count." Sue herself did not tell me how many times she had been married or divorced. She just said, in response to my question, "a lot." Note that, at least according to Ida, Sue uses the word "married," not "divorced." She has two grown children and has custody of two young nieces. She has had a variety of jobs and is currently a data processor, attending a local business school part-time. Sue and Cathy Hays, another participant, are close friends who spend much of their free time together.

Cathy, 46, has been married and divorced once and is currently unmarried. After alluding to her husband's "strangeness" several times near the beginning of the session, she said that after their divorce, her husband let her know that he was gay. I suspect that her hesitancy about directly stating this fact was related to my
presence, for I was the only person in the group who did not already know about his homosexuality. Cathy could therefore initially allude to this fact, knowing that she did not have to confront it directly until an explicit statement of her ex-husband’s sexual orientation was crucial for me, as the outsider, to understand a story. Cathy, a secretary who says she hopes to go back to school, has two grown children.

Ida Jones, 36, has been married and divorced once and is unmarried. A secretary at a local university, she has two young children who live with her. She met Sue and Cathy about one and one half years ago when she joined a singles group whose members attend various cultural activities and hold monthly "mixers" with similar groups.

Because they participated in the entire session and thus in the development of its dynamics, I consider Ida, Sue and Cathy to be key informants. Two of these three key women, Sue and Cathy, are extremely close friends, having known each other for about six years. Although their specific marital experiences were somewhat different, their children—each has a son and a daughter—are similar in age and thus the difficulties involved in having been a single mother creates another bond between them. Sue and Cathy either see each other daily or talk on the telephone each evening. When neither has a date, they spend most of their evenings together, talking about their lives (past and
present), their future plans, and their relationships with men. The general understanding I gained from their statements and Ida's is that Sue is frequently involved with someone, while Cathy is not. In those situations, Cathy becomes Sue's audience, listening to her stories about her "latest" during their daily phone conversations. It became clear during the session that Sue wishes to present herself as independent and in control. She was the most dominant and assertive of the three key women, particularly with regard to her interactions with Cathy. Although both Cathy and Ida disagreed and argued with Sue during the group conversation, Sue was for the most part able to maintain her dominance and control over the session and the participants. However, the dynamics shifted somewhat when Ida's intimate friend, Mary Leeds, arrived. Mary, who joined us about two hours after we began talking, is a childhood friend of Ida. At 35, she has been married once and is recently divorced. Like Ida, she is a secretary at a local university. She has a young son who lives with her. Having a relationship similar to that of Sue and Cathy, Mary and Ida frequently eat lunch together during the week. Ida sees herself as Mary's "guide" to divorced life, having already experienced many of the problems Mary now faces. And, because as Ida told me later, "We know everything about each other, from the time we were babies, on," she feels that she is in a good
position to advise her friend. Despite these similarities with the other women's relationship, however, this one is different, in that a more balanced power structure seems to have developed. Neither one of these two women plays a particularly dominant or subordinate role with the other. Mary does, however, have the ability to control quietly through her calm and careful participation. This became clear when she partially reduced Sue's dominant position in the conversation once she joined the group.

All four women have similar backgrounds. They grew up in the midwest, came from lower middle class families that included several siblings, and had some secretarial or other post-secondary training in order to support themselves. They all spoke of needing to feel self-sufficient, contrasting that state with their mothers' situations. Only Sue came from a family that did not stress religious training and strong family ties, although "being a good mother" was a value she mentioned fairly frequently. Each of the other three women talked and told stories about being the first person in her family to get a divorce, focusing on parents' negative responses to the action.

Sue, Ida, and Cathy were waiting in Ida's living room when I arrived and had already started talking about their divorces. Sue immediately began to joke about having "said
it all already," so everyone else would have to talk. The easy, joking atmosphere continued for much of the next three and one-half hours of talking and storytelling. Ida later informed me that what was said, who talked, and how the talking proceeded was typical for their get-togethers. However, my presence and my use of a taperecorder did have an influence on the session. Three different times—at the beginning of the session, at about the midway point when I started a new tape, and at the end of the session—Sue and Cathy seemed self-conscious about being taped and asked what I planned to do with their "stuff." After the session ended I answered their questions more fully; prior to that time I said that I was interested in what people said when they got together and talked about their divorces, so I wanted them to do whatever they would usually do. I assured them each of the three times that I would not use their names, for although no one had asked, I realized that they were made uneasy by the idea of the tape recorder. Sue joked that anonymity would allow her to "get dirty" and tell the "real dirt." We responded with laughter and more joking, which eased the tenseness and the session proceeded fairly smoothly.

The interactive dynamics among and between the participants from the very beginning of the session established a mood, the proper feeling for the actual storytelling. The various roles played by the tellers and
the types of interaction which followed throughout the session were also established in the general conversation before the storytelling started: what was told when, by whom, how the stories were performed, and how frequently. Just as the general overview is a typical way to start an individual storytelling session, the general conversation about divorce experiences before anyone tells a specific experience as narrative seems to be typical of the group conversation.

Ida: Yeah, [one woman told me she] invited them [her ex-husbands] all back together.
EM: Yeah, she had a divorce party, she was telling me.
Sue: That, that's nerve.
General laughter
Sue: That, that wouldn't work with me.
Cathy: Uh uh.
Sue: Not with my ex.
Cathy: What was her point in having them all back, in having a divorce party?
EM: Um, um, I think it was partly a celebration, I've heard of people having divorce parties, afterwards, but not having their their exes there. But just getting together and celebrating
Sue: Yeah, I can understand the divorce party part,
EM: Yeah
Sue: but not with um
EM: Um
Sue: the divorce party part
EM: Um, they were still friends. And, ... and so it was just
Cathy: I can't imagine, for me, I can't imagine someone celebrating something so sad.
EM: Uh hm, yeah.
Cathy: Because, to me, that, even though it's, taking control of your life and realizing that you've got to do something different than what you're doing, and you have the courage to go ahead and do it, ... to me it's still sad.
EM: Uh hm
At this point in the conversation, a movement between a tone of lightness and seriousness was established. Everyone grew quiet as Cathy spoke and I was the only participant who directly responded to her statements. Throughout the session, Sue remained the teller who generally reasserted the humor or lightheartedness of a topic, while Cathy primarily casts a negative tone over the session. However, as is seen by the end of this excerpt from the group conversation, these are related to their general outlooks on life, which are carried over from the outside context in the general discussion of values: Sue is the cynic and Cathy is the romantic.

Cathy: So, I can't imagine someone having a party over it.
Sue: I don't know, I kind of had a party.
(chuckle)
General laughter.
Sue: Part, it depends upon the circumstances of the divorce. ... Well, as far as talking about it, when I feel down or, or
Cathy: when your tail's dragging
Sue: but when I feel good, I don't talk about it, cause it makes me feel bad, and today, I feel good, so
General laughter
EM: Oh no
Sue: I've been in counseling for over a year, and I've hashed through this stuff so many times, that ... just ...
Ida: Well, Cathy, come on
Cathy: My mouth is full. [We were eating dinner at this point]
Laughter
Sue: I was just thinking about the reason that you got a divorce, is uh ...
Cathy: is uh is depressing, so I really don't like to talk about it.
Sue: But do you remember any good parts of your marriage?
Cathy: Oh, well, it doesn't matter once you're divorced. (chuckle) Yeah, I know a lot of people who remember good parts of their marriage. I don't remember any good parts.
Sue: Well, I don't either, I mean. When you think about that. In fact when I finally figured out one day that there were more bad things than good, I said, "This is not good." (chuckle)
Cathy: chuckle
Sue: "This is not the way it's supposed to be." And that's kind of what ... all marriages are, I think, I mean there's never going to be a marriage that's totally, good.
EM: Uh huh
Sue: There's always going to be things. It's when the good outweighs the bad that you try to make it work, but when it doesn't, ... say, "Wait a minute here," ... Cathy: Well, I tried to make it work, even though it was all bad,
Sue: Why
Cathy: that was my problem. You know, I finally faced the fact that I couldn't make it work ...
Sue: Well, you can't, nobody,
Cathy: No one person
Sue: No one person
Cathy: ever can.
Sue: It takes both
Cathy: It takes two.

This pre-narrative discussion established the ambience for storytelling. In the back and forth movement of the dialogue between Sue and Cathy, the two women were basically in agreement, so the movement emphasizes and builds upon this fact. However, at other times, a similar movement was used when two participants were engaged in a disagreement or conflict, with the movement emphasizing that aspect of the session.

EM: Yeah
Cathy: Oh, it's been much better since my divorce, at least I don't have to put up with his garbage. ...
Sue: I must like marriage better, cause I’ve tried it enough times. (chuckle)
General laughter

Sue’s use of humor in making this statement was informed by her awareness of the general public’s attitude toward multiple divorced women. The statements made by Karen Woods and some of the narratives she told during her individual session about her multiple divorces indicate a similar awareness of jokes often made about the "Zsa Zsa syndrome."

Sue: But but I’m usually happier, ... I feel better about myself, when I’m not married. ...
Ida: Yeah, yeah but the-, then you don’t have to confront anything
Sue: Right
Ida: You can just go on with
Sue: I can just have fun (chuckle)
Ida: Well, yes.
Sue: I like that part (chuckle)
General laughter
Cathy: Well, ... I don’t know, I’ve had better times since I’ve been divorce, but I can’t say they’ve all been great.
Sue: No no, not always great, you have good and bad with both, single and married.

In this exchange, Cathy called Sue on her generalization, at which Sue retracted part of the original statement in an attempt at mediation. However, Cathy, in essence, rejected her retraction, for she wished to focus on her life before the divorce in this exchange, not her life after it.

Cathy: I only had the bad in the marriage, so I wouldn’t know if there was any good or not. ... [after a relatively long pause, I ask Cathy how long she has been divorced]
Cathy: Eleven years, so I really don’t know, having only been married one time, and it was nothing but the pits [spoken with a less serious tone]
Sue: Laughter
Cathy: That’s probably why I’m still divorced.
It was nothing but the pits, I was afraid to go back and do that again.
Sue: Well, I had three husbands, and I can tell you, it's no different! (laugh)
Cathy: laugh
Sue: It's still the pits!
General laughter

Note how Sue's statement "topped" Cathy's. This one-ups-manship continued throughout the session, particularly in their interaction, although Sue tended to try to top other participants' narratives and statements as well. Cathy's repetition of "it was the pits" and the related statement "I was afraid" indicate that this was a "potential" story which was not told. Much later in the session, however, Cathy returned to the topic and told several narratives explaining why "it was the pits." Meanwhile, the general conversation continued with Cathy telling another "potential" story, in this case one which more explicitly revealed her as a "romantic," for it focused on an ideal, a "fairy tale" waiting to happen.

Cathy: But I'm convinced that somewhere out there there is a man that I could get along with, that it could be good with. But I haven't met him yet. ...
Ida: Well, you, it is, hard when you're working on a relationship. I think it's easy to say when you're not working on one, what I would like, this and that, and then--and you say all this--and then you get it, and then you're working on it and then you rethink and it's like, "Do I really want this?"

Ida's interactions often involved attempts to discuss seriously problems she saw inherent in both Sue's and Cathy's styles of dealing with their relationships and
divorces. Her reactions were also colored by the fact that 
at the time I participated in and collected this group 
session, she was attempting to end a potentially 
destructive relationship.

Sue: There's too much thinking.  
Ida: laugh  
Sue: It is. It's too damn much trouble, this  
EM: Being in a relationship?  
Sue: Yeah  
EM: Being married?  
Sue: Yeah. ... Yeah, it's too hard. I mean 
you've got to work too hard. ...  
Cathy: Not if they're working, too. ...  
Sue: Have you known any man that's willing to, to 
do his part?  
Cathy: Yeah, I've seen some.  
Sue: Where?  
Cathy: I don't personally know. (chuckle) No, 
I've never been involved with any,  
Sue: And who do you know, who do you know has a 
happy marriage? Anybody?  
Cathy: Yeah.  
Sue: How many people?  
Cathy: Two.  
Sue and Cathy: laugh  
Sue: Are they married to each other?  
General laughter  
Cathy: No, no they're not married to each other.  
Sue: (still laughing) There's that one couple.  
Cathy: No, it's two women, they both have good 
marrriages. Well, I know three, I take that back.  
Sue: You know that for a fact, and not going by 
what they tell you?  
Cathy: I go by what I see. I can't know it for a 
fact unless I lived with them.  
Sue: Yeah  
Cathy: But I go by what I see.  
Sue: There was this lady at work. Told me about 
what a wonderful marriage she had. [With 
dramatized, exaggerated voice] Her husband was 
just wonderful. Their life was just wonderful. 
One day he pushed a pie in her face (slight 
chuckle) because she never shut her mouth. And 
they ended up divorced.  
General laughter  
Sue: "You got one too, what happened to your 
*wonderful* relationship, Millie?" (chuckle)  
Well, nobody could have a wonderful relationship
Here the conflict between Sue and Cathy is actually between two world views: the cynical and the romantic. In fact, the brief narrative that Sue told reveals that cynical view both in content and in her performance. Sue effectively ended the disagreement by telling a story that seemed to proves the validity of her position, although the focus apparently moved from the man being at fault to the woman. The crucial point for Sue, thus, was her contention concerning the non-existence of a good marriage. Because it was told with humor, and with an almost cartoon-like emphasis on the disagreeableness of the woman, Cathy and the rest of us were able to accept Sue's proof and laugh along with her.

During the group conversation as a whole, there is no unified sense of movement or development, no real sense of progression carried throughout the entire body of narratives. Instead, thematic links between story topics and the surrounding conversation provide a sense of coherency and unity that holds the session together. Thus, when isolated from each other and from the conversational context, the stories often do not seem to make sense or to reflect any coherent position held by a teller. In fact, one storyteller may even tell a narrative that contradicts an earlier position or stated belief about a particular topic. For example, ten minutes or so after Sue argued
that men will never put forth any effort to make a marriage work, she told a story about Paul Newman's good marriage, using it to explain why he is still married: he works at it.

Sue: I was listening to Paul Newman once, and he said he and Joanne Woodward, they've been married a long time, which is unusual for somebody as famous as they are, ... but they said that, he said, "We fix things." Said, "Most people today, don't fix stuff. Toaster breaks, you throw it out. Mixer breaks, you throw it out and get another one. Marriage doesn't go quite right and you throw it out and get another one."

Cathy: It's a throw-away society.

Sue: He said, "Our toaster breaks, we fix it. Something breaks, we fix it. Our marriage is in trouble, we fix it." That was the answer.

EM: Yeah, the two of them.

Sue: Yes, the two of them working together. But very few people have that attitude. I mean, I don't think they do. I mean, most of the time, it's ... "You try to fix it." (chuckle)

Cathy: Yeah.

When seen with her statements and with the other stories she told about marriages, both hers and others' s, it becomes clearer that Sue's main point was not that men or women never work at having a good marriage, but rather that it is extremely difficult to attain and maintain a good marriage. During the conversation that followed this narrative, Sue and Cathy continued their dialogue about the institution of marriage. Thus the movement of the topic has expanded to include women as well as men, but has narrowed in that the earlier generalization about "all men" has been left behind and apparently forgotten by the participants, since the essence of the disagreement had
been about the existence of any good marriages.

Of the four initial participants—Sue, Cathy, Ida, and me—Sue and Cathy are the most intimate. Due at least in part to their close friendship, these two women often established a dialogue-like atmosphere during the group conversation, although they did address the other two of us and accept our more limited participation. Sue and Cathy, as indicated in the sample conversational excerpt, sometimes finished each other's statements, interjected frequent comments, used a sarcastic tone with each other (infrequently used with Ida and never with me), corrected each other's stories, and argued over the "correct" meaning of a story. They negotiated between themselves, with one of the two (usually Sue) "winning" more frequently than the two of them reaching a compromised meaning, so that a competitive tone was maintained during their interactions, underlying elements of collaboration. Ida also participated in the negotiating process, although to a lesser degree, and was thus not as complete a participant during the dialogue-like interactions.

These examples show that the collaborative/competitive aspect of Sue and Cathy's interaction is most visible in the conversation surrounding the stories. However, the overriding sense that is created by this interaction permeates the session, whether or not it is actually occurring at that moment. All of the participants competed
for the floor, but Sue and Cathy more frequently and stridently did so. At the same time, these two women expressed their sympathy and support for each other's experiences in an odd type of interaction that made me as listener feel rather uncomfortable, for it emphasized my outsider status. In this next example, Sue talks about her father in an introduction to a "potential" story apparently about abuse.

Sue: But uh, I never saw him [her father], when I was a kid, because he was out, dating and drinking, and running around, so I grew up with a step-father, that, he and my mother fought a lot, and he was, he was really a crazy ... manipulative man, ...
Cathy: So was my daddy
Sue: and, in my teens, he had done a couple things to me that had made me real uncomfortable with him, ... so, ... you know, you just grow up with all that, plus, ... Gosh I hate to get in to all of this. .... Well, there are just lots of things that had happened when I was young, that, I had not dealt with, ever, until I went into counseling
EM: Uh huh
Sue: and, ... I mean, real uncomfortable things that I, finally, when I started talking about them, I said, "My God." Ann says, "Am I the first person that you've ever told?" I said, "Yeah." "How can you carry that st-, those things around for years?" I said, "No, I didn't ever know they bothered me." ... But, ... but you know, you have a lot of problems, and you get married,

Here the listeners' lack of response--no one encouraged Sue to tell more about this topic--indicated to Sue that she should not develop this into a actual narrative. Note the shift from "I" to "you" in a transition that potentially could draw the listeners into the story she moved toward
next: her ex-husband rather than her father, still with
the theme of being at the mercy of a "crazy man."

Sue: just like with Paul, but that incident with
the knife, any normal, girl, or secure person,
would have said, "This man's crazy" and would
have gotten the hell away from him, but at that
time, I didn't have any, because I was determined
to make that work, I mean, I still thought, that,
"Here's this man that loves me
Ida: Uh huh
Sue: He's not capable of loving, he never has
been.
Cathy: Right
Sue: And he never will be.
Cathy: Has no ways, to love anybody.
Sue: They only want, possession, they want you to
be there, they want you to be their mother, they
don't know how to love.
Cathy: Well, being a homosexual, he doesn't know
how to love, a woman,

Here Cathy changed from responding to Sue's statements to a
making reference to her own experience. She shifted so
slightly, however, that Sue did not immediately realize
what Cathy had actually said.

Sue: Yeah
Cathy: at all.
Sue: Right. (Laughs) That would be something!
(laughs)
Cathy: I, in fact, I don't know how, ... Well, he
must be bi-sexual, but I really, but I think of
bi-sexual as a man who, or or a woman, who
doesn't really want to admit, what they are,
because it was only the last two years, that we
were married, that we didn't have, well, two and
a half, we had no sex at all, and I think that's
really when he came to terms with what he was
Sue: Uh huh
Cathy: And he was going out with men
Ida: Yeah
Cathy: at that point, and uh, ... then he had no
way, of showing any love, or affection,
Sue: That's because he didn't
Cathy: He became very mentally cruel, then, and
his was very subtle, very subtle, it wasn't, "Oh
you're a bitch," or "You're ugly," or anything
like that, it was very subtle things, like, "You know how Brenda is." Well, you know, if you are an insecure person, to begin with, you'd say, "What do you mean, 'you know'?"

(Smiling) Cathy: "God, am I really that bad?" Well, "What is it we're talking about?" I didn't know what he was talking about. "Well, you know how Brenda is." And things like, he would say things like that all the time, "We know how you are." Now I thought, "How am I, how? Am I that bad?" And I would get mad and I would blow up, ... and there the things he would and wouldn't do, mostly what he wouldn't do, then I'd go run back to him and apologize, I'm like you're crazy.

Sue: Like you're crazy.

Cathy: Yeah.

Sue: That's the thing, Paul used to be great at that with me, I'd always think, "Well, gosh, I got, I have the, ... I made him feel bad when we fought, it was my fault, I had to go fix this,"

At the point when Sue stepped in with an evaluation of Cathy as character's experience, Cathy had been moving toward narrating a more specific story. The movement from a general statement to a general narrative, to a more specific story is a common pattern for her. Sue's evaluative interjection effectively terminated the story and Cathy the narrator's turn at this point. Sue then attempted to relate the topic to one of her narratives. However, Cathy was able to regain the floor and tell her story.

Cathy: And I never will forget this. I had uh gall bladder surgery, and ... I came home from the hospital, a couple days before I was supposed to, because I was doing so well,

EM: Uh hm

Cathy: And, and, course immediately I had my kids [at home with me], and they were very tiny, and, I was trying to take care of them, ... uh, fulfill my responsibilities to them, fix meals, ... not even supposed to be up doing these
things.
EM: Right
Cathy: The doctors had said, "You can go home, and you can dust the tables, and you can set the table, but don't you do anything else." You know. I was doing all this stuff, and uh and uh, my uh, ... ex-brother-in-law's wife, called me on the phone, and Jim [her husband] never came home for lunch, he never came home for lunch. Well, this particular day, he decided to come home for lunch, and I was on the phone. ... And he came in, he broke every glass in the house. There was a pot of beans in, on the stove for supper. He took that pot of beans, he threw it against the wall, and told me I was lazy. I had no business being on the phone. I never was on the phone, I didn't have any friends because he wouldn't allow us to have any friends. She had called to find out about some family things that were going on, and and, he ... And this was "Pitch the bitch," (chuckle) and left. And here I was, you know, I was in tears, because I had been on the phone, talking to, my sister-in-law, and I should have been, I should have been up doing things, you know.
EM: Yeah
Cathy: That was garbage. He should have been there helping me.
Sue: No, but you see, it had nothing to do with any of that, nothing.
Cathy: No, uh uh, ... well, yeah.

Once again, Sue interjected her own evaluation of Cathy the character's experience. She revised the meaning of that story after Cathy as narrator finished, to which revision Cathy tacitly conceded by replying, after a pause, "well, yeah."

At another point in the session, Sue told a long series of stories about her first pregnancy and her second marriage to her first husband. During this narration in which little or no transition was provided as Sue moved from one story to the next, Cathy as listener broke the
story frame a number of times, making comments that were potentially disruptive to the narrating. However, Sue, a strong storyteller, was able to respond to the comments and still maintain control over the floor, eventually completing the narrative series.

Sue: So I divorced him [the first husband who had vanished] while he was gone, said, "Hey, forget this shit." ... And then when he got back home, ... course, there's other stories with this, too (laughing)
Cathy: Laughs
Sue: I mean, when he, I, I, I divorced him and I moved to California, ... and then, while I was in California, I met somebody I was really crazy about, and became pregnant [spoken in a quieter voice], but, I didn't marry him, uh, he asked me, but I I couldn't, because, ... I know that's the only reason he wanted to get married, cause I was pregnant, I just couldn't do that, if he'd wanted to marry me, because we were in love, I would have married him in a minute, but, ... I didn't, that just wasn't me, so I decided to go back home and, ... Course now that guy is, drives a Rolls Royce [much lighter tone]

Sue as narrator changed the tone of the story when it became "too serious" by interjecting a humorous jab at herself as character. Despite the distance between herself as character and as narrator that this creates, the closer identification with herself as character she established in the first portion of this segment as well as in previous stories about this subject allows the positive aspects of that character to reflect upon her present self as well. Thus Sue's presentation of herself as an honorable character (one who would not use her pregnancy as a reason to marry the man she later reveals she truly loved),
although gently laughed at a bit later in the narrating by herself and the other participants, is one which Sue as narrator wishes to connect with her present self.

General laughter
Sue: lives in New York, and has a big fabulous house
General laughter
Cathy: Fool that you were!
General laughter
Sue: Uh, ... yeah, I mean there's some
Cathy: You you you and your honor and morals
(laughs)
Sue: See. And "Oh, I'm not going to marry a guy who's only to go and marry me because I'm pregnant." Well, now, I mean, back there, I was, what did I care, I could have married him!
General laughter
Ida: That's what every one would have thought.
Sue: Ye-, we, when we met, h-, he was very honest with me, up front, you know, he, we had fun and he really liked me, but he had told me then, he said, "You know, I'm I'm not looking for a permanent relationship." Well, I wasn't either, really, but I just, I was so crazy about him, for some reason, but part of that I think, was that, rejected feeling from Paul, and I, you know, but, he was a very trustworthy, honest guy, I liked him from the beginning,... and then,... after I found out I was pregnant, I thought, "Oh my god," because I met him in uh, April, and in May, I got pregnant. I mean it didn't take long! (chuckle)

Here Sue as narrator's use of humor reflects her awareness of the generally negative attitudes held today about laxness in the use of birth control. In my earlier study, "Should I tell the one about?" I discuss the fact that several of the informants were outspoken in condemning inaction about birth control. In fact, one informant felt compelled to justify having had sex without birth control which resulted in a pregnancy by emphasizing the time period and differing attitudes toward easy availability of
"the pill." Through the use of humor, Sue was able in this narrative to implicitly address this point first, excusing the actions of herself as character while distancing her present self from any criticism. Sue continued her story with an explicit reference to birth control and an implicit comment on its lack of availability, emphasizing the time period during which the narrated event occurred.

General laughter
Sue: I was young, and innocent, I never thought about ... birth control, never entered my mind for some reason, and I have no, I mean
Ida: You didn't take that class in school
Sue: No
General laughter
Sue: I didn't, they didn't have that class in school when I was young
Cathy: chuckles
Sue: I co-, I mean when I found out I was pregnant, I said, "Oh my god, what am I going to do?" And we talked about it, and you know, he said, "You marry me and go with me, after the baby's born, you can decide what you want to do, if you don't want to stay with me, you can go home." ... And I couldn't do it, I said, "Chip, I know, that you don't want to get married, I know that." He had things in his life he wanted to do, I said, "I know that's not, really what you want" and, you know, he said, "No, but it's what I will do." And he wou-, I mean he would have he would have done that, and kept his word, but I could not do that to him. I said, "No, I need to go home and decide what I'm going to do here." It was, I, you know
Cathy: Why don't you give him a call, tell you've changed
Sue: (laughs)

Note that Sue responded to Cathy's interjection with a corresponding humor. In this way she was able to maintain the floor, moving immediately into a smaller series of embedded stories that focused on later periods of time in
the life of that child. Once again, then, she was able to
deftly control the distance she created while narrating,
moving to a more distant and then a closer identification
with herself as character.

General laughter
Sue: "Hey, Chip, this 24 year old daughter that
you have here!" [change in tone of voice to more
serious] Although Treva’s very close to him,
now, they’ve, which I’m glad of, he he, well, he
told me when she was young, he said, "If she ever
needs anything, you just let me know." And when
she started college, cause he said, "When she
goes to college, I will pay all her expenses,"
and he did.
Cathy: Oh, that’s a
Sue: When she started college, he said, and she
wasn’t going to, she wasn’t going to take the
money, I said
Cathy: Maybe this is the knight in shining armor
Sue: Oh, he’s married now, he’s the one that uh,
uh, they have 5 kids they’ve adopted from Chile,
they came to Treva’s wedding, and, but I like his
wife, she’s real nice, I mean, but he is, and she
told me, she said, she said, "Sue, the biggest
mistake you ever made was not marrying Chip."
(laugh) I said, "Louise, it’s only one of my
many mistakes, I know that."
General laughter
Sue: She said, "He’s the most honorable man I’ve
ever known in my life. He is absolutely a man of
his word." And Treva’s just like him, I mean,
she’s ju-, she didn’t grow up around him, but
she’s just like him. But uh, ... Anyway, I went
back home, and then Paul came home from the
service, and we started dating, and, back then, I
mean, nobody knew I was pregnant, cause, my whole
pregnancy, I only gained 19 pounds, so, I didn’t
even really start showing until about the 6th
month, or 7th. And, you know, Paul admitted
he’d, he was wrong, and ... And uh, well, "Could
we get married again and try it?" And I I
thought, "Well, this man does not know I’m
pregnant, I’d better tell him." (chuckle)
Cathy: chuckle
Sue: And he said he knew. I don’t know how he
knew, but he he said he did. So we remarried.
And I shouldn’t have, that was the thing, because
I really still had Chip in my head. I mean, he
was, it took me a long time to get him out of my head. (chuckle) But, you know, I thought, "Well gosh, here's a man marrying me and I have somebody else's child, he must really love me."

Sue's ability as a narrator and the outer context of her relationship with Cathy allowed her to deflect Cathy's potentially disruptive responses and turn them to her advantage. She also used them as indicators of movement in the listeners' interest in and response to her narrating. Thus she increased the humor in her performance after Cathy's joking interjections and momentarily redirected the focus of the narrative toward more recent events before returning to the primary narrative.

A third example of the type of dual narrating in which the two women engage concerns again an introductory portion in which the two compete for the right to tell their story. Here, a strange sort of simultaneous and parallel dialogue is created, with neither person able to take control of the floor and move from conversation into narrating.

Sue: you know, that was his [her first husband] problem ... it's just a mental sickness he is, he is so-, sociopathic, that's the word, that's he he's a very controlling, manipulative and and mentally, I I seriously believe that mentally he has some serious serious problem
EM: Uh huh
Sue: that he will never, I mean, he hasn't dealt with them at this point, and he never will.
EM: Uh huh

It was here, at my second response, followed by a very brief pause during which time Sue was about to continue, that Cathy attempted to gain the floor.
Cathy: That's what my husband was in, but he probably never will, that's what my family doctor says about him.
EM: Uh huh
Cathy: and those things.
Sue: Well, Paul has alienated anybody that's ever cared about him. He treated our son like, horrible.
Cathy: Oh, that's like my ex-husband, but my daughter is completely different and that is something I I have never understood,
Sue: Same way with Treva, Paul is, treats Treva entirely different than he does our son
Cathy: I
Sue: It's because, it's again, it's that, at least with Paul, that
Cathy: it's that
Sue: it's that female image, he wants somebody that, Paul wants somebody, that he can put on a pedestal and have his little princess
Cathy: Well, that's what what Jim, what Valerie is to Jim
Sue: and that's what Treva is to Paul.
Cathy: Yeah, that's it
Sue: just his little pet
Cathy: Yeah, and so that she can manipulate him into anything that she wants him to do.
Sue: Oh well Treva can too, Paul just bought her a car.
Cathy: You're kidding
Sue: No, he bought her a car, ...
Cathy: Now, see Chip couldn't ever get
Sue: she didn't ask for it
Cathy: Jim never did anything for him.
Sue: She did not ask for it.
Cathy: No, Valerie never did ask for, ask Jim
Sue: But he knew she needed one, and Daddy went right out and bought it, you see.
Cathy: and she could always manipulate him into doing anything she wanted, without asking for it, and
Sue: Yeah

In this interesting battle for the floor, both Sue and Cathy expressed negative opinions about their ex-husbands—as might be expected—but they also displayed somewhat negative attitudes toward their daughters. These feelings about the daughters' relationships with their fathers,
colored by at least a hint of jealousy ("his little pet"),
are expressed through implicit charges of manipulation by
Sue and an explicit charge of manipulation by Cathy, later
retracted and then revised by her. These opinions and
indications of attitudes were frequently presented with a
sarcastic tone of voice.

Cathy: and here was Chip begging for it, begging
for attention, begging for anything, and he
Sue: and he didn’t get it
Cathy: and he didn’t get it.
EM: Um
Cathy: Yeah
Sue: It was
Cathy: It was sad. And Chip will suffer, all of
his life, besides all the emotional abuse, and
all that, and the lack of attention, and he lack
of a good strong male image, he has the fact that
his father is a homosexual. ... you know, my
daughter does, I mean she knows it too, ... but
for some reason,
Sue: she handles it better.
Cathy: she handles it better, because,
Sue: she’s a female, right?
Cathy: Uh huh. And my son is a male and you
know, there’s just
Sue: Well, it’s sad
Cathy: It destroyed Chip’s whole male image of
himself
EM: Yeah
Cathy: which he didn’t have to begin with,
because his father never gave him anything to
hold onto.
Sue: Same way with Paul and Bret, I told Bret,
I’ve talked to, my son Bret and I are close and I
mean, we can talk about it, and I’ve begged him
to go to counseling, I’ve said, "Until you’ve
resolved these things with your father, you are
never," and he says he does
Cathy: I’ve begged Chip to, too, but that’s part
of that macho
Sue: Yeah
Cathy: male image that they’ve been led to
believe by their fathers, and
Sue: Well, it’s easier to take drugs and and
pretend everything is
Cathy: that everything’s rosie.
The abrupt mention of drug use was a surprise to me. In no way had the talk prepared me as listener for the sudden shift in the topic. Ida, however, did not respond in a similar way, indicating that although she did not feel able to participate more fully, she did share some knowledge about the drug use. This is another sign of the intimate friendship and ties between the two women, for they were so involved in their conversation that they did not realize that a member of the group had not been provided with necessary background information.

Sue: But eventually he's gonna have to, eventually they either hit bottom and something will make them,
Cathy: You just hope they don't die
Sue: Yes
Cathy: before they hit bottom.

Although neither of the two women would give up the floor to the other, making it impossible for either to move from conversation into narrative, they "compromised" and resolved the conflict by focusing on the similarities of their children's situations and their own inability to take effective action. Thus their shared knowledge about their similar circumstances enabled them to complete the conversation with a tone of collaboration.

Patrick B. Mullen is one of the few folklorists who has recently studied dual narrating. Unlike the married couple whom he discusses in *Engagement and Continuity*, however, these two divorced women are not telling the same story. Instead, they are trying to influence and "help"
the other one tell her own story. Therefore what gives them storytelling rights over the other's story, and, in effect, over the other's experiences? In *Storytelling Rights*, Amy Shuman focuses on who has the right to tell and to listen to personal experience stories. However, the "ownership" of those stories is not in question, nor does the teller when main character allow another the right to participate in the narrating. Rather, Shuman examines who has the right to retell and be the listener of the retelling. With the divorce narratives I collected, the very existence of the group session establishes the fact that as participants we all have the right to listen. But this right was not shared completely, at least for part of the session. For example, as the outsider, I was not privy to some information, such as Cathy's husband's homosexuality, until she judged that I either needed to know to understand her story or that I would not be judgmental about her lack of knowledge of his sexual preference during the time they were married. Therefore, apparently need to know does come into play in terms of who is given privileged information and when.

What factors help determine who has the right to assist a person retell her own story? And especially the right to attempt to influence the version being performed? A combination of elements allows for this type of sharing of story rights to occur. The friendship between the three
other women present and their habit of gathering together frequently to talk means that each woman has heard some of the others' stories. The outer context, the women's friendship, is suggestive of a history of interaction, of which this group conversation is only one part. The outer context also helps to explain Ida's apparent "rights" here. Although she is not as close to Sue and Cathy as they are to each other, she does have limited rights with their stories as well as the full rights in general participation. In addition, all four of us women have shared the experience of being divorced and are, or have been, divorced mothers raising young children. These last two commonalities helped create a bond which, more than their willingness to tell me their stories, allowed me to participate to a limited degree in the session. However, my lack of a prior acquaintance with two of the three women prevented me from feeling free to negotiate the meaning of their stories with those two. When my friend Ida, either implicitly or explicitly requested that we aid her in interpreting and making sense of her experiences, I did participate more completely, feeling less of an outsider. In general, though, Ida talked very little about her divorce and told very few divorce stories, focusing instead on a relationship she had been attempting to end at that time.
There were a few times, however, particularly further into the session, when I felt I had come close enough to feeling I was a full participant to share some of my own stories. In fact, I sometimes became rather aggressive in my attempt to gain the floor and tell my story. In the first example, I picked up the theme of the general conversation, that men aren’t able to lead a normal life without a woman.

Sue: Most men don’t find other divorced men and go out and do a lot of things together.
EM: Yeah, that’s true.
Sue: They have no social life, so they wait for this woman to come along and give them a social life, and then they ...
Cathy: and then they don’t want it after they get it.
Sue: they sit home and watch T.V. (laughter)
EM: Yeah, that happened with my ex-husband, he was just so devastated, because I wanted the divorce, and I was leaving to come back up here, I was in Houston at the time, and uh, I was coming up here to start PhD work, and I was taking the kids, and uh, he was so upset he wanted me to stay in Houston, we we’d have separate households, but then I’d still be there, so he could come over and have dinner
Cathy: laughing
EM: he’d sleep there if
Sue: Oh no
EM: he wanted to and I said it was okay, and he’d see the kids some. So he’d have everything without any responsibility
Sue: Yeah
EM: have everything exactly the way he wanted it. And he was just so devastated that I, that the kids and I were leaving, his family was leaving, he would have nobody and nothing in Houston,
Ida: That’s called your cake and eating it too
EM: Yeah
Ida: I know
Sue: And he wasn’t willing to do anything to make that not happen?
EM: Well, ... no, no, nothing at all.
Ida: He still wanted a
The other women at this point made an assumption (stated by Sue and Ida and held by Cathy as indicated through gestures) that my husband actually was the one who wanted the divorce: "And he wasn't willing to do anything to make that not happen." Despite my statement that I was the one who made the decision to divorce, they had reinterpreted my story. According to their understanding of the divorce experience, although I had made the actual decision, my husband allowed the divorce to happen by refusing to prevent it. Thus, in their conception of divorce, while the woman decides upon divorce, she does so only as a last resort. The man is the villain, either through his action or inaction as would then be illustrated in the narrated event. Interestingly enough, I as narrator did not attempt to correct or clarify their misinterpretation of my story. I did, however, return to the narrative and redirect it toward the point I had been trying to make.

EM: Yeah, yeah, and four months later, four months later, after I was gone, he was at a bar, playing pool, and he got picked up by a woman, who is ten years younger than I am, and a month later, and he moved in with her, at her apartment, and he married her a year later. So, it was like four months, he was so devastated
Cathy: Right
EM: It only took four months to recover from that.

In order to emphasize my reason for telling the story and thus its meaning for me, I repeated the time period--four months--four times and emphasized the short time it took my ex-husband to recover from his "devastation" after the
divorce. Although this story could be told in a way that would reflect negatively upon me as character (after all, I was quickly replaced), my emphasis on his negative qualities and my telling the story as an example of men's inability to live on their own allowed me to protect myself from a potentially negative portrayal.

In another example of my more complete participation in the session, I was responding to the general conversation about how difficult it was to get an outsider, even one who was a family member, to understand that a marriage which seemed to be acceptable (or at least tolerable) might not be.

EM: Yeah. My mom even said to me, uh, that, I I was thinking several times about leaving my husband, and she kept saying to me, uh "A bad father [for your children] is better than no father at all."
Cathy: Um
Sue: Bull shit
EM: Yeah, that's
Sue: But you see, that's how we grew up,
Cathy: My mother used to say
Sue: My mother was the same way, you know,

Note the attempts by three of us to gain the floor. The "jockeying" continued with no one being able to control the floor.

Cathy: Yeah
Sue: You know, you're supposed to get married and your husband, and she used to tell me that about Paul, "Well, look how good he is, he brings his paycheck home every week."
EM: Uh huh
Cathy: Yeah
Sue: And he did. "He doesn't drink and he doesn't beat you." Tha-
Cathy: Well, those are great things,
Sue: that's exactly what he does.
EM: In fact, ... I, I used to think, I, I used to have this,
Cathy: Aren't those great

At this point I made repeated tries to gain the floor to
tell my story. What occurred, however, was that I told a
constantly interrupted and commented-upon potential
narrative which was not completely developed. My initial
hesitation, shown by the frequent pauses and caused in part
by my discomfort in exposing this side of my marriage (and
my response to it), contributed to my inability as narrator
to take full possession of the floor.

EM: Yeah. Mom, Mom said, "Well, he doesn't go
out on you."
Cathy: He did.
EM: No, he didn't. I mean, he did drugs, and
he'd get drunk all the time, and and he'd do that
sort of thing, but but uh, he had a steady job,
Ida: Yeah
Sue: "And he doesn't beat you, he doesn't beat
the kids."
Cathy: Yeah
EM: "And,"
Cathy: What a
EM: "he doesn't run around," so you know
Cathy: Perfect father and husband
EM: "You know, he may not be perfect, he may not
be as good as he could be, but look how fortunate
you are."
Sue: Right.
EM: And I used to think, ... sometimes, ... "My
god, I wish he would beat me."
Sue: laugh
EM: I wish, I wish
Cathy: so that you'd have a reason
EM: Something that I could show, that I, that I,
that I could prove that, that things were as bad
as they were.

Note that in this exchange, unlike the story I told which I
discussed previously, I did correct a misinterpretation.
When Cathy responded to my mother's reported comment ("he doesn't go out on you") by stating "he did," I corrected her assessment of the marital relationship. Since I had not been able to create a distance between myself as character and myself as narrator, it was essential that I not be seen here as a woman who was so easily replaced. The lack of value which that action would represent might too readily reflect upon my present self. Thus I had to correct Cathy and indicate that my husband's actions were those which could only reflect negatively upon him: using drugs and drinking.

Although many of the same narrative techniques and rhetorical strategies used by the tellers of personal experience narratives in individual sessions, such as metanarration and repetition, are used by the tellers of narratives in this performance context as well, there are some significant differences. Many of these stories do not seem to be explicitly end-oriented in either of the two basic ways I discussed in Chapter Two. This is particularly true of the conversationally patterned story, which is similar to what Katherine Young refers to as a narrative that takes the form of antefactual turntaking (Taleworlds 168). These stories are often "keyed" for performance initially, but they frequently "fade out" rather than reach a sense of completed ending. Once again, then, the overriding influence of the performance
context—conversation—is apparent.

In this example of a "fade-out" narrative, Cathy seemed at first to be trying to tell a narrative about her mother's having been unable to help her with the divorce experience. What becomes clear, however, is that she actually wanted to tell about her mother's conscious refusal to help Cathy as character. Note the use of "couldn't help" when the sense of the story is "wouldn't help."

Cathy: My mother couldn't help me
EM: Oh my
Cathy: No, my mother, one comment that she made, to me, I I said, uh, about something, to the effect "Well, nobody's perfect." She says, "Well, you ought to know, you're divorced."
Ida: Ooh
EM: Oh my God
Cathy: the only way I could be perfect was to stay married, and yet they hated my husband,
EM: Uh hm
Cathy: You know,
Mary: Maybe she meant
Cathy: No no no, no she meant me. And you know, it's funny. "How dare you get a divorce, you've disgraced this." Well, they felt that way, I had disgraced their family
EM: Oh my God
Sue: Well, my
Cathy: You know, well, ... I was only the second person to get a divorce in our family on either side,

Cathy tried to maintain her control of the floor at this point by emphasizing her response as character and by focusing on the family's apparent reason for their rejection of her, both of which were designed to elicit sympathy for herself as character. However, as more of her listeners attempted either to suggest another
interpretation for her mother's reported statement or to interject comments about their own similar experiences, Cathy lost her ability to hold her listeners' attention.

Ida: In my
Sue: Well, my family couldn't react that way.
EM: Oh, you came from a long line of
Cathy: except for my sister who had been married three times before. (chuckle)
Sue: when I got my divorce, she'd been married three times (laugh)
EM: But still, it was a disgrace?
Cathy: Uh huh, uh huh, ... not in a, no, it wasn't just mine, I disgraced, uh ...
EM: the family
Cathy: Yeah, Joy [her sister] had a reason. Her husband beat up on her, mine didn't beat up on me, you know. And and one of them died on her, you know (chuckle)
General laughter
Sue: There's a good excuse!
Cathy: See, I didn't have those excuses. He didn't beat up on me, he didn't go out and drink, he didn't go out with other women. ... He was going out with men
General laughter
Sue: Yeah, that's right, the perfect husband cause he didn't run around with other women
(laughs)
Cathy: And here I was, you know,
Mary: Well, my family, my father
Cathy: She couldn't, ... I should
Sue: That's the way
Ida: Yeah, I was, I I, for like six months I didn't call my family
Sue: chuckles

Note that at one point Cathy had the attention of the listeners but that she quickly lost it again. Her move from attempting to elicit sympathy to laughter thus was no more effective in allowing her to maintain control of the floor. In fact, the use of humor about her ex-husband's homosexuality undermined a potential depiction of herself
as victim, for attention was directed away from any real
depiction of Cathy the character's suffering. Thus the
narrative structure here is undermined by the continued
conversational structure.

On a few occasions, each of the participants was able
to complete successfully an end-oriented narrative.
Frequently this occurred when another's story's ending had
"faded out" in the conversation. For example, Ida as
narrator was able to successfully conclude a story which
was end-oriented in the conversation that overpowered
Cathy's attempt to narrate, shown in the example above.

Ida: I didn't, because there's nothing that had
ever happened, and so it was like, I knew that
they couldn't help me or, ... You know, I had to
go to other people, for help. But
EM: Yeah
Cathy: Yeah
Ida: you know, when you think you want this
support, well, it's like, ... My sister, she had
a dream, that my husband was sleeping somewhere
else. She did, and she called me up, and she
said, "Ida, are you okay?"
Mary: Judy? That was Judy?
Ida: And I just started crying and she goes,
"You're having, you're having troubles, real
troubles, it must be" And I said, "Yes!! Yes!!"
[Ida yells this]
Laughter
Ida: "Yes." Thank goodness for sisters and ESP!
Laughter
Cathy: Yeah
Mary: Um
Ida: And you know, and it's nothing that, ... you
know, I would never have told my family, no, I
couldn't.

The serious tone with which Ida began and ended her
narrative created a feeling of intensity that was
maintained even through the humorous portion. In addition to orienting the story toward its end by connecting it to the preceding topic of conversation, Ida as narrator used the phrase "it's like," followed by a pause, indicating immediately that she considered this to be an important story. The listeners's interjections indicated interest in her narrative and acknowledged her right to continue.

Sue, the most dominant of the participants, tended to be generally successful in end-orienting her stories and maintaining control of the floor long enough to finish them. Sometimes, in fact, she was able to continue to hold the floor long enough to tell a second story as a parallel to her first. This ability to successfully attain the desired end of a narrative, then, is a power issue, for the one with the power in the group can accomplish what the others frequently cannot.

Sue: But, the other side of that [the marriage] was, ... (chuckle) We had a good sex life for a while, but every time our sex life was really good, and I'd think "well, what we--" he'd go out and screw around. I--, he'd go out and screw around, and always with some pig, some ... I used to think he must scrape the bottom of the barrels to find these, ... and, I'd always find out. I never went out looking, I mean I just didn't have time for that, but somehow, ...

Sue's introduction to her story end-oriented the narrative and at the same time set up the presentation of herself as character as someone who had control and power, just as Sue as her present self asserted throughout the session that
she had. The pause after the introduction serves as a transition into the narrative.

I had some guy call me one night, he said, uh, "Did you know your husband was out with my wife two nights ago?"
Ida: Oh
Cathy: Oh no
EM: Oh
Sue: I said, "No, uh, my husband works nights."
But, I did know, because when Paul came in from work that next morning, I knew something was wrong. I didn't know what.

The importance of knowledge, a theme in many of the narratives told in individual sessions, is stressed in this story as well. Here, however, Sue as narrator must indicate through her narrating that although as a character in the narrated event she did not have full knowledge of the actions of her husband, she was astute enough to realize that "something was wrong."

Sue: He couldn't look at me. He used to come in, and he'd give me a little kiss, or, ... He couldn't look at me, didn't say much, I thought, "Well, what the hell's wrong with him today?"
And I just got this real funny feeling. I didn't know what it was, I didn't suspect that he was running around, because our sex life had been really good at that time, ... And this stupid man's wife, went out with Paul, with ... her husband's brother and his girlfriend!
EM: Uh!
Sue: And they double dated.
EM: Oh my Go-
Sue: I'm serious.
Cathy: chuckle
Sue: When I I, ... well, I waited, I didn't blow up then, I waited. Cause when Paul got paid next week. He always gave me his paycheck, it's the only time in his life he never did. He cashed it before he got home, and he said, "Well, I needed some money and I thought I'd cash my check before I got home," ...
Ida: Little clues
Sue: So I called his boss, and I said to him, "You know, Paul got paid this week and I think something was wrong with his check. Would you mind checking his hours for me?" He said, "Well, no, last Wednesday night, uh, he didn't come to work." I said, "Oh, that's right, I remember, he was off." Then he exploded. ... (chuckle)

Ida: Yeah.

Sue: Yeah. But, ... the girl he went out with, ... was, I told him, I said, "Paul, for God's sake, at least give me some competition. If you don't come home and go out with somebody like that, ... Well, how do you think that makes me feel? It makes me feel like a piece of shit." You know what he told me? He said, the only reason he ever went out with women like that was cause he, he knew, that I would know that he didn't love those women.

Ida: Oh

Cathy: chuckle

Sue: (chuckle) That I was the only woman he ever loved.

General laughter

Sue: Honest to God, that's what he said! I said, Ida: They know what to say, don't they? Sue: I said, "Do me a favor, and give somebody else some of your love and just treat me like the other people." (chuckle)

General laughter

Sue as narrator established her control over the performance of this story from its beginning, end-orienting it and carefully developing the characters as well as the narrative. She continually increased the biting sarcasm with which she narrated this story, distancing herself as narrator from herself as character, but even more from the narrated event. She repeatedly emphasized the knowledge about and control over the narrated event which she had as character while simultaneously emphasizing the stupidity of her husband and of the woman with whom he spent the night. Thus the story and her performance of it enhance Sue's
presentation of herself, both as character in the past and, more importantly, her present self.

Although several methods of end-orienting narratives are used by the tellers of the stories in this group session, much of the sense of an ending does arise from the conversational context in which the narratives are situated. In order to gain the floor to tell a story, the narrator must connect it to the surrounding conversation even when another method of end-orientation is used. However, when a story is so closely tied to the conversation that the other participants feel able to interject their comments and responses to it throughout its telling, the likelihood increases that the story will ultimately "fade out" rather than end.

In another example of a "fade-out" story, Cathy tried to complete a story in which she made parallels between the progressively improved situations of three generations of women in her family. The implication, of course, would be that her own situation is an improvement over that of her mother's. This story began in response to the general conversation about men's expectations and how those expectations affect women's lives. The general tone of the conversation shifted from one that emphasized women's inability to improve their lot due to men's control over women's lives to one that focused on women's power to survive anything and to improve their lot as much as
circumstances allow.

Sue: Well, but it's okay if they do it because they're a man, they're allowed to run around, men are expected to run around, they're allowed to do this. You're supposed to stay home and take that, and that's what you grow up with, and that's what you think is normal. And, you know, it's harder than hell to get all the brainwashing out of your head.

Cathy: Well, I know my mother
Sue: And some people never do. Some people
Ida: Work it out.
Sue: have it their whole life.
Cathy: Yeah, but
Sue: Yeah.
Cathy: Well, I know my mother
Sue: You might as well give up, sometimes, I ... I think most men are just mentally retarded. They're never going to get any better
Cathy: laughs
Sue: Honest to God, I do. I think they ought to breed robots for men and they'd be a hell of a lot better.
Cathy: laughs
Sue: Start this whole line of robots. "What kind of man do you want? We can make him right up for you." (chuckle)
General laughter
Sue: Buy me a man.
General laughter
Sue: Program him to do exactly what I want.
Laughter
Cathy: Little bit, so that you can trade them down.
Sue: Yeah
Ida: Lease them out when they get old
Cathy: Turn them into the garbage heap. But my mother my mother did better than her mother did,

Prior to this turn at talk, Cathy had tried twice to begin a story about her mother ("Well, I know my mother"). Instead, she had to participate in the general conversation and maintain a similar tone of lightness and cynicism about men. Here she responded to Ida's comment and then made a third attempt to begin her story. She quickly moved from a
reference to her mother to one about her grandmother, stacking detail upon detail in her attempt to make her point.

Cathy: my, my grandmother was extremely religious, fanatic religious. And I guess that one of the reasons was because that was the only thing she had, in her life. But she had 13 children. What'd people do, go out and take care of 13 children, and you're a woman and it's it's in, well, right at the turn of the century. Sue: Oh God
Cathy: Yeah. And her husband, they lived in South Carolina, and, and they sold my mother out, to his cousin, for, to pick cotton. She's five years old, ... And then they sold her out to her brother, when she was around seven or eight, to cook. My mother has cooked since she was five. She did the family cooking. Can you imagine, cooking on a coal stove, for ten people, when you're five years old? And going out and picking cotton? And my mother was raised like that. And whenever he got mad at her, over doing something wrong, he took, ... the the bullwhip to her, in a, can you imagine? She did a hell of a lot better.
Sue: chuckle
Cathy: Her husband owned three grocery stores. My grandfather, he went out and never held a job. Sue: Yeah
Cathy: But her husband owned three grocery stores, he was an independent businessman. He was, he, he, basically, he was a good man. He was good to us, he never drank, or smoked, he, he believed in God and he went to church. He was a a stable member of the community, and he did love my mother. He was very expressive of his feelings towards her. But, he wasn't, he wasn't that way with us.
Sue: Hm
Ida: And it's like
Cathy: In a, and in a lot of ways, she did a hell of a lot better than she did,
Ida: It's
Cathy: than her mother, and then
Sue: Yeah, well. Well, that's what you go by.
Cathy: then I
Sue: I mean, you judge each,
Cathy: I mean I see, I
Sue: each generation gets a little better. I was talking to Treva, my daughter. Cathy's rather rambling narrative indicates her lack of control over her narrating. As narrator, she did not seem to have a clear idea about how she needed to develop the story, other than the general idea of a three generational parallel. Sue's apparently correct evaluation of Cathy's point in telling the story ("Well, that's what you go by. I mean you judge each, each generation gets a little better") allowed her to take the floor and turn the focus onto her own experience. She picked up Cathy's structure of the movement through the several generations, successfully developing her own story in the same direction as Cathy as narrator had intended to continue.

In another example of a story that gets "lost" in the conversation, Cathy responded seriously to a joking comment made by Sue about Ida's son's toy gun on the sofa.

Ida: Well, that that, this is the first one I heard [joke divorce card] and that was you know, it's uh, you know, "If you love them," you know, it's like a butterfly, "you let them" you know, "fly away," and then it says, "Then you hunt them down and kill them."
Laughter
Sue: "If they don't come back"
Ida: Yeah, "If they don't come back."
Laughter
Mary: I like that, too
Sue: That's what I told Cathy when I come in and saw this gun here [refers to a toy gun on Ida's sofa that belongs to her son], it was
Laughter
Sue: I'll use this. If he [her current lover] don't come back, I'm gonna hunt him down and kill him.
Laughter
Cathy: Well, that's something I used to dream about, ...
Sue: Hunting somebody down and kill him?
(chuckle)
Cathy: My ex-husband,
Sue: Oh.

A sudden shift in the atmosphere occurred at this point when it became clear to Sue and most of the rest of us that Cathy was no longer joking about killing men.

Cathy: I used to dream that I had shot his head off
Group: Oh.
Cathy: It just goes blowing off into space.
Mary: You, you really dreamed that?
Cathy: Oh, all the time, for two or three years,
... And
Ida: Well, that's good. (chuckle)
Cathy: Did you see, did you see the movie They Shoot Horses, Don't They?
Group: Yeah
Cathy: Well, that scene, where he shot her?
Sue: Uh
Cathy: And the blood was flying out in the air?
EM: Uh huh
Cathy: That's, that's what I would dream about, and I would just see his head just shattering every place and blood would just be going, just. It was a terrible dream, but it was such, ... so gratifying [change in tone for last two words, to a joking tone, that lightens the atmosphere once more]
General laughter

Note that the reaction of those who were listening was to try to interject some humor at various places. Once it was clear that Cathy as narrator was quite serious about this story, there was a silence, and a much different tone ensued while she was talking. She then suddenly interjected a note of humor herself, once she finished providing the details she had wanted to supply.
Cathy: But I re-, I was really very angry, of course, at the time,
Mary: When you [directed to Cathy] made that remark, it made me think of how women, how most women, don’t, aren’t, either try not to express anger or they don’t think they’re allowed to, but you [directed to Sue] made a remark before about "When my ex-husband did that, to me" and then you said that woman taking care of him, something about how you would never do anything like that, Sue: I wouldn’t now, there was a time in my life when I probably would have, I would have, but I wouldn’t now.
Mary: And what you just said, I was just thinking about women’s anger, and then and then your dream, and
Cathy: that was very gratifying
Mary: Yeah, yeah.
Cathy: And I still wish I had do-, I wish I had done that, I really do, rather than
Ida: No!
Cathy: Yeah, the
Ida: You’d have to live with that. You’d have nightmares about that
Sue: But that’s nothing
Cathy: No, no, no, but

Cathy tried to continue to hold the floor, apparently wanting to further develop her narrative. Here and at other points during the session, she indicated a desire to "flesh out" hints that she had dropped about her marital relationship. However, her control over the floor slipped away, and Sue eventually directed the conversation in a way which picked up Cathy’s narrative.

Sue: That’s nothing
Cathy: No, I would have gotten it over with (chuckle)
Mary: They say the best revenge is to live your life well,
Cathy: Uh huh
Sue: Oh that’s right, that is.
Cathy: Yeah
Sue: I mean, to succeed and be happy, is is
Cathy: Oh well, then I’d kill him. (chuckle)
Laughter
Cathy: But
Sue: If you think of it that way.
Mary: Yeah
Sue: Well I thought that way about Paul, sometimes, I mean, with this, with all this stuff with these kids. If I'd a had a gun that day, I would have, I could have, I could have very easily have just blown him away,
Cathy: Yeah
Sue: Because he he is just a crazy son of a bitch, and he does not deserve to live. I really gave thought to going out and buying a gun. I, and I've never ever felt that way about anybody in my life
Cathy: Oh I did, too, yeah
Sue: This time I thought, somebody should just kill him.

At this point Sue began a story in which she told about "this time." Cathy's final attempt to regain the floor so that she could continue with her story about how "I did, too," failed. Again, she was relegated to a subordinate position in the interaction with Sue, in which she could only chime-in and compare her situation to Sue's.

Due to the conversational context in which these stories are told, the "fade out" usually involves several individuals discussing the points made by the teller, arguing about the meaning of the story or about correctness of the interpretation of the story. Rather than waiting until the story ends, however, the listeners frequently interjected their comments throughout the telling. Indeed, when this occurs, so much attention is directed away from the story that it is left behind and conversation takes over, the talk moving so far from the story that it usually remains unfinished. The performance context thus impinges
upon and controls in part the structure and the content of specific stories as well as the interactional dynamics of the entire session. Thus these "fade-out" stories in particular can be thought of as "conversation pieces."

Another way in which a story in the group session is end-oriented occurs when a story is told in response to a formal request to tell one from another group member. This happens rather infrequently, and only when a new member joins or when one of the members is not participating. For example, not long after Mary arrived at Ida's home, she was addressed by Cathy, who asked her if she was having fun and invited her to tell us about her divorce. Although Mary did not orient the story in an introductory section, or connect it to the preceding conversation, she told a story that was related to a previously mentioned topic, connecting it to that topic through a statement that allowed us as listeners immediately to orient the narrative toward its ending.

Mary: I well, I went through a divorce experience, and I I, my dad knew when I sent a Christmas card with just my name on it and my son's name on it. And, so he went to my sister and asked her what was going on because I, it was the same way with her family [refers to Ida's earlier story], we didn't talk about it. And well, uh, I, it was like. Well, when I was in town with my relatives, I was having problems, but they didn't want to hear about it, because they didn't want another divorce in the family. There were some, not a lot, not an, not an every day thing, but, there were already a few divorces. And uh, so this was like, "we don't want any problems," or, "any problems, they don't exist. There's not going to be another divorce."
And so, I kept quiet about it. And then, when I moved to Columbus here, away from the family, I didn’t have to talk to anybody about it because everybody lived up there. And so he just left. And that’s when I started signing the cards, and so they knew.

Laughter

Mary: So I didn’t have to talk about it to them.

Mary’s final statement, a metanarrative evaluation of the story’s point, links the end to the narrative’s beginning. This neat tying of the end to the beginning, creating a circular narrative, is rather unusual in the group session. Mary’s later narratives, while they do display a similar control on the narrator’s part, are not as markedly self-reflexive, indicating that the initial invitation to her to tell a story created a tacitly agreed upon space which she was allowed to fill without the conversational context impinging upon it.

Using another method, Sue successfully oriented one of her stories toward its end by creating a parallel between it and the story she had just finished telling. Thus she created a sense of it as serial to the first one. In this example, Sue told a story about a friend’s experience with a husband who had sex with other women but who believed that his claim not to care for the other woman should exonerate him from any wrong-doing. This story follows one previously discussed in which Sue as character discovered through a phone call that her husband had had an affair.

Sue: And that [the lack of love during intercourse] makes it okay, you see. Because, if he don’t love them. Well, like Jonnie and Bill,
this girl friend of mine who just got a divorce. Her husband was a policeman. It was on the news and all that stuff. But he got picked up for, going to prostitutes
Ida: Oh
Sue: for sex.
Cathy: Oh, yeah, I do remember that.
EM: Hm
Sue: It was real bad. They’re now divorced. ... You know what he said? What he said to her? That doesn’t count at all, because
Ida: Whew
Sue: that didn’t mean anything to him. And, well, she has a boyfriend now named Roger. And he hates Roger. And he can’t understand how she could. He doesn’t see. I said, "Well, Jonnie, just tell him, 'Hey, it’s okay.'" Say, because every time you and Roger have sex, you pay him ten bucks!
General laughter
Sue: She said, "Next time I’m going to tell him that."
General laughter
Ida: Oh no
Sue: That’s the way men think. Just like Paul. Bill thinks that he did not do anything wrong
Cathy: But men do think like that.
Sue: Oh yeah, he didn’t do anything wrong. He paid this prostitute to to give him oral sex,
Cathy: laughs
Sue: but he didn’t do anything wrong, because there was no emotion involved. He paid her. It was a business deal and [smacks her leg with her hand for effect] and that’s all.

In this performance, Sue apparently chose to tell a story about another woman’s similar experience with a husband as a parallel to her own, with the point being that "that’s the way men think." However, despite the fact that this is, indeed, what the story is about on the surface, the actual effect of the story is more complex. The focus of the story’s performance actually centers on Sue and her experiences, for not only did she tell this story immediately after her own, as a "second story" as well as a
"serial story" (using Katherine Young's terminology, *Taleworlds* 87), but she also maintained a rather consistent presentation of herself as narrator and as character in both stories: Sue is knowledgeable and in control, able to provide advice to her friend based upon her own experience.

Although there are some techniques used in individual sessions are also found in group storytelling sessions, one aspect that is completely missing in the group session is a chronological ordering of the session or even of an individual's body of stories. In other words, during the group session there is no sense of movement--within the session as a whole and within each individual's body of stories--from a beginning to an ending, in terms of narrated events. Again, this is as a result of the performance context, for each teller must share the floor, and thus must share the "chronology" of the session. Another element that contributes to the absence of chronology is the high degree of knowledge shared by the primary participants. Because of their knowledge of each others' lives, they could rather easily situate a particular story in the teller's life history, whereas I, as the outsider, could not. However, within an individual story, some details specifying that particular story's chronology--as it pertains to that story--are given, but again with little or no reference to other stories except as they might relate thematically.
One of Mary's stories, in which she told us about a confrontation scene with her ex-husband, illustrates the use of an internal chronology which allows the listener to understand the narrated event. This story, however, is told without any chronological reference to any of her other stories or to anyone else's stories or to the conversation which surround it. It is performed here and works here because thematically it fits with the surrounding discourse. In addition, Mary as narrator successfully end-orient the story, thus illustrating as well her control and power as narrator. That same power is depicted in her portrayal of herself as character.

Mary: Well, my ex-husband would ask me out, too. I couldn't believe he had the nerve to do that.
Cathy: I couldn't believe
Mary: He'd ask me to go shopping with him, or
Sue: Yeah
Mary: or whatever he's doing
Sue: Yeah
Mary: Or our child
Ida: because he feels comfortable with you, I guess.
Mary: He wanted, he wanted to know if I would go eat with him, and, you know, find a babysitter for our kid, and, no way. I wouldn't go shopping with him, or eat with him, or do anything.
Sue: Well, you were smart not to do that.
Mary: Yeah
Cathy: Well, I wasn't going to
EM: Well, I was really stupid,

In the general talk about the behavior of ex-husbands, Mary had expanded the topic to include the men's behavior toward their children. After her "pre-narrative" introductory portion, Cathy attempted to gain the floor to make a parallel with her own experience. I, however, interjected
with a contrasting introduction to a general narrative. I began my statement with an implicit, positive evaluative comment about Mary's behavior by stating that "I was really stupid," allowing me to gain the floor through this attention-getting device.

EM: I me-, after we, after we separated, before the divorce was final, we were down in Houston, uh, my ex-husband is such a slime-ball, uh, he he was supposed to be able to have the kids every other weekend, for the whole weekend. The only weekend he ever had them was the very last weekend we were living in Houston, right before we moved.

Because the other participants were not familiar with my story, I felt that I needed to emphasize the chronology in this narrative, especially as it was crucial to understanding my point in the story—that although he knew his children were moving very shortly to another part of the country, he still was unwilling to give much of himself to them. As the next statement I made as narrator indicates, my point in telling this general narrative also involved my attempt to present myself as character as a thoughtful, concerned individual: the "good parent."

EM: And it was only because I suggested that he might want to see his kids for more than just a few hours. He would come over on a Sunday, late morning, early afternoon, work on the car in the drive-way, drink beer, watch ball games, or talk to the guys in the neighborhood, and Sue: and that was his

EM: and that was his visit with the kids. And then he'd hang around until he knew it was time for me to fix dinner, and he'd just be there, and so he'd get to eat a free meal, and eat dinner with us, and that was his time with the kids. Sue: Yeah
EM: Either that, or uh,
Sue: So you never got a break.
EM: Uh uh, never. Never. Uh, um, he would never come and take them out, to dinner, never take them out anywhere, uh, except something he might want to do, and then he would want their company. But it was never anything they would want to do. Like he'd go to, down to shoot basketballs,
Cathy: Oh man
EM: and he'd take them with him. They didn't want to do that
Sue: Yeah
Cathy: My ex would do the same thing.
Mary: He would act like he was doing me a fav-, a babysitting favor, by taking our son.

Mary suddenly regained the floor by making a reference to the story she had begun to tell earlier. Her use of "he" had created a momentary misunderstanding by the other participants, for her comment initially was interpreted as a response to my narrative. Thus she had already established herself as the next teller by the time her use of "me" clarified the meaning of her statement.

Mary: And I started keeping a calender, cause uh cause we had a dissolution. There was never anything set. I I told the man, "I think we should set something up." "Well, you two are working everything out, so"
EM: Uh huh
Mary: so it wa supposed to be agreeable
Sue: and flexible
Mary: and uh, so I started keeping a calender, because he would come and maybe get Ian for a few hours and dump him right back. Or, he'd make me come and get Ian. He'd ask me, "Come pick him up." He wouldn't bring his own son in the car home.
EM: Uh hm
Mary: And uh, I started keeping a calender and uh, and then, when he met someone, he was going to get married and be Mr. Big, and uh, all settled down. And, he kept hinting like, he would want Ian to come and live with him. And I said, "What do you mean? You're not even going to file." I said, "You could be a a father to him."
I said, "You could be a father, but you don't even exercise your visitation rights." And I kept the calendar and told him, how very lit-, I showed him.

EM: Uh huh

Mary: How he couldn't take Ian this weekend because he went whitewater rafting. Couldn't take Ian because he was taking, his parents were coming to town, they were going to dinner. The next weekend, friends were going to dinner. And through all these excuses, and I had them all written down.

EM: Uh hm

Mary: And I showed him, threw them right in his face.

(chuckle)

Laughter

Mary: And it was out on our front porch, where I, just moved, and and an old lady, lady across the street, got to hear us yell about it.

Laughter

Mary: Oh that was awful.

Laughter

Mary's success as a storyteller has to do with her ability to control the storytelling situation. This narrative illustrates the power that she, as narrator, commands. Through repetition of key points she effectively emphasized the positive qualities of herself as character while simultaneously emphasizing the corresponding negative aspects of her ex-husband. She repeated "I started keeping a calendar" three times while incorporating details that illustrated why this was a critical action for her as character to take. Thus her action further emphasized his inaction and the listeners were prepared for the character's triumph, when both literally and figuratively Mary as character "showed him." Through her successful end-orientation and skill in performing the narrative, Mary did
not need to rely upon an overall chronology of her divorce stories for this story to be understood and appreciated.

The only individual from whom I collected stories in individual sessions who did not follow an obvious and/or discernible chronological ordering within the session and within the body of his or her stories was Nick Sanchez. Even with his stories, however, a chronology of sorts began to emerge through repetition of details, so that by the end of the session, I as listener felt that I knew what happened when during the narrated events. And, of course, I was only listening to stories about one person's life, rather than three or four. One other individual storyteller, Patrick Roberts, left the chronology toward the end of his session when he began to tell his "set pieces." But because he began his body of stories by following a strict chronology, I as listener, once again, could "see" where the later stories fell in terms of the chronology of the narrated events. In addition, Patrick emphasized the particulars of time and place when he began a story—as did Nick.

Overall, in this group session the tellers did not seem as concerned with locating narrated events in time and space. A greater concern seemed to be focused on the respective age of a particular teller when that individual was a character during a narrated event. The focus on age emphasizes the distance—and, by implication, the
difference—between the teller's present self and past self as character, and the teller's distance from the narrated event. For example, Sue frequently stated that she was "only nineteen" when she was first married, as did Ida and Cathy. This device points out through repetition the amount of time that has passed between the experiencing of the narrated event and the narrative event.

In fact, the overall lack of a sense of chronology was so apparent that it overrode any notation of time and place that was used by a teller, so that I felt it lacking even when it wasn't. The conversational context, with the frequent movement from teller to teller, the high degree of interaction within and between stories, and the created sense of "everything in flux" also contributed to this overall response of mine. What I recall most about this experience, and what I am left with—as a participant—is more of a feeling about the tellers themselves and their interaction rather than the memory of any particular story any one of us told. Thus what remains uppermost in my memory is the presentation of self. Not that I do not remember the stories, of course, but the overriding and lingering response in me as participant concerns the people involved, the tellers.

A general impression developed during the session as a whole of the various narrators portraying themselves as characters in a definite fashion—each one seemed to know,
to varying degrees, how each wanted to be viewed. Despite
the conversation which at times focused on the perceived
differences between past and present selves, very little
character progression occurred during the narratives. Much
of this is due to the nature of the session, I believe, for
with five individuals competing for the right to narrate,
it would be extremely difficult for anyone to be able to
illustrate progression. Instead, a general sense of static
characters remained, with the characters at times seeming
to be more like character types than three-dimensional
fleshed-out individuals. For example, time and time again,
Cathy the character is the powerless victim of fate and
circumstance, if not of all the men in her life. Despite
attempts at times in her stories and her conversation to
insert other aspects of herself as character, as narrator
she always returned to focus on the victimization of Cathy,
the almost completely disillusioned romantic.

Certain themes, such as victimization and the
existence or non-existence of a romantic ideal, did run
throughout the stories in the session. Katherine Young's
discussion of group narrating sessions focuses in part on
serial stories and second storytellers. She defines a
serial story as one that is told by the same narrator who
tells an initial story, which develops or in some way
touches upon the theme or point of the first (Taleworlds
87). A second story is one that another storyteller
narrates in which an elaboration of some aspect of the first is incorporated (Taleworlds 87). Young states that second storytellers are not asserting a "community of experience with the first tellers," but instead they are "asserting an affinity of understanding" (Taleworlds 87), for the second tellers have in some sense analyzed that first story. Her findings and subsequent differentiation between these two types of stories and tellers are, in part, valid with respect to the tellers of these divorce stories. However, the recognition and articulation of the similarities in their experiences is essential in the development and performance of their stories also. This need to establish the existence of a "community of experience" helps explain the use of other people's experiences within one teller's body of narratives. By telling a parallel story about another person's divorce experience, the narrator is creating a macrocosm which reflects the microcosm of his or her own experience. The need to articulate a "community of experience," then, provides another reason for the establishment of a common or similar theme in many of the groups of narratives. Examples of an individual teller's need to emphasize that she was not alone in experiencing a particular event abound not only in this body of narratives but also in much of the conversation as well.

A few times, however, a participant linked a story to
others by referring to a common theme, yet did not successfully create a community of experience. Often, however, this occurred when the usual flow of the session was disrupted. For example, when Mary told her "invited" story, she oriented it by linking it to an earlier topic which she had heard when she first joined the group: how a person announces to unreceptive and nonsupportive family members that there has been a divorce. Mary's story was about how she had felt she had to wait until she moved to another area to separate from her husband and then, after the divorce, how she "announced" the divorce by signing her name and her son's on the Christmas cards--there was no husband's name on the card.

Mary: So I didn't have to talk about it to them. [Because she had sent the card with only her name and that of her son.]
Sue: I saw a card at the card shop and I liked it. It was kind of that same thing, announcing a divorce. It said
Ida: Oh
Sue: Remember that card?
Ida: Yeah.
Sue: "Remember the part that said, that used to say 'Mr. and Mrs.'? Well, there's no Mr. anymore."
Laughter
Mary: I saw a card, too.

No one had responded when Mary ended her story with the metanarrative evaluation, "so I didn't have to talk about it to them." This topic had previously been completed and the conversation had proceeded to other topics. However, Mary included a new element in the story which, while it was not directly responded to, was picked up as the focus
of the next part of the conversation and the next few stories--divorce cards. Thus a slight addition to a story shifted the focus of the next part of the session, for it brought up an experience which the others could discuss.

The "affinity of understanding" that Young mentions also came into play during the group session, particularly when a teller indicated, explicitly or implicitly, that she needed this shared understanding to be articulated. When a teller attempted to link her story directly and explicitly to one just told by another narrator, she drew upon characteristics both of the second and of the serial stories. Thus the community of experience and the affinity of understanding were both crucial components in this group session.

In the next example, composed of three stories, two told by Sue and one told by Cathy, Sue told a narrative about her cruel ex-husband followed by one about a "cruel, crazy" trick that he played on her. Cathy immediately followed the second narrative with one that she considered to be a parallel story from her own experience. Cathy as narrator attempted in this narrative to draw upon what she judged to be the crucial elements of Sue's second narrative.

Sue had been telling a series of stories about her trip to California after her first divorce and about a subsequent pregnancy. She had decided not to marry the
baby's father and returned to Ohio, where she dated and quickly remarried her first husband. She told this next story as an example of the kind of man the husband was, having already distanced herself as narrator from herself as character in earlier stories by emphasizing the character's age and inexperience and how long ago the narrated event had occurred.

Sue: But uh, ... anyway, I went back home, and then Paul [her ex-husband] came home from the service, and we started dating, and, back then, I mean, nobody knew I was pregnant, cause, my whole pregnancy, I only gained 19 pounds, so, I didn't even really start showing until about the 6th month, or 7th, and you know, Paul admitted he'd, he was wrong [in having dropped out of sight not long after their marriage], and ... and uh, well, "Could we get married again and try it?" And I I thought, "Well, this man does not know I'm pregnant, I'd better tell him." (chuckle) Cathy: chuckle

Sue: And he said he knew. I don't know how he knew, but he, he said he did. So we remarried. And I shouldn't have, that was the thing, because I really still had Chip [the baby's father] in my head, I mean he was, it took me a long time to get him out of my head. (chuckle) But, you know, I thought, "Well gosh, here's a man marrying me and I have somebody else's child. He must really love me." ... For the first five years of our marriage, he was the cruelest person that I had ever been around, he did some horrible things to me, and why I put up with them, I don't know, I mean, he really, ... at the time, I guess the incidents happened just far enough apart, that I didn't, and I too young, to think about it, ... but he did some, when I brought Treva [the baby] home from the hospital, the day I brought her home, he picked me up at the hospital, it was in January, snow on the ground, took me in the house, dropped me off, said, "I'm going out with my friends. Bye."

EM: Oh.

Sue: But, ... He did lots of those kinds of things, when I was pregnant with her.
Although we as listeners had attended to Sue's story, we had apparently not responded as sympathetically as Sue as narrator desired. I was the only listener who verbally responded, and the other two had responded only with sympathetic nods. After a pause, Sue made the general statement that this experience was one of many and then proceeded to tell another one, using devices such as reported speech and repetition to dramatize the story. She also expanded the general topic of neglect to include psychological abuse with a hint of potential physical abuse, emphasizing the vulnerable position of herself as character--young and pregnant.

Sue: One of the scariest things he ever did to me, and I, I considered leaving him, because I thought "This man is crazy." We lived in an apartment out on the East Side, which was not a real nice neighborhood, anyway, ... and uh, on Fridays we used to get pizza, and he'd go get it, cause then they didn't have delivery,

Cathy: laugh

General laughter

Ida: Stone ages, gnaw, gnaw.

More laughter

Sue: But I said, "Okay, while you're gone, I'm going to take a shower and I'll get drinks and stuff." So he leaves to go pick up the pizza,

Ida: This is when you're pregnant?

Sue: Uh huh, I was pregnant. I go to get in the shower, and I always had a habit, when I wa-, well, it was after that movie, Psycho, you know?

Ida: Oh, yeah.

Cathy: Oh!

Sue: Whenever I'd get in the shower, I always locked the bathroom door, it was just after seeing that

Ida: Uh huh

Sue: movie, I guess. But I'm in the shower with the bathroom door locked, and suddenly I hear this noise outside, ... I thought, "Well, it can't be Paul, back already," so I yell, "Who's
out there?" No answer. I turn the shower off. I'm yelling, "Who's out there?" No answer. So I get out of the shower, and, under the bathroom door there was about that much [notes about an inch or two with her hands] so I thought, "I'm going to look down to see who's Ida: [aside to the rest of us] Somebody's looking through. Sue: his shoes were up against, the door. So I just kept saying to myself, "Okay, if I just don't panic here, Paul should be back soon. Whoever that is out there, I'm going to be alright, once he gets back." Cathy: There wasn't a window out of your bathroom? Sue: No. Seems like it was, forever. Ida: Did he know you saw this movie, Psycho? Sue: But within a few minutes, ... I hear this person leave. ... And I thought--I mean, I just couldn't figure out what. So I stayed in the bathroom, I thought, "Well, I'm just going to stay right here till Paul gets back." Within another few minutes, Paul comes, "Well, I'm home." I open the bathroom door, and, laying on the couch is a knife. One of our knives. And I went to pieces. So I'm telling him the story. I said to him, "You had to pass the guy. There was somebody in this house, you had to pass him." I said, "I'm calling the police." And not until I picked up the phone to call the police did he tell me that was him. EM: He did that? Sue: He did that. You know what he said? "I just wanted to see how you acted in a crisis situation." ... Cathy: Sounds like something my ex-husband would do.

While Sue told her story, Cathy and Ida periodically interjected potentially disruptive comments. Sue is a strong enough storyteller, however, to be able to deflect or ignore these. At this point in the narrative, when it was almost complete, Cathy made this parallel between Sue's husband's actions and those of her own husband. No one responded to this statement, however, and Sue continued
with her story.

Sue: I told him, I said, "You are crazier than hell. You are crazier than hell." ... I mean that was a crazy, but you see, I was 20 years old, ... and this, he was, we're about the same age, today, if somebody did that to me, I'd leave them without hesitation.
Ida: Yeah
Cathy: Uh huh, my ex
Sue: Back then, you're married, you think, "Well, you"
Ida: "I have to make this work." (chuckle)
Sue: "know, I have to make this work."
Cathy: Uh huh
Sue: But mental, he's mentally cruel, and he's been mentally cruel for years, there's uh, just, I did not recognize it, I mean, I did not see that, ... that's a crazy thing to do.

When Sue's story was drawing to a close, Cathy attempted to make a parallel again. She responded to Sue's narrative with a rather curt "Yeah," then immediately moved into what we listeners expected to be her parallel version of Sue's story. However, despite her earlier attempts to connect Sue's abusive husband story to her own marital experience ("sounds like something my ex-husband would do"), she switched to an abusive father story.

Cathy: Yeah. But my dad did that to me and my sister when we were little. ... We, they, we, they had a grocery store, and our apartment was in the back of it, and, my sister and I, whenever she would take a bath, I'd go in and sit on the commode, talk to her, and whenever I'd take a bath, she would come in, sit on the commode, talk to me because there weren't any people around that uh you know, that had apartments or anything, we had no friends, except each other, so we were in there and she was taking a bath, and I was sitting on the commode, talking to her, and the door was closed. And we hear this, scratching [makes a scratching sound with her fingers] scratch, scratch at the door, and I I said, "That's Daddy." And I hollered, and I
said, "Daddy, stop that," and, just kept up. Just kept going [makes scratching sounds] just kept going, and on and on. Kept going for a long time, and he would never answer, never did answer, ... he never admitted it was him, ... that was very cruel,
Sue: Uh huh
Ida: Yeah
Cathy: to two young girls
EM: Oh yeah
Cathy: very cruel. And that's part of my problems with men, my father.

This narrative could almost be a parody of Sue's narrative--for many of the important elements of Sue's story are here--except that Cathy told the story as a serious parallel experience. She sees this as a thematically identical story: a story about the "crazy mean" trick that her father played on her as a child. She used identical strategies and a similar narrative structure in her performance. Note, for example, Cathy's use of repetition throughout the story, the use of reported speech, and the emphasis on the vulnerability of the "young girls." Although she retained the floor and completed the story, a virtual lack of listener response indicates that the differences between the two stories, both in actual content and in performance were apparent to the other participants and were judged to be too great for the narratives to be considered serial.

Participants in a group storytelling session use many of the same strategies and techniques which tellers in individual sessions have found to be effective. Other
elements also come into play, however, which can determine the frequency and method of using those strategies. The overpowering influence of the conversation as performance context presents such a force. In addition, when individuals tell stories about a traumatic experience such as divorce, it appears to be critical that they be able to create a sense of group cohesion and identity. Thus although the interaction of the listeners is potentially disruptive and can even prevent a story from being developed, the process of interaction is crucial to the participants. The establishment of a community of experience and of an affinity of understanding is an important element in the group performance of divorce narratives. As Simon Bronner states with regard to personal power and praxis, "the final product"--here, being the stories--"is not the sole end but, ... the doing. ... the process takes on a symbolic significance for its exercise of personal control" (93). Thus we find both the desire for the session to continue and the equally powerful desire to participate actively. The balancing of these needs and the outer context of the individuals' relationships with one another create a complex set of dynamics, dynamics as complex as the individuals themselves.
CONCLUSION

The stories that people tell about their divorces reflect in their particulars the wide range of possible experiences centered on this event. The content of specific narratives, therefore, is as diverse as each individual's divorce experience when compared to that of another. However, within these external differences are similarities which reflect concerns shared by individuals who live in the same culture and have to deal with the same basic assumptions, stereotypes, institutions, and organizations. The stories illustrate, among other things, the search each narrator tells of having made during the narrated event for strategies to help the teller as character cope with the dramatic upheavals--both social and personal--created by divorce. Thus common structural patterns and the use of common rhetorical strategies emerge, as do common themes.

Throughout my study, I have found that individuals use a number of different rhetorical strategies when telling personal experience narratives. These can, and generally are, changed and varied during the act of narrating, in response to a variety of contexts that influence the
performance of the narratives. Rather rendering or recounting their experiences in an un-self-conscious way, these storytellers created complex narratives during performances that indicate a keen awareness of their audience, the audience's responses, and their own conception of themselves as character and performer.

Central to the performance is the idea of control. The teller, through the act of narrating, feels that he or she has some degree of control over the past event. The teller can create a sense of consequentiality through narrating, creating links between events that are necessary in order for the experience to make sense. Also under the narrator's control in his or her presentation of self through and by the performance of the personal experience narratives. A teller, by creating a degree of close identification with or distance from the self as character and from the narrated event, can present the listener with a version of the present self that is connected—or not—in essential ways with the past self. The teller, through control of the differential information levels, can, while performing create a desired effect in the listener. In this way, for example, a teller can temporarily withhold a vital piece of information until the climactic moment, recreating for the listener what was, in essence, experienced by the teller as character.
In conjunction with the teller's using narrating to help make sense of the divorce experience for himself or herself, the teller also wants to justify having become divorced to the listener. Thus the audience plays a vital role in these performance, with the teller aware always of the potential for misunderstanding, misinterpretation, or even condemnation. Therefore, each teller has at least one "turning point" story, generally told in greater detail and with more elaborate rhetorical strategies. The careful and "correct" performance of these narratives is vital to the teller, for through them he or she justifies the divorce.

A recurring structure in these narratives is similar to a traditional folktale structure identified by Vladimir Propp in *Morphology of the Folktale*. I have already alluded to the "search" or "quest" structural model that permeates the structure of an individual's body of divorce narratives. A number of individual narratives, are built upon a "Lack/Lack Liquidated" structure which Propp found to be widely used in Russian folktales. In addition to these surface structures, I have found that several traditional character types were created by my informants during the course of their storytelling. The storytellers sometimes depicted themselves as the victim, the powerless one in distress. Other characters, generally the ex-spouse, but sometimes a parent, were portrayed as villains, preying on the good will or innocence of the victims.
Sometimes a helper character was included in a narrative, a friend who would offer guidance, moral support, or verification of the correctness of the teller as character's response. The teller sometimes depicted himself or herself as a trickster-like character, the clever, yet powerless one who merely waits for the villain to outwit himself or herself and reveal to the world the true nature of the marriage. In many stories, the teller as character was ultimately transfigured and revealed as the hero or heroine of his or her own story. At times the teller progressed from victim to hero/heroine, while in other narratives the victim became martyr. In this version of victim, the teller emphasized his or her attempts to placate the villain, to assist the villain, or to fulfill the duties prescribed by the marital role. By incorporating these traditional structures and actors into the performance of these personal experience narratives, the storytellers are able to draw upon shared cultural understanding and stereotypes as they recreate their versions of their pasts.

Cultural stereotyping is also reflected in how my informants defined divorce through their storytelling. Divorce is not just the actual event or legal procedure—traumatic or not—through which a person goes. Rather, divorce is frequently a life-changing experience, somewhat akin to a rite of passage. The personal experience
narratives about divorce, as performed by my informants, indicate that divorce, as understood and experienced as a role exit process, can encompass and affect a large part of a person's life. Indeed, some individuals continue to see themselves as divorced— as refer to themselves as such— no matter what other external changes occur in their lives. None of my informants told me just one divorce story, nor did anyone focus merely on the actual legal ceremony. Instead, I heard life stories from some and portions of life stories from others. Clearly, the divorce experience strongly affects the individual's perception of himself or herself and creates a psychological need to create, through narrating, a more integrated version of the past and present.

Many of my informants also indicated that they tell a number of their stories fairly frequently. A general assumption about personal experience narratives, however, is that the specific stories themselves are rarely retold. Because they are seen as conversational genres, too, they are frequently thought of as never being "performed." A few of my informants, however, had told me some of these narratives prior to my collecting them, and two individuals have retold some to me since that time. The marks of recurring performance are indeed present in some of the narratives I collected, particularly those to which the teller referred by title. The narratives have a polished
quality about them, more of a definite focus, with the clustering of details centered on building to a punchline or similar feature.

Two rather distinctive performance styles among my informants tend to follow gender lines. In general, the men from whom I collected told, or indicated in various ways that they wanted to tell, their personal experience narratives in a highly humorous style. They often indicated that they wanted to be entertaining and performed their stories in a manner directed toward reaching that goal. Thus an ingredient in their presentation of self through their performances was rather ego-directed. The one male informant who did not use humor for this purpose apologized to me near the end of his session, stating that he was sorry he didn't "have any funny ones." Another male informant became much more at ease and comfortable during the session and even appeared to be relieved when he was able to tell some cocktail party-type stories, referring to each as "a story I've begun telling my friends." One female informant followed this same pattern, maintaining a humorous style of delivery. Since the collecting session, she has told me many more stories, all of which are performed in the same fashion. Since the collecting session, she has informed me that she wants to make her listeners laugh and that she now realizes many times she created situations with the idea of later being able to
tell "good stories" about them. The other performance style, used by most of my female informants, involves the creation of an atmosphere that fosters feelings of intimacy and closeness between the participants. During the performance, the teller's performance style implies that confidentiality and trust is essential. Thus the teller, while needing to maintain the listener's attention, uses rhetorical strategies intended to arouse sympathy or empathy. The performance style used in the group session combines aspects of the two, for while it is a more public performance context, the importance of establish ties through commonalities indicates a concern for some degree of listener involvement and the creation of a sympathetic or empathetic response.

As we continue to examine the performance of personal experience narratives, we will learn more about the process of narrating and the ways in which tellers of these stories create symbolic representations of themselves and their lives.


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