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### Scholarly Story Telling

In order to be scholarly, one has to be dedicated to knowing. The *Oxford* Dictionaries define the word as "having or showing knowledge, learning, or devotion to academic pursuits." This commitment to the discovery of the truest strains of information is what sets the kind of research apart from others. Instead of being a recreational past time, a scholar devotes their time to discovering and validating reality. Stories are a time-honored and essential tool for a scholar because without narrative and stories, there would be no reality to research.

Here is an illustration - a story - that might help elaborate that claim: An individual makes an observation. Whatever or whomever they notice sparks an interest and they want to know more. They ask around, read up or ask their interest directly. They engage in dialectic discussion and form their own idea about their interest, which then can be explained, to others. Suppose that this individual is a historian or journalist or perhaps a sociologist. And suppose she or he meticulously recorded her or his investigation so that they could later evaluate their extensive research. And once they had come to a conclusion - definitive or ambiguous, satisfying or wanting - they published their findings so that other interested people can see, learn and evaluate their scholarly research.

Stories are involved in every aspect of this process of both untrained and academic research. Not only can a story very much be the subject, but storytelling is also involved in the

act of investigation regardless of topic. It is involved in the initial observation up to the reception of the final presentation.

Narrative is the human tool to make sense of the surroundings. It allows recall and evaluation of actions that have been carried out. As an event happens, it doesn't make sense. It is there for a flash and then leaves an individual who cannot comprehend what has happened. Only when a participant or witness to the event narrates it can anything be processed and understood. Once put into a context and timeline, "as a form of narrative it enables temporal creatures like us to create meaning" (Munslow 16). A story, in effect provides knowledge through the hindsight and evaluation it requires. This is referred to as a "*narrative mode of knowing*" (Czarniawska Joerges 7). To construct a story, the initial process connects singular moments, stringing them into a cohesive event. This cohesive event can then be analyzed to understand actions that both brought about and resulted from events. "The narrative mode of knowing consists in organizing experience with the help of a scheme assuming the intentionality of human action" (Czarniawska Joerges 7). Narrative allows an entrance into the actuality that human beings perceive in such a way that people can then understand each other and the world around them. Essentially, reality is the product of story telling.

Stories allow access to reality. This might be seen as a disadvantage for researchers who are supposedly after the objective reality of any topic, subject or event. Stories are, even in a historical genre, still subjective accounts from individual perspectives. But the fact of the matter is there is no such thing as an objective reality. "All we know are our experiences, which are 'subjective,' and thus just our opinion" (LaFave). Subjectivity is the internal reality within each individual human being that she or he has assembled through narratives. The only human access

to the world is through their subjective senses and reason and "narrative making is wired into the human brain as the key mechanism for representing reality" (Munslow 16). Stories are recounted as explanations and mechanisms "to entertain, to teach and to learn, to ask for an interpretation and to give one" (Czarniawska Joerges 10). Stories have been told since communication was possible and as such, quite a cache of narratives has developed to the point where there are pre-established concepts of reality. In this way there is a "power of story to shape everyday experience" (Bruner 7). Expectations have been established based on stories of past events and typifies the proper reality.

Just as reality can only be accessed subjectively and personal realities are contrived, these internal lives are another aspect of the collective reality. Perspectives are reflections of the internal life of people that cannot be objectively accessed or perceived. This is a part of the whole picture and a guiding motivation for individual actions and reactions and they need to be explored to understand "the invariable structure of the universal human mind" (Czarniawska Joerges 2). The only way to reveal this internal psychism is through a dialogue or inquisitive discourse. Stories and narrative are involved here as well. Not only does narrative contextualize an event for an individual, but also an event cannot help but be communicated in the form of narrative. This allows the receiver of the information to understand it as well.

The study of story for the intent of knowledge "pays much attention to language (in a sense of any system of signs - numbers, words, or pictures) as a tool of reality construction rather than in passive mirroring" (Czarniawska Joerges 12). This sense of language is the medium that allows expression of the individual and through the understanding of the individual, another piece of reality can be discerned. Narrative effectively places events, things and people into

contexts that shape reality. So as a story reveals the completeness of reality, it is not just applicable but is necessary to scholarly research. The guerrilla involvement of story surfaces and resurfaces through the course of the research process. The narrative structure is applicable as a guideline for a comprehensive and comprehensible account of a scholar's investigation. Different areas of research assume different roles within the traditional narrative outline. For example, "specific events, otherwise represented as lists or chronicles, are brought into one meaningful whole" (Czarniawska Joerges 7) by way of a plot. This is as much a necessity of scholarly research as it is in a fairy tale. Also similar in both is the "emphasis on the interaction between the reader and the text" (Czarniawska Joerges 2). A good story, regardless of what it is about, engages and instills itself within its audience.

Narrative can take many forms and has many applications not the least which sees "narrative as a *mode of knowing* and narration as a *mode of communication*" (Czarniawska Joerges 6). Knowing and communication are indispensable for scholarly research. The academic forum is dependent on narrative. The process of narrative enables communication, discussion and critical evaluation of research and information. It can be found that "in every conversation a *positioning* takes place [...] which is accepted, rejected, or improved upon by the partners in the conversation" (Czarniawska Joerges 5). In this way, great minds have developed the monumental theories and made momentous discoveries through dialogues.

Scholarly professional discourses are just as - if not more - reliant on the narrative provisions and insights into the entirety of human reality. Among the many different professions that are very closely involved with storytelling and are regarded as scholarly pursuits, history, journalism and sociology are included. These studies are intertwined with the social world, in

which humans "refer to events and things and people by expressions that situate them not just in an indifferent world but in a narrative one" (Bruner 8). Because of the fact that narrative establishes the purpose and progress of time and reality, stories "are 'especially viable instruments for social negotiation'" (Czarniawska Joerges 9). The social collective can otherwise be referred to as a community. The likes of which would not "be possible were it not for our human capacity to organize and communicate experience in a narrative form" (Bruner 16). These are studies concerning community.

Reality is, by definition, the here and now. There is no past in reality. Essentially, in that fashion, there is no reason in reality either. Human beings are unable to rationalize moments as they happen but only after the fact, in a narrative that recounts and makes sense of what just happened. History is a pure human construct, otherwise unattainable in the reality of the world if not for stories. "[H]istory is a narrative representation of past reality that specifically recognizes the sequential and temporal relationships that exist in and between 'the real', 'the story' and 'its telling'" (Munslow 17). History is temporal in the sense that it has never nor can ever be sensually perceived. The "Historian Hayden White shocked by claiming that there can be no discipline of history, only of historiography, as historians emplot the events into histories instead of 'finding' them" (Czarniawska Joerges 2). They essentially create a metanarrative with all the singular stories of the people that pass through events. In order to compile a comprehensive perspective of history, researchers take "the triad of *story*, *narrating* and *narration* [that] incorporates *every* aspect of the history production process" (Munslow 24). It is first necessary to find and collect told stories from the past that shed light on the perceptions and society of the time. From there it is rationalized "that a narrative of an individual history is placed in a narrative

of social history" (Czarniawska Joerges 5). As no one person acts entirely outside of society, theirs is a piece of his or her community's larger story.

One resource that historians use to inform the collective illusion of history is news reports from the past. These are assumed to be the objective recounts of events that transpired previously. Again there is an issue of objectivity. The metaphysical reality of a situation, that outside of an individual's perception and contextualization, can only be a minimal set of truth-facts. The only way to discover a situation is through a narrative. But "a story expresses the narrator's point of view or perspective or knowledge of the world or, indeed, truthfulness or objectivity or even integrity, which may be hard to determine" (Bruner 17). The finite amount of discernible truths pertains to that that is left outside the unavoidable interpretation of events in order for any understanding to be reached. "There are facts of the matter which can be faithfully reported" (Kieran). Anything outside of the very basic is a subjective translation. For a journalist, the mission is to employ ethically established "truth-respecting methods required for him to achieve the proper goal of journalism: arriving at the truth of the matter" (Kieran 23).

An objective reality is not the entire reality. At a journalist's disposal are the stories of those who also observed the event. Perception is the only access to reality at her or his disposal. It is also inclusive of the invisible events within the observer that are just as pertinent to the big picture. As this is the primary source of information, and the stories that a journalist collects are then construed into her or his own narrative, "news events inevitably give rise to a number of different legitimate reports which are not reducible to one underlying complete and consistent report" (Kieran 24).

Similarly concerned with the bigger picture of humanity is sociology. Sociological research also involves stories within its scholarly investigation because "social life is a narrative" (Czarniawska Joerges 3). As a study of society, it only makes sense that sociology would include "culture's coin and currency" (Bruner 15). As previously mentioned, community - and therefore society also - is not possible without the constant ebb and flow of the various narratives of its members. To investigate any community of peoples, "it is useful to think of an enacted narrative as the most typical form of social life" (Czarniawska Joerges 3). Guided by the knowledge of the essential nature of stories, from the individual to the collective level, a scholar strives to locate and collect those stories that are pertinent to her or his area of investigation. Most normal happenstance falls within an unnoticed story that for the most part goes untold. This is due to narrative being "the main form of social life because it is the main device for making sense of social action" (Czarniawska Joerges 11). When a norm deviates, it is worthy of contemplation. An interruption causes confusion. "The function of the story is to find an intentional state that mitigates or at least makes comprehensible a deviation from a canonical cultural pattern" (Czarniawska Joerges 9). Parallel to the instinctive process of any individual caught off guard, a scholar engages in a similar discourse but uses collected stories in lieu of personal narrative to map out the particulars of any given subject of intrigue. Though within sociological studies, the issue arises again of the fact that "stories are always told from a particular perspective" (Bruner 23).

In all three examples of scholarly research, investigators attempt to grasp "human conduct via the notion of narrative" (Czarniawska Joerges 3). In history, journalism and sociology the same issue - and the main objection - of using stories on academic study arises. But

there is no sidestep or alternative path besides narrative because stories are such an integral component of human reality. Researchers of any discipline accept, rather than deny, the potentially shaky reliability of stories as an unavoidable circumstance when collecting enough stories to compile a comprehensive perspective. It is up to the academic integrity of any scholar - even if she or he was not dealing with stories - to make sure "not to lie about the evidence and to make reasoned and balanced judgements" (Munslow 17). Such diligence "allows for self-conscious, insightful and shrewd history making" (Munslow 17) by historians. The articles from past periodicals that historians use as a source of story "rest upon commitments to fundamental moral, social and political principles" (Kieran 24) upheld by journalists who follow his or her collectively approved code of ethics.

To perform scholarly research is to seriously investigate something for the sake of knowledge. Whenever any amount of worthwhile information is collected to substantiate a new hypothesis or revisit an old idea, scholarly research is being done. Because stories are so essential to the human process of understanding, "narrative offers an alternative mode of knowing" (Czarniawska Joerges 8). This mode makes sense of events; it creates history and legitimizes any and all actions through acknowledgment. All other forms of knowledge are reliant on stories, the most empirical being science which "requires narrative for its own legitimation" (Czarniawska Joerges 7). Within the context of narrative process and legitimization, it stands to reason that "there has to be a story to tell why scientific knowledge [or any other kind for that matter] is important at all" (Czarniawska Joerges 7).

"Stories, finally, provide models of the world" (Bruner 25). so fundamental an aspect of society and culture cannot be eradicated from intelligent inquirers, nor should it be. Stories allow



human beings to make sense of the world. Without narrative, we would drown in a successive deluge of meaningless moments. Stories are what give us control. The fact is telling scholarly research cannot help but involve telling stories because that is our only access to reality.

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