

AUTHORING SELF: FRAMING NARRATIVES OF YOUNG WOMEN DIAGNOSED WITH
MOOD DISORDERS

by

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ABSTRACT

With suicide the 3rd leading cause of death among teenagers and with 8.3% of adolescents diagnosed with a mood disorder, there is an educational imperative to inform those who are involved in educating these young women about the cognitive and social aspects of these mental illnesses. This study could provide insights that will increase the quality of relationships among teachers, students, and parents and could improve the development of Individual Education Plans for those diagnosed with mood disorders. Building on work done combining literacy and mental health concerns, studies that focus on development of self, and on sociocultural theories of meaning making, this narrative inquiry dissertation explores and explains how 2 young women who have been diagnosed with a mood disorder develop concepts of self. Using a case study format, I conduct a series of individual interviews with the young women, their parents, and 2 local adolescent therapists. Data also include archival data and a research reflection journal. In my narrative analysis for each case, I focus on the young women's narratives situated within particular settings as the basic unit of analysis. My research seeks to understand how young women who have been diagnosed with a mood disorder internalize and reconfigure the messages they receive from their external worlds. My research questions how

young women appropriate the competing voices within the various settings of their daily activities and examine the multiple mediational means (both material and psychological) that these young women use to construct their narratives. Specifically, I am asking 1) What tools of narrative construction did the young women use to frame their experiences? 2) How did the young women use narratives in defining their unique senses of self? and 3) How did their narratives become cultural tools for authoring self?

INDEX WORDS: Narrative, Self, Mental Health, Adolescents, Sociocultural Theory, Activity Theory, Multiple Composing Processes

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Narrative inquiry is inherently interdisciplinary work spanning the fields of medicine (Damasio, 1999; Saks, 1985, 1995, 1997), sociology (Goffman, 1976; Labov & Waletzky, 1967), psychology (Bruner, 1991; Fish, 1993; Mishler, 1986); education (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; McEwan & Egan, 1995), and anthropology (Geertz, 2000, Spradley, 1970). Narrative inquiry data collection methods are similar across disciplines, including interviewing, fieldwork, and collection of archival data. The theoretical and disciplinary frames usually drive analysis. For example, sociolinguistic (Sachs, Schlegoff, & Jefferson, 1974) narrative analysis has looked at micro level features such as turn taking or adjacency pairs; whereas, narrative work in educational psychology has focused on more macro level issues such as scripts and schemas (Cazden, 2004, Cortazzi, 1993).

Narrative inquiry as a research approach unites theoretical reflection, data gathering and analysis, and research representation. “What distinguishes narrative as a mode of inquiry is that it is both the process—a narrator/participant *telling* or *narrating*—and the product—the *story* or *narrative* told” (emphasis in original, Kramp, 2004, p.XX). Narrative inquiry suggests “the interdependence of content and form, of product and process, of ends and means” (Conle, 2000b, p. 192).

Conceptualizations of the way meaning is constructed undergird the interdisciplinary uses of narrative inquiry. For the most part, researchers using narrative approach believe people construct stories to make sense of things, to figure out meaning, and to establish connection.

Bruner (1991) points to this need for narratives: “The human mind cannot express its nascent powers without the enablement of the symbolic systems of culture” (p. 20). Narratives are part of the symbolic systems of culture. Each time a narrative is told or represented, the symbol systems that are available for constructing narratives are summoned. Most doing narrative work look at stories, oral or written, told by individuals within their cultural contexts. Sociocultural narrativists find their data in the array of individual signs and the culturally shared tools that are part of the process of constructing narrative

Narrative Inquiry and the Authoring of Self

For some doing narrative work, narrative and story are interchangeable. I position myself with those who argue that though all stories are narratives, not all narratives are stories (Maines, 2001). Cultural differences, “the different contexts in the mind” (Cazden, 1988, p. 25), allow for different constructions of meaning and experience. Oral and written narratives, particularly “autobiographical self narratives, are culturally structured product[s] of language use learned relatively early on in the socialization process” (Callero, 2003, p. 124). Narratives, according to Bruner (1991), become an attempt to establish stability when breaches in the norm occur. This phenomenon helps explain why so many versions of events abound during times of unrest or environmental change.

Narrative inquiry has been criticized for its over reliance on the verbal mode of communication. Riessman (1993) points out that “there is a danger in narrative work in reifying verbal expression” (p. 70). It must be recognized that narratives take other forms (e.g. pictures, symphonies, ballets), and narrative inquirers need to be open to finding narratives in non-verbal modes. For example, a teddy bear itself is not a narrative, but ask the owner to tell about that the teddy bear, and the experience unfolds. The narrative represented by the object is revealed as

much as possible in speech. In my own work, I recognize that material objects often embody narratives. Therefore, I designed interviews to elicit narratives from photographs and various objects chosen by the participants as representative of themselves.

Narrative Inquiry Methodology: Data Collection and Analysis

Interviews are narrative inquiry's main source of data. Interview research elicits stories, however, as Mishler (1986) argues: "Treating responses as stories opens up many complex analytic problems, and, of course, it represents only one of a number of approaches to issues of meaning" (p. 67). In narrative work, the interview process itself calls on participants to make sense and create meaning from their experiences. Mishler (1986) views interviewing as a "form of discourse between speakers" and argues that "ordinary language competence shared by investigators and respondents is a critical but unrecognized precondition for effective research practice" (p. 7). Interviews for Mishler are speech events. In an interview "meanings of questions and responses are contextually grounded and jointly constructed by interviewer and respondent" (p. 33-34). This co-construction that occurs during the interview process is another reason why it is so important that the researcher remain constantly reflective on her role in the construction of the narratives. Even the co-construction of the questions is negotiated once the interview is in process. The ambiguity and complexity of language in a question are not the only things affecting the response. In fact, Mishler asserts that the way in which "interviewers and respondents attempt to 'fit' their questions and responses to each other and to the developing discourse" helps resolve any ambiguities in the questions, whether they are simple or complex (p. 47).

This co-constructed nature of interviewing and analysis is viewed as an important part of the narrative inquiry process. Narrative inquiry research is an exploration for both the researcher

and the participants. As the stories get told, the meanings are pieced together by the interviewer and interviewee through the interaction within the interview setting. Further interpretation and narrativization occurs in the analysis and representation processes, and even then, narrative inquirers are encouraged to work collaboratively with their participants. “Regardless of the type of narrative inquiry undertaken, the current critique calls attention to the researcher’s presence and why it must be taken into account from the start” (Alverman, 2000, p. 8). For example, in the analysis of the young women’s strips of narratives, I am infused in the authoring process. Though I am a researcher investigating their tool use, I am also an author producing another version of self for the young women and others to read and examine.

Narrative methodologists talk often about issues of subjectivity, truth, and representation. Bruner (1991) argues that truth claims are often made without an understanding of the process involved in constructing a narrative:

Unlike the constructions generated by logical and scientific procedures that can be weeded out by falsification, narrative constructions can only achieve “verisimilitude.” Narratives, then, are a version of reality whose acceptability is governed by convention and “narrative necessity” rather than by empirical verification and logical requiredness, although ironically we have no compunction about calling stories true or false. (p. 4-5)

The analysis undertaken in this narrative inquiry took the emphasis off whether Ember’s stories were truth or lies; instead I focused on her available tools and frames for constructing narratives of experience. For example, Ember often told stories that seemed far-fetched—a man who would break into her trailer, steal her books to read, and then replace them. As a listener I could not willingly suspend my disbelief, but as a researcher in the analysis process, I was not concerned

with whether her story was true or not. Rather, I was interested in the knowledge I have from previous interviews about her interests that would help her tell a story in such a way.

In an editorial comparing analyses and interpretations of a six-year old girl's narrative, Cazden (2004) called for "complementarity." (p. 342). As an implication for research, this concept suggests "we should try to describe as fully as possible both the social traditions and the individual transformations" (p. 342). It would be hard to imagine that one could be always conscious of choices made while constructing narratives (Davies & Harré, 1990). The analysis method used in this study explores how the individual can effect change on her environment with her narratives. Examination of tool use in narrative construction offers a glimpse at the inter- and intramental functioning of the individual as she constructs her narrative self within our interviews. Becoming aware of the sociocultural influences on the construction of self, particularly for a stigmatized population such as those labeled mentally ill, offers clients, family members, and educators more tools for a healthy life. Furthermore, narratives author self, a constant work in progress. It is my hope that this study fits with Cazden's call for responsible research:

If art is inherently produced by "transformation" of the "stream of tradition" by "individual persons" with "unique sensibilities," the implication for research is that we should try to describe as fully as possible both the social traditions and the individual transformations. (p. 342)

Participants

Participants for this study were selected through purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990). Both young women had been diagnosed with a mood disorder while in their teenage years. Both were taking medications and receiving therapy at some time during the study. The two young

women were all between the ages of 15 and 21 when they began the study. Ember and Chloe identify as white. As a recipient of welfare and unemployed, Ember was from a lower socio-economic status; whereas, Chloe was from an upper middle class family.

Ember (19) and Chloe (17) are local and specific examples of how mental illness affects daily life. (Both young women agreed to choose their own pseudonyms.) These young's women's lives may at times seem atypical and far from what teachers encounter in daily interactions with students; however, they were chosen for this study because their narratives offer valuable learning opportunities for educators and parents (Stake, 2000).

In order to participate, the young women's parents also had to agree to be interviewed. I interviewed Ember's aunt/adopted mother, Debbie, and her biological mother, Tonya. With Chloe, I interviewed her father and mother, Preston and Laura, who have been married 18 years.

To solicit participants, I originally sent out a form letter to 21 area therapists who advertised in the phone book, on the internet, and through community mental health networks. I received only one response from these letters, Dr. Evans, a Family Therapist who recommended Ember for my study.

In talking about my study to my students, friends, and acquaintances, I found people willing to share a great deal about their personal and/or familial experiences with mood disorders and other mental illness. I found Chloe through an informal conversation at my workplace about family matters. Her father told me of some of the experiences their family was having with Chloe's behavior at home and suggested I ask her if she would be interested in participating in the study. Chloe and I knew each other a year before I asked her to participate in my pilot study.

Data Collection

Data collection for Ember and Morgan took place over a 10 month period and was part of a larger including three other young women who are not profiled in this analysis. As mentioned earlier, Chloe was a participant in my dissertation pilot study, which took place two years before official data collection began. Data collection for this portion of the study with Chloe spanned 22 months, with large gaps between the pilot and the follow-up interview. Their individual interviews were held at the public library, in a small office space at the community college at which I taught, and at the young women’s houses. Chloe and I conducted all of the interviews except the pilot in her bedroom. Ember met me at the library and the community college.

The following table shows the time frame for Ember and Chloe’s case data collection:

Initial Interview	Follow up	Photo Elicitation	Self Box	Exit Interview	Parent 1	Parent 2	Mental Health Provider
<u>Ember</u> 1/17/03 Library	3/17/03 Community College	3/27/03 Community College	5/8/03 Community College	10/1/03 Library	Debbie 7/14/03 Library	Tonya 7/9/03 Library	Dr. Evans 2/28/03 Dr.’s office
<u>Chloe*</u> 5/21/01 University office	3/18/03 Chloe’s room	5/6/03 Chloe’s room	10/13/03 Chloe’s room	11/10/03 Chloe’s room	Preston 5/21/03 Madison’s front porch	Julia 6/13/03 University office	Dr. Gobel 3/7/03 Dr.’s office

A complete interview cycle entailed 5 interviews including an Initial Interview, an Initial Interview Follow-up, a Photo Elicitation Interview, a Self Box interview, and an Exit Interview. Each case also contained parent interviews from those parents who agreed to participate in the study. Participants were paid \$25 for each interview. I conducted interviews with 2 area mental health professionals. These interviews took place in their office during a scheduled appointment time, and they were paid their hourly rate of \$100 for the interview.

Life History Interviews. The first interview was based on oral history interviewing techniques (Dunaway & Baum, 1984). The initial interview questions were focused on getting a family and social history, stories about mental health issues, and educational information. The following interview protocol was used as a guide:

Interview Guide for Life History Interview

1. Tell me about your family.
2. Tell me about your friends.
3. Tell me about your earliest memory.
4. What are some stories your family tells about you as a child?
5. Tell me about a significant memory from your elementary school years, middle school years, high school years.
6. Tell me about the events leading up to your diagnosis.
7. What did you know about your disorder before you were diagnosed?
8. What do you know now about your disorder? How did you find out?

Because the questions were open-ended, the interview did not follow a simple question-answer format. Rather, using specific participant words or phrases as probes, I encouraged further narrative development. Often I did not have to ask all of the questions because the participants covered the topic in one of the responses to my probes. The initial interview lasted from 1½ to 2 hours.

I transcribed each tape immediately following the initial interview and developed a rough outline of significant people and events in the young women's lives. From this outline I formulated questions about things that remained unclear. In a follow-up interview I shared the outline with the young women, asking them to check for errors in sequence or relation. I also

focused in on specific events mentioned in the initial interview, asking for further elaboration in some cases. These follow-ups lasted 1 hour.

Photo Elicitation Interviews

Photo elicitation interviews (Harper, 2002) rely on two forms of symbolic expression, words and images, and they connect ““core definitions of the self” to society, culture, and history” (p. 13). For the photo elicitation interviews in this study, I requested that the participants choose an assortment of pictures to discuss. After the initial interview follow-up the young women were instructed to begin gathering photographs (approximately 20) of their family and friends. We held the photo interview about 2 months later. I encouraged them to choose photos from as far back as they liked. In the interview, I let the young women decide which picture they wanted to talk about first. Both young women had ordered their pictures somewhat chronologically, so there was a linear progression imposed by their ordering, not by my questioning. As we looked at the pictures together, I asked them to tell me about the picture and probed using words and phrases from their responses. I also would ask them what led them to choose a particular picture. At the end of this interview, I asked them to discuss the process of putting these pictures together to bring in to the interview. Each of these interviews lasted approximately 1½ hours.

Self Box Interviews. The theory of “the decentralization of self-knowledge” (Hermans, 2003) is behind the methodology of the “Self Box” interview. In the “Self Box” interview I requested the young women to compile objects that they felt represented them. I based this request on the notion that

the other as part of the external; domain of self is not only seen as “mine” but also as another I which, rather than being an extension of the self on the object level, is

a person like myself or is an object with person like qualities (e.g., a piece of art, a toy, a picture, nature, or a beautiful place which “speaks” to you). (p. 103)

The interview activity was also based loosely on portfolio compilation exercise presented by Dr. Kathleen Yancey at summer Writing Project program in which I was a participant. The interview took place about 6 months into the data collection process. I put no limit on what they could choose, but did suggest personal belongings such as CDs, art work, and journals. The guiding idea I presented to help them compile their objects was to imagine that someone who did not know them at all were to find the box. What would the young woman want people to learn about the kind of person represented by the objects?

Though I did not suggest it, each of the young women in this study chose a box that was symbolic of her self as well. For example, Ember’s box was a lunchbox she had from childhood. Though it did not fit all that she brought to show, she did mention that it limited her to the important things. As the young women pulled things from their boxes, I would ask “What made you put that in your box?” and followed up with probes to expand their explanations. These interviews also concluded with a discussion about the process of putting together these boxes for the purpose of this interview. Each of these interviews ran over 2 hours.

Exit Interviews. The Exit interview provided a chance for me to catch up with the young women’s lives and to ferret out details of experiences recounted in previous interviews. For Ember the exit interview took place 10 months after the study began. For Chloe, this interview was the end of a 3 year research relationship. To prepare for this interview, I reviewed the previous interview transcripts and made notes about questions to ask. I focused on reoccurring personal issues, mental health concerns, and family dynamics. I asked the young women to reflect on their role as a participant in the research project, and I questioned them about their

future plans. These interviews tended to be much more conversational and lasted about 1 to 1½ hours.

Parent Interviews. I conducted the parent interviews after I had completed the photo-elicitation interviews with their daughters. At this point in the collection I had been working with the young women for 5 to 6 months, and the parents were well aware of what was going on with the study. The parent interviews were typically longer than the young women's initial interviews, lasting 1 hour 45 minutes to 2 hours 15 minutes. In these interviews I asked the following questions:

1. Tell me about your daughter.
2. What do you wish for your daughter?
3. Tell me about a time when you witnessed your daughter's strengths in action? Her challenges?
4. What are some particular incidents that made you aware that your daughter might need to seek mental health care?
5. Tell me about any particular times when you received feedback from others about your daughter.
6. What were some ideas you had about this disorder before you knew your daughter had it?
7. What do you know about your daughter's diagnosed disorder?
8. How have you educated yourself about your daughter's disorder?
9. Talk about any stories you've heard in your family about mental illness.

Similarly to the young women's initial interviews, I did not strictly adhere to the interview guide. Instead I probed the parents' responses and often let them digress to stories about themselves as

young adults, which was often what would happen as the parents were talking about their daughters. Chloe's mother and father agreed to be interviewed. Ember's biological and adopted mothers agreed to be interviewed, but her father, who worked a 3rd shift job, did not volunteer to participate.

Mental Health Professional Interviews

Three mental health professionals agreed to be interviewed for this study. Dr. Evans, a Family Therapist who recommended Ember for my study, was the first therapist I interviewed. The other, Dr. Gobel, was also a local adolescent therapists who was currently working with Chloe. In the beginning of the interviews with Dr. Evans and Dr. Gobel, we went over the consent form and discussed that no mention of any particular patient would take place in the interviews unless referring to an anonymous specific incident. The questions I asked in these interviews follow:

1. Take me through your process of diagnosis for young women.
2. Talk about your knowledge of mood disorders. (Major Depressive, Bipolar, and Dysthymia)
3. Talk (without using names) about specific young women you have worked with who have been diagnosed with mood disorders.
4. What are the processes of treatment for those diagnosed with mood disorders?
5. How do you suggest your clients and their parents educate themselves on their disorders?

These interviews were less conversational, stuck more to the interview guide, and lasted 45 to 50 minutes.

Data Analysis: Authoring and Framing

The process of narrating events is selective, and the product is a framing of events as the teller is able to generalize them. From innumerable happenings the teller chooses, consciously or unconsciously, particular events and orders them in a particular way to create a story that is acceptable to an audience. The composition of the narrative depends on the available cultural tool kits (Wertsch, 1991); thus the more tools a person has available for narrative construction, the more possibilities for framing a particular experience. As a narrative inquirer, I am less concerned with veracity of their stories that contribute to their life narratives and more interested in the verisimilitude (Bruner, 1991)--the way the story is told, the context in which it is told, and the choices made in creating the story.

Berger and Luckman's (1966) talk of performances in terms of their "external social functionality" and their emphasis on language for imposing logic and coherence to what is shared culturally. Their concept of performance is akin to Goffman's (1974) discussion of the theatrical frame. Without an audience there is no performance. Through a process of reflection and reconstruction, the performer of the narrative, with the help of their audience, constructs meaning that becomes part of the teller's biography. "A segment of the self is objectified in terms of the socially available typifications" (Berger & Luckman, p. 73); thus, the act of performing the narrative becomes both an attempt to establish self and to legitimize the experience.

Personal Profiles

The chances that exactly the same sequence of random events will occur in the growth of two different patterns, such as two snowflakes, are extremely low. Consequently, it is improbable that one young woman's experience of a mood disorder could serve as a template for

others. Frame analysis allows me to view a single case as idiosyncratically replicable. Though other young women or their parent and educators may not have the same life experiences as Ember and Chloe, they may recognize some similarities for their own lives. However, in order to contextualize these young women, I had to create personal profiles to introduce their unique situations. The processes of analysis I used to do this included a combination of backward and forward mapping (Tuyay, Floriani, Yeager, Dixon, & Green, 1995), data mapping, and sociographs (see Taylor, 1984).

Using backward and forward mapping allowed me to focus on aspects of the data to provide necessary contextual information for the research questions. The method involved the use of a “tracer unit” that involves

an analytic constant that is traced across time, events, and people. Each instance of occurrence becomes a site for exploring how, how, when, for what purposes, with whom, in what ways, and with what outcomes the analytic unit occurred.

(Tuyay et al.,1995, p. 3)

The tracer units I chose to follow and write about for these young women’s profiles were family history, friendship patterns, formal education, and mental health. Data transcripts from the young women, their parents, and the two therapists were my main source; however, I also used the internet, particularly sites on clinical pharmacology and sites about these young women’s specific diagnoses. My journals and interview notes were also data, as were follow-up conversations with the young women.

After coding all instances of these four areas, I then began to write the profiles. For the section on family and friends, I grouped all comments about people mentioned more than four times together and analyzed the overall commentary about the particular person. For example,

when Ember talked about Tonya, she regularly portrayed her in youth as a drinker and promiscuous. None of the comments she made about her biological mother were positive, indicating a conflicted relationship. From these groupings of transcripts and archival information I had gathered during backward and forward mapping, I created the sociographs for each participant which diagram the relationships as they detailed them throughout our interviews. The written profiles of these relationships reflect the data from the interviews and intertextually linked the young women to the lives of those they considered influential on their own.

Data mapping was particularly helpful for the sections on education and mental health, both of which required extensive archival data. I made medication charts, diagnoses information sheets, and hand drawn life maps with symbols and text representing the four tracer units. These data maps were used to guide the construction of personal profiles that reflected these young women across time and in several different contexts.

Sociocultural Frame Analysis

In order to help people better understand the process of self formation within the context of a mental illness diagnosis, this study used frame analysis (Goffman, 1974) to examine this phenomenon of narrative construction. It does so based on the notion that each individual word carries a “sign” (Vygotsky, 1987), or as Damasio (1994) calls it, a “contingency” (p. 182). Vygotsky (1987) emphasizes that words are signs to individuals, producing different complexes that sometimes add up to the same socially shared concept. Similarly Damasio’s (1994) somatic–marker hypothesis discusses how thought processes, whether verbal or preverbal, take place in the “mind’s imagetic space” (p. 182), producing a physical response, a gut reaction, as decisions are made. In line with these theories, frame analysis recognizes that choices made in the

narration of an event are not always conscious. Rather narratives are recounted using the available tools and settings and with recognition of the audience.

As noted earlier, the disciplinary frame often directs data analysis in narrative inquiry. Mishler (1986) cautions researchers to account for “structure, meaning, and interactional context,” but he does not dictate how that analysis is to be done. Similarly, Goffman (1974) offers no step-by-step process for frame analysis; rather, he explains how the theory allowed him to see the world. In frame analysis the situation becomes the unit for making meaning; nevertheless, Goffman (1974) cautions that “Frame, however, organizes more than meaning; it also organizes involvement” (p. 345). The idea that individual’s involvement in the situation that she is narrating shapes the meaning of the situation is what led me to choose frame analysis for this study.

Vygotsky (1978) discusses how memory is “exceptionally appropriate for study of the changes that signs introduce into basic psychological functions because it clearly reveals the social origins of signs as well as their crucial role in the individual's development” (p. 38). In constructing a story from a memory, the participant in the interview is building knowledge by externalizing thought and verbalizing images. From this externalization of an experience in the past, concepts are internalized through the generalization inherent in putting thought into word. This framing of memory, putting preverbal thought into word, is what I have tried to capture in the analysis of these young women’s narrative strips of experience.

Strips. The first step in frame analysis is to identify “strips” of experience in the data. According to Goffman a strip can be defined as “any arbitrary slice or cut from the stream of ongoing activity. . . . [or] any raw bunch or occurrences (of whatever status of reality) that one wants to draw attention to as a starting point for analysis” (1974, p. 10). For this study, after

transcription I read through each case's data, simultaneously listening to the tapes. Though I kept my research questions in mind, I was not searching for any particular theme or type of story.

What I noticed was the recurrence of certain issues in narrative form throughout the data. The data I chose as strips for analysis were retold in at different times, in different settings, and from multiple perspectives. For example, the narrative strips chosen for analysis in Ember's case encapsulate an experience that was recounted in her biological mother's interview and referred to by her other sister. The subject matter, the youngest sister, was also a primary focus of the family's attentions and conversation at the time of data collection. Similarly, the issue that dominated Chloe's interviews, the computer and what she used it for, was also a major topic of conversation during her parent interviews. The participant authored narratives, however, are the only ones used for direct analysis. Hence the strips I chose are analogous to strips of film with different takes of a similar scene taken at a different time and from a different perspective. As young women added to the experience, they altered the constructions. The different versions (i.e., strips) gave me a unit of analysis from which to answer my research questions.

Identifying tools of narrative construction. The first research question looked at the tools of narrative construction the young women used in their strips of experience. Through the concept of framing, Goffman's (1974) analytical method allowed the question "Under what circumstances do we think things are real?" (p. 2). The frame is comprised of the basic elements of a situation that are "built up in accordance with the principles of organization which govern--at least social ones--our subjective involvement in them" (pp. 10-11). This analytical approach captures "what one individual can be alive to at a particular moment" (p.8), particularly in relation to the cultural tools available.

Goffman (1974) relied on a dramaturgical model in his frame analysis. As a former Literature teacher, I examined the strips for elements used in narrative construction such as point of view, character and plot development, genre, coherence, and figurative language. I first went through and circled all pronouns and identified their referents. I then highlighted and made notes about techniques employed in construction such as repetition, dialogue, plot structure, use of figurative language, and other elements that stood out in repeated readings.

Once these elements of the narrative genre were identified in the strips, I chose the most salient to analyze further, paying particular attention to what each young woman used more frequently in framing her unique issue. At this point, the analysis done during the construction of the personal profiles was essential in making connections between and among the elements of the strips. For example, without having completed the process to create the profiles, I might have missed the information that Ember's mother regularly took Ember's knife collection away from her when she was in a manic phase, thus missing the significance of the symbol of the knife to Ember.

Signs of Self. In answering how the young women use narratives to define their unique senses of self and I examined the young women's framed experience in relation to the rest of the interview data. My analysis method reflects the belief that self is constructed through interaction with and personal modification of the culture in which one lives. Therefore, I explored how Ember and Chloe created their idiosyncratic version of self through their use of signs intramentally.

The intramental use of signs to appropriate cultural messages is important for looking at how these young women defined their unique and dynamic senses of self. Tools of narrative construction within an interview setting differ from those in a classroom, a group of friends, or

on-line. The oral narratives captured in the interview transcripts referred to mediational means with which these young women interacted on a daily basis. These tools and signs were not only verbally manifested: Both Ember and Chloe used the tools of construction found in their oral narratives as they do in other arenas in their lives. For example, both young women were visual artists and communicated through images. Chloe was a singer and played the viola, so music was another mediational means through which she communicated. Ember's beliefs in Wicca introduced her to a metaphysical world that gave her a social life beyond her immediate life world. As it is impossible to extract preverbal thought or to assume another individual's meaning of a symbol, the analysis in this section relies on the tools identified in the first section of analysis in relation to the young women's expressed interests. I used information gained during the creation of the profiles and a version of recursive frame analysis (Chenail, 1995) to make inferences about the young women's definition of self.

Keyings. In order to understand how the narratives then became cultural tools for authoring self, I used Goffman's (1974) notion of keying (p. 44). Keys connect self constructions to the larger community of which they are member. To get at what makes these experiences real to the young women, I labeled each of the frames with certain keys and then discussed how the strips that made up the particular frame fit within those keys.

Keys are "the conventions by which a given activity, one already meaningful in terms of some primary framework, is transformed into something patterned on this activity but seen by the participants to be something quite else" (Goffman, 1974, p. 44). Goffman's definition of keying had five parts that included: 1) The objects involved with the activity are transformed from the original schema for which they were intended (i.e. a baseball bat gets used as a horse); 2) Participants are aware there is a transformation occurring; 3) Bracketing can occur when

keying begins and ends; 4) Keying is not restricted to any particular setting or environment; 5) Keying performs a crucial role in what we think is going on. Goffman suggested five basic keys - make believe, contests, ceremonials, technical redosings, and regroupings (pp. 41-75) that put limits on the frames in which they take place.

I then examined how their narrative framings had transformed their environment. The act of performing the narrative becomes both an attempt to establish identity and to legitimize the experience. Legitimized roles “represent the institutional order” (p. 74), so if in the interview setting a narrative is performed and accepted, a particular self is being authored and an experience codified in verbal form.

Macro and micro level analysis of narrative are necessary to achieve complementarity. In creating the profiles focused on the young women’s family and social history, education, and mental health concerns, I attempted to address issues that would come into play with the analysis of the frames experiences. The chosen strips of narrative represent a small portion of data from each of the young women’s data set. Yet, they were purposefully selected because they represent verbal snapshots of a complex process of self construction. As a researcher, I could only attend to what my personal culture allowed in the construction of the results, but my hope is that I have authored a self for Ember and Chloe that shows them both engaged in a dynamic and powerful process to change their life worlds through narrating their experiences.