Bruner's Search for Meaning: A Conversation between Psychology and Anthropology

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Abstract   We introduce a special issue of Ethos devoted to the work of Jerome Bruner and his careerlong attempts to seek innovative ways to foster a dialogue between psychology and anthropology. The articles in this special issue situate Bruner's meaning-centered approach to psychology and his groundbreaking work on narrative in the broader context of the developmental trajectory of both of fields of inquiry. Bruner's work has been enormously influential in the subfields of cultural psychology and psychological anthropology, especially because of his important contributions to our understanding of the intimate relationship between culture and mind. We examine Bruner's past and ongoing engagement with such luminary figures as Lev Vygotsky, Jean Piaget, Alfred Kroeber, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Clifford Geertz to highlight points of convergence and tension between his version of cultural psychology and contemporary theorizing and practice in psychological anthropology. We also review his practical and theoretical contributions to the fields of medicine, law, and education. [Jerome Bruner, cultural psychology, psychological anthropology, meaning, narrative, mind, culture]

Although Jerome Bruner has bemoaned the historical separation of anthropology and psychology, throughout his lengthy and distinguished career as a psychologist his work has had much impact on bringing these two disciplines together. The articles in this special issue of *Ethos* reflect the impact of psychology on anthropology and vice versa. They do so through a focus on the contributions of Bruner and the influence his work has had on anthropologists, as well as the ways in which his development of the subfield of cultural psychology has been influenced by anthropology.

For more than half a century, Bruner has insisted on the place of meaning in any psychological study of human activity and the human psyche. This fundamentally interpretive perspective is at the heart of the cognitive revolution he played a pivotal part in mounting in the late 1950s. His story of what inspired such a revolution is that psychology during this period was dominated by a behaviorism built on a stimulus response theory of human action. The meaning-centered psychology Bruner and his colleagues proposed was meant as a counter to this reductionist framework. He puts it this way: the aim of the cognitive

revolution "was to discover and to describe formally the meanings that human beings created out of their encounters with the world, and then to propose hypotheses about what meaning-making processes were implicated. It focused upon the symbolic activities that human beings employed in constructing and in making sense not only of the world, but of themselves" (1990:2). In this declaration, the seeds of an interdisciplinary study of human activity were laid, an interdisciplinarity that Bruner enthusiastically embraced in his own work. For, as he goes on to say, if meaning were to become the central term for psychology, then psychology would need to "join forces with its sister interpretive disciplines in the humanities and in the social sciences" (1990:2). Anthropology has been a particularly significant sister discipline for reasons that will quickly become apparent.

Bruner has never wavered from this declaration that meaning making must be at the heart of an investigation of activity and mind. Much of his intellectual contribution, which has been so wide ranging, can be traced to elaborations of what is at stake in taking meaning as the central problematic for psychology, and the social sciences. Anthropology has played a pivotal role because of a crucial intellectual move on Bruner's part, an insistence that meaning is not something either determined (more or less) by innate biological drives nor created (however intrapsychically) in the individual mind. Rather, to speak of meaning, one must begin, he declares emphatically, with the concept of "culture" rather than "biology." As he writes (1990), he set out to confront a view about the relation between biology and culture that the human sciences inherited from the 19th century. In that version, culture was conceived as an overlay on "biologically determined human nature. The causes of human behavior were assumed to lie in that biological substrate." What he argues instead "is that culture and the quest for meaning within culture are the proper causes of human action" (1990:20).

Culture is constitutive of meaning because everyday practices of meaning making draw from symbolic systems "already 'there,' deeply entrenched in culture and language" (1990:11). In Bruner's felicitous phrase, culture offers a "communal tool kit." This tool kit could not be considered, as it often was, as something merely "added" onto nature. Rather, Bruner remarks that a "great divide" in evolution was crossed with the introduction of language and culture. He quotes Geertz to emphasize his point: We humans are "incomplete or unfinished animals who complete or finish ourselves through culture" (1990:12). Bruner's declaration that humans are fundamentally culture makers speaks to a remarkable history of theoretical work. What is especially astonishing about Bruner's intellectual career is the sheer versatility of his projects, his willingness to think broadly, to cross all sorts of disciplinary divides in his creative quest to understand the human mind. Geertz paints a vivid portrait:

> There are, in psychology, a great many more of the resolved and implacable, *esprit de systeme* types (Pavlov, Freud, Skinner, Piaget, Chomsky) than there are of the agile and adaptable, *esprit de finesse* ones (James, Bateson, Sacks). But it is among the latter that Jerome Bruner, author or coauthor of more than twenty books, and god knows how

many articles, on almost as many subjects, clearly belongs. In a breathless, lurching, yet somehow deeply consecutive career spanning nearly sixty years, Bruner has brushed against almost every line of thought in psychology and transformed a number of them. [2000:188]

Throughout Bruner's career, first at Harvard, then Oxford, and more recently at New York University, the concept of "culture" as articulated by anthropologists has been present. Sometimes it has been submerged and muted, as during the height of his foundational work that led to the cognitive revolution in psychology, and sometimes it has been articulated more overtly, as in his current elaboration of what he and others have labeled "cultural psychology." Despite Bruner's longstanding interest in culture and his view that anthropology and psychology should be more closely aligned, he has been skeptical of certain directions anthropologists have taken in their move toward psychology. As will become evident in what follows, he had particular difficulties with what undoubtedly for decades was held by many both within and outside the discipline to constitute cultural anthropology's most concerted efforts to bring the two fields together: the culture and personality school. He found a truly useful anthropological foundation for a cultural psychology only with subsequent disciplinary shifts, particularly the rise of anthropology's interpretive school. The development of cultural psychology entails a changing set of conversations between psychology and anthropology briefly sketched below.

Shifting Conversations between Psychology and Anthropology and the Rise of Cultural Psychology: A Brief History

Within anthropology there has long been an interest in things psychological. Thus, for example, when the British zoologist turned anthropologist, A. C. Haddon, organized the first Cambridge University ethnographic expedition to Melanesia in 1898, he brought along three psychologists, William McDougall, Charles S. Myers, and W. R. Rivers as part of the research team. At the last minute, a physician destined to make important contributions to both psychology and anthropology, C. G. Seligman, also joined the party.[1]

Psychology played a critical role in the training of some early anthropologists. For example, Wilhelm Wundt, the eminent 19th-century German psychologist to whom Bruner refers in his article in this issue, had future anthropologists Franz Boas and Bronislaw Malinowski as two of his many students. As Bruner points out, Wundt among his many interests, included the study of *Volkerpsychologie* (folk psychology) defined as "the psychological explanation of the thought, belief, and action of primitive man on the basis of the facts supplied by ethnology" (Wundt 1916:7). When Franz Boas immigrated to the United States, he pursued his single-minded offensive against scientific racism (1911). Using evidence from a variety of sources, he argued that "there is no fundamental difference in the ways of thinking of primitive and civilized man . . . [thus] the view cannot be maintained that the present races of man stand on different stages of evolutionary series and that civilized man has attained a higher place in mental organization than primitive man" (Boas 1911:8). Relatively little

original research was done on the subject of comparative thought processes after this until the late 1950s with the birth of cognitive anthropology (Bock 1988:21).

By the 1920s, the influence of Sigmund Freud and his disciples, including the renegade psychoanalyst, C. G. Jung, had had an impact on both American and British anthropology (Bock 1988). Thus, for example, Bronislaw Malinowski used data from the matrilineal Trobriand Islanders to challenge the universality of Freud's formulation of the Oedipus complex (Stocking 1986), and Margaret Mead (1930) used material from the Manus Islanders to amend Freud's findings. Anthropologists' fascinations with Freud and psychoanalysis may be the most telling reason that Bruner, initially interested in understanding cognition, felt that this focus on refining psychoanalytic theory in light of cross-cultural data, offered little of interest to him.

However, there was another point of confluence between psychology and anthropology that occurred during the 1920s that had a lasting impact on the development of what we now call "interpretive" anthropology, that mode of anthropological inquiry most concerned with understanding symbols and their role in the creation of meaning. It was marked by anthropologists' adoption of the psychologists' notion of configuration or pattern. As Bruner has written, "gestalt theory was the prime exemplar of the configurationist trend in those early years. Its credo was that all systems—physical, biological, and mental—have the intrinsic character of controlling the local elements that compose them" (2004:16). Moreover, it was believed that "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts." For several anthropologists, including Edward Sapir, Ruth Benedict, and Benedict's protégée Margaret Mead, the concept of "cultural configuration," which they derived from the psychological notion of configurationism, became a powerful tool of cultural analysis, one that was most extensively elaborated by Benedict in her best-selling books *Patterns of Culture* (1934) and *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946).[2]

Bruner, beginning with his undergraduate years at Duke University in the mid-1930s where he had a roommate studying anthropology, was clearly aware of the anthropologists' concept of "culture." In those early years, however, the anthropological notion of culture seemed to him disconnected from the phenomenon of mind as studied by laboratory-based psychologists. And it was toward laboratory-based experimental psychology that Bruner gravitated in his choice of Harvard for graduate school.

However, during the 1940s and 1950s at Harvard a newly established interdisciplinary Department of Social Relations, took up residence on one floor of William James Hall while the old Department of Psychology (where Bruner's newly established Center for Cognitive Studies was located), occupied another floor. Quite tellingly, Bruner chose to teach in both departments. As he has said, the Department of Social Relations "became my new home. I embraced it. But I never could shed the 'old Department' as a 'reference group.'"[3] As a result of his dual departmental associations, Bruner was tuned into the dialogues Harvard anthropologists Clyde Kluckhohn and John Whiting, who also taught in the Department of

Social Relations, were having with other psychologically oriented anthropologists of the "Culture and Personality" School such as Benedict, Mead, Gregory Bateson, and Ralph Linton.

Eschewing psychoanalysis designed for Freud's Vienna and research focused on culture and personality where the intellectual marriage of topics "brought out" as Bruner later commented, "the worst in both spouses," he nonetheless maintained a keen awareness of the myriad number of different ways children are raised in different cultures. He recognized the importance of child care as a significant force in enculturation, for example, the processes of shaping of a Balinese baby that subsequently shape an adult member of Balinese society (Bruner 2000:ix–xii). And, in fact, reading *Personality*, Gordon Allport's (1937) classic introduction to the anthropological study of personality during the summer of 1938 had, Bruner said, "predisposed him to go to Harvard" [where Allport taught] rather than Yale for graduate school (Bruner 1983:35).

Overall, however, the study of personality in general, a subject of interest to many psychologists as well as psychoanalysts, was not a topic that engaged Bruner intellectually. "What puts me off 'personality theory,'" Bruner writes, "is its decontextualized way of dealing with motives and dispositions. It lacks a sense of place and of setting" (1983:136).

What initially attracted anthropologists to the study of personality was their conviction that a focus on personality afforded them a way to study the individual in relation to his or her culture. Thus, for example, for Edward Sapir the locus of culture was the individual, not some externalized superorganic force, as Alfred Kroeber had posited (cf. Bruner this issue). For Sapir, the study of individual personality was a means to understanding "a system that seeks and creates meaning." In identifying personality as a system rather than simply a set of traits, Sapir's thinking reflected the influence of gestalt psychology, with its emphasis on pattern and configuration, that is, the organization of experience into psychologically significant units.[4] For Sapir, "every person has a unique culture because, first, his personal history brings him into contact with a unique configuration of influences in a manner consistent with the unique organization of his personality" (Handler 2005: 116). Culture, moreover, is not fixed or static, but subject to change as it is continually reinterpreted by individual personalities (Handler 2005). At the University of Chicago Sapir taught a course called "The Psychology of Culture." In 1931, he was invited to join the Institute of Human Relations at Yale, where he created a seminar on "The Impact of Culture on Personality." The seminar was to cover "the meaning of culture, its psychological relevance for personality, its value relativity and the problem of reconciling personality variations and cultural variations."[5]

During the late 1920s and throughout the 1930s, anthropologists such as Sapir, Benedict, Mead, Cora Du Bois, and Linton increasingly engaged in cross-disciplinary dialogues with psychologists and psychiatrists such as Lawrence Frank, Abram Kardiner, and Harry Stack Sullivan. They were joined by a growing number of European émigré psychoanalysts,

including Karen Horney, Erich Fromm, and Erik Erikson, who congregated in New York City during the 1930s after fleeing an increasingly fascist Europe. Anthropologists were invited to give talks at the New York Psychoanalytic Institute, where psychiatrist Abram Kardiner taught seminars on psychocultural theory. Eventually, at Ralph Linton's behest, Kardiner moved his seminar from the institute to the Department of Anthropology at Columbia University (Manson 1986:72–94). Both psychiatrists and anthropologists stood to benefit from this interdisciplinary dialogue. According to Sapir, cultural anthropology

> is valuable [to psychiatry] because it is constantly rediscovering the normal. For the psychiatrist and for the student of personality in general this is of the greatest importance, for personalities are not conditioned by a generalized process of adjustment to "the normal" but by the necessity of adjusting to the greatest possible variety of idea patterns and action patterns according to the accidents of birth and biography. [1966:151]

Psychiatry could teach anthropologists how to do justice to the individual, not simply as a representative of a culture but as a bearer of specific ideas that have been culturally shaped (Sapir 1966:141). Indeed, it was contact with anthropologists that was responsible for producing the sensitivity to cultural context that psychoanalysts such as Horney and Erikson expressed in their work. Horney, for example, acknowledged the influence Ruth Benedict had on her major book, *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time* (1999).[6] Benedict also had a great impact on Erikson's work, as did anthropologists Scudder Mekeel, Bateson, and Mead.[7] Thus, indirectly anthropologists played a role in the development of Erikson's foundational concept of identity as he developed the concept in *Childhood and Society* (1963).

For Bruner, however, just as problematic as most personality theorists' decontextualization of the individual or, as with Erikson, his neo-Freudian orientation, was their lack of interest in the study of the mind and in the process of meaning making. It was his concern to study the development or evolution of mind that led Bruner, long before structural, cognitive, and interpretive anthropologists in the United States, to take an interest in the postwar work of Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky. Although the developmental psychologist Piaget was wrong in many of his details, according to Bruner,

> he made a tremendous contribution to our understanding of the mind of the child and how it grows, and indeed to our understanding of mind in general. And I think he did it in much the same way as Claude Levi-Strauss has made his contribution to our understanding of human culture—by insisting on its structures and connectedness, its deep rules, its derivative structures. [Bruner 1983:138]

For Bruner, Piaget's structuralism was a commitment to a quietism and isolation of the individual that was quite off-putting. "So the child who is father to the man in the Piagetian world is indeed a calm child and a lone one" (1983:138–139).

Vygotsky's world however was an utterly different place. Growing up in that world, Bruner noted, "is full of achieving consciousness and voluntary control, of learning to speak and then finding out what it means, of clumsily taking over the forms and tools of the culture and then learning how to use them appropriately" (1983:139). These themes of Vygotsky's work also entered anthropological consciousness. As Bruner thoughtfully wrote in his preface to the MIT Press edition of Vygotsky's *Thought and Language* (1973) though the volume's principle theme is "the relation of thought and language, it is more deeply a presentation of a highly original and thoughtful theory of intellectual development. Vygotsky's conception of development is at the same time a theory of education" (Bruner 1973:v).

As Bruner also writes in his introduction, Vygotsky was the architect of what stimulus-response psychologist Pavlov called the "Second Signal System," a system that mediates between the individual and the world of physical stimulation so that the individual can react "in terms of his own symbolic conception of reality" (1973:x). It is this insight that was of most interest to anthropologists, for here is where the concept of culture comes into play. Summing up the difference between Piaget and Vygotsky, Bruner notes: "Piaget's genius was to recognize the fundamental role of logiclike operations in human mental activity. Vygotsky's was to recognize that individual human intellectual power depended upon our capacity to appropriate human culture and history as tools of mind" (1996a:2).

What captivated Bruner most in Vygotsky's work was his consideration of context as a critical element shaping mental development. It was during the 1960s that Bruner and his graduate students directly encountered evidence of the role that cultural context played in the development of mind. They discovered it quite dramatically as a result of the research Bruner's students were conducting in places such as Africa, where Patricia Greenfield studied schooled and unschooled Wolof children in Senegal, and in Alaska, where Lee Reich worked among Eskimos. Bruner and his students published the results of this research in *Studies in Cognitive Growth* (Bruner et al. 1966). It was, Bruner reflects, a book "whose comparison of Western children to the Wolof of Senegal and Eskimos gave heart to those who were culturally oriented." But it was also a book, he said, "that was really out of step with the drumbeat to which developmental psychology was then marching" (1983:146). However, it is with the research in this book that the fields of anthropology and psychology begin to intertwine again in new complex and generative ways that have led to the creation of what we now call "cultural psychology."

At the same time that Bruner and his student Patricia Greenfield were studying Wolof children in Senegal, Michael Cole's cognitive research on mathematical concepts among the Kpelle children of Liberia (conducted with his colleague John Gay) was leading Cole to engage more directly with anthropologists and linguists to better understand the cultural context of learning and thinking (Cole et al. 1971; Gay and Cole 1967). Like Bruner, Cole realized the important role of language and symbolization in cognition and, thus, the impact of culture on mind and meaning making. While psychologists such as Bruner, Greenfield, and Cole were approaching these issues from a cognitive perspective, psychologically

oriented anthropologists were pursuing several different lines of investigation in their studies of cognition Yet other anthropologists were investigating the role of symbols and meaning in the development of mind, self, and emotion and reinvigorating the anthropological interrogation of the concept of culture through the development of the fields of interpretive anthropology and culture theory, predecessors to what anthropologists now also call "cultural psychology."

One of the most important spokesmen in the development of interpretive anthropology and the field of culture theory is Geertz, himself a product of Harvard's Department of Social Relations. In 1973 he published his seminal volume of articles, *The Interpretation of Culture*. Although the most renowned piece in the collection is Geertz's "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," there are two other articles in the collection that warrant historical attention: "The Impact of the Concept of Culture on the Concept of Man" and "The Growth of Culture and the Evolution of Mind" (Geertz 1973). For it is these two articles that herald the beginning of what today anthropologists such as Richard Shweder and Bradd Shore, early theorists in the subfield, refer to as "cultural psychology."

In his article on culture and the evolution of the mind, Geertz refers to Bruner's work, along with that of several other psychologists and scientists concerned with the study of the evolution of human behavior and especially with the development of the human mind. Specifically, Geertz cites Bruner and Postman's (1947) article on "Emotional Selectivity in Perception and Reaction" to underscore his point that in order for humans to act they need "guidance from symbolic models of emotion" (Bruner and Postman 1947:69–77). In other words, "in order to make up our minds we must know how we feel about things; and to know how we feel about things we need the public images of sentiment that only ritual, myth, and art can provide" (Geertz 1973:82).

Bruner's early writings on perception also directly impacted the thinking of Irving A. Hallowell, arguably one of the most contemporarily influential psychological anthropologists of his generation. Indeed, in an article entitled "Rorschach Test in Personality and Culture" (1967), Hallowell seeks to underscore the "cultural factors in the structuralization of perception" by building directly upon Bruner and Postman (1947) as well as one of Bruner's earlier articles "Perceptual Theory and the Rorschach Test" (1948). Citing Bruner's article, Hallowell (1967:39–40) notes that Bruner pointed out that "a case can be made that Rorschach implicitly provided the axiom around which the first chapter of a dynamic theory of perception must be built ... 'the principle that every performance of a person is an expression of his whole personality'—perception included" (1948:157–158).[8] Following Bruner and Postman, Hallowell highlights the necessary relationship of perception to action, stating that

> the generic function of perception needs to be construed with reference to how the individual is prepared to behave in a world that is ordered, stable and meaningful for him. It can scarcely be maintained that the human being undergoes perceptual

adjustment to an abstract world-at-large, or without being influenced in any way by the experience of others. On the contrary, the objects of his world and their properties are those which become ordered and meaningfully defined for him by the kind of discriminations, classifications, concepts, qualities and values that are emphasized by his culture. [1967:40]

It was thus in dialogue with Bruner's early writings on perception that Hallowell suggests that subjective experience necessarily arises in "a system of interdependent relations between learning, the structure and functioning of the human personality and the dynamics of perceiving" (1967:40), an insight that has deeply influenced the thinking of psychological anthropologists since Hallowell's day.

Troubling the Waters in Contemporary Times: Intersections between Psychological Anthropology and Bruner's Cultural Psychology

Contemporary psychological anthropology is a field that has expanded to incorporate many perspectives that impact understanding of subjective experience: practice theory, cognitive science, neuroscience, evolutionary psychology, relational psychoanalysis, Vygostkian activity theory, phenomenology, and embodiment, to name only a few. That said, a good number of psychological anthropologists have sought to underscore the fact that it is never simply the case that a tabula rasa mind is confronted by, internalizes, and then subsequently reproduces cultural forms.

Such a "fax model" of culture and subjectivity (Strauss and Quinn 1997) is one of the most prevalently criticized perspectives in contemporary psychological anthropological theorizing. An interest in debunking such "fax models" in the service of recognizing the complexities inherent in the internalization of cultural meaning is perhaps what most distinguishes contemporary psychological anthropologists' concerns from those of their peers (Throop 2003). As Bruner notes in his contribution to this issue of *Ethos*, it is perhaps what also distinguishes cultural psychologists from many of their colleagues in psychology. The recognition of the personalization of received cultural forms—a process that is affected by an individual's social positioning, particularized life trajectory, and the complexity and fluidity of subjective life as mediated through everyday interactions, concerns, and attachments—is one prevalent perspective in this tradition in psychological anthropology. Ideas concerning the impact of pregiven mental structures, functions, and processes, whether those have been deemed to be cognitively, psychodynamically, or evolutionarily based, is yet another.

This most recent trend in psychological anthropological theorizing seems to contrast at times rather sharply, however, with Bruner's dialogue with such key anthropological figures as Lévi-Strauss, Geertz, and even Kroeber. Yet it is Bruner's creative use of these thinkers that arguably contributes most directly to the subversive nature of his envisioning of cultural psychology. For a good number of psychological anthropologists, however, Lévi-Strauss, Kroeber, and Geertz promote approaches to cultural subjectivities that are viewed as having

largely, if not at times completely, dispensed with the dynamism and complexity of subjective experience, a fact of which Bruner is well aware.

Indeed, Lévi-Strauss's neo-Kantian structuralist assumptions about the ways in which the universal structure of the human mind ultimately shapes its otherwise culturally variegated products, pays scant attention to how myths, symbols, and tropes are embodied, experienced, and communicated by actors at particular times and in particular contexts. Similarly, even though his writings on self, emotion, and mind have served as a touchstone for anthropologists interested in pursuing a dialogue with culture and psychology, Geertz' interpretive view of culture as a text, his thoroughly semiotic understanding of subjective experience, and his reliance on such influential antimentalistic philosophers as Gilbert Ryle and Ludwig Wittgenstein, renders the Geertzian social actor an agent with an all too "thin" subjective life.

Residues (often quite explicit) of psychoanalytic influence are discernable in this call for recognition of the emotional and imaginal complexity of subjective life present in current strains of psychological anthropological critiques of structural and interpretivist anthropology. However, intracultural variation, the directive or motivational force of cultural schemas, and the distinct personalized inflection of otherwise shared cultural forms, are as much a concern of psychological anthropologists drawing from cognitive and phenomenological traditions, as of those who ascribe more explicitly to such psychoanalytic influences. No doubt a number of psychological anthropological readers may question Bruner's tendency to reference antipsychologistic anthropological perspectives. However, his consistent emphasis upon complexities of subjective life avoid a full embrace of psychoanalysis (as Lutkehaus notes in this issue), and his attention to the ways that narrative both reflects and helps individuals navigate such complexity, points to a critical and creative use of structural and interpretivist thinkers in articulating a vision of cultural psychology.

Bruner's use of Vygotsky resonates with a number of influential perspectives in contemporary psychological anthropology (see, for instance, Holland and Lave 2001). In highlighting the activity and agency of cultural actors, engaging in careful reflection upon the concrete mechanisms through which cultural forms are transmitted in the context of social practice, and focusing on the ways in which cultural artifacts mediate human activity (see Cole 1996), Vygotsky's cultural–historical psychology has indeed found much purchase in current psychological anthropological.

It is perhaps Bruner's view on the central role of narrative in mediating human experience and action, however, that serves as the key bridging construct between his vision of cultural psychology and contemporary interests in subjective experience in psychological anthropology. It is not only that a story is, in some basic sense about motives, dealing as it does with "the vicissitudes of human intentions" (Bruner 1986:16). But, more radically, as Mattingly suggests in her article, deciphering intentions depends upon our ability to place action

within unfolding narrative contexts, that is, our interpretive capacity to infer motives requires placing an act within the context of an unfolding story (Bruner this issue).

Narrative, Cognition, and the Self

One of Bruner's most powerful contributions to discussions in both psychology and anthropology has been his startling and brilliant considerations of narrative as a mode of reasoning, as a form of language, as a crucial "communal tool" for ongoing sense-making and structuring practical action, and as a vehicle for creating self identity. For the past 20 years, he has been systematically developing what is essentially a narrative view of culture and mind, arguing that reality itself is narratively constructed. This narrative perspective has been articulated in a host of articles and books—beginning, most famously, with several chapters in *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*, in which he puts forward the claim that narrative "deals with the vicissitudes of human intention" (1986:13). This is a reasonable enough observation about narrative. It is not, in itself, especially surprising. The surprise comes from his subsequent assertion—that the concept of intention is itself "irreducible" in the human mind. It is one of the primary ways humans apprehend and interpret their world, one of two primary modes of thought. "Intention," Bruner remarks, "is immediately and intuitively recognizable: it seems to require for its recognition no complex or sophisticated interpretive act on the part of the beholder" (1986:17). He proposes that there may even be a biological basis for narrative apprehension of the world, a kind of "human readiness for narrative," that is a "predisposition to organize experience into a narrative form, into plot structures and the rest" (1990:45).

In a well known chapter in *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds* entitled "Two Modes of Thought," Bruner connects stories to a kind of thinking rooted in a primitive propensity to interpret behavior in terms of intention: "one can make a strong argument for the irreducible nature of the concept of intention (much as Kant did for the concept of causation)" (1986:17). He turns to some fascinating psychological experiments to make this case. These experiments reinforce the idea that even when shown simple nonhuman figures (e.g., triangles and circles) put into motion, humans irresistibly ascribe animacy in which the figures are perceived as connected to each other and as moving in intentional ways (1986:17–19). Research subjects describe and connect these intentional movements narratively, inventing plots in which large rectangular bullies chase smaller circles and triangles, for instance. Bruner moves from the "unworded narratives" in these experiments to narrative discourse, adding other key features to narrative thought.

Following scholars in anthropology, history, and literary theory, Bruner asserts that all stories integrate plights, characters, and consciousness (1986:21). He gives special place to the notion that stories typically concern a breach from some canonical state of affairs. He also privileges the way that narratives "subjunctivize" reality, "trafficking in human possibilities rather than settled certainties" (1986:26). Stories, in other words, present the world not as it necessarily or always is, as settled facts, but as—and here he follows

Todorov—"psychologically in process, and as such contingent or subjunctive" (1986:29). As Roland Barthes has said, in stories, we know that things could be otherwise.

In *Acts of Meaning*, published four years later, Bruner again introduces narrative as a primary mode of thought. But here he focuses on the connection between narrative and culture. The bare bones of Bruner's argument about the centrality of narrative to an understanding of human cognition begins with his assertion that what any "mental science" needs is to investigate the "concept of meaning and the processes by which meanings are created and negotiated within a community" (1990:11). With such a charge one must begin with culture.

Culture provides deeply entrenched "symbolic systems" offering tools necessary to construct meaning. Humans are born into worlds constituted by these already-there symbolic systems. Bruner speaks of meaning in terms of a classically anthropological notion of culture. Meaning, via culture, is "rendered public and shared" (1990:12–13). He is emphatic about the possibility of interpretation—of figuring out what others are up to—precisely because of the public nature of meaning. "However ambiguous or polysemous our discourse may be, we are still able to bring our meanings into the public domain and negotiate them there...Interpretation, however 'thick' it might become, must be publicly accessible or the culture falls into disarray and its individual members with it" (1990:13). A culture provides a canon for making sense of what others are up to, and it even provides "procedures of negotiation...for getting back on track when canonical relations are violated" (1990:19). Culture gives us the possibility of reading other minds because a cultural world is one where meanings are public and communal, rather than individual and private.

Bruner's notion of "culture" is thoroughly pragmatic, constructivist, antiessentialist, and pluralist. He notes with approval the "pluralism of modern life," suggesting a more complex view of culture than a singular form of life or an unproblematic commitment to shared values. Rather, his constructivism leads him to embrace "open-mindedness" or the "willingness to construe knowledge and values from multiple perspectives without loss of commitment to one's own values" (1990:30). His cultural psychology rests on this vision: "I take the constructivism of cultural psychology to be a profound expression of democratic culture" (1990:3).

With Bruner's focus on narrative as cultural, he introduces yet another kind of connection between narrative and culture, for his notion of culture is also narrative. In entering (cultural) life, individuals enter a story that has begun before them and one in which they will be helped in understanding through the aid of elders:

> It is as if we walk on stage into a play whose enactment is already in progress—a play whose somewhat open plot determines what parts we may play and toward what denouements we may be heading. Others on stage already have a sense of what the play is about, enough of a sense to make negotiations with the newcomer possible. [1990:34]

This metaphor of culture as drama prepares the way for his argument that what cultural psychology most needs to concern itself with is "folk psychology" or, in other words, "common sense." Common sense in any cultural domain offers "more or less normative descriptions about how human beings 'tick,' what our own and other minds are like, what one can expect situated action to be like" (1990:35) and other practical matters necessary to get around in a particular world. Narrative thinking is essential here; the organizing principle of folk psychology is narrative rather than logical or conceptual. For what does folk psychology concern itself with? The very material that constitutes a story: "human agents doing things on the basis of their beliefs and desires, striving for goals, meeting obstacles which they best or which best them, all of this extended over time" (1990:42–43). As Shore notes, "In this vision, storytelling is not so much our way of communicating meaning as it is the very workshop of meaning-making" (this issue). Shore further notes Bruner's insistence that while narrative may be an inherent capacity of mind (therefore biologically given), and in that sense a "global human capacity" it is very much a learned one, a "local skill shaped by historically and culturally specific narrative resources" (this issue). Shore's article in this issue offers an ethnographically rich documentation of just this local process as he examines camp meeting life in Salem, Georgia as a space where "family union tradition . . . underwrites the production of family narratives."

As we can see from connections drawn among narrative, culture, and "common sense," in Bruner's framing, culture is not fundamentally narrative because what happens in life is necessarily dramatic. Quite the contrary. Bruner argues that culture offers us the interpretive tools to render things ordinary, banal, and thus comprehensible. He turns to a staple of cognitive psychology and cognitive anthropology—the notion of the schema to develop his argument. Relying especially upon Bartlett's classic work, he argues that our perceptions of experience, and the processes for remembering them, are ordered in narrative fashion by narrative schemas. These narrative schemas are informed by "larger-scale narratives" that are part of "folk psychological conceptions of the world" (1990:59). Living in a cultural world means being enveloped in locally canonical cultural schemas, schemas we have learned as part of our induction into a particular social world. These schemas (or standard stories) allow people to maneuver with comparative ease, making sufficient sense of one another to carry out daily practices in the scenes of everyday life.

But culture also offers narrative tools for encountering and accounting for transgressions. Culture may have as its key task making things ordinary or banal, but it also provides the resources for dealing with ongoing breaches of the canonical. And it is the play between the ordinary and the extraordinary that is the stuff of stories we choose and need to tell. Culture offers us a way of mediating between the ordinary and the extraordinary, a fundamental part of the on-going work of figuring out situations. In all of his works on narrative, Bruner underscores breaches. He declares that "it is only when constituent beliefs in a folk psychology are violated that narratives are constructed" (1990:39).

It might seem paradoxical to connect narrative thought to *both* the culturally canonical—to folk psychological expectations of how one should, for example, "do post office"—and also to those very situations in which the expected is flouted. How is narrative thought of at the heart of our interpretations of the usual but, yet, only ever reaches discourse when things go awry? In addressing this puzzle, Bruner reiterates that culture offers people canonical ways of acting, but—because of the pluralism and multiple perspectives inherent in any cultural world—it also provides a way to interpret and negotiate through deviations from some expected norm of behavior, differences of meaning and belief. A viable culture, he insists, must have an available repertoire of interpretive strategies directed precisely to render "departures from those norms meaningful in terms of established patterns of beliefs" (1990:47). Narratives forge links between the expected and the unusual. Stories provide means for explaining why things have gone in a surprising direction; they simultaneously depict the ordinary and departures from it. They also continually highlight the negotiated, situated, and interpreted quality of social life, even the recognition that others, operating from another perspective, could tell a different story.

In anthropology a close ally in the development of Bruner's narrative theory of mind is to be found in work of those scholars who ascribe to a hermeneutic or interpretivist approach. Although interpretive anthropology has not made narrative a core concept, its emphasis on humans as meaning makers and interpreters—cultural mind readers—is congruent with Bruner's narrative framework. Notably, Geertz's notion of "thick description"—a corner-stone construct of interpretive anthropology—has close kinship to Bruner's narrative conception of mind reading. Geertz points out that what anthropologists are doing is not so much making observations of the way things are but making "thick descriptions"—anthropological interpretations of how cultural actors are interpreting their world, and what these interpretations lead them to do. "What we call our data," Geertz famously notes, "are really our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to" (1973:9). In this sense, Geertz goes on to conclude: "Right down at the factual base, the hard rock, insofar as there is any, of the whole [anthropological] enterprise, we are already explicating: and worse, explicating explications" (1973:9).

Bruner gains inspiration from interpretive anthropologists such as Geertz in forging his cultural psychology but he also challenges anthropology to recognize the centrality of narrative to cultural interpretation. One could say that Bruner offers to anthropology a particular, narrative way of understanding what anthropologists are doing when they are explicating explications. A key anthropological task, one that has been at the heart of psychological anthropological research since its inception, is articulating and interpreting folk psychologies evidenced in particular encounters and events. In carrying out this task and rendering these events through "thick descriptions," anthropologists are telling stories of other people's stories. Interestingly, as Bruner himself has pointed out, Geertz's classic illustration of thick description is in fact, a story (2005). It relates a tale of a certain Jewish trader named Cohen who comes to grief when, robbed by some Berber tribesman, he complains to the French authorities that he wants recompense for the sheep stolen. The

trader's attempts to receive just retribution for the theft, following traditional Berber practices, only get him in trouble with the French authorities, who, being ignorant of Berber traditions, completely misunderstand Cohen's actions and throw him into prison.

Geertz offers us a story of cultural confusions and misunderstandings between the Berber and French authorities in 1912 Morocco, exemplified in a single, dramatic event. And, notably, Geertz' story isn't just "narrative" in some universal sense but narrative of a particular cultural sort, one that has particular and continuing salience in the contemporary world. For Geertz might have told a tragic tale of Cohen, the Jewish trader: people are murdered, Cohen is imprisoned, and his family believe him to be dead. But in Geertz's hands, it is rendered as a darkly ironic comedy of errors, a handy narrative genre for an anthropologist exploring the foibles and fatal possibilities of cultural misunderstanding. Geertz, in other words, is not only giving us a story but a story that is itself a product of his own cultural world. As Bruner argues, narrative is central to interpretation but it is also locally, culturally shaped. The narratives through which people make sense of the world are culturally specific: they come in certain, culturally available types, genres that provide a repertoire of possible, tellable tales.

Recognition of the impact of culturally articulated narratives on the interpretive schemas of social actors has been implicit in the work of many cultural anthropologists (see, for instance, Mattingly and Garro 2000). It has been explicit in much of the cultural psychology inspired by Bruner and has indeed significantly influenced the writing of many thinkers who self-identify as psychological anthropologists (see, for instance, Shore 1996). It is interesting to consider how this particular approach may differ from, and yet complement, the use of narrative to assess tensions between personal and collective forms of understanding (cf. Obeyesekere 1981; Hollan 2000). For individuals drawing from person-centered (Levy and Hollan 1998, Hollan 2001) and phenomenological (Csordas 1990, 1994) approaches in psychological anthropology, for instance, such narrated stories may be mined for evidence of underlying dynamics of conflict and complexity in an individual's psychic life. Or, possibly, for evidence of competing sensory and embodied registers of experience not exhausted in narrative form. In this respect, there is ample opportunity for readers to work to further engage in an examination of the ways in which Brunerian cultural psychology and more person-centered–phenomenological approaches to narrative, cognition, and self-experience in psychological anthropology importantly inform and challenge one another.

It is typical of Bruner's intellectual reach that he has not been content to articulate this narrative framework only for psychology or the human sciences. He has also pondered its relevance for practical matters. He has explored and expanded his understanding through an exploration of two enterprises of immense importance: education and law. A careful examination of Amsterdam and Bruner's (2000) analysis of reason in law, and, especially, the role of narrative in guiding this reasoning, is found in Brenneis's contribution to this issue.

Bruner's work on narrative has had enormous significance in other practical domains as well, most notably medicine (Charon and Montello 2002; Good and Good 2000; Mattingly 1998). It may be surprising to some readers that with so many practical contributions extending from Bruner's ongoing interest in narrative that Geertz (2000) has also made the intriguing observation that Bruner's narrative theory of culture and meaning making is radical, far more radical than Bruner himself acknowledges or, perhaps, even recognizes:

> there remains the sense that Bruner is underestimating the explosiveness of his own ideas. To argue that culture is socially and historically constructed, that narrative is a primary, in humans perhaps the primary, mode of knowing, that we assemble the selves we live in out of materials lying about in the society around us and develop "a theory of mind" to comprehend the selves of others, that we act not directly on the world but on beliefs we hold about the world, that from birth on we are all active, impassioned "meaning-makers" in search of plausible stories, and that "mind cannot in any sense be regarded as 'natural' or naked, with culture thought of as an add-on" . . . amounts to adopting a position that can fairly be called radical, not to say subversive. [2000:196]

One way to read the articles collected in this issue of *Ethos* is as attempts to grapple with and reconcile the at times "subversive" nature of Bruner's idea of cultural psychology. Indeed, whether it is in terms of ruptures evidenced where individuals work to reconcile radically differing cultural assumptions with one another, in gaps that seem unbridgeable when mediating differing levels of analysis between collective and individual phenomena, or in terms of ever-persistent epistemological debates over solipsism, intersubjectivity, and the problem of other minds, contributors and readers of this issue alike must themselves draw from a set of cultural narratives ready at hand to make sense of complexities and mysteries of human existence and social life. A number of compelling fault lines may be mapped in the wake of Bruner's writings, and it is toward the most challenging of these that we now turn.

The Possibility of a Universal Cultural Psychology

In Bruner's contribution to this issue he provides a brief critical history of what he believes to be a number of failed attempts to develop a truly generalizable cultural psychology. That is, a cultural psychology that is not merely descriptive but that works to delimit a universal appreciation of culture's impact on mental processes. Bruner's furthering of such a perspective is based in his view that it is universally the case that culture: (1) delimits and routinizes the ordinary, (2) limits and defines the possible, and (3) offers a means to makes sense of breaches or violations to what is otherwise culturally expected. It is thus through narrative, or storytelling, that individual actors are able to mediate transactions between the ordinary, the unexpected, and the possible.

While there are a number of important points of convergence between Bruner's vision of cultural psychology and the ways in which anthropologists (psychological and otherwise) have sought to think through the relationships between culture, mind, and activity, attempts

to delimit a universalistic theoretical stance provoke a skeptical, if not critical, response from some. As Bruner points out a longstanding hallmark of the anthropological enterprise has been the development of an almost existential unease when confronting received categories, particularly those that are offered as reflections of a universal truth.

It is in fact the very work of immersion in another culture—through participating directly in its shared practices, beliefs, assumptions, and perceptions—that anthropologists are able to begin the difficult work of confronting directly their own ingrained assumptions. Perhaps this viscerally inscribed sense of unease in the face of recognizing the conventionality of the ordinary fuels anthropological discomfort with proclamations of generalizable theory (cf. Brenneis this issue).

That said, it is interesting to point out that many of the anthropologists contributing to this issue have sought in various ways to answer Bruner's call to seek a universalistic cultural psychology necessarily embedded in the complexities and particularities of everyday life. In this light, Shore's chapter provides a rich ethnographic description of the historical, spiritual, and social nature of the annual Salem Camp Meeting in Georgia based on a more generalized discussion of practices of memory work that have implications stretching far beyond the camp's "tents." The repetitive, cyclical, and slow temporal rhythm of the annual meetings, Shore suggests, effect autobiographical memory, the organization of events in time, and the shaping of identity. It is in fact from this examination of camp life that Shore postulates the concept of hyperritualization as an intensive form of ritualized repetition intrinsically valued as a means to create a marked sacred time and space. His discussion of memory objects is also a topic that, while culturally and historically rooted in the specificity of the camp experience, is salient to other places, contexts, and times in which memories may become externalized in objectified forms.

For Shweder, the particularities and complexities of "traditions of medicine" in Orissa, India provide the framework to situate a discussion of what he and his associates have termed the "big three" causal ontologies or explanations for suffering. Like Shore, Shweder draws on particular cultural practices as a means to delimit and constrain possible universals of human forms of being-in-the-world. These include orientations to suffering that draw upon bodily (e.g., biomedical), interpersonal, and moral explanatory frameworks. In tacking between the particularities of traditions of medicine in Orissa, conceptions of health in the United States, and three causal ontologies of suffering held to arise in markedly different cultural and historical contexts around the globe, like Shore, Shweder is following in line with Bruner's vision of an ethnographically-based cultural psychology with more general implications.

Emplacing Culture: Memory, Meaning, and Practice

In critically engaging with Kroeber's (1917) notion of culture as "superorganic" and Geertz's view of culture as a way of "imagining the real," we are led to yet another way in which Bruner's vision of cultural psychology may challenge, and be challenged by, some

prevalent anthropological assumptions about the interface between cultural forms and individual subjective life. Indeed, many contemporary psychological anthropologists find themselves in accord with Sapir and not Kroeber, in believing that "All individuals tend to impress themselves on their social environment and, though generally to an infinitesimal degree, to make their individuality count in the direction taken by the never-ceasing flux that the form and content of social activity are inevitably subject to" (Sapir 1917:441). For it is, as Sapir observes, not the social group but, rather, "always the individual that really thinks and acts and dreams and revolts" (1917:442).

For cultural psychologists and psychological anthropologists alike, then (not to mention all serious theorists of culture), a key issue that arises from Bruner's perspective concerns the locus of culture, its distribution, and its effects (see also Mattingly this issue). While Bruner admits that much of his work has focused, with Vygotsky, on processes of internalization, he is also seriously invested in questioning how it is that individuals not only internalize cultural meanings but also how they "legitimize them by externalizing them into an institutionalized, superorganic world 'beyond' us" (Bruner this issue). And it is perhaps in his working to understand the sociohistorical persistence and weight of institutions like the American legal system that Bruner finds it compelling to critically rethink Kroeber's superorganicism in terms of his version of cultural psychology.

Questions of superorganicism aside, for most culture theorists, to discuss the inscription of culture on the level of individual experience is to broach questions of meaning, memory, and local forms in which memories and meanings are formed, transformed, and emplaced. This is, of course, as Lutkehaus observes (this issue), also implicated in Bruner's longstanding commitment to investigating how it is that cultural and social contexts impact individual learning and the acquisition of shared norms, values, and forms of understanding.

Whether we are thinking in terms of non-propositional and embodied forms of memory entailed in Pierre Bourdieu's (1977) notion of "habitus" or the declarative, episodic, and narratively cast traces of past experience articulated in the context of autobiographical memory (Garro 2001), there are always complex relations between individual memory, the effort after meaning, and the cultural resources that inform and afford such efforts (see also Garro 2000). The relevance of a Brunerian cultural psychology for foregrounding the role of culture, mediated through narrative practices, in formulating experience, memory, and social action, is perhaps most clearly evident in James Wertsch's, Shore's, and Mattingly's articles. Also evident in each of these articles are attempts to reconcile individuals' lived experiences with the impress of extraindividual forces.

For instance, Wertsch (this issue) considers the intersection of narrative and collective memory, siding with Bartlett (1932) in arguing that while the idea of a disembodied form of collective memory is tenuous at best, it is a fact that memory—its content, its form, and manner of recall—is importantly shaped by social, historical, and cultural contexts within which it arises. He advances the notion of schematic templates implicated in specific

communities of practice. While the content of specific narratives within communities and between individuals may vary considerably, Bruner suggests that collective forms of memory may be instilled in more basic, and less reflexively available, schematic narrative templates. These serve, in Bruner's words, as cookie cutters organizing the frame through which reality and history are perceived (2002:6–7). We see in Wertsch a concerted effort to elaborate the ways that collective forces are historically appropriated, carried forth, reflected, and transformed through the lens of individual experience and expression in narrative.

Shore's article also speaks directly to issues of the historical, social, and cultural shaping of memory, practice, and subjective experience. According to Shore, the camp provides a "theater of memory." As he puts it, "Over the three years I attended Salem camp meeting, talking, watching and listening, I began to realize that the power of the camp meeting was tied to its distinctive capacity to orchestrate memory." It provides a place to do "identity updating," which Shore defines as "not purely an internal process, but . . . [one] generally dependent on social supports. Birthday parties and celebrations, anniversaries, and all life-stage rites of passage help scaffold internal identity updating, reconciling a person's private sense of self with the person that others see" (this issue). The distinctly personal, local, and, yet, still cultural inflections of these memorial processes speak to the significance of thinking more carefully about the ways in which meaning, memory, and cultural forms dynamically interleave in lived experience and its perduring residues manifested in material, social, and imaginal forms. Shore's historical and ethnographic description of Salem camp places a different accent on the multifold interchange of collective and individual processes than is found in Wertsch's primary reliance on written narrative summaries of historical events in Russia.

Mattingly's article highlights the ways in which differing understandings of the definition and place of culture in turn affect the ways in which both psychological anthropologists and cultural psychologists go about conducting their theorizing and research. Mattingly's dynamic, hybridized, and pluralistic view of culture is based in analysis of real-time interactions between families and health care practitioners. Such interactions prove to be a significant site for the articulation, contestation, and transformation of cultural and personal meaning. Seeking out the at times ambiguous, contested, and, yet, generative sites of "blurred zones in between," Mattingly explores those instances where there is perceived to be little in the way of shared understandings between interlocutors. She states that "While Bruner focuses on narrative mind reading as a within-culture affair, I look to situations where there is a strong presumption among participants that they do not, in fact, share a cultural framework, situations where interactions very often reinforce participants' experiences of cultural difference" (this issue).

On Traveling to Fiji: Experimental Methods, Thick Description, and Participant-Observation

Doing cultural psychology is not solely a matter, according to Bruner, of going to a distant land to study differing forms of feeling, thinking, appreciating, and judging. It is instead a

practice of orienting to cultural influences on subjective life; cultural influences that must be taken seriously regardless of the context within which they occur. While there are a variety of different approaches to thinking about possible ways to orient to the cultural, methodology is key to the merits of a Brunerian cultural psychology. What precisely does it mean to take a cultural psychological approach to particular problems of human existence? How it is that cultural psychologists are able to access deeply ingrained and taken-for-granted assumptions about mental life without the contrastive canvas provided through examining subjective experience in the context of distinctive cultural relief? That is, is cultural psychology possible in zones of intimate familiarity with particular communities of practice to which one already belongs? Also, is it possible to be a cultural psychologist while employing experimental methods? Conversely, is thick description and participant-observation, long the hallmark of anthropological research, deemed to be essential to the enterprise of cultural psychology? Or are these two varieties of a number of suitable methodologies that may be employed?

These are questions far beyond the scope of these brief introductory comments. They are, however, questions that lie at the heart of attempts to define cultural psychology and its sister discipline psychological anthropology. Indeed, when we look to Shore's detailed ethnographic description of camp life in Georgia, Mattingly's longitudinally based microanalysis of interactions between African American families and health care practitioners, or Shweder's long-term ethnographic work in Orissa, we are presented with a vision of Brunerian cultural psychology that, while not necessarily mandating trips to far off lands, does rest solidly on naturalistic and qualitative methodologies that have defined anthropological approaches to the problem of culture, social action, and subjective experience.

Similarly, in Suzuki, Davis, and Greenfield's contribution, the authors collected data not from a laboratory procedure or standardized assessment measure but, rather, more anthropologically: from naturally occurring field settings, settings utilized by high school sports teams. In undertaking a cultural comparison of notions of self-enhancement and self-effacement in the context of four different ethnic groups and their participation in a multiethnic high school girls' sports teams, they argue that, "Even in these most natural of settings, strong evidence for individualistic and collectivistic models of praise and criticism emerged." Central to their research is the analysis of a variety of narrative based forms of data tied to descriptions of events and interactions that arise in such competitive settings. These are taken from players' self-reported journal entries and investigators field notes. Again a methodological approach familiar to anthropologists, psychologically oriented or otherwise.

It is true that Mattingly's, Shweder's, Shore's, and Suzuki and colleagues' articles rely to differing degrees on observation, and to some extent participation. However, there are differences between the descriptive quantification entailed in Suzuki and colleagues' integration of observation, journal writing, and reflexive assessments; Mattingly's combination of videotape and observational data; and Shweder's and Shore's more

traditional anthropological and qualitative approaches. Moreover, these naturalistic, qualitative, and observational approaches seem to contrast at times with what appear to be rather more "experience-distant" (Geertz 1973) forms of narrative and cognitive analyses undertaken by Wertsch. Wertsch's extremely insightful and penetrating analysis is oriented to explicitly reflexive modes of expression in the form of writing, a form of expression arguably at some remove from more embodied and sensory varieties of experience evident in everyday interactions that are the focus of observational and participatory qualitative methodologies.

Although methodological approaches are rarely in themselves definitive of a particular field of inquiry, the extent to which cultural psychologists and psychological anthropologists view their respective fields as being informed by particular methodological approaches, and the degree to which such approaches affect the development of theory, are implicated (at least implicitly) in the articles in this issue of *Ethos*. Whether traveling to Fiji or not, cultural psychologists and psychological anthropologists alike must continue to question how issues of methodology impact the validity, sufficiency, and quality of data employed to further particular theoretical and practical ends. The various methodological approaches entailed in the contributions to this issue may serve as a basis for beginning what must be an explicit and detailed reflection upon approaches to investigating the cultural patterning of subjective experience and social action.

Troubling the Waters between Theory and Practice: Bruner as Public Intellectual and Practical Theorist

A truly striking aspect of Bruner's influence is the extent to which his ideas have served to further not only research and theorizing in both psychology and anthropology but also have also directly shaped a number of practical concerns in the fields of law, education, and medicine. We have already mentioned several examples of how his work has reached into these arenas and contributions to the present collection speak to this practically engaged side of Bruner's work. Bruner's influence on education is especially well known and is also underscored in Lutkehaus's article. As she observes, in addition to his contributions to the field of educational psychology from the publication of *The Process of Education* in 1960 to *The Culture of Education* in 1996b, Bruner played a pivotal role in forming the national Head Start program and in the development of a new elementary school science curriculum, where he worked closely with anthropologists at Harvard to create the "Man, A Course of Study" (MACOS) curriculum. Indeed, both Head Start and the MACOS curriculum (which introduced anthropology for elementary school children) have had, and continue to have, a direct impact on generations of children and teachers. More recently his influence is perhaps most apparent to parents and teachers who are adherents of the "Reggio Emilia Approach" (or, simply, "the Reggio Approach") to preschool education. Bruner, attracted to the emphasis on children's symbolic language and the attention to the physical environment of the innovative preschool education started by parents in the villages around Reggio Emilia

in Italy, has been both an advisor to practioners of the Reggio Approach and an enthusiastic spokesperson to educators and parents in the United States and abroad (Cadwell 2003; Rinaldi 2006).

His consideration of narrative as a mode of thinking has had enormous influence in the study of clinical practices. Scholars in medical anthropology, sociology, and psychology have drawn on his work in their investigations of illnesses and healing narratives (e.g., Charon 2006; Charon and Montello 2002; Good and Good 2000; Mattingly 2004, 2006, this issue; Mattingly and Garro 2000; Ochs and Capps 2001; Shweder this issue). Within the sphere of health care, Bruner has had significant impact in recent attempts to "humanize" medical education. He has helped to shape current discussions in what has come to be called "narrative ethics" within biomedicine. Narrative ethics, a movement that has grown over the past two decades, arose when clinical professionals came to recognize

> the centrality of narrative in the work of health care. . . . Narrative approaches to ethics recognize that the singular case emerges only in the act of narrating it and that duties are incurred in the act of hearing it. How the patient tells of illness . . . what the audience is being moved to feel or think—all these narrative dimensions of health care are of profound and defining importance in ethics and patient care. [Charon and Montello 2002:ix]

Intriguingly, Bruner's literary, imaginative, and subjective orientation to narrative may be more visible in this practical domain than when his arguments are directed to psychologists and social scholars.

Bruner has always operated with a wide lens, and it is no surprise that he effortlessly moves between the subtle worlds of infant–parent and patient–caregiver communication and the rather more public ones of education, medicine and, more recently, the law. In his study of American legal practices, he and his colleagues also find stories at the heart of things:

> [the] law is awash in storytelling. Clients tell stories to lawyers, who must figure out what to make of what they hear. As clients and lawyers talk, the client's story gets recast into plights and prospects, plots and pilgrimages into possible worlds. (What lawyers call 'thinking through a course of action' is a narrative project of the perils of embarking on one pilgrimage or another.) [Amsterdam and Bruner 2000:110]

His current teaching is primarily to law students at New York University. Here, Bruner finds that "the culture-mind issue lurks in the background of what lawyers do" (this issue). In Brenneis's article we find a discussion of Bruner's interest in law and, in particular, his investigations of how narrative is a necessary part of legal practice and jurisprudence. Brenneis turns to *Minding the Law* by Amsterdam and Bruner, which entails a number of significant contributions to legal thinking and practice. Citing this work, Brenneis explores storytelling as "noetic space," a mode of analogical thinking, and a basis for the construction of theory. In doing so, Brenneis underscores Bruner's commitment to consider mind and culture making not as the disembodied imposition of schemas on everyday life but, rather, as an ongoing work of practical imagination, the employment of a culture's noetic space that,

and Brenneis quotes Amsterdam and Bruner here, is an "imaginative space teeming with alternatives to the actual" (2000:237; Brenneis this issue). Brenneis draws on Bruner to argue for the narrative nature of at least some kinds of theory-making by looking at several exemplary cases. These include the role of cases in Chinese traditional medicine and Zen Buddhist Koan as indexing narratives. From these examples, he transitions from the practical to the practice of theory making to claim that " 'theory' can and indeed often is made through the principled and imaginative lamination of stories learned, told, and interpreted" (this issue).

In exploring Bruner as an intellectual whose interest in practice has been inextricable from his interest in theory, Brenneis offers an especially rich insight. As he puts it, "it is signally in moments of practice and pedagogy that theory is articulated, negotiated, transformed, and made audible."

Conclusion

Whatever position one chooses to take in relation to the various issues discussed above, it is clear that Bruner's vision, as well as its extension, transformation, and critical assessment in the articles collected in this issue, is an important basis for continuing what is most certainly a necessary and significant dialogue between psychology and anthropology (not to mention between these fields and the many other disciplines that Bruner's ideas have impacted) over the nature of subjective life and its variegated cultural, social, and personal contexts. If nothing else, the articles assembled here should further such dialogue and contribute to the development of research and theorizing in both psychological anthropology and cultural psychology about different ways that social actors become personally and culturally predisposed to perceive, appreciate, judge, imagine, feel, and behave in everyday lives.

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Notes

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1. In recent years, the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to the Torres Straits of 1898 has received renewed attention from anthropologists and others interested in the early history of British anthropology. Rivers, who went on to do additional ethnographic research in Melanesia (the results of which he published as the two-volume tome *The History of Melanesian Society* [1914]), investigated vision on this expedition. He was the author of *Instinct and the Unconscious* (1920) and *Conflict and Dream* (1923) and the edited volume *Psychology and Ethnology* (1926), among many other works. C. G. Seligman's article "Anthropology and Psychology: A study of some points of contact," appeared in 1924. W. McDougall was the author of *An Introduction to Social Psychology* (1908). And Charles Myers wrote *An Introduction to Experimental Psychology* (1911) and *Mind and Work* (1921).

2. For more about Benedict's use of the concept of configuration see Mead 1974, Handler 1986, Lutkehaus 2005.

3. See Boas, *The Mind of Primitive Man* (1911:77).

4. Interestingly, Bruner, too, was influenced, but in different ways than Sapir and other anthropologists interested in the notion of configuration, by the work of Kurt Koffka, one of the three German psychologists whose work is most closely associated with gestalt psychology, *Principles of Gestalt Psychology* (1937). See Bruner 1983:70–71.

5. See Regna Darnell 1986. Among the students who took this seminar were Weston La Barre, John Whiting, and Scudder Mekeel, all of whom became psychological anthropologists. The psychologist Irvin Child also participated in the seminar.

6. For more about Benedict's influence on Horney, see Babcock 1995 and Quinn 1987.

7. Meekel, who trained at Yale under Sapir, took Erikson into the field with him in the late 1940s (Bock 1988:128; Coles 1970:33).

8. Bruner's quotation within this passage is from Robert W. White (1944:228).

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