



Life Stories: The Creation of Coherence (Oxford Studies in Sociolinguistics)

By Charlotte Linde

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All adult speakers in Western cultures have life stories argues Charlotte Linde, and the ways in which these life stories are formed and exchanged with others have a powerful effect on all of us. Life stories express our sense of self, who we are and how we got that way. According to Linde, we also use these stories to show that our lives can be understood as coherent, and to assert or negotiate group membership. These life stories take part in the highest level of social constructions, since they are built on cultural assumptions about what is expected in a life, what the norms for a successful life are, and what common or special belief systems are necessary to establish coherence. The life story, illuminated by this engrossing study, is a form of everyday discourse which has not previously been precisely defined or studied. It is an oral, discontinuous unit, consisting of stories which are retold in a variety of forms over a long period of time, and which may be revised and changed as the speaker comes to drop old meanings and add new ones to parts of the life story. The life story is a particularly rich and important area for study, because it represents a crossroads of linguistic structure and social practice. Linde's analysis is of importance to linguistics, as well as having broader implications for anthropology, psychology, and sociology.

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Life Stories: The Creation of Coherence (Oxford Studies in Sociolinguistics) By Charlotte Linde **Bibliography**

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Editorial Review

Review

"An excellent example of interdisciplinary theory and research, and a lucid introduction to the study of narrative. Linde bridges the neglected gap between rhetoric and the psychology of narrative. Really delightful."--Andrew Garrison, *Miami University*

"Looks extremely interesting....Offers the opportunity to bridge some significant gaps in our understanding of how our self schemas really function."--Elizabeth Weiss Ozorak, *Allegheny College*

"I have read *Life Stories* with much pleasure and enlightenment. It is a work that combines impressive scholarship in several academic disciplines, and an insightful perspective on popular culture. It will make a substantial contribution to several fields: linguistics, conversation analysis, discourse analysis, psychology, anthropology, and sociology--and no doubt others as well."--Robin Lakoff, *University of California, Berkeley*

"Charlotte Linde's book provides a useful exploration of life stories' structure and their implications for larger issues."--*Anthropological Linguistics*

"Linde's provocative work will stimulate sociologists to rethink how sociological analyses can benefit from the contributions of its cousin sociolinguistics and visa versa."--*American Journal of Sociology*

"*Life Stories* is a richly innovative study, packed with insights into the way we use stories to create and maintain an identity over time. ...the book contains much that will interest a wide variety of readers, from linguists, narratologists, and literary theorists, to students of autobiography and folklore. An imaginative, stylishly written and boldly interdisciplinary study, *Life Stories* focuses our attention on a hitherto unexplored mode of narrative discourse, throwing new light on the interconnections between self and story."--*Style*

From the Back Cover

This sociological study explores how people create and exchange coherent life stories, and looks at the psychological and social purposes behind them.

About the Author

Charlotte Linde is at Institute for Research on Learning.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Joyce Cannon:

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