Narratives in East Asia and Beyond

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Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Using Narratives as a Research Method

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Introduction

Promoting Interdisciplinary Exchange and Addressing the Challenges in the Area Studies

Elizaveta Priupolina

Today, one in every seventy-eight people on earth is displaced. By the end of 2021, the number of those displaced by war, violence, persecution, and human rights abuses was at 89.3 million.[1] The numbers rose up to one hundred million people just four months into 2022 (UN News 2022a). The number of conflicts, civil wars, and armed clashes in the contemporary world is at the highest since 1946, with almost sixty ongoing state-based conflicts in Asia, Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and the Americas (Davies, Petterson, and Öberg 2022). The rate of fatalities is at its highest over the last thirty-five years.[2] At the same time, since the end of the World War II, a (perhaps, universally accepted) rhetoric holds that peace is the highest value. Yet it is surprisingly hard to verbalize experiences of conflict across the diverse communities as they are divided into supporters of either side of the conflicts, abstaining from taking sides, choosing to keep silence, or ignoring the situations. The debating groups ground their arguments in history, national or ethnic identity, or perceptions of threat associated with the ideological clashes. They produce narratives about the present, past, and future, and it is clear that those narratives do much more profound and complicated work than (just) telling a coherent story of events.

Recently, the "end of history" (Fukuyama 2012) seems to have ceased to be the foreseeable future. Whether it is the clash of civilizations (Huntington 2011) or another round of the collision of ideologies, the ongoing polarization of opinions and positions is guided by narratives, and narratives appeal to emotions rather than rational choices and logic. As compellingly argued by the father of the concept of narratology, "the fear of the barbarians" is itself

what poses major risks to the civilizations. In his view, civilization is defined not in terms of the concrete traditions, values, or developmental stages but in terms of the ability to comprehend the positions and concerns of the other while keeping up one's own values and beliefs (Todorov 2013). And it is the fear of the other that makes civilizations violent and vulnerable at the same time. This interpretation illuminates the importance of narratives in communicating with the other and about the other.

Even more so, the role of narratives seems to be greatly increased in the era of social media. Almost immediate communication and news circulation worldwide is available to as many as five billion users. Unlike rational choice argumentation and logic, narratives can be evaluated by individuals with no special expertise or training based on common sense (Fisher 1989). In this way the narratives can easily be disseminated and mobilize large groups of people holding similar values, regardless of where they are physically located. The close connection of narratives with values, which makes them emotionally appealing on the one hand and also convincing on the other hand, is what makes people more willing to share the narratives with each other. While reinforcing the existing systems of beliefs by validating values, narratives can also serve as the driving force to promote shifts and the emergence of new meanings. In other words, narratives can be regarded as complex communicative practices deeply linked with the production of social life (De Fina and Georgakopoulou 2012).

Against this background, this volume attempts to reflect on the way narratives can be used as research methods in the field of political science and international relations. This volume attempts to showcase how political scientists can learn from the advances of narratology in other fields, in particular, in literary studies and ethnographic research. The focus of the contributions to this volume is not as much on the structural characteristics of narratives, but rather on the way narratives affect reality, thus contributing to creating and shifting meanings and values and, even more so, on how one can use narratives to understand the reality that they created. The volume brings together scholars from diverse fields and backgrounds to share their ideas and research on narratives and their connection to broader domains of meaning.

The volume is specifically focused on China studies as a field that is actively developing both inside and outside of China due to the growing international impact of China's policies. On the one hand, China studies is a dynamic field that is constantly searching for new approaches and methods. On the other hand, while having plenty of empirical data, the field might sometimes experience the need for thoroughly developed and tested methodological approaches. Moreover, recently, China studies (as well as a range of other area studies) have been fundamentally affected by some newly emerged challenges that have a very profound impact on how scholars organize and

present their research. This volume contributes to the attempts to reflect on how to bridge the existing and the emerging gaps by bringing together the scholars working on narratives in the field of China studies and their counterparts from the fields of philosophy, narratology, and anthropological linguistics.

DEFINING A NARRATIVE

Interest in narratives is not new for the contemporary social sciences. Narratology gained important development in the early twentieth century in the field of literary studies in the works of Vladimir Propp and Mikhail Bakhtin. A later narrative (re)turn originates in the 1960s in linguistic studies, followed by historiography and social sciences (Forchtner 2021), and to date comprises a broad spectrum of studies in linguistics, political and social sciences, international relations, cultural and historical studies, ethnographic research, literary studies, and more. Contemporary narratology is still fiercely debated. As of the early 2000s, narratology was considered the "field in the making" (Chase 2005), which still seems to be the case in the early 2020s (Raine 2020). To date, the field is guided by two core approaches to analyzing narratives: structuralism and interactionism (for an overview, see De Fina and Johnstone 2015). While structuralist research is mainly focused on the narrative and the way it is constructed, the interactionist stream is working toward understanding how narratives, narrators, and audiences are mutually constitutive.

Another dimension of the interest in narratives developed in the field of communication research by Walter Fisher in the 1980s. Fisher believed that narrativity is, to a significant extent, opposed to the rational choice-based understanding of human reasoning. In his view, humans as natural storytellers see the world as a set of stories. Fisher argues that for humans, anything can be a narrative and even that a narrative does not need to be connected to any sequence of events. According to him, from the pool of diverse stories, humans select narratives that they are willing to engage with. The persuasiveness of a narrative is defined by coherency (the way how the story stands together) and fidelity (how the narrated story corresponds to an individual's knowledge of the world). The persuasive force of a narrative is thus closely connected with the domain of values, and a narrative tends to make a stronger appeal to values than to rational arguments. In other words, people tend to believe the narratives that correspond to their set of values (Fisher 1989). The choice of the stories by an individual would thus highlight the values with which they identify. These reflections on narratives are particularly interesting today when the way how people consume information shifted

significantly thanks to the development of online communication. On the one hand, the personalized recommendation algorithms based on user experience (Zhou et al. 2020) to a significant extent reinforce the information selection bias. On the other hand, online media seem to have greater confirmation bias compared to traditional media (Pearson and Knobloch-Westerwick 2019).

Yet many scholars emphasize that one should not overstretch the concept (Rowland 1989). While narratives are indeed a very significant analytical category, it is important to place clear limits on how and when the term is applicable and what are its distinguishing features (Reisigl 2021). Narratives may be everywhere, but not everything is a narrative.

A contemporary view suggests that the concept of narrative is interdisciplinary in nature and can be researched from a variety of perspectives and using a variety of methods (Holstein and Gubrium 2012). Borrowing from literary studies and literary critics, the development of narrative analysis in other fields helps to broaden the perspectives of the research. The commonly agreed-upon characteristic of a narrative is that it is only possible in the framework of particular events. As demonstrated by Valery Tiupa (2022), an event does not necessarily have to occur within the narrative, yet it could still be a central element in the narrated story. Beyond this, there is a significant variety of approaches to what is (and maybe even more importantly, what is not) a narrative. Many agree that a narrative should be compared to other types of text (e.g., Reisigl [2021] suggests that there are five generic patterns, which are description, narrative, explication, argumentation, and instruction, each having specific linguistic functions). Others prefer to "conceive narrative as a cognitive style or a mode of thinking" (i.e., as patterns of information, regardless of the form in which they are represented; Ryan 2007, 27). Beyond the binary approaches (a narrative or not a narrative), some scholars suggest evaluating the degree of narrativity. A narrative would thus be conceptualized as a "fuzzy set allowing variable degrees of membership, but centered on prototypical cases that everybody recognizes as stories," with narrativity conditions stretched along the spatial, temporal, and mental dimensions (all three of these being semantic dimensions) and one formal and pragmatic dimension (Ryan 2007, 28–30).

NARRATIVES AS RESEARCH METHODS

The ongoing discussion suggests not just approaching narratives as the object of study but also considering narratives as a method (Raine 2020). For instance, some scholars working with the national role theory argue that the analysis of narratives produced by agents is one of the important ways to make sense of national roles claimed by a state in the international arena or

by a group of agents within a state (Wehner and Thies 2014). Narratives have a number of crucial functions in a polity—from constructing (national) identity (Andrews 2014) and making sense of the other to providing ontological security and shaping people's definition of situations and, even more so, of memories about the past events (Selimovic 2014). In this sense, (meta)narratives are a key mechanism for creating and re-imagining history (Godfrey and Lilley 2009; Gudehus 2008; Leavy 2007).

With growing interest in broadening the scope of the narrative, attention has recently been directed toward understanding the connection between the narratives and the (re)production of social practices (De Fina and Georgakopoulou 2008; 2012), as well as how counter-narratives redistribute power to adjust diverse fields of social interactions (Lueg and Lundholt 2022). The added value of using narratives as research methods has been scrutinized by scholars focusing on education research (Mertova and Webster 2019).

From the empirical perspective, substantial attempts to employ narratives as research methods developed in regional studies (e.g., looking at how narratives can shape [political] conflicts and conceptions of order [Mühlberger and Alaranta 2020] and perceptions of threat [Lusk 2021]), help to accumulate political mobilization (Shim 2013), achieve global policy coordination (Colley and van Noort 2022), and interpret knowledge about the past (Haake and Juszkiewicz 2022; Goldblatt 2020; Gairola and Jayawickrama 2021; Tanaka 2020). In the field of international relations, specific interest has been developed toward studying strategic narratives (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle 2014) and the ways they construct power (van Noort 2019) and affect the power dynamics in the international arena (Yang 2021).

Special interest is emerging in the analysis of visual narratives in public discourses (Bleiker 2018; Callahan 2020; Harman 2019). In recent scholarship, the role of images and visual narratives has been explored through issues such as conflict and war (Crilley and Chatterje-Doody 2020), migration crisis (Adler-Nissen, Andersen, and Hansen 2020), and populism (Freistein and Gardinger 2020). Significant attention in the field of visual studies has been paid to the analysis of films and other video-based visualized political narratives (Callahan 2015; Mueller 2013; Noesselt, Eckstein, and Priupolina 2021) and the functioning of the narratives in the digital spaces (Crilley, Manor, and Bjola 2020).

The importance of addressing narratives is to be explained not only by the access which this approach allows to otherwise hidden domains of meaning and connections between ideas and social practices. Beyond this, using narratives as research practices allows scholars to widen their toolkit and available data when facing new challenges. Thus, one of the fundamental challenges which have recently emerged is the reduced accessibility of field research. In the second half of the 2010s, scholars working in the field of political science

and international relations increasingly experienced how the growing polarization in the political arena impeded access to field investigations. This has been becoming increasingly obvious in many directions of regional research, including China studies. The pandemic situation exacerbated the issue, and hundreds of projects aiming to collect field data and carry out interviews with local experts, officials, and politicians had to be postponed or adjusted in a way to further the analysis without data from field research. The closed borders dramatically restricted outside observers' access to internal debates. In such a context, narratives produced by politicians in official discourses, scholars in academic debates, and netizens in social media became a tremendously essential source of information about the internal debate dynamics and focal points.

Another issue is the growing expectations of research to fit a particular normative framework.[3] Yet research and the way in which it is presented function as a powerful mechanism to co-produce and reproduce norms and social practices. By leading to the emergence of a spiral of silence (Noelle-Neumann 1974) or a bandwagon effect (Kiss and Simonovits 2014), attempts to call for norm conformity may have adverse effects on the discussion of highly relevant issues in public discourse. In academic debate, their effect may be far more devastating. It is thus particularly essential that the researchers are aware that the way they present their research can play a significant role in shaping systems of knowledge and perceptions. In this context, there is a surging interest in experimenting with the new approaches in which narratives seem to play an increasingly important role, as they provide a richer toolkit to study the diverse and complex processes taking place inside the states and in the international arena.

This volume aims to contribute to the discussion of narratives as a research method by bringing together studies on the connection between narratives and social practices from scholars in diverse fields and backgrounds, combining theoretical and empirical approaches to the study of narratives. In the first part of the volume, scholars from the fields of philosophy of narrative and ethnographic research share their reflections on how to identify and approach the links between narratives and social structures. Thus, the connection between narratives and scientific knowledge is addressed in the contribution by Grigorii L. Tulchinskii. The chapter argues that scientific disciplines and theories are methodologically three-level narrative systems, which are factual, causal, and goal-oriented. Tulchinskii argues that the narrative approach is important in understanding the nature of the motivational and volitional behavioral factors that manifest as narratives generated by both individuals and others (relatives, experts, etc.). The chapter highlights how the narrative interpretation of self-consciousness in the first and third person offers the potential for convergence of the humanities and science in the study and

modeling of cognitive processes. At the same time, the contribution suggests that the narrative approach serves as a bridge between the humanities and social sciences and as a constructive foundation for the current challenges of civilization development.

Suren Zolyan discusses the ever more essential topic of historical memory and the role of narratives in constructing historical memories. Zolyan argues that historical memory uses a variety of semiotic devices to depict the past, including narratives, symbols, monuments, songs, etc. The article discusses the semantic tools of the construction of historical memory and national identity. In this research, the narrative is conceptualized as an investigative method of explanation and a technique of textual representation of the imaginary past. Zolyan highlights that the connection between history and narrative was mentioned by Aristotle. As an example of that connection, he approaches the Armenian historiographical practice of the early Middle Ages. Zolyan demonstrates how a describer (or a collective "author" of a story) can be included in a semantic system of historical memory as a separate describing system that considers the interaction of subjects, descriptions, and attitudes.

The chapter by Sabina M. Perrino offers some insights into the use of narratives in anthropological linguistics. Perrino reflects on why and how narratives, as they emerge in interview settings, are key theoretical, analytical, and methodological tools. The chapter addresses this issue by emphasizing the key role that narratives in interviews have in human communication and engagement across cultures and as fertile analytical and methodological tools. As research on this topic has demonstrated, interviews are key sites to examine the emerging nature of storytelling practices. In these settings, interviewer(s) and interviewee(s) usually end up telling stories of their past, present, or imagined future. During these speech events, participants can assume and reverse speech roles while they deliver their stories. This chapter therefore demonstrates that narratives in interviews are intricate research methods as they offer researchers access to the subtleties of participants' interactions across spatiotemporal scales.

In close connection to these reflections, the second part of the volume is constituted by the contributions from scholars working in the field of East Asian studies and offering empirical case studies. Yunfeng Ge and Hong Wang suggest integrating Discourse Space Theory and Critical Genre Analysis as an analytical framework for the analysis of documentary discourse. Drawing on the transcriptions of a Chinese gourmet program, this study demonstrates that, as a result of both the physical and socio-cultural conceptualizations of food reality, the Chinese gourmet discourse is embedded with diversified pragmatic, professional, and cultural values and beliefs that contribute to the heterogeneity of discourse. These values and beliefs are manifestations of the different aspects of the sense of belonging that the

Chinese gourmet discourse endeavors to activate in the minds of spectators. This chapter illuminates how language use is ideologically invested on the levels of lexico-grammar and discourse structure and how the dynamic and diversified values and beliefs are mixed together to form an integral discourse entity to achieve certain ideological functions.

Shubham Karmakar explores the evolution of a strategic narrative of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). This chapter looks into the BRI discourse promoted by Chinese media during the first months into the COVID-19 pandemic. Karmakar argues that the specifics of BRI projects which heavily rely on the involvement of international stakeholders is in stark contrast to early measures taken by the governments across the world to constrain the COVID-19 pandemic. This created an existential threat to BRI. The chapter reveals how Chinese media responded to this challenge by promoting a modified BRI rhetoric for international audiences. Karmakar outlines the adjustments of the BRI rhetorical discourses and explores the narratives used to legitimize China's position.

Connor Malloy and Theo Westphal also locate their research in the domain of BRI studies, examining how German logistics companies involved in BRI narrate their engagement with the Silk Road, keeping in mind economic opportunities on the one hand and a political climate that is skeptical of increasing ties with China on the other hand. This chapter addresses how local actors perceive and position themselves in relation to dominant narratives, and in doing so, highlights the role played by non-Chinese actors in reproducing the BRI narrative.

Elizaveta Priupolina, Tanja Eckstein, and Nele Noesselt delve into how narratives about leadership and diplomacy in a CCTV political documentary "Major Country Diplomacy" contribute to the process of role legitimation in China. Drawing on the previous studies of role claims projected by China, the study argues that the documentary not only projects the role claims but also uses narratives to deliver justification on why those role claims are legitimate and have to be accepted by the international counterparts and domestic audience. The chapter demonstrates that the narratives are organized in a way that not only constructs the legitimacy of role claims but is also aimed at various different sets of audiences.

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NOTES

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2. Based on the chart provided by Davies, Petterson, and Öberg (2022) for 1989 to 2020, the only case that stands out is the Rwandan genocide.

3. One such debate has been developing in the field of China studies, see the debate between Andreas Fulda and Björn Alpermann and Gunter Schubert; a short overview is available at http://www.mediastudies.asia/against-moral-crusading/.

PART I

Interdisciplinary Reflections on Narrative Analysis

Chapter 1

Narration as a Platform for Interdisciplinarity

The Inter- and Cross-Disciplinarity of the Narrative Approach

Grigorii L. Tulchinskii

INTRODUCTION, OR NARRATOLOGY'S GOING BEYOND DISCIPLINARY BOUNDARIES

Modern civilization and the way of life it shapes pose a serious challenge to the humanities (*die Geisteswissenschaften*), to their conceptual core such as notions of consciousness and self-consciousness, freedom and free will that form the basis for the theory and practice of morality, law, education, art, and politics. The data of contemporary neurophysiology also add to these challenges, reinforcing their robustness. Thus it is not simply a question of rethinking a number of ideas and concepts, but of determining the essence of humanitarian knowledge and its place in the general system of socio-cultural practices. And, as it seems, it is a non-trivial place. In this non-triviality, narration and the narrative approach appear to play a key role.

It is not simply that our troubled times appear to be none other than a conflict of narratives. In addition, the complexities of the modern world in politics, economics, art, science, and our personal lives are expressed and determined by narratives that not only set the media news agenda, but also determine the content of both the semantic picture of reality and our attitude toward it, toward other people, and toward ourselves.

The matter is much more complicated. These days, narratology has outgrown the scope of literary studies, something which is outlined and

elaborated upon in the remarkable works of the narratology researchers (Genette 1997; Propp 1968; Freidenberg 1997; Friedeman 2022; Schmid 2010; Stanzel 1986; Tiupa 2021). Nowadays, narratology actually appears as an interdisciplinary field of research and modeling of the practices for shaping and relaying event experience.

As Jens Brockmeier, Rom Harré, Roland Barthes, and Paul Ricoeur have convincingly shown (Harré, Brockmeier, and Muhlhausler 1998; Barthes 1975; Ricoeur 1984; 1985; 1988), the consideration of any artifacts of art as narratives allows us to consider them simultaneously as models of the world and the self, with priority specifically in the work of the personal element. It is the narrative that structures ("slices") the continuum of life, and the act—both in terms of motivation and in terms of implementing characteristics—that emerges through the narrative. A number of ideas proposed by Mikhail Bakhtin are confirmed. He did not directly use the concept of narrative but paid much attention to storytelling and had a great influence on narratology in the latter part of the last century and the early years of this century.

Moreover, the idea of narration plays a key role in a wide field of contemporary research: from anthropogenesis to strategic communications and symbolic politics, from the problem of responsible self-consciousness and free will to the neurophysiology of the brain.

Studies in the philosophy of culture and personality, social semiotics, and its practical applications in sociocultural practices and communication have constantly pushed the author toward a narrative in a wide range of problems from the philosophy of action to political culture and branding. Drawing on the materials and results of these studies, this chapter attempts to summarize the important interdisciplinary potential of the narrative approach, which acts as a distinct bridge between the humanities and social sciences, partly even natural sciences.

The examination begins with the role of narration in the modern understanding of the nature of subjectivity and free will, which separates man as a rational being from the natural world. It concludes by acknowledging the role of narrative communication in making sense of the phenomenon of anthropogenesis. Thus, the proposed characterization of the interdisciplinary role of the narrative approach, without claiming to be exhaustive in detail, acquires some completeness, albeit tentative and rough.

NARRATIVITY AS A SOURCE OF SUBJECTIVITY (SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE SELF)

L.S. Vygotski and M.M. Bakhtin, in their time, emphasized that writing and reading serve as an "inner dialogue" that articulates, instills, and intonates

thinking. These ideas directly correlate with modern research and recommendations emphasizing the role of writing, reading aloud, and direct lively communication in the formation of memory, and thus consciousness. Humanity was basically created by reading, known today as deep reading as opposed to modern digital reading. Meanwhile, ongoing research in many parts of the world warns that the basic processes associated with deep reading, such as assimilation, analogical thinking, inference, critical analysis, and the generation of insights, "are endangered when we move within the framework of digital reading modes" (Wolf 2018).

As long-term studies of the neurophysiology of the brain illustrate, we can distinguish three levels of consciousness. First, there is the proto-self, which, in fact, is the manifestation of the bios of a living organism. All living organisms have this level of consciousness. Second, there is the core self, the sensually expressed bodily isolation in the flow of sensations and reactions from the receptor system. This level of consciousness implies a developed system of innervation. Finally, there is the level of actual self-consciousness, a reflection that manifests itself in memory. It is no wonder that A. Damasio calls this level an "autobiographical self." Indeed, self-awareness is a euphemism for memory, and vice versa (Damasio 2010). A simple and well-known test for a person's sanity, which shows that we are dealing with a reasonable subject who has self-awareness and memory, is their ability to say who they are, what their name is, where they were born, where they live now, what they do, what their job is, etc. The test shows whether they have a coherent narrative about themselves, in other words, if they have a coherent memory.

A person who has lost their memory is insane in the sense that they are not aware of who they are and how they ended up in the present situation. And while the biosphere is sufficient for the proto-self, and all the core self needs is innervation with feedback (for the human organism the thalamus is sufficient), the autobiographical self is associated with the prefrontal areas of the brain's frontal lobes, which are responsible for learning and use of speech.

Basically, these three levels of consciousness represent forms of homeostasis that are inherent in all natural systems, not only living ones. In other words, consciousness and self-consciousness are forms (levels) of realization of fundamental intentionality as self-regulation of any coherent systems preserving their integrity (Dennett 1991; 1998). Thus, self-consciousness and subjectivity by their origin are not opposed to the natural world. Rather they are rooted in it, they are forms of its development ensuring homeostasis—adaptation and self-regulation of rather complex systems, which human individuals still are.

However, these qualities can be formed, and the mechanism of their formation is communicative. It is about socialization, about an individual's mastering of socio-cultural practices, which L.S. Vygotski referred to as the

"ingrowing" of socio-cultural experience programs (Vygotski 1929). And this process (family upbringing, education, professional training, social activity, etc.) is accompanied by communication. It is an obvious well-known fact that a full-fledged consciousness will not be formed outside of communication with other people. Life experience as well as the theory and practice of upbringing and education show that the mastering of socio-cultural practices is accompanied by verbal communication, by discursive practices in the form of stories about current and past experiences, and about possible consequences.

At the same time, a special role is played by narrative communication. It does not simply encourage, but describes and explains what is happening, including the role which the individual themselves plays in these processes. For example, a child is told that it was not the cup that fell, but that they dropped it. The child could have dropped it; they could have not. They dropped it. "You did it!" In these narratives, the individual is pulled out of natural causal processes and causes are closed in on them, making them a *causa sui*, making them the hero of the event series. In the process of such narrative communication that accompanies the socialization of the individual, parents, teachers, and other mentors place responsibility for what happens on the individual. These processes are captured in the formation of neural networks in the cerebral cortex, providing homeostasis for the individual as a social actor and the experience of the transcendent, beyond the empirical, the ability to imagine, and to contemplate a possible future.

And by the third year of life, the child masters first-person narration, talking about themselves, about the actions they have committed, or is about to commit, or even was about to commit. Thus, memory, self-consciousness, and the subjective identity of the individual are expressed in the mastering and shaping of a coherent first-person narrative about their experiences. In such stories, self-awareness/memory manifests, forms, and develops itself, and the person appears as the author of the novel of their own life, often returning to their first chapters, sometimes even rewriting them (Henrich 2007, 55). In this narration, where the self reflects on one's experience, one not only describes this experience, but also expresses ideas about the past and the future, opening up possibilities of prediction, imagination, and fantasy.

Thus, studies of brain neurophysiology and philosophical reflections on their results show that the narrative approach allows us to explain the formation of consciousness and self-consciousness (selfhood), both in phylogeny and ontogeny. The source of the narratives of self-consciousness (Dennettian "sketches"), of their stable stimulation and reproduction is culture, thanks to which man as an intentional system appears as the highest stage of evolution so far.

FREEDOM AS A NARRATIVE OF RESPONSIBILITY

Moreover, narrative communication proves to be an important key to understanding the nature of the formation of self-consciousness, which is the awareness of oneself as something special, separate, isolated in the flow of life-reflection. Self-consciousness, combined with the activation of oneself as an actor, is the essence of self or in German *die Ichheit*, I-ness. And if I am aware of myself plus my own responsibility for the fact of my being and for the manifestations of this being (an act or an omission), then this is already the manifestation of subjectivity, of the responsible self-consciousness of selfhood.

However, the main thing in this process is that we are talking about subjectivity, the individual's assumption of responsibility for what is happening, what has happened, or what might happen. Nikolai Berdyaev and Jean-Paul Sartre referred to freedom as the "hole in being," the pre-existential and extra-existential beginning of being. The "sensorium of freedom" is the subjectivity of the self-consciousness of the individual. Outside the person endowed with consciousness there is no freedom, just causal and other determinations.

This responsibility is initially "loaded" by others, while subjectivity turns out to be secondary to and derivative from this responsibility. In this regard, M.M. Bakhtin was deeply and fundamentally right in his reflections on the absence of an "alibi in being" (Bakhtin 1993). It is his idea of the fundamental role of responsibility (non-alibi in being) as a measure of consciousness and freedom as well as the idea of the role of Others in the formation of consciousness. Consciousness and reason are not only secondary to responsibility; they are also its instrument, the measure of one's awareness of one's possibilities to influence what is happening.

Thus the relationship between freedom and responsibility becomes clear. Freedom is a godlike quality and a subject of theological disputes (why the Almighty Creator created a being endowed with freedom); not a "hole in being" (N.A. Berdyaev, J.P. Sartre), but a shuttle weaving the fabric of being. This shuttle is a result of socialization, which is another [un]necessary confirmation of the fact that man is a social creature.

Indeed, man is a creature who has taken the mechanism of adaptation beyond biological nature. While the animal world adapts through mutations and natural selection, humans, without mutating as a species, make the environment mutate by creating culture—a system of generation, preservation, selection, translation, and reproduction of social experience. Y.M. Lotman defined this as a system of non-genetic inheritance of information on behavior (Lotman 2010). However, this system reproduced through socialization,

"growing" programs of social experience into bearers of this culture, needs individualization for its development—a unique, inimitable peculiarity of this assimilation.

This uniqueness is embodied in the subjectivity of self—the main source of plasticity and dynamics of human civilization, which provides its procreativity (excessive stock of options and scenarios of behavior), and thus the pre-adaptability of the individual and society, the anticipatory nature of the individual's reaction to the circumstances of existence and development (Asmolov, Shekhter, and Chernorizov 2018).

THE PROBLEM OF FREE WILL, IDENTITY, AND NARRATION

There are two *scholia* or footnotes in this regard. The first relates to the reflection on a series of neurophysiological experiments (Libet 1985; Fried, Mukamel, and Kreiman 2011; Haggard 2008; Trevena and Miller 2009; Wegner 2002) that questioned free will. These experiments have shown that free will is a "late rationalization" of actions that were reactive in nature, influenced by unconscious personal factors and reactions. The discussion between incompatibilists and compatibilists, which at first developed in terms of complete determinism and indeterminism, resulted in concepts that entirely denied free will as a phenomenon and as a concept (incompatibilism), and in concepts that allowed a combination of natural determination (primarily causality) and free will.

Incompatibilism, rigid determinism, reduces human beings to inanimate objects, as well as the treatment of people to the treatment of other objects that are of animate and inanimate nature. S. Smilansky writes that it is better not to tell anyone about this, otherwise society will be ruined (Smilansky 2000). If everything that happens is a consequence of causal determination, then all grounds for the identity of "self" disappear, as well as law, morality, and education, which are based on the "presumption" of responsibility for free decisions. However, according to D. Pereboom, in following this paradigm it is quite possible to revise law and morality in terms of a more humane attitude to deviations, mistakes, and failures (Pereboom 2001). In general, the conclusions were well articulated by Nietzsche, according to whom freedom and morality are invented in order to evaluate and judge us. And this conclusion only emphasizes the social nature of consciousness and the primacy of responsibility in relation to freedom.

However, attributing to experiments an evidentiary power against the reality of freedom rests on a truncated notion of free will as an unalternative cause of itself, because the individual can ascribe to themselves this capacity

for self-determination in a narrative self-explanation of what happens, often retrospectively, *post factum*. What is characteristic of motivation not as reasons but explanations of actions is that with some intellectual effort one can always find a deeper motivation. Motivation itself is narrative in nature, being not so much the cause of behavior as its explanation and interpretation. Often such a narrative has the character of a late, or even defensive rationalization of actions (von Wright 2004). With some intellectual effort it is always possible to find an even deeper motivation. This applies not only to historical analysis and art history, but marketing analysis, logotherapy, forensic practice, and examinations are also built on this.

Such self-explanations determine not the stimulus responses to specific actions, but the overall strategy of important and permissible behavior in the overall narrative of life strategy, including participation in experiments. Freedom lies not in creation "out of nothing," but rather in the ability to find the situations in which one finds oneself consistency, clarity, and direction in its conscious realization. Freedom of self-determination is therefore not expressed in particular actions. In contrast, it is expressed in the process of constructing a "way of action" (*Handlungsart*), a kind of perspective on life as one's own life (Henrich 2007; Tulchinskii 2020, 165–69). And such a life scenario, in fact, is a narrative that is continuously developing, supplemented, and enriched by more and more events. It is exactly in this integrity of long-term singularity preservation (activity authorship) that freedom is localized. Precisely in complicity with one's projects, including the common project (of meaning) of life, the will manifests itself. Free will is not a linear algorithm, but it is embedded in the dynamics of the process of constructing subjectivity as the history of one's own life and as the memory of this history.

The second observation is related to the first and refers to the often-discussed question of subjectivity's integrity (self-awareness of the self). Where and when do we find this integrity? Reducing the answer to identity seems misleading. Identity (a term from psychoanalysis) means belonging, identifying oneself with something, with someone (i.e., renouncing one's own self or subjectivity, renouncing the responsibility that forms it). The self appears as part of something, in which the personality spreads out like a lump of butter on a frying pan.

In the best interpretation, wholeness is a kind of "basic identity" (me as a son, or as a philosopher, runner, father, Russian, or as a boy from St. Petersburg's Peski district, etc.), and all other experiences, all other social roles are essentially adventures of this basic identity.

However, it seems that the key point or the general case is precisely the "adventures" described in the narratives of self-consciousness. "The wanderer and always only the wanderer," as V.V. Rozanov wrote. "Unchangeable in change, unity in diversity," as N.A. Berdyaev practically echoed him.

The main self equals "man without properties," an open system, flexible and ready for different embodiments, for "many-I-ness," as A. G. Asmolov calls it. Subjectivity is like a blind spot in the eye that is invisible, but necessary for the vision. It is the assemblage point of responsibility/freedom, the Bakhtinian author of the self-awareness/memory novel of their life, in which the personality appears as an autoprojection.

NARRATIVES AND THE METHODOLOGY OF SCIENCE

The dependence of entity representations on modes of reasoning and linguistic constructions has long been identified in science. Not only the representations of social reality, but also of natural reality, depend as much on the ways of reasoning as on the ways of observing and measuring. Moreover, the very possibility of recognizing and measuring certain parameters depends on previously developed meaningful discursive constructions, coherent narratives about reality. And this dependence is much deeper than it might seem at first glance. Several levels of this dependence are presented in the following, which allow us to talk about narration as a methodological platform for interdisciplinarity.

First, as was shown earlier on the crisis of positivist-oriented social sciences, if we consider explanations in terms of narratives (i.e., the construction of meaningful discursive explanations), then scientific knowledge appears as three levels of narration (Tulchinskii 2019):

1. The level of empirical factuality, the presentation of descriptions, of data.
2. The level of causal connections, relationships, and determinations between facts.
3. The level of targeted context that reveals the intent behind the construction and use of the whole design.

If scientific explanations provide answers to questions, solve problems, and reveal the essence of what is happening, then it is appropriate to liken their narrativity levels to the structure of a detective story: the presentation of situations, their description (the presence of the victim, where and when the participants of the events are located, the weapon of the crime) is supplemented by the aggregation of the puzzle to build a coherent picture of what happened. In this larger picture, semantic or causal inconsistencies of explanations can be found and reflection is what completes the understanding of this whole, extending comprehension to the discovery of motivations (in the spirit of the H. Poirot story, or Miss Marple in the finale). This polynarrative model is consistent with I. Galtung's concept that the development

of social science constantly moves between three "poles": data, theory, and values (Galtung 1977). Criticism realizes the comprehension of empirical data from a value perspective. Empiricism, with its attempts to explain and anticipate development, realizes the correlation of theory and empirical data. The synthesis of theory and values provides constructivism as an opportunity to construct models of reality.

Although Levels 1 and 2 are accentuated in science, while Level 3 is accentuated in humanities, these levels are not disconnected, but interrelated in both the humanities and sciences. Thus, the role of Level 3 manifests itself not only in justifying the significance of research, but also in the basic metaphors underlying scientific terminology. This is evident even in Level 1 during the selection of facts, their recognition and designation. The specificity of science is that metaphors such as "force," "field," "current," "strings," "wave," etc., are concretized, operationalized, and measured. Thus, judgments containing such terms are verifiable: they can be confirmed or disproved. This is what makes it possible to not simply bring a phenomenon into a general category, but to attempt to identify correlations, to highlight essential factors, causality, and other determinations. However, the categories themselves, their selection, not to mention the justification of relevance, as well as the target context of the research, and the recognition of the practical significance of its results, which are important for grant applications, popularization, and scientific journalism, are precisely Level 3 narratives. Constructive (algorithmic procedural) explanations integrate Levels 2 and 3 of the explanatory narration, revealing the process of phenomenon generation. Whereas Level 1 acts either as an elementary basis for the construction, or also as a presentation of the "final product" of the entire construction.

Moreover, it is wrong to reduce the methodology in the social sciences and the humanities to the methodology in the natural and exact sciences. First, as already noted, sciences themselves depend on the constructive conceptual activity of the cognizing subject. And second, it emasculates the very essence of the social and humanitarian subject (i.e., the presence of a will among political actors, whose motivation is reduced to abstract schemes). In other words, it eliminates responsible subjectivity, as has been discussed. Sabina Perrino demonstrates in her contribution to this volume that narratives play a key role in the implementation of the primary material collection in sociological research. So, an interview involves a joint narration making by interviewer and interviewee.

NARRATION AND SYMBOLIC POLITICS

The virtue of the narrative approach is to concretize the role of communication and language, not "in general," but structured into narrative descriptions (i.e., containing descriptions of how events develop and of the factors of this development). Thus, politics, as an activity related to the formation, retention, and transfer of power, ensuring the integrity of society, the internal and external conditions of its existence and development, involves the active use of symbolic resources. Politicians and statesmen of the highest level speak about the possibilities of such technologies.

In the majority of political science studies, this issue is considered as "soft power" ("smart power"), "symbolic politics" (also "symbolic policy"), "symbolic power," or even reduced to propaganda and manipulation of public consciousness, in a syncretic format: mainly as a certain narrative content transmitted by elites who possess media resources. This model of "one-way play" or, at best, a two-way process (symbolic politics "from above" and "from below") greatly simplifies the matter. The specifics of the forms and channels of translation (presentation) of the symbolic narrative content and the multilevel nature of structuring and presentation of this content are not considered. As a result, the mechanism of symbolic politics ("soft power") itself appears to be something like a "black box" without any explanation for both the transformations in this mechanism itself and the factors of these transformations.

Therefore, in our opinion, a more specific approach is needed to distinguish between specific practices of politically using symbolic resources. The narrative approach offers such opportunities. Several directions can be identified. First, there is the distinction between the types (levels) of symbolic narrative presentation used in discursive ways for presenting symbols and their interpretations. This approach seems justified by the fact that even the visual presentation of symbols, in one way or another (in connection with their interpretation), implies discursion, without which analysis, explanation, and even understanding is impossible. Second, it opens up possibilities of systematization according to the types of content symbolization in such presentations and the forms of these presentations. Such instantiations make it possible, thirdly, to talk about the diachrony of symbolic politics (i.e., about the differences in the speed of symbolization dynamics at different levels of its presentation). At the same time, while the first two directions are virtually developed and the problem lies in their systematic presentation, the third one seems to be the most important, if not the key one, in the identification and comprehension of the practical consequences of implementing contemporary narrative practices for symbolic politics.

Symbolic politics as an activity related to the production of certain ways of interpreting social reality and the struggle for their dominance is connected not only with the alignment of priorities within the balance of social forces' interests, but also with the formation of a worldview in the minds of the bearers of these interests, which, in turn, determines the scenarios of their behavior.

Practically any (if not all!) phenomena of social reality (events, texts, images, personalities, natural objects and cataclysms, cultural artifacts, etc.) can serve as objects (and instruments) of symbolic politics. They become so under two conditions:

1. They appear as a subject of public discourse (i.e., discussions, debates, interpretations in the public communication space, and most of all in the media). Outside of the public space, they can be the subject of special operations or behind-the-scenes actions, which also become an instrument of symbolic politics if publicized.
2. In these debates and interpretations, the mentioned phenomena of social reality are connected with the contemporary context (problems, goals).

   The second condition draws on symbolic politics narratives about the past (history, historical facts), and images of the future, which also become a tool of symbolic politics. Science, including the exact sciences and quantitative methods, being dragged into discussions about pressing problems of societal development, also acts as a part (means and technologies) of symbolic politics.

In any case, the first condition plays a key role: in order to form a feeling of unity between a person and others, to form a sense of belonging to a particular society (nation, ethnicity, political group), it is important to be included in a plot that unfolds in time, in which this community has a major and positive role to play (Bell 2003). That is why narratives, as a linguistic, discursive practice of narration of unfolding events in a meaningful sequence with a beginning, a plot of development, and a final denouement, play a crucial role in the formation of everyday consciousness and traditional knowledge. Tales, legends, chronicles, *byliny* (old Russian epic poems), hagiographic stories, epics, and biographies of famous people form and broadcast ideas about the origin of a given society (clan, tribe, nation), the most important events, they praise heroes, instill pride in their ancestors, and set models of moral behavior and distinction from neighbors and foreigners. Thus narratives symbolize reality, fill it with meaning, and set templates and patterns for interpreting the past and present, making it possible to position a given society and its representatives, acting as an effective means of forming, even constructing, their identity (Sommers 1994).

Over time, the media, the arts, the entertainment industry, the education system, and the humanities have added to the traditional narrative means of socialization. A special role in this is played by history, which is often shaped and developed as narratology in the first place: the specific story and the interpretation it contains (White 1975). It is no coincidence that the first typology of symbolic narrative, deployed on three levels, was proposed precisely using the example of history: information mediated by the historian's imagination, gathered by him from sources; rhetoric of convincing the audience of the plausibility of the proposed semantic scheme; political and ideological settings of the narrative author (Topolski 1999). Such a scheme is quite adequate and appropriate in relation to the positioning of historical research. However, the circle of actors in the symbolic narrative is much wider. Virtually the entire political class is actively involved in this process—from the highest levels of government to local deputies and officials, as well as leading journalists and experts. Speeches and programs, normative acts, state symbols, official rituals, ceremonies, the content of textbooks and curricula, in addition to anniversaries and holidays are by no means a complete list of the purposeful use of symbolic politics. Media, everyday experiences, practices, and communications play an important role: from early childhood and family communication to folklore and interpersonal communications at home, to communications at work and in one's free time.

Taking into account the multi-factoriality and "multi-actoriality" of the practices for presentation (translation) of symbolic content, narration appears as a system that is realized on at least three levels (Tulchinskii 2015):

1. Demonstration, a succession of events, characters, documents, and artifacts that form a factual basis.
2. Aggregation of these facts into chronological and causal connections that form the basis of the plot.
3. Interpretation of this whole, reflection on it, revealing the direction of the development process toward the finale, as the "assembly point" of the narrative, revealing the meaning and sometimes the intention of what happened.

This structure practically coincides with the structure of scientific narration and the detective story discussed earlier.

There is some overlap with E. Topolsky's model, but only with regard to the first level, which is empirical factuality. The second level in our model cannot be reduced to rhetorical methods of persuasion. It is precisely a semantic construction, the essence of which is to develop explanation as the identification of determinations, cause-effect relations, and causality. The third level also constructs an explanation, though no longer of causality

("why?"), but of teleology, of purpose ("what for?"); it implies the identification of a certain intention, goals, intentions, and motivation, which generates or uses causality. Moreover, there is also an inverse connection: already at the factual level, the third-level narrative participates in an explicit or implicit way, affecting the selection of facts and the criteria for this selection, including even their recognition itself.

However, simply distinguishing between the levels of narration and the possibilities of their interaction and combination is not enough. It is also important to distinguish the very modes and groups of narration modes at each level.

As noted, what is the most systematic (and long-standing) is the ideas concerning the content of the presented and broadcast narratives of the symbolic.

There are a great many concepts and theories of myth and mythological consciousness. There are no fewer attempts to systematize them and to theoretically interpret such systematizations (see Segal [1999] for one of the most comprehensive attempts at systematization). It is important for our consideration that the mythology of the post-industrial society of mass consumption is structured radically different from that of traditional culture, which seeks a transcendental justification of reality in the "hierophany" of the sacred (Eliade 1987). This culture of the myth "here and now" is almost the first cultural formation in the history of mankind, devoid of any kind of transcendence, but completely and exclusively immanent. However, myth, like the public opinion that broadcasts it, remains a condition for making sense of reality, which determines understanding, evaluation, motivation, decisions, and actions. Thus, the mythical retains its role. Suren Zolyan reveals this role in his contribution to this volume by discussing the example of Armenian historical memory.

The typical set of myths used in symbolic politics as narrative frames is also preserved. Let us mention the main ones:

The foundation myth is the story of the beginning of a given society, where "our land came from." There can be a serious political struggle around this myth. Thus, the historical cradle of the Armenian people and its culture is Artsakh, while the cradle of the Azerbaijani ethnos is the Ararat Valley. The historical homeland of the Serbian ethnos is Kosovo. And how many *intifadas* began in Israel because of the Muslim shrines on the Temple Mount, the shrine of the Jews and partly of the Christians, too!

The myth of origins is directly related to the myth regarding to the story of foundation—the historical moment from which the counting of the history of society begins. Thus, Soviet school textbooks of national history began with the Urartu state, which today is totally unknown to students who believe that Russia began with the baptism of Vladimir, the Grand Prince of Kiev. It is true that this point of reference is now also claimed by Ukraine.

The main characters of the historical myth are primarily "*founding fathers*," historical figures who played a key role in the formation and development of the ethnos. They are joined by the *heroes* to whom we owe our existence and who are our models for moral and behavioral emulation. The "Pantheon" of historical narrative also includes figures of culture, art, remarkable workers, and athletes.

The most important events in history. Among these, the "great-historical-victory-over-the-deadly-enemy" plays a special role. In the case of a major conflict, it is structured according to the "Hero-Enemy-Victim" model. The Hero fights the Enemy in order to save the Victim (the Victim can also be seen as a Sacrifice) (Etkind 2013).

Places are associated with such events, as well as dates, which make it possible to celebrate these events, commemorate their anniversaries, and become familiar with them.

The list of mythologemes of the historical narration is supplemented by *the products of human hands*, something to be especially proud of: from artifacts of traditional and ethnographic arts and crafts to the achievements of modern technology. Basically, the mythological "content" is quite standard and well-known to ethnographers, specialists in cultural identity, and tourist lore storytelling in the branding of countries and regions.

The systematization of the forms of symbolic presentation deserves special attention. They are most obvious at the second and third levels of narration, when it comes to interpretative (hermeneutic) practices of interpretation. Researchers ascribe significance to them differently, focusing on textbooks and curricula, traditions, mass events, rituals, celebrations (Hobsbaum and Ranger 1983), press and other media, and the public debates of specialists and journalists. According to A. Etkind, they comprise a software form of presentation, in contrast to hardware forms of such presentation, which include museumification, monuments, memorials, architectural monuments, and places of historical events connected with the lives of famous people (Etkind 2013, 225–28).

Any mythology not only narrates, but also assumes that the mythical can come out into the world with the help of special presentation practices, which provide for belonging to the mythical: rituals, celebrations, ceremonies, reconstructions, installations, performances, happenings, and games. That is why it seems important to add a third form to Etkind's typology, the chronotype, special events, which happen at special times in special places and provide opportunities for practical involvement up to and including interactive bodily practices.

What is noteworthy is H. White's model that constructs a narration in accordance with literary genres (White 1975). This model seems extremely

promising for the analysis of narration at the third and partly second levels. However, the focus on the new civilizational possibilities of symbolic presentation, which open up at all levels of narrative, also seems important for the purposes of this review. Modern information and communication technologies generate ambiguous situations of perception and authenticity at each of these levels.

This applies first and foremost to the factual level.

Such possibilities reveal new technologies for capturing reality. This is, first of all, screen forms, variations of which have been developed since photography and cinema. Their forms become greater and greater thanks to computer technology, the internet, and mobile communications: Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, photo shoots, selfies . . . a complete and multiplied depiction of reality. A world of factoring and fractalizing reality with documentary-fueled mythmaking. Meanwhile, these fragments of reality, arbitrarily edited, are presented as an immersion in authenticity and a deeper understanding of it: reports, newsreels, interviews, documentary film, documentary drama, historical reconstruction, mockumentaries, semidocumentaries, reality shows, photo and video materials of any origin, computer simulations, and costumed reconstructions.

Television and the internet visualize what is happening in different parts of the world, allowing the viewer to feel like a virtual participant in wars, revolutions, the redrawing of borders, disasters, massacres, and ethnic cleansing.

This makes modern technologies of symbolic narration extremely convenient for political regimes in ideological justification, justification of their actions, and even legitimacy (Gill 2013). Narratives of symbolic politics, with proper persistence and consistency of the elite, sooner or later become a part of the actual picture of the world. Given the political will and social base represented by a passionate minority, this happens quickly, literally before our eyes, with the current means of communication. The impression of ease, however, is quite deceptive.

Symbolic narratives are broadcast not only at different levels and in different forms, but also in different symbolic spaces ("fields") with different time lags regarding possible changes in content, which ultimately determines the results of symbolic politics. It is one thing to dynamically present symbolic narratives in the media, broadcasting the reaction of the political class to the current problems, the interpretation of these problems, their sources, and possible solutions. The narratives broadcast by the educational system, which is inherently inert, are another thing; attempts in education to keep up with the dynamics of media broadcasts are fraught with failures and contradictions, sometimes tragicomic ones. But society also has even more inert, yet rather stable modes of transmission and reproduction of mythology. And different actors work with these "modes" of symbolic presentation.

These are not only elites, who have symbolic and publicity capitals (fame and recognition) and access to media resources; these are politicians, journalists, religious figures, public intellectuals, humanists, and artists. They provide the most dynamic mode of presenting the symbolic narrative.

But the foundations of cultural identity are laid from an early age in a close circle of communication: family, relatives, loved ones, and friends. And such a mythology is more long term, stable, and inert than the one broadcast by media means of symbolic politics (Harrison and Huntington 2001). The intermediate position between the relatively stable, inert mythology and the dynamic nature of media symbolic politics is occupied by the narratives broadcast by the educational system, whose mobility is relatively limited.

Of course, the media play their role, and especially television through films, television shows, and talk shows simulates reactions to events, immersing viewers in everyday situations and in the discourse of famous recognizable people. The crucial role is played by the news, whose very selection, commentary, and intonations transmit and visualize symbolic narratives. In the twentieth century, sports were added to the means for mass mobilization of public consciousness. Citizens see the country's victories on stage and in sports arenas on television and are filled with a sense of pride. Then, on the same television screen, they are shown another victory, gained during the operation, which (in the same television screen) looked like another successful performance of ours in such a beautiful military-style uniform. War looks like a television report, or even a computer game, where we have ten lives to spare.

If a person, shaped within the book culture of linear reading, building narratives, and tracing plot lines, is able to understand quite complex semantic constructions, a person of the screen digital culture operates only with meanings of the "twitter" format and cannot work with complex sign and semantic structures. The sources of information are perceived by that person as dishes on a buffet, from which they select arbitrarily and at their own discretion.

In mosaic, clip, consciousness, mythology, and the narratives expressing it are less stable, and comprehension is shallow and "short," incapable of "long thoughts." Such consciousness is incapable not only of identifying cause-and-effect connections, but also of simply tracing the chronological sequence of events. The past is reconstructed again and again for the momentary present.

The tendency to accumulate different interpretations increases, making not only a broad dialogue possible but also the articulation of different versions and their evaluations. This activates and stimulates the development of ethnic, racial, confessional, and gender identity, which, in turn, intensifies the accumulation of different narratives. A system with positive feedback on the differentiation and divergence of forms of group consciousness and identities

emerges. The cultivation of an eclecticism of multiculturalism and tolerance has already led to an increase in multi-vector conflict diversity in Europe, Asia, and America.

Outbursts of anti-modernization moods among the general public in countries such as Algeria, Mexico, Turkey, and Russia, where relatively few elites share and broadcast the new meanings and values of post-industrial society, while the general population is guided by the memory of cultural tradition, are vivid examples of this. The example of Russia in this regard is particularly noteworthy. In the country, for over a century and a half, property has not only changed radically, but by historical standards instantaneously; each new political regime began by denying what the previous one had done. Symbolic narratives have changed so rapidly and radically (with textbooks rewritten, streets and cities renamed, corpses removed) that not only has one developed an immunity to their changes, but even an idiosyncrasy it seems.

It appears that we are entering a flaring conflict between two types of mythologies and symbolizations. We are talking about the need to comprehend the demand for a third-level narrative that goes beyond the immediate political context. Already in the last decade of the twentieth century, the situation has begun to change technologically (the internet), politically (the crisis of liberalism), socially (the stratification and radicalization of the middle class), and culturally (the rise of fundamentalism). A socio-cultural and technological platform for changing political realities is being actively formed.

That is why ordered, systematic communication in several stages (as social communication and its organizational forms become more intense) is important, leading to the consolidation of traditions up to their full institutionalization into organizational-legal forms, to their materialization. All systems of values and norms pass through such stages, not only in politics but also in business, science, art, and religion. In addition, the formation of the agenda in symbolic politics must be supplemented at the right time by the creation of infrastructure for the embodiment of the transmitted meanings and images; then the communication will be supplemented by hardware artifacts and events in which meanings are deposited by a new cultural layer for the following generations and become part of their way of life. A vivid example of such a narrative agenda is the formation and promotion of a transport logistics project under the Great Silk Road symbolic auspices. Connor Malloy and Theo Westphal as well as Shubham Karmakar discuss this practice in detail in this volume. Yunfeng Ge and Hong Wang in this volume also write about the application of this narrative practice in promoting a Chinese gourmet program. This indicates that the use of narration goes beyond the usual marketing storytelling to business projects on a global scale.

In this regard, diachronic research is particularly promising as it can clarify the ratio and effectiveness of interaction between long-term symbolic

narratives, media narratives dependent on the current political moment, and medium-term narratives broadcast through educational programs and the arts.

NARRATION AND ANTHROPOGENESIS

The examination carried out suggests the principle and profound role of narration in the formation and development of personality and society, in revealing the dynamics of interaction between the social and the individual.

Let us begin with the main thing, the anthropological problem, the problem of the human being. It consists of when, under what conditions, the representatives of *Homo sapiens*—both separate individuals and the species as a whole—can be regarded as beings truly endowed with reason, capable of guiding the rules of behavior and creating new conditions of their existence.

Plato's unrivaled empirical accuracy in defining man as a featherless biped with a soft earlobe and broad fingernails still does not answer these questions (Diogenes Laertius 2013, 246). Yes, no other such living creature has yet been discovered. But the very set of these identifying characteristics does not reveal the nature of the human phenomenon. The main problem of anthropology is the problem of anthropogenesis (i.e., the origin of man as a sentient being with consciousness), which has no unambiguous and universally recognized solution. This remains relevant unless, of course, we abandon the unambiguous solutions such as the divine origin of man "in the image and likeness" of the Creator or alien origin, to which the ideas of metempsychosis, innateness of ideas, are attached.

In the meantime, we cannot ignore a number of obvious circumstances. First of all, it is the emergence of the *Homo sapiens* species 2.5 million years ago, who about sixty thousand years ago carried out its expansion almost all over the globe, displacing the Neanderthals, the Denisovans, and other closely related *Homo* species that existed. As for consciousness, it is also a fact that it can be gained, and it can be lost temporarily, partially, or completely due to affects, illness, or the development of dementia. And for its development and maintenance, life among other people endowed with consciousness and communication with them is necessary. Outside such communication, as life's cruel incidents show, a person does not become a full-fledged personality. On the contrary, systematic communication contributes to the fact that even profoundly disabled people can become full-fledged members of society and even outstanding scientists. In addition, an equally obvious circumstance for the emergence of consciousness is the brain. It is not without reason that beheading is a well-known massacre in the history of people endowed with the "wrong" consciousness.

In other words, the main factors that make a person a desired anthropological entity are the brain and communication. While the first factor, a biological factor given by the genome, is only a necessary precondition, the second factor is a necessary and sufficient condition. The connection between consciousness and communication, thinking and language (as a tool for the most advanced communication) has long been known. However, only recently has it become clear that it is not simply a matter of language, but, as was shown at the beginning of this work, discursive practices or the use of language in specific situations of social experience when language constructions (speech, text) are used in some eventual aspect.

In this regard, as has already been shown, a crucial role is played by narratives—stories, stories with plots in which actors, their intentions, actions, the results of these actions, and evaluations of the results appear. It seems that it is the mastery of narrative communication that plays the key role in both anthropogenesis and the formation of personality.

The idea of the "cognitive revolution" about sixty thousand years ago, when *Homo sapiens* gained a competitive advantage over the other five or six *Homo* species, deserves attention and further development. And this advantage is connected with mastering the practice of narrative communication (Harari 2014). If signal communication (such as "the tiger is coming!") is able to unite no more than 150 individuals (the size of the pack, clan, or tribe), then narrative communication (such as "I saw a tiger at the waterhole this morning, and it was obviously hungry and fierce") is able to unite hundreds, thousands, since it is now obvious to millions of individuals who share a semantic worldview, the content of which is defined by complexes of specific narratives. This is why myths, history, religion, politics, morality, law, science, economics, money, and other social institutions are essentially nothing more than narratives that people tell each other, that they trust, and are guided by in their public and personal lives as they make plans and create new realities with their actions.

NARRATIVE ABOUT THE CHALLENGES OF DIGITALIZATION AND PERSPECTIVES ON HUMANITY

This possibly lengthy, extended, and detailed "narrative about narration" allows us to move on to a coherent conversation about the challenges of modern civilization, first and foremost in the format of digitalization. We are talking about the development and use of technologies based on the ideas of discreteness, algorithmicity, computability, and programmability. It is digitalization that defines the face of modern civilization: computer technologies, information and communication technologies, and their applications. And

digitization is peeling away humanity, showing its role and significance no longer in the context of anthropogenesis and the formation of personality, but by bringing it to the frontier for the prospective development, if not the existence, of civilization.

Digitalization is related to the fundamental novelty of our time. Up until now, man has created tools, and instruments as organo-projections (Kapp 1877), means that expand bodily and physiological capabilities: a knife, an axe, a spoon, a fork, and a handle expanded the capabilities of the hand, while glasses, a microscope, and a telescope expanded the capabilities of the eye, etc., up to the means of processing, movement, complex devices, machines, aggregates, and complexes of them. In the case of digitalization, the situation is different. We are not talking about individual practices or even just their interaction, but about a new holistic habitat, which is almost entirely artificial: from food production to three-dimensionally printed buildings, unmanned vehicles, smart city-type complexes, the Internet of Things, and turning into the internet of everything. In front of our eyes, the technosphere appears as an ecosystem.

It is no longer about the ability to create robots that look like living beings or synthetic organisms, nor is it about cyborgization, where technology literally becomes part of us. These days the situation is different: on the contrary, it is not so much that the new technologies are becoming part of us, but rather that we are becoming part of them.

It could be said that in industrial society there were voices saying that man is becoming an appendage to the machine. But with digitalization, the world around us becomes an embodiment, a realization of the digital code. Culture, the way of life in the digital form appears literally as a machine of socialization, as a programming, installation ("ingrowing") of experience. Whereas man is increasingly becoming not a user of this machine, but literally part of it, not a user of options, but an option. What is this? A synthesis of the ideas of Plato and Pythagoras? A descent into archaicism? Or the complete triumph of rationalism, taken to its extreme (=opposite)?

The challenges of civilization are multidirectional. There is a political challenge of total control and literal realization of the classic anti-utopias of E. Zamyatin, A. Huxley, and G. Orwell, behind which we see the *Grand Inquisitor* by F.M. Dostoevsky and *One Who Counted All* by A. Platonov. There is an ethical and legal challenge to the subject and content of responsibility of the developers, the algorithms' owners, or the algorithms themselves. There is an epistemic challenge of treating cognition no longer as interpretation and fact-checking, but as an embodiment of the algorithm.

The economic challenge of transforming subjectivity, the self, into a source of income, a new rent, is particularly revealing. The rent from natural resources, monopoly, financial transactions, and the rent from wage labor

was first supplemented by network rent (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007), and now by existential rent. The human being, the very fact of their existence, the circumstances of their life, the manifestations of their life in employment, leisure, and consumption, moreover, their personality, their self and authenticity, and their very subjectivity have become a new source of rent income. This has been made possible by the precarious nature of work, by prosumerism, Big Data, and nudge marketing that is integrated on digital eco-platforms.

M. McLuhan once wrote that industrial technology and market mechanisms simultaneously exaggerate and reduce the behavioral content of sex, and that they turn people into their sexual organ (McLuhan 1951). In the contemporary situation, this metaphor is implemented literally. Just as the bee is the sex organ of flowers, carrying pollen that contributes to crops monetized in markets, so the modern man appears as the sex organ of digital platforms: by leaving life traces on these platforms, man contributes to the building of monetized Big Data. And just as the bee, along with pollination, produces wax and honey, which the beekeeper or the bear collects, the human beings in parallel produce new technologies and mechanisms that are used by business and government. In the digital version, capitalism is an extra-human and inhuman system of economic management aimed at increasing capital. It is a remarkably resilient system that has undergone several transformations, and in its digital form it has received its historically most pure and complete expression.

The main challenge of digitalization is anthropological, the total dissolution of the self in digital identity as identification, fixing a kind of categorical belonging, or an inventory. The totalitarianism of the twentieth century is perceived as an anthropological disaster. It seems that the last century was only a "test of the pen." And this is not so much the situation of the Wachowskis' iconic film *The Matrix*, where people serve as the raw material for the creation of a phantom world, as that of Stanislaw Lem's *Solaris*, where people, their world and experiences are the products of a kind of planetary whole that calculates everything and everyone.

Of course, digitalization is a great achievement of civilization. Humanity has never lived so comfortably. It has created the "Great Hype," the "Klondike" of the new economy. Even crime has changed: there is less violence, but fraud has increased tremendously. And beyond these challenges, the system itself, in its complexity, the costs of control, the energy costs of blockchain, is reaching its limits. It is here that the cost of any failure, with catastrophic consequences on a planetary scale, rises dramatically.

In relation to digitalization, humanitarians are used to the role of victims, suffering from the irrelevance and redundancy of social-humanitarian knowledge as "narrative-interpretive" knowledge ex post ("after the fact") (Taleb 2004). According to Nassim Taleb, this knowledge is knowledge that has no

practical meaning, it cannot be touched, cannot be "put into a cart." It is the commentary that corresponds to a desire (and even a need) to hear stories. However, there seems to be a situation in which "minuses" can become "pluses" and weaknesses can become advantages. Third-person consciousness can be simulated. Algorithms beat world champions at chess, the game Go, and even poker. But self-consciousness, selfhood in the first person, is manifested and expressed not only and not so much in some activity according to a predetermined algorithm. A machine can formulate objectives to achieve a goal; it can even set goals on some scale of values. But to go beyond the scale results in a program failure. A human being, on the contrary, constantly fails, at least in their imagination and at least out of resentment. The content of subjectivity "in the first person," in the source of meaning and semantic formation, is an emotionally colored experience. The individual is finite and is aware of their finitude. The individual can be satisfied; however, more often than not they are unsatisfied. The individual gets tired; they want something, something new, and something different.

The digitalization peels away, brings the main thing to the forefront, which is subjectivity as a source, means, and result of development. No wonder modern employers who think about development value not so much knowledge (~information), and even technological skills (which are easily absorbed with the change in technology), but the condition for knowledge and these skills, the skills of procreation, pre-adaptivity: critical thinking, the ability to identify problems, decision making and their implementation, emotional intelligence, active offline communication, open-mindedness, and the ability to understand and adapt to other people. Developed subjectivity, procreativity, and pre-adaptivity are a reliable prevention of a triple burnout: professional, personal, and human.

Here, for example, are some questions from the thirty-minute Harvard business school MBA interview: "Explain to me what you are working on as if I were an eight-year-old child," "What are the things you can never succeed at and never be as good as others?" "What are the two best pieces of advice you have ever been given in life? Why do you think they are?" "What would you like to be remembered for?" "How do you make important decisions?" "How would your parents describe you as a 12-year-old?" "What would I have never guessed, even after reading your application for admission?" and "What was the most challenging question you were asked?" All of these questions are, in fact, tests for developed subjectivity, for the ability of reflexive narration.

In this regard, let me turn to the role of the humanistic paradigm. Knowledge of natural processes and phenomena is not self-sufficient. One way or another, it is knowledge about the infrastructure that makes it possible to preserve and develop society. The social is also not self-valuable. It

is what ensures the existence and development of a certain way of life (i.e., culture). However, if the social self-value is fraught with economocentrism, then the self-value of culture is fraught with chauvinism. Culture is also only infrastructure that provides the formation and development of a certain type of personality. A culture without bearers of the culture is dead, only an asset for archaeologists.

Also, socialized personality is not self-sufficient, but it is a condition, an infrastructure for the formation of subjectivity, making the personality a sane subject, and in terms of morality and law. In this respect, humanitarian knowledge is knowledge of the same degree of generality as natural science. Of course, particular manifestations of self-consciousness and selfhood are individual and unique, but the condition of this manifestation is universal—it is subjectivity as a responsible realization of freedom (=free manifestation of responsibility).

It is becoming increasingly obvious that there is a need for a comprehensive humanitarian expertise. This is not only expertise in regard to the consequences of implementing digital technologies, but also the development goals, and the development and implementation themselves. Such expertise can only be comprehensive and interdisciplinary (Leontiev and Tulchinskii 2018). It must be aimed at ensuring, preserving, and developing subjectivity, which is the core not only of humanity, but of human civilization.

The subjectivity, which is narrative in nature, is not simply the "last house of the soul." It is also the main factor of dynamics and development. It is the nail on which "the entire hat" of *Homo sapiens* civilization hangs. If this nail is pulled out or hammered down to its very cap, then this civilization loses its source, means, and result of development (i.e., it becomes meaningless, turning into the embodiment of R. Bradbury's short, but very articulate story "There Will Come Soft Rains").

ERGO . . .

Thus the narrative approach turns out to be a platform for the integration of interdisciplinary research and even the convergence of the humanities, natural, and exact sciences in the analysis and projection of the meaning-making narrative, levels and dynamics of historical memory, relevant socio-cultural practices, and social communication. On this basis, the possibilities of constructive complementarity of semiotic and hermeneutic approaches, analytical and continental philosophy also come to the surface.

The philosophical significance of these generalizations lies in the prospect of the possibility of integration between the continental philosophical tradition oriented to the description of consciousness "in the first person"

(phenomenology, existentialism) and the English-language tradition with its emphasis on descriptions "in the third person." Thus, D. Dennett's concept, formulated in the tradition of analytical philosophy (as opposed to phenomenology, then just in its early expression) only partially includes even E. Husserl. The thing is that the evolution of intentional phenomenology has traveled a demonstrative path from F. Brentano to Husserl and further to M. Heidegger and H. Gadamer, coming to the hermeneutic and semiotic analysis not only of culture, but also of consciousness, actually combining them methodologically (Derrida 2000), and sometimes supplementing them with psychoanalysis (in poststructuralism). The result was, in fact, the same as in analytical philosophy: revealing the key role of narration as the source of the "elusive" essence of meaning. The narrative approach departs from the opposition between stream-of-consciousness phenomenology and behaviorism. It establishes a bridge between the self in the first and third persons, preserving the possibilities of humanitarian disciplinary approaches and preserving their socio-cultural institutional applications (in law, education, religion, politics, art history). This bridge is strong enough, in the sense that it can be crossed by tanks of digital models and algorithms.

However, this is a topic for another conversation—a conversation about the challenges that digitalization poses to morality and law, economics and politics, education and anthropology, etc. In this chapter, the author only wishes to share the range and scope of perspectives offered by the narrative approach. Among other things, these perspectives express the real demand for humanitarian knowledge and humanitarian expertise experienced by contemporary civilization. It is precisely narration that turns out to be the main subject and instrument of such an expertise.

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Chapter 2

On Semantic Tools of Construction of Historical Memory (in Movses Khorenatsi's *History of Armenia*)

Suren Zolyan

INTRODUCTION

In this article, we will consider three significantly different topics—the features of the construction of national histories, modal semantic characteristics of historical discourse, and the primary narrative characteristics of the *History of Armenia* by Movses Khorenatsi (fifth century). Such a combination of heterogeneous topics can be explained as follows. The creation of national histories is usually considered a characteristic of modern times and is associated with the processes of creating national states. These histories are designed to trace the nation's origin back to mythologized antiquity and legitimize the nation-state's existence. Meanwhile, Khorenatsi's *History* demonstrates that similar narrative practices may have originated in the early Middle Ages. We assume that the explanation for this phenomenon can be found if we isolate the changeable political and socio-cultural contexts of narratives and texts, in which the relatively stable basic semantic characteristics of historical narration are manifested. First, these are modal, temporal, and causal characteristics, and there is a particular interaction between them. Such an approach makes it possible to interpret this classical text of Armenian historiography in a new way and correlate it with modern narrative practices of nation-building. Accordingly, in the first part of the chapter we will address the narrative characteristics of national histories; in the second, the

semantic features of historical discourse; and in the third part using this methodological framework, we will explicate the main semantic characteristics of Khorenatsi's *History*.

NARRATIVES THAT SHAPE NATIONS

The construction of national history and all-national historical memory is associated with Modernity when the concept of the nation and national state was finally formed. History coming from the distant past becomes an obligatory attribute of a nation-state; it is thought to legitimize its emergence and existence and provide a connection with a primordial past. This was noted by Ernst Renan in the classic lecture "What is a Nation" (Renan 1990; originally 1882); in the 1980s and 1990s, this approach became decisive in political philosophy and historiography (Hobsbawm 1991; Gellner 1996; Anderson 1991; Smith 1995). The modern nation is conceived as the result of a particular construction, and one of the main tools and component of the resulting construction is history:

> National history thus serves as justification for the existence, the particularity, and often the greatness of the present nation-state. For those intent on achieving statehood, history serves to legitimate that desire. The appeal to history as legitimation is particularly intense in times of rapid social change, of internal conflict, revolution, civil war or war, when we encounter the greatest concentration of attempts to "write the nation" back into time, to create prehistories of the present and to construct traditions. (Berger 2015, 4)

The constructivist approach causes a whole direction of interdisciplinary research. The numerous cases of creation and re-creation of national histories in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were revealed. The collapse of the colonial system, then the USSR and Yugoslavia, led to the formation of new states and histories. Several major international scientific projects were carried out, the most prominent of which was the five-year program "Representations of the Past: The Writing of National Histories in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Europe" (2003–2008), funded by the European Science Foundation. After its successful completion, it gave birth to new connected research programs. Closely related to this project are the scientific book series *Making Sense of History: Studies in Historical Cultures* (since 2002, forty-seven volumes of this series have already been published) and the eight-volume book series *Writing the Nation* published in 2008–2015.

Of course, in addition to studying political and socio-cultural contexts, identifying the tools for constructing history and semiotic forms of its

representation has acquired particular importance. Due to this approach, the issue of narration came to be considered one of the primary mechanisms for the creation of history and therefore of the nation. As was stated (referring to Bhabha [1990]) by one of the leaders and contributors to the aforementioned project:

> Nation is narration. The stories we tell each other about our national belonging and being constitute the nation. These stories change over time and place and are always contested, often violently so. Few paradigms in the realm of cultural sense-production have been as powerful as the national one, and the prominence of nationalism as an ideology and social movement in the world of today testifies to its continued and global appeal. (Berger 2008, 1)

The article "Narrating the Nation" (Bhabha 1990) became a methodological guideline for several studies that made up the collective monograph of the same name (Berger, Eriksonas, and Mycock 2008). However, this in itself was separate from the main object of discussion. Meanwhile, Bhabha insisted on exploring the full semantic potential of such an understanding of a nation as a process and result of narration, and this potential is far from being limited to political and socio-economic factors (Bhabha 1990, 1, 3).

The study of various cases demonstrates that narratives and narrative practices create historical past and form historical memory. This led to a change in the point of view on the historian: from an objective observer, as it was habitual to consider the historian earlier, now they are attributed with the role of narrator and myth-maker (Berger 2008, 5). In many cases, such narratives are not based on sources but resemble literary texts in which hypotheses give way to fiction. At the same time, in some cases, these narratives claim that the reconstruction of the past is based on reliable sources that were not previously known or deliberately concealed by malicious neighbors. (These cases are analyzed in Geyer 1989; Sethi 1999; Smith 2003; Roshwald 2006; Wang 2007; Lorenz 2008; Berger 2007a; 2007b; Berger and Lorenz 2008; 2010; Rigney 2008). With all their diversity, they can be reduced to a model metanarrative:

> Nations are articulated through the stories people tell about themselves. The narrative is most often a tale of origins and continuity, often involving sacrifice and martyrdom, but also glory and heroism. The national history is one of continuity, antiquity of origins, heroism and past greatness, martyrdom and sacrifice, victimization and overcoming of trauma. . . . Beyond the specific narratives of particular nations is the metanarrative or discourse of the nation, the cluster of ideas and understandings that came to surround the signifier "nation" in modern times (roughly post-1750). (Suny 2001, 870)

However, such a temporal threshold may not be absolutized. Of course, the concept of "nation" formed in modern times is very different from its previous "*signifier*." Nevertheless, analogs of the modern concept of the nation can be found both in the "Histories" created in antiquity and the Middle Ages (Berger 2015, 13).

Even noting such a difference, leading experts stipulate that the similarity of particular elements should not obscure the deep differences due to the diachronic context (Roshwald 2006, 5). Bearing in mind this precondition, we nevertheless want to demonstrate that the situation may be changed if we turn from contexts to texts, from circumstances of narration to its content and mechanisms. Then it is possible to reveal correspondences between the whole system of narration as a construction of the national history.

It may sound strange that it was only recently that the points of convergence appeared between the earlier-described constructivist approach and other influential direction in the philosophy of history—the so-called narratological direction (sometimes it is denoted by the terms *linguistic turn*, *discursive turn*, or *post-modern philosophy of history*). It has been actively developed since the 1970s (White 1973; 1987; Barthes 1981; Ankersmit 1983; Domańska 1998). It is also based on the methodology of constructivism and considers narrative and textual strategies as the main factors of production, representation, and interpretation of historical texts. However, constructionist theorists usually did not take into account the main concepts of their narratologist counterparts. As its prominent representatives have recently noted,

> We observed a remarkable imbalance between the extended theoretical discussions about history and narrative on the one side, and the quite limited number of empirical attempts to analyse narrative strategies of historians on the other—professional or otherwise. Now it is time to check how far theoretical claims [apply] concerning narrative in history—especially those formulated by White, like the construction of a temporal beginning, middle and ending, and the construction of a plot, as well as the claims of postnarrative theory concerning truth and objectivity. (Berger and Lorenz 2021, 334)

It is not obvious which models and strategies of historical narrative are basic and common. Thus, in Berger and Lorenz (2021, 334–41), seven new characteristics were added in addition to those borrowed from narratologists. This list can be supplemented as a result of the study of new cases. Nevertheless, all the features can be considered as a concretization of the general principle: "A historical narrative is tied to the medium of memory. It mobilizes the experience of past time, which is engraved in the archives of memory, so that

the experience of present time becomes understandable and the expectation of future time is possible" (Rüsen 2005, 11).

This general provision can be expressed in various forms and represented in different texts and contexts. Each of these cases necessarily causes a certain refinement of the general model. We intend to demonstrate it by analyzing Movses Khorenatsi's *History of Armenia*. What gives this text a special significance as an object of study? The *History* was written in the fifth century, proving that not only individual elements but also the holistic, systemic practices of narrating as nation-building, which constructivist theorists talk about, appeared much earlier than 1750. At least, the Armenian medieval historiography demonstrates that in the early Middle Ages, it is already possible to find a similar case of the creation of national history while using comparable mechanisms. Thus, without disputing the connection of such narrative practices with the political context of the modern time of the formation of nation-states, we intend to demonstrate that it is possible to find out narrative and textual analogies in ancient times. With all its particularities, the case we have considered generally coincides with the narrative practices and strategies of the modern age. The historiographer Movses Khorenatsi, whose *History* we intend to address, explicitly declared his objectives: to reconstruct the history of Armenia and Armenians from the very beginning and legitimize the nation's existence among the others. The object of our research allows us to identify both general characteristics and peculiarities. At the same time, the distinctions may be attributed to the context of the creation of this text, while the commonalities relate to textualization models. In the following parts, we will present our vision of the basic modal semantic features of the historical narrative (modal semantics, or the theory of possible worlds until now, has been minimally employed in the field of theory and philosophy of history, although it is actively developed in relation to literary narratives), then analyze the textual strategies to generate the history of Armenia and Armenians.

THE HISTORICAL DISCOURSE: FROM A MODAL POINT OF VIEW[1]

In this chapter, we intend to highlight some of the historical discourse's semantic peculiarities derived from its basic modal characteristics based on primary deontic and epistemic notions (possibility, necessity, obligatority, normativity, etc.). Narratives oriented on the description of past events presuppose a particular organization of discourse and semantic mechanisms that may be manifested with various political and cultural goals and contexts. Historiography and historical memory represent the past through various semiotic tools: narratives, symbols, monuments, songs, etc. Such forms of

representation exclude the possibility of applying truth value criteria to the corresponding procedures for their semantic evaluation.[2] Special modal and temporal operators are required. The classical temporal logic is based on the basic assumption that the actual world in the present was once the same world in which the described event occurred at some moment in time, and the world where we are now is the heir of that world (Prior 1967; Lewis 1987). However, how does it become possible to travel back in time and, at some point, to precede that world to ensure that that event really happened? This function is entrusted by some narrator, who sets out the facts about the past, as (if) it was/were, to another narrator—to an eyewitness who existed at that moment, saw that event with their own eyes at that moment, and moreover left a reliable testimony about this (of course, this also applies to the fact of the existence of such an eyewitness). Narratives and other forms of representation of history and historical memory pretend to be based on historical facts and represent historical reality as it was. However, such facts are textual entities—both verbal and material objects to which a sign (semiotic) function is attributed (e.g., archaeological artifacts are interpreted as signs referring to some denotates). Thus, the description of the past event refers to some previous narrator or quasi-speaker (e.g., excavations of a city or tomb are described as some message from the society which created it). As Yuri Lotman explains the interrelationship between historical facts and texts,

> The historian is condemned to deal with texts. The text stands between the event "as it happened" and the historian, so that the scientific situation is radically altered. A text is always created by someone and for some purpose and events are presented in the text in an encoded form. The historian then has to act as decoder, and the fact is not a point of departure but the end-result of many labours. The historian creates facts by extracting non-textual reality from the text, and an event from a story about it. (Lotman 1990, 217–18)

In this case, the question arises as to the adequacy of both a primary record and its subsequent interpretation. Thus, a multilevel semantic and pragmatic modal system appears, although designed to create an impression of a narrative based on facts. Subjective components of a narration (conventionally: context including an author and interpreter) significantly affect a description of the historical past. This constant interaction between narratives and their interpretations creates a new situation. Thus, a historian-narrator (or a collective "author" of the narrative) can be included within a semantic system of historical memory—as a separate meta-system describing the interaction of subjects, attitudes, and narratives.

What are the semiotic foundations of describing the past? One can put forward a paradoxical formula—a description of what was a case may be

considered as a special case of describing what could be a case. Usually, a description of the possibilities is oriented to the future—as something that can happen. This is a point of the statement of Ludwig Wittgenstein—something that can be described through some formal language can happen: "What can be described can happen too . . ." (1922 . . . , LPT. 6.362). However, descriptions of the past also turn out to be based on a choice from a certain set of possibilities. Let us recall the paradoxical thought of Friedrich von Schlegel: "The historian is a backwards-looking prophet" (1971, 27).

We do not intend to debate what Wittgenstein meant (for more details, see Zolyan 2022a; 2022b). In any case, it may be related to such a fundamental property of language that makes it possible to describe the world as it could be. The art and technique of narrative is the development of basic semantic linguistic competence: "Since man can represent to himself the way the world is he can represent to himself the way the world might be but isn't. Language then becomes a rule-governed device for putting into the mind of another a representation of the same set of possible worlds which is in the mind of the speaker" (Cresswell 1988, 29).

However, a representation of possibilities (a set of possible worlds) also requires some techniques of textualization. Wittgenstein, of course, had logical descriptions in mind, so he specifically stipulated: "What can be described can happen too: and what the law of causality is meant to exclude cannot even be described" (1922 LPT. 6.362). Nevertheless, apart from the logic of causality, one can mention the logic of textuality. In social communication, pragma-semantic mechanisms are used to establish relations between heterogeneous worlds and connect events occurring in different worlds—events of the past and future, the worlds of myths and legends, and chronological records. Attempts to apply the apparatus of the possible world semantics to a literary text have been undertaken repeatedly—mainly in connection with the problem of *Truth in Fiction* and modes of reference to fictional objects (see pioneering works: Lewis 1978; Searle 1975). Meanwhile, this logic of modality and textuality was developed in poetics and rhetoric from ancient times. It is necessary to distinguish what the ancient Greeks considered as a distinction between two types of discourses (i.e., between a myth and a history), that is, between the description of fiction and what took place in reality. This distinction was expressed in a profound philosophical form as a distinction between history and poetry: "the poet's function is to describe, not the thing that has happened, but a kind of thing that might happen, i.e., what is possible as being probable or necessary" (Aristotle 1962, 15a). This fragment is well known (cf.: Partner 2013), but much less attention was attracted to its continuation, where Aristotle suggests that the *poet* can compose events that happened in reality: "if he should come to take a subject from actual history, he is nonetheless a poet for that; since some historic occurrences may very

well be in the probable and possible order of things; and it is in that aspect of them that he is their poet <or maker>" (Aristotle 1962, 15a).

Wittgenstein's statement can help to understand this paradoxical idea: if events that have occurred are not accidental, they can be described (in advance?) as if they occurred by virtue of the law of *causality* (according to Wittgenstein), or by *probability and possibility*, or even *probability or necessity* (according to Aristotle). Thus, events that *actually happened* may appear *as composed* ones. And vice versa; by Aristotle, in the absence or lack of causality, the composed narratives are taken out of the artistic genre. In favor of this assumption, one can refer to Aristotle's further explanations, which are based not on aesthetics but on causal and modal characteristics (probability, randomness, necessity). Based on this ground, Aristotle distinguishes the *worst and best plots*.

> Of simple Plots and actions, the episodic are the worst. I call a Plot episodic when there is neither probability nor necessity in the sequence of episodes. . . . Tragedy, however, is an imitation not only of a complete action, but also of incidents arousing pity and fear. Such incidents have the very greatest effect on the mind when they occur unexpectedly and at the same time in consequence of one another; there is more of the marvelous in them then than if they happened of themselves or by mere chance. Even matters of chance seem most marvelous if there is an appearance of design as it were in them. (Aristotle 1962, 15a–2b)

As one can see, according to Aristotle, the distinction between history and literary text is based on the difference between their modal and semantic characteristics, and only in this way correlates with the described content. Singular accidental events of historical discourses are opposed to the possible (non-random) or even necessary events as described in poetic works. But it is noteworthy that Aristotle immediately stipulated the possibility of combining history and fiction; this may appear in *Tragedy*. Thus, the distinction between what took place and what could take place is transferred from the actual world to possible worlds created by a text as its domain of interpretation. Accordingly, common semantic procedures directly correlating language expressions with non-linguistic objects cannot be applied in this case, and only various kinds of interpretive operations are possible.

As one can see, Aristotle considered a particular narrative strategy, suggesting that "good" narratives should represent a sequence of events not in such a way that the episodes follow each other without probability and necessity but as non-accidental events that *happened as if on purpose*. Not only some separate events but also relationships between them have to be endowed with an assigned meaning, and an accidental event should appear as a required link in a chain of causes and consequences; this can be considered

as a textual manifestation of causal logical-semantic relations. The strategies creating those linkages are well known in poetics and rhetoric. From this point of view, it makes it possible to find a commonality between the Aristotelian and Wittgensteinian understanding of the connection between *what can be described* and what *can happen*.

Such operations of assigning causality and making meaning require an explanation of how it is possible to introduce "meaning" into an event. These operations may be designated as mechanisms of creating coherence between episodes and the integrity of an entire narrative based on a comprehensive semantic framework. This frame is given by semantic coordinates, by the initial and final episodes of a narrative. The procedures of textualization, as it can be understood from what Aristotle said, are intended to create a certain causal connection between described events. Moreover, there can be no event-in-itself outside of a symbolic representation describing and relating it with other events (it may be a sentence, a painting, a photograph, etc.). Again, it seems to be appropriate to recall Schlegel: a historian who is located in their present describes past events from the point which is the future in relation to an event under consideration. This allows a narrator to contribute what was absent in the event itself—the influence and consequences of that event on subsequent ones. The narrator is able to know what will happen and even *predict the interests of future historians* (Danto 1965, 169).

Thus, its consequences are "tied" to an event, and it creates a cause-and-effect relationship (or its appearance). Describing events (episodic narration, according to Aristotle) is transformed into a narrative, where accidental acts appear as having happened *as if on purpose*. For instance, as Leo Tolstoy ironically described it in his *War and Peace* novel, Kutuzov's decision to leave Moscow is endowed with connections with subsequent events and the final situation (the defeat of Napoleon). That event, from the point of view of a historian predicting back, is endowed with a reflection of subsequent events; why it becomes possible to produce statements as, for example: At the council in Fili, Kutuzov proposed the only correct solution—though nobody could definitely know its consequences when that decision was made. The sequence of events acts as a coherent and integral text with a single semantic structure with marked beginning and end, and all intermediate episodes are subordinated to the primary function—to create not only a temporal sequence but also a semantic connection between them.[3] The starting and ending points act as a kind of Borgesian Aleph—these are the points at which all the other points between them are present. This semantic structure gives appropriate meanings to any intermediate event (the battle under Mozaisk, crossing the Berezina River, Napoleon's defeat, etc.)—precisely as facilitating or hindering the transition from beginning to end. In this way, some sequence of events is converted to text, acquiring the appropriate textual characteristics.

As was mentioned by Aristotle, a poet can compose what has taken place if they describe it in a deterministic way. But in this case, a historian, setting their narrative about what took place in a certain causal chain acts not as a descriptor of facts but as their creator. In addition to the introduction of the aforementioned cause-and-effect characteristics, this unfolds implicit modal parameters. Looking from the present to the past suggests that the creation of a text proceeds from its end to its beginning, in the direction opposite to the actual sequence of events in history. This leads to a retrospective transformation: "Looking from the past into the future, we see the present as a complete collection of a series of equally probable possibilities. When we look into the past, reality acquires the status of fact and we are inclined to see it as the only possible realisation. Unrealised possibilities are transformed into possibilities which could not be realised" (Lotman 2009, 126).

Events are transformed into sentences, and a sequence of them constitutes a narrative. Such criteria of textuality, such as coherence and cohesion, become decisive. The semantic integrity of a text is grounded on some semantic framework that is to unite dispersed fragments. Meanings that are absent in events themselves emerge while describing them[4]—partially due to the juxtaposition of sentences in a text and partially due to including a describing system (i.e., a historian and their context, in narration). History as a sequence of events that has no beginning and no end is converted into text, and on that occasion, its beginning and end are of decisive importance (cf.: Rigney 2013). These points, first, separate that message from other messages and, second, determine the semantic coordinates of a narrative. All events installed in the text must be correlated with these coordinates, and in this way they are endowed with modal characteristics. In the same way as in poetics, random and singular events are transformed into universal and necessary ones. The semantic coherence between initial and final episodes (as it were) produces an ideological metanarrative integrity (cf.: Lyotard 1984). The mechanism of a constructing (meta)narrative on the national history of Armenians will be addressed in the third part of our research.

COMPILING THE PAST: MOVSES KHORENATSI AND HIS *HISTORY*

The History as a Birth Certificate for the Nation

The aforementioned theoretical standpoints may be demonstrated through analysis of Movses Khorenatsi's *History*. This is a unique opportunity to trace the construction of national history in ancient times. Armenian historiography is remarkable as it makes it possible to observe the birth of historiography

from various kinds of non-historical texts (oral history, myths, legends, and songs). The first historical work appeared only in the fifth century, despite the significant previous period of existence of the Armenian statehood (according to various sources—from three or four millennia BC). The first Armenian "Histories" were concentrated on recent history and most significant current historical events—the adoption of Christianity by Armenians (Agatangelos's *History*); the ongoing struggle with Zoroastrian Iran for the preservation of the Christian faith (the "Histories" of Yeghishe and Kazar Parpetsi), or contemporary chronicles, often based on oral narratives (Faustos Byuzand's History). Only Movses Khorenatsi raises the issue of the history of Armenia (or the "History of the Armenians"—the ancient Armenian "Պատմութիւն հայոց" allows a dual interpretation) as a holistic narrative in its connection with the world history and synchronized it with the most influential version outlined in the Bible.[5] That is why in the Armenian tradition, Movses Khorenatsi is considered the most authoritative author; he was respectfully honorified as *the Father of History* (*Պատմահայր, Patrmahajr*), as well as the Father of Writers/Poets (*Քերթողահայր*; *Kertohahajr*). In general, this attitude may be formulated as it was by the prominent Armenian philologist Stepan Malkhasian:

> Khorenatsi was the first to write the systematic history of the Armenian nation from the beginning to his time. . . . This was a birth certificate for our nation, which until then did not know who it was and what its origin was. Connecting the origin of the Armenian nation with the Holy Book, originating the Armenians from the Habeti tribe, he created an honorable place for the Armenian nation among other ancient nations. (Malkhasian 1997, 33; our translation from Armenian)

Modern researchers confirm a similar characteristic (Abrahamyan 2011, 106). This first systematic history of Armenia aims to reveal the origin of the Armenians and create a narrative that makes it possible to trace the history of the Armenian kings and nobles and align them with the data of the Old Testament. The *History* consists of three parts—the legendary genealogy of Armenians, the middle history of Armenia, and the completion of the history. In the preface, Movses addresses his patron, prince Bagratuni. He praises his prince for his initiative and condemns the previous kings and princes for the fact that none of them left written evidence:

> So then it is clear to us all that our kings and other forefathers were negligent toward scholarship and unconcerned with the life of reason. . . . But it seems to me that nowadays, just as in the past, the Armenians were not enamored of scholarship or intellectual books. Therefore, it is superfluous for us to say anything more about those unlettered, lazy, and barbarous men. But I am greatly

> amazed at the fertility of your mind, that from the beginnings of our nation up to the present you alone have been found to undertake such a great task and to present us with this request—to write the history of our nation. (Khorenatsi 1978, 5)

The first two parts relate to cultural memory, since the events described are separated from Khorenatsi by millennia by the first part, and by centuries for the second part. The third part, on the other hand, begins with the events after the adoption of Christianity—the middle of the fourth century, from which Movses is separated by less than one and half centuries.

As noted, the ancient Armenian "Պատմութիւն Հայոց" allows for a dual interpretation (i.e., *the History of the Armenians* and *the History of Armenia*). This duality is not only linguistic but also substantive: the first two parts are the compiled history of the Armenians, the most prominent leaders and kings, while the third part is the history of Armenia, the Armenian kingdom in its most dramatic periods.

This distribution neatly correlates with Jan Assman's differentiation between the long-term cultural memory of societies, which can span up to three thousand years, and communicative memory, which is typically restricted to eighty to one hundred years and based on evidence and reports of eyewitnesses. Besides, it relates to the status of reported events: "The distinction between communicative and cultural memory is linked to the difference between the everyday and the festive, the profane and the sacred, the ephemeral and the lasting, the particular and the general" (Assmann 2011, 43).

One can see a distinction between different types of historical memory in the following self-description of the contents of the *History*. At the beginning of the third part, Khorenatsi points to the sources of his information. The first part is based on the Biblical history and Greek sources, the second on memory; in the third, which describes everything that *has happened in our time or a little earlier* (Khorenatsi 1978, 255), Movses acts as an eyewitness.

The first part presents samples of the mythological history of Armenia that has survived in oral legends. At the beginning of the history of the Armenians, the origin of the Armenians in Babylon and their exodus, as well as the struggle against pagan rulers, are described. The second is a combination of an epic narrative and certain historical data, in which historical figures act as epic heroes. Sometimes Khorenatsi reproduces folklore motifs, although the names of real kings are used (the kings Artashes, Artavazd, etc.).

The third part is devoted to describing the events that occurred after the adoption of Christianity (301 AD), up to the termination of the Armenian kingdom. The historiographer could have reliable information on those events, and he made a special reference to it in his introduction to the third part while addressing his patron: "Therefore do not censure or blame us, for behold we shall tell you without error about whatever happened in our own

times, or a little earlier, by composing a third book dealing with events after Saint Trdat down to the removal of the Arsacid family from the throne and of the posterity of Saint Gregory from the patriarchate" (Khorenatsi 1978, 254). For him, the latest history appears as a chain of permanent conflicts between kings and princes, constant betrayal, unwillingness to follow the instructions of the Armenian holy patriarchs (Gregory, Nerses, Sahak), and restoration of pagan customs.

Exploring the Nation

The construction of national history is carried out in the text itself. The selection and description of events that took place are subordinated to an ideological framework, which Movses sets out in the preface: "For although we are a small garden, and are very limited in number, and deprived of power, and have been conquered by other nations many times, still in our country there have been many feats of courage worthy of being immortalized in writing, which, however, none of them <kings and princes> cared to record in books" (Khorenatsi 1978, 5).

The initial history of Armenia appears as an epic in which the heroes/progenitors protect their clan, build cities, take care of the people, etc. The hero/progenitor turns out to be Hayk, who left the evil giant Bel from Babylon to go to Ararat—Khorenatsi retains the name of the Babylonian supreme deity, although at the same time he identifies him with the king Nimrod mentioned in the Bible. Bel tries by force to bring Hayk and his clan back to Babylon. However, in the battle with Bel, Hayk defeats him and establishes the Armenian kingdom: "Now our country is called Hayk after our ancestor Hayk" (Khorenatsi 1978, 88).

The history of Armenia, according to Khorenatsi, appears as a text that has a beginning and end. In the contemporary period, the fall of the Armenian kingdom and the patriarchate is described as the end of history. It may be assumed that for this reason Movses Khorenatsi mentions the prophecy of his teacher, Patriarch Nerses the Great, but does not give either the text itself or even the content of this prophecy (it is given in the *History of Armenia* by Kazar Parpetsi, fifth century). Meanwhile, it contains a prediction about the restoration in the future of both the Armenian kingdom and the patriarchy. This contradicts the ending of Khorenatsi's History, which does not leave any hope.

At the same time, the context of the writing (the times of decline of the Armenian kingdom) predetermines the narrative pattern ("the paradise lost") and tragic pathos. The *History* ends with lamentations. The ending of the narration marks the end of history: "But here let this discourse cease, as [I am] weary of speaking to the ears of the dead" (Khorenatsi 1978, 253).

The title of the third chapter is named: "The Conclusion <of the History> of our Fatherland" (Khorenatsi 1978, 254). This idea is even more saliently expressed in the table of contents (for some reason untranslated by Thomson): *This is the list <of chapters> of the third book with which Armenian history ends* (Khorenatsi 1997, 210; our translation).

Constructing the Narrative: Khorenatsi on His Sources

The narrative is permanently complemented by a discussion of the reliability of sources. Movses Khorenatsi tries to compensate for the lack of written Armenian sources by turning to foreign works (Greek, Syrian, Hebrew), but this could help only partially. Reflection on his own creative interpretations and its limits is shown in the text when Khorenatsi discusses the reliability of the information from certain sources. Thus, the second chapter of the first part is entitled: Why we wished to expound our affairs from Greek sources although they are more frequently mentioned in Chaldean and Assyrian books (Khorenatsi 1978, 67). This follows from his Graecophilic views, of which he explicitly states to his patron: "Therefore I do not hesitate to call all Greece the mother or nurse of the sciences" (Khorenatsi 1978, 68). His patron, as can be seen from the numerous reproaches of Movses Khorenatsi, loved Persian (Pahlavic) myths.

The main criterion which forms a point of departure for Movses is the reliability of his narration, and he constantly reminds us of it:

> We shall speak only of the subsequent events what we know for certain. (Khorenatsi 1978, 210)

> We shall recount only what is certain and what pertains a true history. (Khorenatsi 1978, 216)

> We shall deal with this history in simple terms so that no one may seem attracted to it because of its rhetoric, but rather that desiring truth in our account, people may read very carefully and avidly the history of our fatherland. (Khorenatsi 1978, 254–55)

In some cases, Movses seeks the authenticity of his narrative even at the cost of conflicting with instructions from his patron:

> So far as was possible we have avoided superfluous and elaborate accounts and whatever words and conclusions tended to unreliability, and followed to the best of our ability only what was right and true, whether from other sources or from our own [knowledge]. Observing the same principle here, I am keeping the course of my story free from what is unsuitable and what would encourage the

> introduction of doubt and disbelief. And I beg you now again, as often before, not to impose superfluous tasks on us, nor by few or many words to turn our whole great reliable labor into a purposeless and superfluous work, for that brings as much danger to you as to me. (Khorenatsi 1978, 210)

However, due to the lack of written information, the historiographer was forced to make use of myths and legends. Therefore, Khorenatsi, with an emphasized distrust of folklore when describing the distant past, is forced to rely on oral traditions. Of course, the historical memory of the events that happened fifteen hundred or two thousand years ago took the form of mythologized legends or epics. Khorenatsi even considers it necessary to make a special reservation, absolving himself of responsibility for the accuracy of what is being reported:

> But very frequently the old descendants of Aram <Armenians> make mention of these things in the ballads for the lyre and their songs and dances. And whether these tales are false or true is of no concern to us. But I am repeating in this book all that comes from hearsay and from books so that you may know everything and understand the sincerity of my regard for you. (Khorenatsi 1978, 80–81)

As one can see, the first and second parts of the *History* differ from the third not only in the time that is described but also in the *modus operandi* of the narrative. In the third part, Movses tells what he knows: this is mainly first-person speech. As for the first and second parts, they are made up of reported speech, a retelling of written and oral sources, the data of which are only sometimes verifiable. (We do not consider the issue of the veracity of Khorenatsi's comments here; as has been shown by critics of his text in modern times, they do not always indicate their sources, and often modify them. This is the subject of the aforementioned review by Thomson [1978].)

Metanarrative Within the Narrative

In his narrative, Khorenatsi combines different conceptual frames. One of them is the Hellenistic tradition with its cult of heroes, which is why one of the most honorable epithets he has is the comparison of outstanding Armenians with Achilles and other heroes of the Greek epic:

> Trdat stood up, took a vase of flowers as a weapon, and drove the guests out from the feast. There one could see a new Odysseus slaughtering the suitors of Penelope, or the struggle of the Lapiths and the Centaurs at the marriage of Perithous. (Khorenatsi 1978, 207)

> He (the king Arshak) seemed more brave and noble than Achilles, but in truth was like the lame and pointy-headed Thersites. His own nobles rebelled against him until he received the reward of his pride. (Khorenatsi 1978, 273)

However, Greek mythology is used rather as an artistic framing of the narrative. As for the substantive metanarrative, in this respect, Khorenatsi is a keeper of the Christian worldview. The key for him is the idea of retribution for the wrongdoings and sins committed. In general, what is happening is based, according to Khorenatsi, on some equilibrium between *peace* and *disturbance*: "Again trouble arose for Shapuh from the same nations while peace was forged with the Greeks, according to the saying 'taking each other's places they were changed': this side's peace for that side's disturbance, and then that side's peace for this side's disturbance. What was the end for one was the beginning for the other" (Khorenatsi 1978, 284).

Accordingly, the evil committed should not remain unpunished. Analogies are used with biblical prophets, who explained history as a manifestation of Divine punishment: "As, we find it said in the divine histories, the Hebrew nation, after the Judges and in the time of anarchy and unrest, had no king and each man acted according to his own pleasure [cf. Judges 21:24]. One could also see the same thing in our own country" (Khorenatsi 1978, 257).

The idea of the inevitability of punishment for the sins committed by kings and princes becomes the principal explanation for events that led to the fall of the Armenian kingdom. Khorenatsi directly points to the Bible as the source of his lamentation and accusation: this applies to the ideology, style, and vocabulary of its text. The quotations are intended to confirm the divine authority of his criticism:

> Therefore, while mourning my people, I will say as Paul said about his enemies and the foes of the cross of Christ, using not my own, but the Holy Spirit's words. A flawed and disappointing clan, the clan unsettled in heart and unfaithful to God in its spirit! People of Aram! How long will you be hard-hearted, why do you love vanity and godlessness? Do you not realize that the Lord has magnified his saint and that the Lord will not hear when you call to him? For you have become hardened in the Fall and do not repent on your lounges, for you make unlawful sacrifices, and despise those who trust in God. (Khorenatsi 1978, 251–52)

The separate final chapter of the book is his "Lament over the loss of the Armenian kingdom." The fall of the kingdom and the patriarchy is a consequence of the general immorality that has engulfed all strata of Armenian society—from kings, princes, and priests to commoners. The Bible becomes a conceptual framework that explains both the emergence of Armenians and Armenia and the termination of the Armenian kingdom: it makes it possible

to link the heroic beginning of Armenian history and its so inglorious tragic end. Therefore, the words of the biblical prophets are seen as being the most adequate description of the events taking place: "Who will join us in telling of these things, sharing our grief? Who, suffering with us, will assist our account or help us inscribe it on stelae? Awake, Jeremiah, awake and lament like a prophet over the miseries we have suffered and the distress we shall endure. Foretell the rise of ignorant shepherds as once did Zacharias in Israel [cf. Zach. 11:16]" (Khorenatsi 1978, 352).

The semantics and style of the biblical prophets become the basis for describing the end of Armenian history:

> And love and shame have been entirely removed from all. What then does this demonstrate, save that God has abandoned *[us]* and that the elements have changed their nature? Spring has become dry, summer very rainy, autumn like winter, and winter has become very icy, tempestuous and extended. The winds bring snowstorms, burning heat, and pestilence. In addition to all this there are tumults on every side, according to the saying: "There is no peace for the impious" [Isa. 57:21]. The kings are cruel and evil rulers, imposing heavy and onerous burdens and giving intolerable commands. Governors do not correct disorders and are unmerciful. Friends are betrayed and enemies strengthened. Faith is sold for this vain life. Brigands have come in abundance and from all sides. (Khorenatsi 1978, 354)

In light of this, we would like to challenge Thomson's point of view. For him:

> What is remarkable about Moses' explicit philosophy of history, sustained by most of his narrative, is the absence of a didactic or moral attitude toward the lessons that can be learned from history. Unlike the generality of Armenian historians, Moses does not think of historical writing as an essay in expounding God's ways to men. He does not deny God's general providence and purpose or his oversight of specific historical events, but he does not draw lessons of moral conduct that are held up for emulation. (Thomson 1978, 9)

This sounds rather strange—as one can see from the quotations, the idea of the inevitability of Divine punishment for the crimes committed is expressed in very explicit way. According to Khorenatsi, this not only determines the fate of the Armenian kingdom but also serves as an explanation for any of episodes of the contemporary history.[6]

This idea becomes the explanatory core, and due to it the disparate events of Khorenatsi's contemporary period acquire integrity. In general, we see that the principles of textualization described in the previous part are at work—that is, the representation of the singular and the random events as regular and deterministic patterns. In addition to temporal operators that determine

the chronology of events (cf.: "There is no true history without chronology" [Khorenatsi 1978, 231]), Khorenatsi also introduces epistemic ones—this is an assessment of the narratives existing before him in terms of their reliability, and deontic criteria—an assessment of the events themselves from the point of view of Christian moral norms or military ethics. The beginning and end of the history of Armenia—the victory of the legendary Armenian leader Hayk and the fall of the Armenian kingdom—create the plot axis of the narrative and determine its semantic coordinates.

Various narratives, borrowed from heterogeneous sources, are combined into one holistic narrative about the genesis and death of the nation. The integrity and coherence of this narrative determined its further life in the Armenian culture—since the Middle Ages, it has served as a metanarrative for the succeeding history of Armenia, creating a stable semantic opposition between the heroic legendary past and tragic actual present.

CONCLUSION

We considered three very different topics of research—these are the issues of nation construction, modal characteristics of historical discourse, and the semantic organization of the text of Movses Khorenatsi's *History of Armenia*. Our study makes it possible to identify the relationship between these heterogeneous phenomena and, on the one hand, to both clarify theoretical concepts and identify new features of the text of the *History*. Narrative practices of nation-building not only depend on the political and social context of modern times but can also be implemented in various circumstances.[7] This distinguishing between variable features of a context and relatively stable textual characteristics can be transferred from the temporal diversity to the spatial-cultural one.

The case under consideration is of particular interest because it allows us to trace the very process of (re-)constructing a national history, which is carried out as a conscious act: the historiographer explicitly declares their objectives, and achieves them in certain ways. They discuss their operating practice with available sources and include meta-texts in their narrative.

At the same time, despite the significant differences in the contexts of the early Middle Ages and modern times, historical narratives' main structural and semantic characteristics turn out to be highly stable, and are reproduced similarly in different contexts. The manifestation of this process can be seen in the analysis of Movses Khorenatsi's *History*. As shown by Aristotle, modal characteristics unite and distinguish between literary and historical narratives. At the same time, the logic of textualization operates, ensuring the integrity

and coherence of the narrative. *History* appears as a text determined by its key semantic points—the beginning and the end. The meaningfulness of history appears through the text's coherence and integrity, determined by the historian's primary ideological schemes (metanarratives). The *History* is constructed as a compilation from various written and oral sources; the end of the narrative is synchronized with the end of Armenian history. The events are subject to plot logic (emplotment), determined by patterns borrowed from the Bible. Our results and interpretation can clarify and expand the contemporary conceptions about the process of formation of historical memory and identify the modal and textual characteristics of historical narratives.

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NOTES

1. The preliminary partial version of the chapter was published by *Vestnik RGGU* [Bulletin of the Russian State University for the Humanities] (Zolyan 2022b).

2. To reflect the hybrid nature of historical discourse, the hybrid term *mythistory* was coined: "The result might best be called mythistory perhaps, for the same words that constitute truth for some are, and always will be, myth for others, who inherit or embrace different assumptions and organizing concepts about the world" (McNeill 1986, 8–9). In respect to national histories, the dividing line between history and myth had been challenged by the leading constructivists; cf.: "In the literature on nationalism, the dominant constructivist positions à la Benedict Anderson and Eric Hobsbawm definitely seem to back up the thesis that national historians have been 'mythmakers' par excellence. The notion that nations are 'imagined communities' (Anderson) which again are dependent on 'invented traditions' (Hobsbawm/Ranger), essentially identifies national historians as the main protagonists in the processes of 'imagining' and 'inventing'" (Lorenz 2008, 45).

3. Cf.: "A beginning is that which is not itself necessarily after anything else, and which has naturally something else after it; an end is that which is naturally after

something itself, either as its necessary or usual consequent, and with nothing else after it; and a middle, that which is by nature after one thing and has also another after it. A well-constructed Plot, therefore, cannot either begin or end at any point one likes; beginning and end in it must be of the forms just described" (Aristotle 1962, 14a–2b).

4. Cf.: "The sense of the world must lie outside the world. In the world everything is as it is and happens as it does happen. In it there is no value—and if there were, it would be of no value" (Wittgenstein 1922, LPT. 6.4.1).

5. We leave out the discussion of the dating of the creation of the *History* and accept the most common Armenian view in that it was created in the fifth century, but at the same time, contains interpolations of later times (see: Malkhasian 1997). The fully fledged representation of the opposite point of view can be found in Thomson (1978). For us, it is most relevant that all further Armenian historiography is based on the metanarrative created by Movses.

6. Cf.: "Justice drew him to the place of retribution. When Shapuh saw him he verbally stigmatized him in front of his own army and blinded his eyes like Sedekia of old [cf. 4 Kings 25:7). So rightly vengeance was exacted for that saintly man by whom our land was illuminated, according to the saying of the Gospel, 'being the light of the world' [John 8:12, g:5]" (Khorenatsi 1978, 271–72); "So was the innocent blood of Gnel avenged on the impious Tirit according to Nerses' curse and on Vardan who perished at the hands of his own blood brother" (Khorenatsi 1978, 281); "He was buried in that same town of Kuash, being unworthy of the tombs of his fathers. For justly he paid amends for the man of God Daniel, being measured by the measure with which he had measured, according to the Scriptures (cf. Matt. 7:2; Mark 4:24; Luke 6:38]" (Khorenatsi 1978, 278); "because God's anger was on Arshak the garrison of the fortress refused to wait for news of Pap and surrendered willingly" (Khorenatsi 1978, 293).

7. Cf.: "In non-Western countries, especially those with long traditions of historical writing, national narratives will play, through strategies of rearrangement, emplotment, and representation—an important role in constructing global pasts that is different from those that have prevailed in the West. Accordingly, although there will be some degree of conflict, the emergence of global narratives does not suppress long-standing national narratives but instead gives them the opportunity to speak their own words and put their own local experiences into global narratives, making them more open and more inclusive" (Zhang 2021, 260).

Chapter 3

Narratives in Interviews as Research Methods

A Linguistic Anthropological Perspective

Sabina M. Perrino

INTRODUCTION

In July 2006, I conducted an interview with one of my research participants, whom I name Youssou,[1] on the value and functions of storytelling practices in Senegal, West Africa. During our conversation,[2] he emphasized the importance of the audience members during the narration. As Youssou describes, Senegalese narratives cannot be considered as such if the audience members are not part of the story. In his words:

> In Senegalese narratives, the audience immediately becomes a participant in the narrative itself. This means that the audience has some very important roles in the narration [process]. It is not only part of the storytelling, but it also becomes characters in the story. This is very typical in Senegal. The audience participates as audience and as character of the story as well. If the audience is not part of the story, the story cannot be told.[3,4]

Senegalese storytellers artfully include participants in their stories through a practice that they metapragmatically define as "*démarche participative*," or as I named it, *participant transposition* (Perrino 2005; 2007). As I show in the first example in this chapter, participant transposition often emerges in narrative practices in interviews. This interactional strategy, in John Gumperz's (1982) terms, would not become visible if researchers were to limit their

analysis to the plot of the story only or the "denotational text" (Silverstein 1998). Narratives in interviews thus have the potential to be key methodological tools in research not only in linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics but across other disciplines as well.

While conducting interviews, researchers collect a wide variety of data, including stories. As has been demonstrated in linguistic and ethnographic research, narratives commonly emerge in interviews as ways to convey some of the information that researchers seek. In the process, however, besides obtaining other important, at times personal, information, significant interactional dynamics happen during these speech events. Thus, narratives in interviews are foundational methodological tools to collect data not only in linguistic anthropology but in many other disciplines as well. Whether interviews are face to face or online, they always involve human interaction that can lead to various interactional dynamics and need to be studied as *situated speech events* (De Fina and Perrino 2011; Perrino 2011; 2021; 2022b). If the same interviewees were to write down their stories instead of performing them orally during the interview, these stories would be considerably different because the interactional dimensions would be completely absent. In this respect, the pioneering research of scholars such as Elliot Mishler (1986) and Charles Briggs (1986) was foundational in highlighting the omnipresent interactional dynamics in interview settings.

This chapter examines the discursive and interactional dimensions of storytelling practices as they emerge in interview settings. Why is it important to study narratives in these interactional settings? What kind of interactional dynamics can develop between researcher and consultant(s) while their stories unfold? Besides answering these research questions, this chapter examines three key aspects in which various interactional stances emerge in and through narrative practices in interview settings: 1) the fundamental and dynamic role played by storytelling practices in interviews in the (co-)construction of participants' interactional moves; 2) how speech participants navigate through various spatiotemporal scales and thus enact their chronotopic (in Mikhail M. Bakhtin's [1981] terms) and intimate stances while they narrate their stories; and, finally, 3) the creation, (co-)construction, and solidification of intimate identities in and through speech participants' storytelling events. In this vein, I show that studying intimate stances in narrative practices adds significant layers of understanding of the many facets of storytelling that would not be captured otherwise. Importantly, I demonstrate that narratives in interviews are key interactional events and methodological research tools that should be studied as such to be able to understand the fluid and dynamic relationships of speech participants as their stories are told. Moreover, these research methods, which mainly pertain to linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics, could be easily extended to other disciplines

as well. Before turning to the analysis of two examples from my data that I collected in Senegal and northern Italy, I review some of the literature on interviews as interactional speech events and research methods and on narratives in interview settings from a linguistic anthropological and sociolinguistic perspective. I then describe how the Bakhtinian notion of *chronotope* and the concepts of *stance* and *stancetaking* can assist the analysis of storytelling practices in interviews.

INTERVIEWS AS INTERACTIONAL SPEECH EVENTS

Researchers have used interviews[5] as one of their key research methods for various ends. They have appreciated their referential function, such as the collected information, for their linguistic analysis, as in the classic interviews elaborated by William Labov (1972) and his research teams. But they have also valued interviews as key sites in which "situated speech" (Fuller 2000) should be studied for its interactional, discursive nature, or the emerging dynamics between researcher(s) and interviewee(s) (Fontana and Frei 2004; De Fina and Perrino 2011; Wortham et al. 2011; Perrino 2022b). In this light, interviews are actual speech events that are (co)created, and developed, by researcher(s) and interviewee(s), and thus need to be studied and used as such because of their dynamic interactional nature. As Mishler (1986, 53, my emphasis) puts it, the interview is a "joint construction of meaning," since "[one] way an interview develops is through *mutual* reformulation and specification of questions, by which they take on particular and context-bound shades of meaning." Thus, a focus on interviews as speech events offers analysts further insights into local customs for accomplishing understanding thanks to this mutual, interactional dynamic between researcher(s) and respondent(s). Mainly inspired by Briggs' (1986) research, scholars have turned their attention to the discursive dimension of the interview, rather than to its form, and have started to explore many of its facets by demonstrating that this interactional setting is key in many research processes, including the analysis of the stories that emerge in these speech events (De Fina and Perrino 2011; Perrino 2021; 2022b).

Theoretically and methodologically, linguistic anthropologists have differentiated the "denotational text" from the "interactional text" of speech events (Silverstein 1998; Wortham 2000; 2001; Perrino 2015b). Originally, they were defined by Roman Jakobson (1957) as *narrated event* and *narrating event* respectively. More specifically, while the "denotational text" refers to the coherence that the story has in terms of reference and predication about "states of affairs," the "interactional text" refers to the quality of the coherence that the interaction itself has—what the roles of the speech participants

are, what actions are being performed, how these actions are enacted, and so forth—and not necessarily the coherence of "what" interactants say (Silverstein 1998; Wortham 2000; 2001; Perrino 2015b; 2019a; 2020). In other words, the *interactional text* includes the many emerging qualities of the various enactments in interaction. Thus, researchers need to analyze narratives in interviews not only for their content, but also for their interactional text, that is, the various moves that interviewer(s) and interviewee(s) make during the storytelling event. Variations in speakers' prosody (tone, rhythm, pitch), laughter, pauses, and other discursive strategies (Gumperz 1982) such as gestures, gaze, and body movements (Goodwin 2015), for example, can influence the storytelling event in significant ways. This interactional dimension of narratives would thus remain veiled by just looking at the content of the stories. As methodological research tools, narratives thus need to be considered from this more pragmatic perspective.

With this in mind, it is clear that interviewer(s) and interviewee(s) construct their various narratives together while their interactions unfold (Perrino 2011; Talmy 2011). The interactional nature of storytelling practices thus allows analysts to study participants' identity (co-)construction as it is connected to their interactional moves. This is possible, for example, when researcher(s) and interviewee(s) engage in long conversations in which several personal narratives emerge. When speech participants assume certain positionings vis-à-vis each other to assert their points during their stories, for instance, they often enact their identities. At times, their entire interaction can be suddenly reoriented and some of their participant roles can be reversed too. This is the case when interviewer(s) and interviewee(s) share similar life experiences or when they need to ask, and/or answer, sensitive questions.

In the summer of 2002, for example, I interviewed Boubacar, in Thiès, a small town in inner Senegal, since I wanted to learn more about Senegalese ethnomedical practices (Perrino 2006). Upon a careful transcription and a fine-grained analysis of this interview, I discovered that there were many shifts of participant roles at particular moments of his storytelling events (Perrino 2005; 2007). During our interview, he told me a story about a disease he had when he was younger. From the transcript of this interview, which was videorecorded, it clearly emerged that Boubacar was trying to catch my attention using some discursive strategies (Gumperz 1982), since, interactionally, I was not paying enough attention to his stories. I noted, for instance, that I was not offering minimal responses, engaging in small conversation, asking him follow-up questions, smiling, nodding, and making eye contact. I was silent most of the time while he was telling me his traumatic stories. In brief, as Deborah Tannen (2007) would put it, I was not offering enough interactional "involvement." That is probably why Boubacar not only changed his interactional moves at specific moments of his narratives, but he also changed their

content, the *denotational text*. Through these interactional and denotational moves, he not only reclaimed my full attention for his story, but he also took control and authority of the storytelling event, showing, once again, how fluid the roles inhabited by researcher(s) and interviewee(s) can be in these settings. Thus, in storytelling practices, speech participants continuously align and misalign with the various topics of the story and with each other. As I show in this chapter, through the analysis of two examples that I collected in Senegal and in northern Italy, interview narratives are performative interactional events in which the context is fluid and can influence them in unpredictable ways.

NARRATIVES IN INTERVIEWS

Telling stories to each other is part of our human nature. Individuals tell stories in many communicative practices while also (co)creating ideologies related to what are considered "good" or "bad" stories. Naturally, storytelling practices happen in interview settings as well (De Fina and Perrino 2011). Both interviewer(s) and interviewee(s) often end up telling stories while asking and answering questions and conversing on various topics. The analysis of narratives as interactional events in interview settings is possible thanks to the theoretical shift from narratives-as-texts to narratives-as-practices, defined as the "narrative turn," which occurred in the 1980s (De Fina and Georgakopoulou 2012). The more pragmatic and discursive approaches to storytelling emerged thanks to the work of many sociolinguists and linguistic anthropologists who studied narratives as interactional events in which the classic Labovian units are not sufficient to explain their pragmatic effects.

In the 1960s, William Labov and Joshua Waletzky (1967) elaborated their well-known narrative model positing that narratives need to contain six units indicating the "necessary" progression of a story: the *abstract*, the *orientation*, the *complicating action*, the *resolution*, the *coda*, and, finally, the *evaluation*. While the Labovian model has been widely used, linguistic anthropologists and sociolinguists have departed from it. In their view, narratives include not only the socio-cultural context in which they are embedded but, crucially, speech participants' contributions during the storytelling event. As Anna De Fina and Alexandra Georgakopoulou (2012, 35) have aptly contended, analyzing narratives through the Labovian model does not include "cases of systematic audience participation, co-construction of the story between teller and audience and many other phenomena that characterize the telling of narratives in interaction." Indeed, as I mentioned earlier, narratives are interactional events in which the classic Labovian units might work only

partially or might not work at all, as is the case with small stories like the ones found on digital platforms such as Twitter or Instagram.

In this light, the emerging relations between narrators, what happens interactionally between them, and the socio-cultural context in which they are embedded are as important as the content of their stories, or the denotational text. Storytelling events are thus intricate and varied, since audience members not only are part of the story, but they also often influence and change it in the process—even silent audience members do. From this perspective, stories are in a continuous relationship with their storytelling event in which they are created and solidified across spatiotemporal scales. It is precisely this orientation of narrative studies that I extend to the narrative practices that I collected in interview settings in Senegal and northern Italy. Before describing the concepts of *stance* and *stancetaking* that have inspired this chapter as well, I briefly turn to the Bakhtinian chronotope, another important notion that has assisted me in demonstrating how time and space often conflate in storytelling events.

TIME AND SPACE IN NARRATIVES

In my research on Senegalese and Italian narratives (Perrino 2007; 2011; 2015a; 2020; Perrino and Kohler 2020), I have been profoundly inspired by the Russian philosopher and literary critic Mikhail M. Bakhtin's (1981) writings. More specifically, I have applied his concept of *chronotope*, which literally means "time space," as a way to analyze the entwined temporal and spatial dimensions in narrative practices. "We will give the name *chronotope* (literally 'time space') to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature," wrote Bakhtin in 1937 (1981, 84–85, emphasis in original). Originally, Bakhtin used this concept to study literary works, such as the well-known novels by Dostoyevsky, Stendhal, Balzac, and Rabelais. In his view, "[i]n the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history" (1981, 84). For Bakhtin, the chronotope was thus a way to draw attention to the inseparability of time and space in novels. In Bakhtin's words:

> In literature and art itself, temporal and spatial determinations are inseparable from one another, and always colored by emotions and values. Abstract thought can, of course, think time and space as separate entities and conceive them as things apart from the emotions and values that attach to them. But living artistic

> perception (which also of course involves thought, but not abstract thought) makes no such divisions and permits no such segmentation. It seizes on the chronotope in all its wholeness and fullness. Art and literature are shot through with *chronotopic values* of varying degree and scope. (Bakhtin 1981, 243, emphasis in original)

Bakhtin analyzes some generic literary chronotopes such as the chronotope of "the encounter," which he also defines as a "real-life chronotope of meeting" where the time, the place, and the rank of the person met are fundamental to the kind of event being narrated. In this case, the where and when is not separate, in the sense that in any encounter or meeting the "temporal marker" is inseparable from the "spatial marker." Bakhtin emphasizes how chronotopes are central to the narrative genres, since

> [t]he chronotope is the place where the knots of narrative are tied and untied. It can be said without qualification that to them belongs the meaning that shapes narrative. . . . Time becomes, in effect, palpable and visible; the chronotope makes narrative events concrete, makes them take on flesh, causes blood to flow in their veins. An event can be communicated, it becomes information, one can give precise data on the place and time of its occurrence. (Bakhtin 1981, 434)

In his literary analyses and writings, Bakhtin elaborated various types of chronotopes, such as the *chronotope of the road*, which is naturally linked to the chronotope of meeting, since several encounters happen on the road at a precise time and location; the *chronotope of the castle* which is inspired by the Gothic or black novels of seventeenth-century England, in which castles played an important role in terms of the historical past, being the places where well-known historical figures lived; the *chronotope of cafés and salons*, which notably emerged from French novels where salons and parlors were common places for intellectuals to meet to discuss about politics and literature; and the *chronotope of threshold and crisis*, in which thresholds play pivotal roles for novel characters. In Dostoyevsky's novels, for example, the threshold (and related chronotopes such as the stairs, front hall, and corridors) are usually places where action leads to crisis: as Bakhtin (1981, 433) reminds us, "[i]n this chronotope, time is essentially instantaneous; it is as if it has no duration and falls out of the normal course of biographical time."

Several linguistic anthropologists and sociolinguists have fruitfully applied this notion to various socio-cultural contexts (De Fina 2022; Divita 2014; Karimzad and Catedral 2018; Koven 2013; Perrino 2007; 2011; 2015a; 2022a; Perrino and Kohler 2020; Wirtz 2016; Woolard 2012). Referring to narrative practices, for example, Michael Silverstein redefined Bakhtin's chronotope in these terms: "the temporally (hence, chrono-) and spatially (hence, -tope)

particular envelope in the narrated universe of social space-time in which and through which, in emplotment, narrative characters move" (2005, 6).

In this vein, the chronotope naturally captures complex spatiotemporal configurations, as Kathryn Woolard (2012) aptly argues, since a chronotope is, after all, a special type of scale, given the fact that time and space are discursively flattened and thus create numerous spatiotemporal effects in various discursive practices such as narratives. Thus, the chronotope concept helps unveil the hybridity and continuous movement of past characters and interactants in storytelling events as they develop in interview settings.

STANCE AND STANCETAKING IN NARRATIVE PRACTICES

Narratives in interviews can be analyzed thanks to the notions of stance and stancetaking which typically emerge in interaction (Jaffe 2009c; 2015; Perrino 2018). Interviewer(s) and interviewee(s) usually align or disalign (Goffman 1981) with a certain topic or claim and thus take various, fluid stances during their interactions. They might agree or disagree with a narrative move, for example, and thus position themselves in favor or against it. Alexandra Jaffe (2009a, 2) defines stance as "taking up a position with respect to the form or the content of one's utterance," and this notion has been widely applied in linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics (Du Bois 2007; Lempert 2008; Jaffe 2009b; Walton and Jaffe 2011; Perrino 2019b). For Jaffe (2009a, 4), crucially, stance is also *performative*, in the sense that it is "an emergent property of interaction," which is not transparent and thus needs to be studied in empirical material within a socio-cultural and historical context. As she keenly writes,

> Speaker stances are thus performances through which speakers may align or disalign themselves with and/or ironize stereotypical associations with particular linguistic forms; stances may thus express multiple or ambiguous meanings. This makes stance a crucial point of entry in analyses that focus on the complex ways in which speakers manage multiple identities (or multiple aspects of identity). The focus on process also foregrounds multiplicities in the audiences indexed by particular linguistic practices, and on the social dynamics and consequences of audience reception, uptake, and interpretation. (Jaffe 2009a, 4)

Jaffe also emphasizes the inherently political nature of stancetaking when she contends that "the taking up of particular kinds of stances is habitually and conventionally associated with particular subject positions (social roles and identities; notions of personhood), and interpersonal and social relationships

(including relations of power) more broadly" (Jaffe 2009a, 4). As a theoretical framework, stance is thus essential to examine speech participants' various moves during their storytelling practices in interview settings and elsewhere. In this vein, it is through a close examination of speech participants' stances that analysts can uncover how individual, multiple, and collective identities (Van De Mieroop 2015) are enacted in interaction (Perrino 2020). As I demonstrate through the analysis of my two case studies, these theoretical frameworks are key to unveil the interactional dynamics between interviewer(s) and interviewee(s), especially when they engage in storytelling practices in interview settings.

PARTICIPANT TRANSPOSITION IN SENEGALESE ORAL NARRATIVES

While conducting interviews in several locations in Senegal, my interviewees and I engaged in various interactional dynamics during the many storytelling events that emerged from our conversations. In these storytelling practices, I often noted that Senegalese narrators included me, their interlocutor, "into" their stories through a particular chronotopic enactment that I named *participant transposition* (Perrino 2005; 2007). This specific narrative practice has also received metadiscursive attention since several of my Senegalese research consultants gave a name to it, "*démarche participative*" ("participatory move"), during my follow-up interviews with them. They used the French verbs "transpose" and "transport," for example, to gloss *démarche participative*: "la *démarche participative*, pour te faire rentrer dans ce contexte-là. C'est comme si je t'avais transposée, transportée dans mon histoire-là" ("the participatory move [is done] in order to make you enter that context. It is as if I had transposed [or] transported you inside my own story") (Perrino 2005; 2007). Similar to the cases studied by Stanton Wortham (1994; 2001) in US classrooms, in Senegalese narratives, my interviewees often moved their interlocutors into their stories, the *denotational text*, giving coherence to the *interactional text* as well. I have referred to this process as *cross-chronotope alignment* (Perrino 2005; 2007), a particular spatiotemporal configuration in which the past story becomes aligned, or "coeval" (Silverstein 2005), with the present, ongoing interaction. In this case, the boundaries between past and present are blurred, while a particular cross-aligned chronotopic configuration emerges during the telling.

These alignments clearly emerge in Example 1, in which speech participants enact intimate stances through various cases of participant transposition. I collected these narratives during an interview that took place in Thiès (a small town in the vicinity of Dakar, the capital of Senegal), in June 2001,

with Maimuna, a woman in her late forties at that time. A combination of Wolof (the vehicular language of Senegal) and French (the former colonial language), which is a typical combination in urban centers in Senegal, emerged during the interview. This interview was part of my Ph.D. dissertation linguistic anthropological fieldwork in Senegal for a project on Senegalese ethnomedicine. This interview lasted an hour and a half, during which Maimuna recounted three personal narratives. In her stories, she also engaged in participant transposition five times. In one of her illness narratives after thirty-five minutes into the interview, for example, she remembered that she had an unbearable pain in her legs and entire body one night and that her family wanted to take her to the healer.[6] In this excerpt, Maimuna enacted five cases of *participant transposition*:

Example 1: "*I couldn't move!*"
(M: Maimuna; S: Interviewer)
First Line: Original French and Wolof version[7]
Second Line: English translation

1.	M:	[. . .] c'étai::t en novembre e:::n 1991
		[. . .] *it wa::s in November i:::n 1991*
2.		mmhh e:::t j'étais très malade pendant la nuit d'un fin de semaine
		mhmm a:::nd I was very sick one night of a weekend
3.		je ne pouvais pas bouger et mes jambes me faisaient très mal
		I couldn't move and my legs hurt badly
4.	S:	Je suis désolée
		I am sorry
5.	M:	merci . . . j'avais trè:::s peur d'être paralisée
		thanks . . . I was ve:::ry scared of being paralyzed
6.		tout mon corps me faisait mal et tremblait, xam nga?
		my entire body hurt and was shaking, you know?
7.	S:	*waaw xam naa* je peux imaginer la douleur
		yes I know I can just imagine the pain
8.	M:	donc j'avais pris le palu, tu sais?
		so I got malaria, you know?
9.		avec la fièvre feebar haute
		with high fever
10.		*amoon naa feebar*, la fièvre était tell—tellement forte
		I had a fever, the fever was real—really high
11.		je ne pouvais pas dormir
		I couldn't sleep

12. je ne pouvais pas bouger
I couldn't move
13. je ne pouvais pas même penser, t'as vu?
I couldn't even think, do you see?
14. *gis nga palu boobu*
do you see the kind of malaria [I had]?
15. pendant la nuit je dis à ma sœur SABENA[8]
during the night I say to my sister SABINA
16. "Sabena, excuse-moi, je ne peux pas bouger"
"Sabina, sorry, I can't move"
|
17. S: @@@@=
18. M: et Sabena:: ma sœur, elle dit
and Sabina:: my sister, she says
19. "Maimuna, ñu ngiy dem chez le seriñ"
"Maimuna, let's go to the healer"
20. elle donc va chez le guérisseur
she then goes to see a healer
21. elle demande des médicaments pour mon palu mais les guérisseurs n'en donnent PAS!
she asks for some medicines [to heal] my malaria but healers DON'T give them out!
22. S: oui je le sais!
yes I know!
|
23. M: Sabena xamuma@@@@
Sabina doesn't know@@@@
24. ella y va également les chercher pour moi
she goes there to look for them for me anyway
25. ma chère sœur Sabena [. . .]
my dear sister Sabina [. . .]

After my initial questions about her healing habits and family's diseases, Maimuna naturally launches into a personal story. She starts her narrative with a classic Labovian "orientation" (Labov and Waletzky 1967) to contextualize the disease she underwent when she was younger (lines 1–2). She indeed situates her story in a precise spatiotemporal configuration: she was sick in her bed, and it was a weekend in November 1991. She recounts that one night she couldn't even move in her bed since her legs were in terrible pain (line 3). After I instinctively show my sympathy for her by latching onto her in line 4, she confesses that she was in fear of being paralyzed in her bed that night (line 5). Her entire body was in terrible pain (line 6).

Interactionally, Maimuna tries to find sympathy from her interviewer, me, from line 6 until the end of her story. Intertextually, she often ends her lines with rhetorical questions for me, such as "you know?" (lines 6, 8), "did you see?" (line 13), and "do you see the kind of malaria [I had]?" (line 14) to find complicity, support, and understanding. After I show my sympathy for her in line 7, she asserts that she feared to have contracted malaria, *palu*[9] in Wolof, in line 8, since she also had a high fever. Maimuna also codeswitches from French to Wolof after line 6 and emphasizes the fact that she might have contracted malaria given the high fever and the pain that her body experienced. As a discourse strategy (Gumperz 1982), *codeswitching*[10] can change speakers' participation roles and can thus project various interactional meanings (Bailey 2000; Woolard 1995), such as more connection with the surrounding audience members who are believed to understand both codes (Perrino 2015b). Soon after these codeswitches to Wolof in lines 8 and 10, Maimuna codeswitches back into French and starts describing the terrible high fever she had that night. By codeswitching back to Wolof in line 14, she emphasizes, again, the gravity of her disease, and wants to make sure that I understand what she went through ("*do you see the kind of malaria* [I had]?" [line 14]).

Maimuna's interactional stances emerge even more clearly in lines 11 to 13, when she repeats the negative form of the French modal verb "pouvoir," conjugated in the first singular person, followed by three different verbal constructions: "*I couldn't sleep*" (line 11), "*I couldn't move*" (line 12), and "*I couldn't even think*" (line 13). This *poetic* form of repetition in speech has been studied as *parallelism* by several linguistic anthropologists. Parallelism can be simply defined as repetition with variation in discourse and has been examined extensively especially for its discursive intertextual effects (Silverstein and Urban 1996; Wilce 2001, 191; Tannen 2007). These parallelistic structures emerge several times in this interview, especially when I do not seem to be emotionally involved in Maimuna's storytelling details. She tries to keep my attention focused on the hardship of her past self by repeating certain structures. I add my remarks to her storylines only three times, in lines 4, 7, and 22, thus acknowledging my attention. The dynamic nature of the interview emerges at every turn, thus demonstrating that these speech events are unique in that participants often co-construct, moment by moment, their stories.

It is precisely after Maimuna's second instance of codeswitching from French to Wolof in line 14 where she asks me if I realize the kind of malaria she had, that she engages in the first instance of *participant transposition*. By explicitly addressing me as if I were present in her past story in line 15 ("*I say to my sister SABINA*"), she inserts, or *transposes*, me into her past self and I thus unexpectedly become one of her past addresses, her sister precisely.

This transformation of me into one of her intimate family members indexes the level of interactional closeness that is enacted as our interview progresses through her narratives. At that moment, she gets my attention: I start laughing in line 17 by being surprised of becoming, all of a sudden, her sister in her story. Through this narrative move, I thus become a witness of her serious health conditions. In these lines, Maimuna aligns her past self with the present interaction between the two speech participants.

Maimuna sustains this case of *participant transposition* at every line from line 15 until line 25. At line 18, moreover, Maimuna reiterates my participant role as her sister who witnesses her immobilization and pain in her bed. With a wit of irony, indexed by her raised volume in line 21 and by four bursts of laughter in line 23, Maimuna recounts how, wrongly, my past self visited a healer to look for some medicines for her (lines 21, 23), even though my past self claims to know this fact in line 22. To keep my full attention focused on her story, Maimuna questions my real knowledge of Senegalese ethnomedical rituals. Healers usually don't dispense medicines; one needs to go to the pharmacy or to a Western biomedical doctor to find them. Through these discourse strategies (Gumperz 1982), Maimuna finally captures all my attention since I have become one of the main protagonists of her narrated event, a very close member of her family, her sister. At the same time, she also actively constructs a closer relationship between us, the interviewer and the interviewee. At line 25, indeed, she expresses an intimate stance by adding the adjective "dear," "chère" in French, when she refers to her "sister Sabina." Notably, four more instances of participant transposition followed this interaction during this interview,[11] providing us with more opportunities to enact and co-construct an even closer relationship. The next example, centered in northern Italy, continues to illustrate these patterns, in which spatiotemporal configurations play key roles in the co-construction of speech participants' stances and identities. Both examples emphasize, moreover, the utility of considering narrative practices as research methodologies.

NARRATIVES OF TRAUMA IN INTERVIEWS IN NORTHERN ITALY

My second example is extracted from an interview that I collected in the small town of Treviso, in northern Italy, in May 2003. My interviewee, Veronica, was an Italian schoolteacher in her fifties, and she had a lot of experience as a volunteer assisting children in northern Italian hospitals during her free time. Our interview, which lasted almost two hours, focused on the issue of how Italian hospitals and hospital personnel had been reacting to the new waves of migrants in Italy (Perrino 2020). At a certain point, however,

when Veronica was talking about the relationship between Italian doctors and migrant patients, she launched into three personal narratives. In one of them, Veronica recounted the experience she had with a physician who directed the neurology department where her father had been hospitalized for possible brain cancer a couple of days before. Her narrative began with a description of how Veronica had gone to the neurology department to hear about her father's diagnosis after the doctors had performed a computed tomography scan on him. In Italy, doctors do not usually talk directly to patients about their diagnoses if they are serious. Rather, they first communicate with a close family member and leave the choice to that family member as to what, or how much, of the diagnosis to convey to the sick patient. As one of the daughters of this patient, then, Veronica was allowed to go to the doctor to hear her father's diagnosis results. Anxiously, as she recounted, she rushed to the hospital to hear the verdict about her father's brain problems.

Example 2: "*Here everyone has problems!*"
(V: Veronica; S: Interviewer)
First Line: Original Italian version
Second Line: English translation

1.	V:	ehmm io–eh c'era mio padre ricoverato
		ehmm I–uh there was my father [who was] hospitalized
2.		che aveva un tumore al cervello
		who had a tumor in his brain
3.		e io ero andata il giorno dopo che gli avevano fatto la TAC
		and I went that day after they performed the CAT on him
4.		per sapere di quale:– quale era il problema di cui era affetto
		to know of wha:t– what was the problem by which [he] was affected
5.		e:h e avevo mio figlio Mauro a casa con mia sorella
		u:h and [I] had my son Mauro at home with my sister
6.		e io non lo potevo lasciare mio figlio quindi è stata uhm
		and I couldn't leave my son so [it] was uhm
7.		sì mia sorella era in grado di fare determinate manovre pe:::rché lui eh
		yes my sister was able to take certain steps be:::cause he [i.e., her son] eh
		|
8.	S:	per lui
		for him
9.	V:	e:h però:: io naturalmente ero venuta via col cuore in mano

u:h bu::t I of course had gone away with my heart in my hands

10. S: eh
eh
11. V: perciò ero– mordevo anche un po' il freno
so [I] was– [I] was also a bit in a rush[12]
12. guardavo l'orologio
[I] was looking [continuously] at my watch
13. ero ansiosa e preoccupata sia per mio figlio sia per mio padre perché non sapevo
[I] was anxious and worried both for my son and for my father because [I] didn't know
14. e questo medico::: al quale io ho chiesto
and this docto:::r to whom I asked
15. "scusi professore ma Lei" dico
"*sorry professor but you [formal],"* *[I] say*
16. "pensa di poterci:: eh spiegare quanto prima
"[you] think [you] can explain to us as soon as possible
17. sa ho dei problemi avrei dei problemi
[you] know [I] have some problems [I] might have some problems
18. posso anche spiegarLe"
[I] can also explain [them, i.e. the problems] to you [formal]"
19. "qua problemi ne abbiamo tutti"
"here everyone has problems"
20. mi ha risposto mi ha inveito
[he] responded to me, [he] railed against me
21. nel corridoio dicendo che lì: lì lavoravano
in the hallway [he was] saying that there: there they were working
22. non è che:: stessero lì a grattarsi i cosiddetti
it is not tha::t [they] were staying there scratching their you-know-what
23. e ehmm e questo mi ha trattato veramente in maniera:: molto molto aggressiva
and uhmm and this [doctor] treated me really in a very very aggressive manne::r
24. cosa che io non gli ho mai perdonato
something that I have never forgiven him
25. e dopo che appunto ci ha spiegato, illustrato la situazione
and after that [he] actually explained, illustrated the situation to us
26. che era drammatica appunto ho detto
which was actually tragic, [I] said

27. "guardi:::: Lei si ricordi comunque ecco che è un esser umano anche Lei
"liste:::n [you should] remember anyway well that you are a human being as well
28. che non debba mai provare le situazioni che io sto provando in questo momento
[I wish] you never experience the situations that I am experiencing in this moment
29. perché allora capirebbe" [. . .]
because at that point [you] would understand" [. . .]
30. ho preso e me ne sono andata
[I] got together and [I] went away from there
31. e non mi ha più visto questa persona
and this person never saw me again

In her story, Veronica seems to be eager to tell me her personal experiences concerning her interactions with an Italian neurologist who was overseeing her father's care. At the beginning of her narrative, Veronica keeps her past story separate from our present interaction. The two events, the narrated event (or denotational text) and the narrating event (or interactional text) are kept distinct and distant (Perrino 2022b). Like Maimuna in Example 1, Veronica begins her story with a classic Labovian orientation, in which she briefly outlines the context of the story she is about to tell. In lines 1 and 2, Veronica informs the interviewer that her father had been hospitalized for brain cancer. The fact that this tragic statement is in the very first lines of her narrative indicates her disposition to emotionally involve the interviewer right at the outset of her story. Indeed, as Veronica continues in lines 2 and 3, at that point in her past story, she didn't know whether her father had brain cancer or not. The day after the computed tomography scan was performed on her father, she explains, Veronica went to the hospital to hear what the outcomes were (lines 3–5). Even though in the first five lines of the orientation, Veronica sets up a very dramatic situation, the interviewer seems to remain unresponsive verbally, mostly silent. At line 6, Veronica then adds even more dramatic information when she states that, for that occasion, she had left her son at home with her sister. At first, this line does not seem to add anything dramatic or tragic to the story; however, if one looks at the interactional history between Veronica and me, her interviewer, things become more intricate. Indeed, during our previous interviews and conversations, Veronica had mentioned that her one-year-old son, Mauro, had been very ill for more than a year, and that she could not leave him alone (line 6), not even for ten minutes.[13] If one looks at the interactional text then, one notices that Veronica accelerates the pace of her speech in line 6 when she says "*I couldn't leave my son so this was uhm*,"

which suggests a sense of anxiety in remembering those moments through her storytelling event.

These interactional moves become more prominent after I overlap with Veronica in line 8. In line 7, Veronica explains that she left her son with her sister, who, at the time, was the only person who was able to help her son with his medical care. It is precisely at that point that I cooperatively overlap with her to show not only solidarity with her past dramatic situation, but especially awareness of it at the moment of the narrated event. Soon after my overlap, moreover, Veronica adds more emotional details to her description when she says "*of course I had gone away with my heart in my hands*," in line 9. She uses the Italian metaphor "col cuore in mano" ("*with my heart in my hands*") to show how much she cared that I understand the gravity of the situation when she left her son behind to go to the hospital. She then recounts how much in a hurry she was when she was waiting for the doctor at the hospital: in line 11, she uses another metaphoric phrase, "mordevo un po' il freno," which literally means "*I was biting the brake a bit*." This tropic phrase is followed by a further explanation when she says that she was continuously checking her watch and that she was worried for both her son at home and her father in the hospital (lines 12–13). It is at this point of her narrative (at line 14) that Veronica aligns her past story with our present interaction by using certain discourse strategies (Gumperz 1982) to continue her story.

As in Example 1, Veronica's narrative alternates between moments of alignment between past and present and moments in which she keeps her past story more distant from the present interaction (especially in the beginning of her narrative). The interview becomes emotionally more involved and dynamic in relation to shifts between Veronica's past narrative moments that she recounts and our present interaction when she accelerates her speech pace. By using the Italian proximal deictic demonstrative adjective *questo* ("this") when referring to the doctor in her narrated event in line 14, for example, Veronica brings her past experiences back to the present, to her narrating event. Her narration is marked by rapid shifts that create the impression of back-and-forth space-time movement. Soon afterward, indeed, still in line 14, by using the past tense (*passato prossimo*) of the Italian verbum dicendi *chiedere*, that is "io ho chiesto" ("*I asked*"), her story is temporally relocated into her remote past. Past and present become, again, two separate realms. The two spatiotemporal realms conflate, again, in line 15, however, when Veronica starts a long stretch of direct reported speech. Her narrated event is aligned, again, with our narrating event, the here-and-now interactional framework.

Direct reported speech, or, as Tannen (2007) usefully defines it, "constructed dialogue," always has interactional qualities when it is used in conversation. In her direct reported speech, starting in line 15, Veronica addresses

the chief of the neurology department as if he were present in, and part of, our interactional text. As normally happens in Italian conversations between speakers who do not know each other or who have a different status, Veronica addresses the doctor by using the Italian polite form of address *Lei*. In the same line, moreover, she uses the historical present of the Italian verbum dicendi *dire* in the first-person singular form, "dico" ("*I say*"), and this, again, further decreases the spatiotemporal boundaries between narrated event and narrating event.

In lines 15 to 18, Veronica maintains and projects a respectful and polite demeanor in her request to the doctor. In line 19, however, when she reports the doctor's response to her question to me, Veronica breaks register by saying "qua problemi ne abbiamo tutti" ("*here everyone has problems*"). By using the Italian proximal deictic *qua*, Veronica thus adds a negative connotation to the doctor's overall demeanor. Indeed, in standardized Italian, there are two proximal deictics for "here," that is *qui* and *qua*. While *qui* and *qua* can be interchangeable, ideologically, the use of *qui* is considered more sophisticated in northern Italy. During a follow-up interview, for example, Veronica herself stated that *qua* is used in more dialectal situations than *qui*, especially in her northern Italian region, Veneto. Thus, by having the neurologist utter *qua*, she thus voices him negatively, as someone who is not as sympathetic as a doctor should be. In line 20, having completed her direct reported speech, Veronica shifts to the past tense again to reflect upon the doctor's behavior by saying, "*[he] responded to me, [he] railed against me*." She first uses the verb *rispondere* ("*to respond*") which is a rather neutral verb, but soon afterward she uses the verb *inveire* ("*to rail against*") which is a much stronger verb indexing aggressiveness on the part of the other speaker (i.e., the doctor). Thus, Veronica seems to be completely dumbfounded by the doctor's response to her polite request, and she then gives more details about that particular moment by describing how he railed at her in the hallway of the hospital when he said that they were working very hard and that they didn't have any time to waste there (lines 21–22). She then adds "*this [doctor] treated me really in a very very aggressive manner*," in line 23, where she uses the proximal demonstrative adjective *questo* ("*this*"), again, when she refers to the doctor. By using this proximal demonstrative pronoun, Veronica not only shifts back to the present narrating event and, again, makes the doctor be part of it, but also communicates her profound disrespect toward him to the interviewer.

If we look at the overall interaction, moreover, Veronica also undergoes an important change over the course of the interview. Analogously to the transformations of the interviewees described in Wortham's (2001) research, Veronica shifts from being remissive and polite to becoming unforgiving and embittered. After claiming that she would never excuse this doctor for his

disrespectful behavior in line 24, Veronica continues her sad story by stating that the doctor finally explained the clinical situation of her father to her and probably to her siblings (line 25).[14] The diagnosis of her father was truly tragic, since she was informed that he suffered from brain cancer. It is at this moment of the narrated event, at the very peak of her complicating action (Labov and Waletzky 1967), that Veronica conflates the past with the present interaction again by resorting to a lengthy, uninterrupted, direct reported speech. She addresses the doctor by catching his attention with the polite form of the verb *guardare* ("to look"), which is conjugated in the present subjunctive (line 27). The Italian polite imperative "guardi," which I glossed in English as "listen," is mainly used in two ways in Italian: to show understanding and sympathy to a listener (as in the sentence, "guarda, ti capisco benissimo," "*look, I really understand you*"), or to start an argument, as in Veronica's case, in her direct reported speech. By addressing the doctor with "guardi" ("listen") and by lengthening the final vowel *i*, Veronica immediately sets the tone of her upcoming statements.

At line 28, she uses another polite imperative of the reflexive verb *ricordarsi* which is also preceded by the polite third person subject pronoun *Lei*: "Lei si ricordi comunque ecco" ("*you [should] remember anyway well*"). The explicit use of the polite third person subject pronoun *Lei* further increases Veronica's unfriendly tone, especially if one considers the fact that subject pronouns are optional in Italian, and they are often used to just add emphasis to one's speech. Veronica indeed uses the polite subject pronoun *Lei* repeatedly. In lines 27 to 29, she reminds him that even doctors are mortal, and thus challenges his status. In this way, through Veronica's direct reported speech, the doctor is not only part of her *narrated event*, the past story, but he has also become part of her *narrating event*, the present interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee. Veronica then suddenly ends her stretch of direct reported speech at line 30, when she recounts that after the reported conversation with the doctor, she quickly went away, and this person never saw her again (lines 30–31).

The fleeting and ever-changing nature of interviews, particularly during storytelling events in these settings, thus clearly emerges in this example as well. Like in the interview with Maimuna in Example 1, Veronica and I engage in shifting interactional dynamics. While I overlap with Veronica only twice in the beginning of the interview, in lines 8 and 10, unlike my more involved participation in Maimuna's stories in Example 1, my silence during Veronica's storytelling might indicate my sympathy, respect, and participation as well. Silence, as has been demonstrated (Basso 1979; Ephratt 2022; Nakane 2012), should be analyzed as an interactional and discursive strategy (Gumperz 1982), and could thus show involvement instead of indifference or disinterest.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Why do researchers need to study the many, shifting interactional dimensions of storytelling practices as they emerge in interview settings? As I have argued in this chapter, methodologically, interviews are key sites where scholars could, and should, carefully examine stories. The developing interactional dynamics between interviewer(s) and interviewee(s), as I have shown, are constantly influenced by the various stances that participants take vis-à-vis each other and the evolving narrative topics. In the first example described in this chapter, the interviewee, Maimuna, collapses time and space several times over the course of our interview. Through so doing, she enacts *participant transposition* various times at precise moments of our interaction. In particular, she collapses a chronotope of the past with a chronotope of the present to transpose me into her past biographical self. In this way, she is able to influence our interaction as well since, at first, I didn't seem to be too involved in her telling. After she transformed me into one of her family members, her sister precisely, however, the interactional patterns changed.

Similarly, in the second example, Veronica tries to keep my involvement in her storytelling event by using some discourse strategies such as fast speech pace, reported speech, the use of specific verbs and deictics, and thus rapidly shifts from her past self to the present interaction. At the same time, she makes significant claims about Italian hospitals and personnel and the way patients might be treated unethically despite their serious circumstances. In both cases, moreover, *intimate relations* are also foregrounded, showing how interviews can be transformed into *intimate* moments for speech participants. These two examples thus show how interviews can develop differently, depending on the various socio-cultural contexts, speech participants, and, of course, the stories that are told during these events. In closing, using narratives in interviews as research methodologies is key in better understanding how interactional dynamics emerge in narratives in interviews. In this respect, narratives as research methods have proved to be very effective tools to navigate several discursive patterns in diverse socio-cultural contexts. This chapter thus contributes to this emerging research on the dynamicity and plasticity of narrative practices, which are always situated in their context and thus carry significant perspectives and socio-cultural realities.

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NOTES

1. In this chapter, I use pseudonyms for all my research participants to protect their identity and privacy. All my research projects were approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

2. In Senegal, French, the former colonial language, is still used together with Wolof, the vehicular language, and other languages, including Pulaar, Sereer, Diola, and Mandingo (Irvine 1989; Perrino 2002).

3. Original French version: "Dans les histoires sénégalaises le public devient immédiatement partie de l'histoire. Ça signifie que le public a des rôles très importants dans

la narration. Il ne fait pas seulement partie de la narration, mais il devient aussi un personnage de l'histoire. Cela est très typique au Sénégal. Le public participe comme public et comme personnage de l'histoire aussi. Si le public ne fait pas partie de l'histoire, l'histoire ne peut pas être racontée" (Youssou, July 2006).

4. All translations from French, Italian, and Wolof to English are mine.

5. Interviews are indeed among the most used methods of data collection across disciplines as diverse as anthropology, sociolinguistics, education, social history, and social psychology.

6. In many Senegalese families, herbal remedies are used to cure many diseases at home before going to a healer or to a Western biomedical doctor.

7. See Appendix A for transcription conventions.

8. In Senegal, my first name, Sabɨna, was often pronounced as Sabɛna.

9. The Wolof term *palu*, which is widely used to indicate any disease with malaria-like feverish symptoms, derives from the French *paludisme*, "malaria." Unlike the French term *paludisme*, however, Senegalese use the term *palu* not only to refer to cases of malaria, but also to other ranges of diseases as different as having a high fever, being unconscious or hallucinating, having a bad cold, and suffering from extreme fatigue.

10. While codeswitching takes many forms and involves different units, such as inter-sentential versus intra-sentential, when I mention this discourse strategy in this chapter, I only refer to its socio-cultural and pragmatic functions in interaction.

11. Due to space limitations, in this chapter, only the above case of *participant transposition* is presented and analyzed.

12. Literally, "*[I] was also biting the brake a bit*."

13. Later I learned from Veronica that, after a couple of months, her one-year-old son tragically passed away.

14. In line 25, the Italian pronoun *ci* ("to us") indicates that Veronica received the information about her father's disease together with her siblings or other relatives.

PART II

Narratives as a Research Method in China Studies

Chapter 4

Negotiating Sense of Belonging in Documentary Narrative

A Discourse Analysis of a Chinese Gourmet Program

Yunfeng Ge and Hong Wang

INTRODUCTION

The information age is an exciting time for documentaries. Changes in the way media is produced, transmitted, and consumed are creating new opportunities, with documentary stories covering new themes, packaged in new forms, and finding new audiences both locally and globally. While regarded by most people as a kind of non-fiction film and studied in the realm of the cinema (e.g., Bruzzi 2006; Aufderheide 2007; Nichols 2010), documentaries have also caught the attention of scholars from fields other than the cinema, such as culture, narratology, and linguistics. Among these studies, two topics have become especially salient in the past few years: one being the definition of documentary and its taxonomy; the other, the relation between real event and its representation in documentaries.

Although the term documentary is defined differently, there is a consensus among researchers that documentaries are about real life. Researchers of cinema studies highlight the differences between fiction films and non-fiction films by defining documentary as the "creative treatment of actuality" and the "creation of a new mode of filmmaking" (Grierson 1933, 8). Based on three commonsense assumptions about documentary, namely, real events, real people, and real experience, Bill Nichols (2010, 14) defines documentaries as "about situations and events involv[ing] real people (social actors)

who present themselves to us as themselves in stories that convey a plausible proposal about, or perspective on, the lives, situations, and events portrayed." Among the various classifications of documentaries (e.g., Rotha 1952; Barnouw 1993), Nichols (1994) has offered the most influential documentary genealogy by identifying five modes: the Expository, the Observational, the Interactive, the Reflexive, and the Performative.

The major problems with these documentary taxonomies, however, are that they are inexhaustive and fail to account for the confusion or hybridity of contemporary documentary modes. For instance, Chris Cagle (2012, 47) has found that contemporary documentaries, institutionally dominant documentaries in particular, have increasingly drawn on a looser narration by combining multiple modes into a coherent and unified meaning system. Although Nichols expands his configuration of documentary groups to six modes, adding a new category of the Poetic (Nichols 2010), he has failed to account for the problem that "wildly heterogeneous documentaries are forced to co-exist, very uncomfortably at times, within one mode" (Bruzzi 2006, 4).

Apart from the definition of documentary and its taxonomy, another topic that has been debated for years is the relation between real event and its representation in documentaries. Since its appearance in the last years of the nineteenth century, the documentary film has demonstrated a potential for the observation and investigation of people and social/historical phenomena. Given its historical linkage to the scientific project, observational methods, and the protocols of journalistic reportage, the documentary film has long been tied up with the question of science and is believed by many to be endowed with the power to preserve the world in real time and to guarantee absolute truth (Renov 2004, 172). Therefore, it is not surprising that subjectivity has frequently been constructed by documentary practitioners and critics as a kind of contamination to be avoided (Renov 2004, 174).

However, in recent years, more and more researchers argue that subjectivity cannot be wholly expunged out of documentaries, but rather that filmmakers' personalities are intimately involved in the creation of documentaries. For instance, Erik Barnouw (1993, 287) emphasizes that the filmmaker plays a crucial role in selecting topics, people, angles, juxtapositions, sounds, words, etc., during the production of documentaries, claiming that "each selection is an expression of his point of view, whether he is aware of it or not, whether he acknowledges it or not"; the study by Priupolina, Eckstein, and Noesselt in this edited volume has demonstrated how the political documentary *Daguo Waijiao* uses a diversity of narrative strategies to build up the legitimation of China's role claims. This personalist perspective does not mean to blur the boundary between documentary and fiction films, but rather, by foregrounding the dialectical relationship between reality and its representation in documentary, draws attention to the filmmaker's stake and commitment

to the subject matter represented in the documentary film. The production of documentary films is in fact a process of negotiation between the real event and its representation, which, according to Stella Bruzzi (2006), constitutes the backbone of documentary filmmaking.

In line with this understanding, some researchers define the representation of real events in documentaries as a process of narration. They emphasize that storytelling, with strong characters, compelling tension, and a credible resolution, lies at the heart of good documentaries. For example, Sheila Bernard (2007, 2) holds that factuality alone does not define documentary films; "it's what the filmmaker does with those factual elements, weaving them into an overall narrative that strives to be as compelling as it is truthful and is often greater than the sum of its parts." Also as is put by Peter Weiss (1971, 41), while documentary "refrains from all invention; it takes authentic material and puts it on the stage, unaltered in content, edited in form." Therefore, it is no surprise that during the process of the selection of authentic material and its editing, there is intrusion of bias, subjectivity, and conscious structuring of the event (Bruzzi 2006, 13).

Based on this review, we can make the following tentative conclusions about documentaries, which are also the basic assumptions for the present research: first, the traditional taxonomies and models of documentary are problematic in that they are incomplete and fail to incorporate its increased complications, especially the heterogenous and hybrid features of contemporary documentaries. Second, although a documentary is about real life, it is not reality; a documentary is a negotiation between reality, representation, and spectator. While these assumptions are held to be true concerning contemporary documentaries, the problem of how reality is represented in documentaries is still yet to be resolved.

In light of this discussion, this study aims to explicate the process of representation of reality in documentary films by investigating a Chinese gourmet documentary from a discourse analysis perspective. The underlying thesis of the study is that the Chinese gourmet documentary is not simply a factual presentation of food reality, but a discursive construct that is negotiated between food reality and its representation to create a meaning of "a sense of belonging to the nation" between the filmmaker and the spectator. In order to achieve the research objective, the following two research questions are to be answered: 1) How is the sense of belonging represented in the discourse of the Chinese gourmet documentary? 2) What discursive strategies are employed in the Chinese gourmet documentary to negotiate a sense of belonging between the filmmaker and the spectator?

APPROACHES TO DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

The study of discourse has become a major focus of research in many disciplines ranging from social sciences to information sciences. Approached from different perspectives, the term "discourse analysis" has come to be used in widely divergent ways. Deborah Schiffrin, Deborah Tannen, and Heidi E. Hamilton (2001, 1) have identified three general categories of discourse analysis: 1) the study of linguistic structure "beyond the sentence," 2) the study of language use, and 3) a broader range of social practices that includes non-linguistic and non-specific instances of language. In the past few decades, the object of study for these approaches to discourse has been increasingly moved away from a formal perspective, focusing on the description of language structure, toward a functional one, which focuses on the interpretation of the mechanism underlying language use. Being socioculturally oriented, the functional approach to discourse targets the dialectical relationship between discourse and society and focuses on "the actions of participants in particular communication events" and "the general characteristics of speech/discourse communities in relation to issues such as power and gender" (Biber, Connor, and Upton 2007, 2).

Among this variety of approaches, critical discourse analysis (CDA), being inherently functional, recognizes a dialectical association between language and social practices and ideological assumptions. This position is predicated on the assumption that language use reflects social structures, while at the same time it (re)enforces social structures (Fairclough 1989). For CDA practitioners, discourse is not merely a linguistic practice, but also a social practice which is instrumental in the formation of the social systems, situations, institutions, and ideologies in which it is embedded. Therefore, CDA is not critical in the ordinary sense of the word. Rather, it aims at illuminating the role language plays in power abuse, ideological imposition, and social injustice by critically analyzing language as social action, and ultimately, aims at achieving social change (Hart 2014, 2).

In order to fulfill that aim, CDA practitioners define discourse as referring not only to the production and consumption of text, but to "the whole process of social interaction of which a text is just a part" (Fairclough 1989, 24). In line with this definition, discourse analysis can be conducted on three dimensions: discourse as text, discourse as discursive practice, and discourse as social practice (Fairclough 1992). The dimension of social practice highlights the dialectical relationship between discourse and social structure, holding that discourse is implicated in such various orientations as economy, politics, culture, etc., and therefore should be studied at all levels of the social strata and social settings. Alongside this standpoint is that discourse is inherently

ideological in that any particular texts are believed by CDA practitioners to embody particular social meanings or ideological values.

These ideological values, usually promoted in the interests of specific social groups who have privileged access to socially valued resources and channels for the dissemination of information (van Dijk 1993), are often normalized or legitimized during the production, distribution, and consumption of texts. The normalization and legitimation of ideologies are realized on the grammatical level through speakers' lexico-grammatical choices that allow for representing the same material situation in different ways (Haynes 1989, 119). Therefore, one of the primary tasks of CDA is to deconstruct the process of how ideologies are engendered and reproduced in specific texts by drawing on various discourse analysis frameworks and models of grammar.

Linguistic analysis remains at the core of CDA and is regarded by many as what sets CDA apart from other critical approaches to discourse studies. Among the various models of grammar, systemic functional grammar and a variety of theoretical models from the cognitive linguistic perspective are widely appropriated. One of the problems of systemic functional grammar is that, while it may be ideal for description-oriented analysis of representation and evaluation in discourse, it is insufficient for performing CDA's interpretation-oriented analysis which "addresses the effects of ideological or perspectivized language use on hearers' mental representations and evaluations of reality" (Hart 2014, 9). Therefore, critical discourse analysts now recognize the need for a perspective that takes into account the cognitive dimensions involved in meaning-making (Wodak 2006, 180).

The cognitive linguistic approach (CLA) to discourse analysis is characterized by an emphasis on the relationship between linguistic structures in texts and conceptual structures in the minds of discourse participants. While sharing with CDA the understanding of the dialectical relationship between discourse and society, CLA focuses more on how this dialectic is mediated by the ideological cognitive structures and processes of discourse participants. Following this line of reasoning, "the locus proper of ideological reproduction is therefore not language itself but rather the cognitive processes, including conceptual processes, which language invokes" (Hart 2014, 108). Therefore, CLA aims to investigate the conceptual effects of ideological language choices by theorizing different forms of conceptual operations, such as framing, positioning, and identification, through which discursive strategies may bring about perlocutionary effects on discourse participants.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Analytical Framework

This study employs a discourse analysis method to explore how the documentary narrative of a Chinese gourmet program is embedded with an ideology of a sense of belonging to the nation among overseas Chinese people. According to the basic assumptions of CLA, both the production and the consumption practices of discourse are mental processes that involve a wide range of cognitive activities. Among the variety of cognitive-linguistic models that are developed to account for the symbolic relationships between language, cognitive activities, and society, Paul Chilton's (2004) discourse space theory (DST) is committed to the interpretation of meaning construction of discourse:

> This framework . . . accounts for discourse-level meaning construction in terms of an abstract, three-dimensional configuration in a mental "discourse" space which provides a conceptual coherence to whole texts as entities and events are mapped out across axes representing socio-spatial, temporal and evaluative (epistemic and axiological) "distance." (Hart 2014, 163)

Accordingly, language in use can be understood as utterances that are generated and interpreted in relation to the situation where the utterers and interpreters are positioned (Chilton 2004, 56).

Chilton (2004) identifies three intersecting axes to define discourse space, namely, temporal, spatial, and evaluative axes. It is around these axes that the discourse world is constructed by positioning ideational elements in the text in ontological relations with each other and with the speaker. According to Chilton (2004, 56), the temporal axis represents a time line that extends from "now" to "past" and "future." The spatial axis has both a physical and a social meaning, referring to both a physical distance and a metaphoric social distance. The evaluative axis is simultaneously engaged in both an epistemic and an axiological aspect, representing a conceptualization of "right" versus "wrong" in speakers' belief systems about morality.

While Chilton's DST can show how entities, events, time, and places are represented in the text and how these representations are positioned in relation to three cognitive dimensions, it has some weakness concerning its analytical strength and limitations in its application. First and foremost, while DST concerns people's processing of discourse, its focus of analysis is primarily centered on micro-level lexico-grammatical properties, mainly deixis, in the scope of clause, without taking into account the analysis of macro-level discourse structure and how different types of discourses, which

may be located in different discourse spaces, are merged into an integral one in the current discourse space. Second, although the evaluative axis in DST is sub-categorized into epistemic and axiological aspects, it fails to notice how epistemic knowledge or axiological values may be different in relation to different social entities or communicative situations. Third, DST and its subsequent development (e.g., proximization theory) is primarily limited to the analysis of political discourses and, based on the Us/Them polarization, which is represented by deictic distance, tries to construct an antagonistic relationship between speakers of these discourses and the social entities represented therein. The solution of these problems is to incorporate a more macro-socially oriented discourse analysis to examine how, for example, social entities, social relations, or ideological values are represented mentally, not only through lexico-grammatical resources, but also on the macro level of discourse structures and genre relations.

Critical genre analysis (CGA) (Bhatia 2017) is an analytical approach to the study of situated linguistic behavior in institutionalized or professional settings. It is aimed at demystifying professional practices or actions in typical academic and professional contexts by extending genre theory beyond the analyses of textual, intertextual, and other semiotic resources used in professional genres (Bhatia 2017, 8). The key notions in CGA are criticality, contextualization, and interdiscursivity.

The notion of criticality seeks to uncover how expert professionals construct, interpret, and exploit genre conventions in the performance of their professional tasks, and how institutional, organizational, and professional activities are constructed, and specific communicative objectives are accomplished. The notion of contextualization puts emphasis on how genres are interpreted and exploited in specific professional contexts to achieve specific disciplinary objectives (Bhatia 2004), by dividing context into three overlapping spaces, namely, textual, socio-pragmatic, and socio-cultural spaces, where discourse operates on the levels of text, genre, professional practice, and professional culture (Bhatia 2017, 62). The notion of interdiscursivity highlights the heterogeneous nature of professional communication by investigating how different socio-cultural, institutional, and organizational dynamics are negotiated and how different generic resources and semiotic modes of communication are appropriated to achieve professional objectives (Ge and Wang 2019).

CGA can complement DST in analyzing the mental processes of discourse production and consumption in at least two aspects. First, CGA's notion of interdiscursivity extends DST's micro-level deictic analysis to the macro-level textual analysis of discourse structures and thus helps to account for the mental process of how different genres are merged into one discourse space to form a coherent discourse entity. Second, CGA's notion of context

spaces can provide guidelines for a more detailed and differentiated analysis in terms of DST's evaluative axis, by locating epistemic knowledge or axiological values in different context spaces.

Based on this discussion, we attempt to construct a comprehensive analytical framework based on DST and CGA for the analysis of documentary discourse. While adopting Chilton's notion of "discourse space" as the theoretical basis, we prefer to split Chilton's configuration of Spatial/Socio-spatial axis into two separate axes, namely, Spatial axis and Socio-cultural axis, and thus define "discourse space" as a four-dimensional conceptual structure, where Temporal (T) and Spatial (S) axes together define the physical plane of the discourse space and Socio-cultural (SC) and Evaluative (E) axes define its social plane, as illustrated by figure 4.1.

The Socio-cultural axis is sub-divided into textual space, pragmatic space, professional space, and cultural space, which are characterized by different contextual features. Although also having temporal and spatial

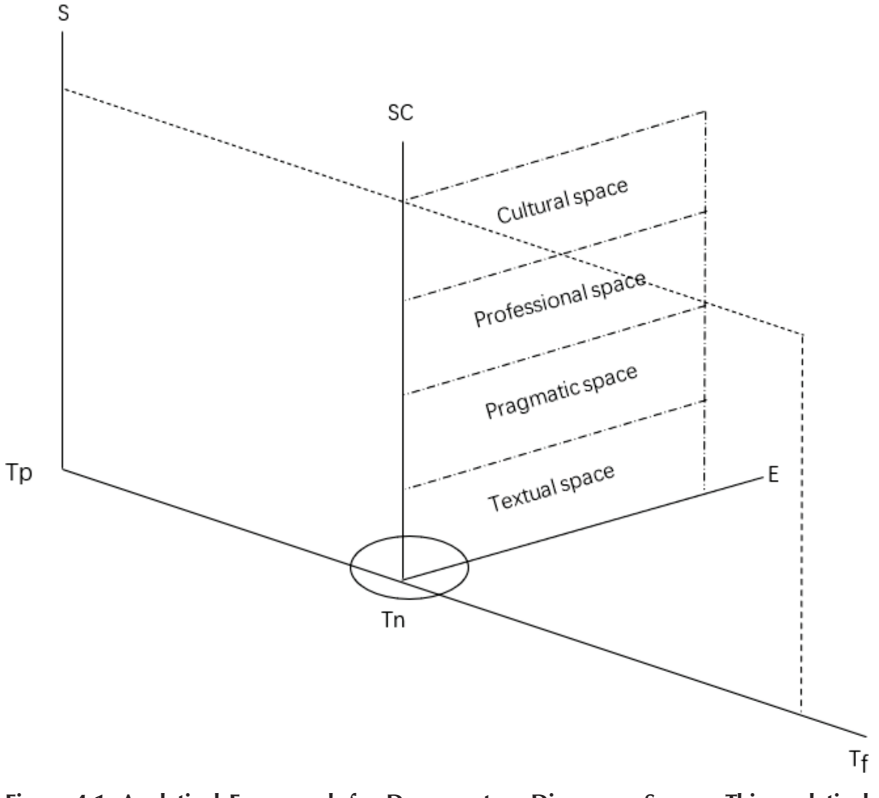

Figure 4.1. Analytical Framework for Documentary Discourse. Source: This analytical framework is proposed by the authors of the paper, based on DST (Chilton 2004) and CGA (Bhatia 2017).

manifestations, the evaluative axis is mainly regarded as socio-culturally embedded or related to conceptualizations on the socio-cultural plane in that it is based on socio-cultural considerations that evaluations are made. On the whole, evaluation can be understood as concerning the basic ideological assumptions of discourse producers. Specifically, these ideological assumptions can be categorized into different values, judgments, and beliefs, which are embedded in pragmatic, professional, and cultural spaces. Evaluation in the pragmatic space mainly concerns interpersonal relations; evaluation in the professional space primarily focuses on, for example, professional values, ethics, and attitudes that are closely related to professional practice or performance; and evaluation in the cultural space largely pertains to such macroscopic concepts as tradition, justice, and morality that stand in close relation to the macrostructure of society. The textual space is the point of junction where the physical plane and socio-cultural plane are connected to contribute to the representation of reality in discourse. It can be analyzed on the micro level as text producers' lexico-grammatical choices or on the macro level as patterns of generic structures, where intertextual or interdiscursive relations are established between different discourse types.

The Data

The data used for this study consist of twenty-five documentary episodes of the Chinese gourmet documentary called *Gourmet in China* (美食中国), with each episode lasting for about twenty-six minutes. This Chinese gourmet documentary film is produced by China Central Television and broadcast on CCTV-4, an international channel broadcasting in Chinese, with the overseas Chinese people as its main target audience. According to the official introduction, the gourmet documentary is aimed at "spreading Chinese food culture" and "promoting cities' reputation" by "creating a documentary program from a humanistic perspective." The documentary is in Chinese with Chinese subtitles. All of the twenty-five episodes we selected are transcribed into a small corpus of 125,550 Chinese characters.

The main reason for choosing a gourmet documentary as the dataset for the analysis is that, apart from the great popularity it enjoys among Chinese people, the gourmet documentary demonstrates a distinct feature of heterogeneity by incorporating a diversity of discourse types, which has constituted a peculiar genre type of gourmet documentary, the analysis of which may shed light on our understanding of how documentary narrative is performed.

Based on the analytical framework constructed, this study first identifies and annotates the discursive resources that are distributed around the four axes of discourse space, namely, Temporal, Spatial, Socio-cultural, and Evaluative axes; second, a detailed analysis is conducted to examine and

summarize how the sense of belonging is negotiated between the filmmaker and the spectator through different discursive strategies in the documentary.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Based on the procedure discussed earlier, the analysis of the data reveals the following major findings: first, the Chinese gourmet documentary, while constructing realities about Chinese food, has mainly contributed to the construction of a sense of belonging, which is materialized on the different axes of discourse space as memories, places, family affection, tradition, etc.; second, this sense of belonging is mainly negotiated on the evaluative axes of discourse space and is realized through different discursive strategies by employing a variety of discourse types; and third, these different types of discourses are merged together to form a heterogeneous discourse of documentary.

Temporal Conceptualization: Discourse of Memory

The Temporal axis in the analytical framework has three major time nodes, namely, now (Tn), past (Tp), and future (Tf). While the Chinese gourmet documentary mainly takes "now" as the frame of its narration, there are a lot of scenarios where the filmmaker gives a past-oriented temporal representation of the food reality through a discourse of memory. The analysis of the data reveals that the past-oriented temporal representation of the food reality is not simply about what the food was like; it presents more information about the situational elements concerning the cooking of the food. These situational elements, by relating the food to family members, friends, the process of cooking, memories of the food's taste, etc., that are closely related to the protagonist's personal experience, create a strong sense of belonging about family memories.

Example text 1[1]

[00:04:23–00:04:34, Episode February 5, 2022] 画外音：小时候虽然生活条件有限，但每当家里来了客人，父亲总是会抓上一只平时舍不得吃的跑山鸡，做他最拿手的"瓦地则衣"。

Voice-over: When I was a child, although living conditions were limited, when we had guests home, my father would always catch a free-range chicken, which we could not bear to eat at ordinary times, for his specialty dish "Wadi Zeyi."

In this example text, the voice-over narrator gives an introduction of the protagonist's childhood memory about the dish "Wadi Zeyi." The expression "小时候 (when I was a child)" provides the subsequent discourse with a past-oriented temporal frame, which activates the essential entities about the dish reality that are stored in the protagonist's memory, namely, "家 (home)," "父亲 (father)," "客人 (guests)," "生活条件 (living conditions)," and "跑山鸡 (free-range chicken)." These entities, when put together, define the essential components of the protagonist's home and create a temporal proximization.

On the Evaluative side, Example text 1 consists of three opposite evaluative phrases, which are used to conceptualize the dish reality: on the negative side, "有限 (limited)" and "平时舍不得吃的 (we could not bear to eat at ordinary times)," and on the positive side, "拿手的 (specialty)." These evaluative expressions, while describing the poor living conditions of the protagonist's childhood, set off by contrast in his memory a yearning for the dish and thus generate a strong sense of belonging not simply about the food itself, but about the family as well.

Spatial Conceptualization: Discourse of Geography

The spatial representation of food reality in the documentary concerns the geographic location where the food is invented, enjoyed, or becomes popular. The analysis of the data reveals a distinct feature of discourse of geography in the Chinese gourmet documentary. Namely, the discourse of geography, while describing the peculiar geographical features of a certain city or region, is usually followed by, or mixed with, the introduction of the special food ingredients in that city or region. This joint presentation, which highlights the spatial dimension of the food reality, may help to generate in the mind of spectators a sense of spatial belonging as a result of the strong relevance constructed between the food and the place where they live.

Example text 2

[00:00:32–00:01:08, Episode April 26, 2021] 画外音：(1)房山，因山得名，由水名扬，(2)山水相依，(3)山地、丘陵、平原梯次延伸，(4)山中的潺潺溪水汇流成河，一路欢歌奔向平原。(5)山羊、蘑菇、鱼鲜、斗鸡，房山的山水，孕育出多姿多彩的鲜美食材，也成为烹饪美味绝妙的催化剂。(6)正所谓美食之乐在于山水之间。

Voice-over: (1) Fangshan is named after its mountains but is well known for its waters. (2) It has a landscape of mountains surrounded by waters. (3)

> Mountains, hills, and flatlands extend one after another. (4) Babbling streams, which originate from the mountains, eventually converge into rivers, singing all the way to the flatlands. (5) Goats, mushrooms, fishes, and household chickens are among those colorful food materials that are bred by Fangshan's mountains and waters, and become the catalyzer to wonderful delicacies. (6) Like the old saying goes, the joy of food lies in mountains and waters.

Example text 2 is a discourse of geography that describes the geographical features of Fangshan, one of the administrative districts of Beijing. It can be seen that, while describing the mountains, waters, and flatlands, the discourse is embedded with an introduction of the local food materials. Clause (1) introduces what Fangshan is characterized by, namely, its mountains and waters; clauses (2) and (3) describe how its mountains and waters are intertwined with each other to form one integrated whole. Clause (4) gives a depiction of what water is like in the district of Fangshan. The personification "一路欢歌奔向平原 (singing all the way to the flatlands)" and the present participle modifier "潺潺 (babbling)," while highlighting the dynamic feature of the water, provide a positive evaluation of the natural environment of Fangshan. And, more importantly, these clauses give a linguistic depiction of a traditional Chinese landscape, which, while symbolizing harmony between man and nature, is usually regarded by many Chinese as their spiritual home.

The presentation of the geographic features in these four clauses gives a definition of the spatial dimension of the food that is to be introduced in the subsequent clause (5), where such food materials as "山羊 (goats)," "蘑菇 (mushrooms)," "鱼鲜 (fishes)," and "斗鸡 (household chickens)" are conceptualized. The two material processes, "孕育 (are bred)" in clause (5) and "在于 (lies in)" in clause (6), ascribe the food materials and the joy of the food to the mountains and waters of Fangshan. Thus, by highlighting the prominent place of the food reality's spatial dimension, the discourse of geography helps to create in the mind of spectators a sense of spatial belonging.

Professional Conceptualization: Discourse of Cooking

The food reality in the documentary is also constructed in the professional space and presented through the discourse of cooking as a professional activity that involves specific technical skills. However, in contrast to most gourmet programs where professional skills are usually attributed to chefs, the documentary of *Gourmet in China* defines those professional skills as an ability owned by ordinary people or as an integral part of a family, thus adding more family atmosphere to the food, as is illustrated by the following example.

Example text 3

1. [00:04:15–00:06:23, Episode February 2, 2022] [1]叙述者1（妻子）：(1)这地瓜打打皮，(2)它这顶上有淀粉，(3)沾完水之后呢，它淀粉就掉到水里头了，做出来的地瓜呢，颜色比较好看，还好吃*(P)*。(4)平常老公天天给我做好吃的，(5)这窍门啥的也都是他教我的。
2. 画外音：(6)锅里放上凉水和油，(7)再加入绵白糖，(8)绵白糖做出来的糖浆清香，不粘牙*(P)*，(9)水开了以后，开始是冒大泡，(10)接着煮，大泡变小泡，(11)颜色从白色开始泛黄，就可以把红薯放进去颠锅翻炒。
3. 叙述者2（丈夫）：(12)翻动地瓜的同时，如果油温比较高，要迅速点入点凉水，(13)点入点凉水的目的就让它迅速降温……外壳更酥脆那种。
4. 画外音：(14)冬日里，来上几块甜、脆、糯、香、烫兼备的*(P)*拔丝地瓜，就是家常味道的幸福感。

1. Protagonist 1 (wife): (1) The sweet potato should be peeled. (2) There is amylum on it. (3) By dipping it into water, the amylum falls off into the water, and the "candied sweet potatoes" cooked will have a lovely color and a delicious taste (P). (4) My husband cooks delicious food for me every day. (5) He taught me those kinds of knacks.
2. Voice-over: (6) Put cold water and oil into the pot. (7) Then add soft white sugar. (8) The syrup made of soft white sugar has a fragrant scent and is not sticky (P). (9) After the water is boiling, big bubbles rise. (10) Keep boiling, and big bubbles turn into small bubbles. (11) When the color turns from white to light yellow, you can put the sweet potato pieces into the pot to stir-fry.
3. Protagonist 2 (husband): (12) When stir-frying the sweet potato pieces, if the oil temperature is too high, pour quickly a little cold water on them. (13) The purpose is to cool the sweet potato pieces . . . to make them crisper.
4. Voice-over: (14) In winter times, have a few pieces of "candied sweet potato pieces," which are sweet, crisp, glutinous, delicious, and hot (P), and you can feel the happiness of home-cooked meals.

Example text 3 is a discourse of cooking constructed in the professional space, where the technical skills of cooking the dish "candied sweet potatoes" are conceptualized. It can be seen that in the example text, three different voices, namely, the voice-over and two protagonists' voices, are mixed together to introduce the cooking procedure of the dish. Apart from the multiple voices, the example text is also characterized by a mixture of evaluations

on the quality of the dish and a mutual love between husband and wife, which help to generate a sense of belonging to each other.

The procedure for cooking the dish constitutes the major part of the professional discourse in the example text. For example, the first three clauses in (1) introduce how to wash the amylum off the sweet potatoes, the clauses in (2) teach spectators how to make syrup out of soft white sugar, and the two clauses in (3) introduce the tricks to make sweet potatoes crisper.

Along with the introduction of the technical skills, the professional discourse is also embedded with an evaluative dimension and is correlated with the pragmatic space to construct an affectionate husband-wife relationship between the two protagonists. The evaluative dimension is mainly concerned with the taste of the dish. For example, such expressions as "颜色比较好看，还好吃 (a lovely color and a delicious taste)" in clause (3), "清香 (a fragrant scent)" and "不粘牙 (not sticky)" in clause (8), and "甜、脆、糯、香、烫兼备的 (sweet, crisp, glutinous, delicious, and hot)" in clause (14) depict the perception of the dish from visual, gustatory, tactual, and olfactive senses.

The pragmatic construction of the dish is mainly realized by three clauses, where the love between the husband and wife is represented. In clause (4), the Material Process verb "做好吃的 (cooks delicious food)," the Client "给我 (for me)," and the Circumstantial Adjunct "天天 (everyday)" are incorporated in the wife's utterance to construct a social reality that she is loved and cared for by her husband. In clause (5), by revealing that it is her husband who taught those tricks to her, the wife expresses her pride and affection for her husband.

On the whole, the merging of the voices of the two protagonists into the documentary is also a demonstration of the love and collaboration between the husband and the wife in cooking the dish, and thus contributes to the construction of an affectionate husband-wife relation, which is regarded by Chinese traditional culture as one of the core principles of a harmonious family.

Pragmatic Conceptualization: Discourse of Family Affection

As was mentioned in the previous section, food cooking in Chinese culture plays a very important role in achieving family harmony, especially in expressing affection between family members. The reason behind this is that Chinese people do not take cooking and dining simply as steps to obtain energy, but also as part of the pursuit of "beauty, ethics, and harmony" (Li and Dai 2019, 130). Therefore, for Chinese people, to cook and dine together is a ritual to be worshipped by all family members and a means by which

they get a sense of belonging. Example text 3 has given us some clues about how love is expressed and represented between husband and wife during food preparation. The following example will demonstrate how food reality is constructed in terms of family affection from the concept of home to create a sense of belonging.

Example text 4

[00:00:20–00:01:08, Episode February 21, 2022] 画外音：(1)江湖滋味万千，唯有一种味道令人难以忘怀，时时想念。(2)在湖南衡阳它是一抹油香，在河南信阳它是诱人辣味，在广东梅州它是百变酿菜。(3)这些美味虽然风格迥异，但却有一个共同的名字，那就是家的味道。(4)烟火升腾，香味弥漫，循着菜香便会知道回家的方向。(5)细细咀嚼,不禁发出感慨，幸福有时就是一道家常菜。

Voice-over: (1) There are tens of thousands of tastes in all corners of the country, but there is only one taste that is unforgettable and worth remembering with longing. (2) In Hengyang, Hunan, it is the fragrance of oil; in Xinyang, Henan, it is the seductive peppery taste; and in Meizhou, Guangzhou, it is the variety of pickles. (3) Although these delicacies are different in flavors, they have a common name, namely, the taste of home. (4) Following the rising smoke and fire, and the diffused aroma of food, you will know the direction toward home. (5) The chewing of the food always goes with an emotional sigh: happiness is sometimes a home-cooked dish.

Different from Example text 3, where the affection between husband and wife is embedded as a subordinate section in professional discourse, Example text 4 demonstrates how affection between family members is represented exclusively through the discourse of family affection while constructing food reality.

As was mentioned, food and cooking play such an important role in Chinese family lives, that they sometimes are regarded as the symbols of home. In Example text 4, this correlation between food and home has a more detailed representation on the lexico-grammatical level by different verb processes from different aspects.

In clause (1), the features of home-cooked food are conceptualized by such attributes as "unforgettable (令人难以忘怀)" and "worth remembering with longing (时时想念)." Clauses (2) and (3), by contrast, emphasize the commonness of home-cooked food. Clause (2) instantiates and highlights the diversity of home-cooked food in different geographical places in China, and clause (3) emphasizes their commonness, stressing that, although there are geographical differences in tastes, they all share "the taste of home (家的

味道)." In clause (4), home-cooked food, which is instantiated as "the rising smoke and fire (烟火升腾)" and "the diffused aroma of food (香味弥漫)," is conceptualized as "the direction toward home (回家的方向)." Clause (5) profiles the process of food eating, and by comparing the chewing of home-cooked food to the chewing of happiness, it makes the family properties more prominent.

It can be seen that in Example text 4, food and home are inseparable from each other. While food is defined as "the taste of home" and "the direction toward home," home also acquires a concrete instantiation as the "rising smoke and fire" and the "diffused aroma of food." In fact, in this Chinese gourmet documentary, food and home are conceptualized as one integral entity, inseparable from each other. And it is the warmth of home embedded in Chinese food that generates the sense of belonging in the minds of Chinese people.

Cultural Conceptualization: Discourse of History and Tradition

Food is also an important cultural phenomenon. Every particular kind of food has its own origins, developments, transformations, and stories associated with its production and consumption. In the Chinese gourmet documentary, food is also culturally represented. The analysis of the data shows that, although culture has a variety of dimensions, the food reality in the documentary is mainly constructed from the aspects of history and tradition, as is illustrated by the following examples.

Example text 5

[00:00:35–00:00:56, Episode July 15, 2021] (1)1200多年前，唐代大诗人韩愈在潮州任职时，同样犯了选择困难症。(2)在初次品尝到潮州美食之后，他即兴赋诗一首，诗中提到了蚝、蒲鱼、章举等多种鲜味。(3)几十种鲜品可供选择，(4)岂不让韩愈犯了难。

(1) Twelve hundred years ago, when taking office in Chaozhou, Han Yu, the great poet of Tang Dynesty, was also troubled with allodoxaphobia. (2) While tasting for the first time the delicacies in Chaozhou, he composed an impromptu poem, where various kinds of seafood, such as oysters, devil rays, octopuses, etc., are mentioned. (3) Dozens of kinds of seafood available. (4) No wonder Han Yu found it hard to choose from among them.

Example text 5 constructs on the cultural axis the food reality in Chaozhou, a coastal city in Guangdong province, to establish the long history of seafood

eating through the discourse of history. The cultural dimension in the example text is demonstrated by the personal experience of the well-known poet of the Tang Dynasty, Han Yu, who enjoys great popularity among Chinese people for his poems and proses.

First, in clause (1), a sense of historical belonging is constructed by the circumstantial adjunct "1200多年前 (twelve hundred years ago)." By revealing their common interest in seafood, it establishes a temporal proximity between contemporary people and people living twelve hundred years ago. Second, the common characteristic between the seafood in contemporary Chaozhou and Chaozhou in history is conceptualized, namely, its abundancy and variety. For example, in clauses (2) and (3), the phrases "多种鲜味 (various kinds of seafood)" and "几十种鲜品 (dozens of kinds of seafood)" are used to give an objective depiction of the abundance and variety of Chaozhou's seafood in history. In contrast, clauses (1) and (4), from a subjective perspective and by describing how Han Yu was troubled with allodoxaphobia when faced with such a variety of seafood, depict the food reality as his personal construction.

The correlation between the seafood and the literary giant in history constructs the food in Chaozhou as a culturally loaded phenomenon and a part of Chinese traditional culture. This conceptualization of the food reality can help to generate a sense of cultural pride and a sense of cultural belonging among the spectators.

Example text 6

[00:04:20–00:04:33, Episode February 21, 2022] (1)衡阳人习惯了用茶油烹制菜肴，(2)茶油的香味是衡阳人的情之根，味之源，是衡阳人家常菜的代表味道。

(1) Hengyang people have been accustomed to using tea oil to cook dishes. (2) The fragrance of tea oil is Hengyang people's root of affection and origin of taste, and the representative taste of home-cooked dishes of Hengyang people.

Example text 6 constructs the food reality of tea oil in Hengyang as an integral part of Hengyang people's tradition. In clause (1), this tradition is conceptualized by the behavioral process "习惯了(have been accustomed to)," which indicates the formation of a custom or tradition. In clause (2), this tradition is conceptualized by three noun phrases, namely, "情之根 (root of affection)," "味之源 (origin of taste)," and "代表味道 (representative taste)." By defining tea oil as a traditional and indispensable ingredient of home-cooked dishes, Example text 6 can contribute to the creation of a sense of traditional belonging among the spectators.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

While structural approaches to discourse focus on the coherence, unity, and conformity of discourses in terms of both their internal structures and the relations between discourses and their contexts, the poststructural approach highlights the dynamic, polyphonic, and even contradictory elements that operate during the production, transmission, and consumption of discourses. Mikhail Bakhtin (1981, 271–72) defines the polyvalence of discourse as the tensions or struggles between centrifugal and centripetal forces that underlie the production of discourse to strive to keep the discourse apart and coherent at the same time. Following this idea, discourses are not coherent or homogenous all the time, but rather are fragile, heterogenous, and dynamic, and can be broken into pieces and then combined together by overlapping, mixing, and embedding during the production of other discourses in other social practices, in which different values and ideologies predominate.

This poststructural understanding of discourse entails an analysis of not only what different discourse types are exploited, together with their related social practices, and the underlying ideologies and values, but more importantly, how these heterogenous and even contradictory discourse types are combined together to form an integrated discourse with both diversity and conformity.

This idea of heterogeneity helps to shed light on how narrative is performed via different discourse strategies in the genre of documentary. The documentary narrative provides a specific arena where the centrifugal and centripetal forces that contribute to the formation of discourses can be examined to account for the process of how an equilibrium state is reached as a result of the struggle between the heterogenous discourse elements.

This study is based on the assumption that the Chinese gourmet documentary is not simply a factual presentation of food reality, but a discursive construct that is negotiated between food reality and its representation to create a meaning of "a sense of belonging to the nation" between the filmmaker and the spectator, the overseas Chinese people in particular. In order to examine the meaning-making process in the Chinese gourmet documentary, this study has constructed a comprehensive analytical framework based on the theoretical constructs of Chilton's (2004) DST and Vijay Bhatia's (2017) CGA to examine how the sense of belonging is conceptualized in the different axes of discourse space and the discursive strategies that are employed in the gourmet documentary to negotiate the sense of belonging between the filmmaker and the spectator.

The analysis of the data has revealed that the Chinese gourmet documentary manifests distinct features of heterogeneity and interdiscursivity,

incorporating a multiplicity of voices and employing a diversity of discourse types, ranging from discourse of memory, discourse of geography, discourse of cooking, discourse of family affection, to discourse of history and tradition. These diverse discourse types contribute to the temporal, spatial, professional, pragmatic, and cultural conceptualizations of Chinese food reality, which in turn can generate a sense of belonging to the nation among spectators by establishing relationships between food and memories about family, places, affections between family members, historical events, and traditions, etc.

It can be seen that the divergent conceptualizations of the food reality in the narrative of the Chinese gourmet documentary are the effects of the different values and beliefs that are associated with the Chinese food. These diversified values and beliefs, which constitute the centrifugal forces that contribute to the heterogeneity of Chinese gourmet discourse, are incorporated as manifestations of the different aspects of the sense of belonging to the nation that the Chinese gourmet discourse endeavors to activate in the minds of spectators. This sense of belonging, which functions as the underlying centripetal force, holds together the diversified values and beliefs associated with the food reality to form a contradictory yet consistent discursive construct of the Chinese gourmet documentary.

The main contribution of the study is that, based on DST and CGA, it constructs an analytical framework for a comprehensive investigation of documentary narrative in specific contexts. More specifically, it provides a cognitively oriented investigation of the operating mechanism of discourse production and consumption by examining how such pragmatic, professional, and cultural elements on the socio-cultural plane are intersected with temporal and spatial dimensions to form an interdiscursive discourse entity. Meanwhile, the analytical framework can also help to demonstrate how language use is ideologically invested on the levels of lexico-grammar and discourse structure. This analytical framework can be applied to the investigation of how narrative is performed in other kinds of documentaries and to the exploration of how ideological meanings are negotiated on both cognitive and discursive dimensions between discourse producers and audiences. Practically, this study contributes to our understanding of the interdiscursive and heterogenous nature of documentary narrative, and of how the dynamic and diversified values and beliefs are mixed together to form an integral discourse entity to achieve certain ideological functions.

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NOTE

1. The gourmet program is broadcast in Chinese, with Chinese subtitles. The example texts analyzed in the paper were translated into English by the authors of the study.

Chapter 5

Analyzing Legitimation Strategies

BRI in the COVID-19 Crisis

Shubham Karmakar

INTRODUCTION

In 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping, during his visits to Kazakhstan and Indonesia, put forward the initiatives of building "the Silk Road Economic Belt" and "the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road." The combination of these two initiatives is officially called the "Belt and Road Initiative" (BRI). According to Xi's speech (Cai 2017), the ambition of the BRI is to serve the common interests of relevant parties and promote regional and global cooperation. Since its announcement, the BRI has gained great attention from all over the world as the Chinese government invites the attention with its proactive promotion of the BRI in many ways. For instance, it can be better understood through the enormous coverage by all the Chinese state-run media, such as CGTN, Xinhua News, CCTV, the *Global Times*, etc. It has also drawn the attention of international think tanks and researchers, thus the BRI has been studied from many economic and political perspectives.

Since the announcement of the BRI, the initiative mostly invited two kinds of criticisms in relation to its prospects. First, the scale and the grandeur of the BRI project made many Western scholars argue against its successful realization (Callahan 2016). On the other hand, based on the data prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Chinese perspective portrays the scale and grandeur of the BRI as a success. By the end of 2019, the BRI project accumulated sixty-four partner signatory countries, amounting to 30 percent of world GDP and 64 percent of world population in total (*Belt and Road News* 2019). The BRI project connected three continents (Asia, Africa, and Europe) through infrastructural facilities such as ports and sea routes, which are expected

to contribute to China's and the partner countries' economies, as win-win cooperation. Under the umbrella term of BRI projects, existing institutions such as the Confucius Institute have been incorporated in the BRI framework and new institutions have been built, such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, which has one hundred signatories. Second, the way in which BRI projects have been executed failed to generate the expected profit. Consequently, many of the partner countries found themselves in greater debt than before (Carmody 2020). These phenomena started waving a red flag for many, and as a result the BRI lost much of its legitimacy (Nordin and Weissmann 2018). Moreover, the fact that major world and regional economies (such as the United States and India) refrained from being BRI partner countries undermined the project's legitimacy both from a regional and a global perspective (Brakman et al. 2019; Cheng 2016; Rolland 2017). Thus, the legitimacy of the BRI has not met China's expectations yet. Moreover, with the COVID-19 crisis, the question of the BRI's legitimacy became acute, which caused immediate Chinese concern. In this situation, the *Global Times*, as the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP's) international mouthpiece, immediately started addressing the problem. The COVID-19 virus outbreak, which caused a pandemic situation worldwide, was a rare period which had not been experienced by humanity since the 1918 pandemic. Legitimation strategies in different settings through different modalities have been widely studied among researchers. Nevertheless, the socio-political situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic makes the proposed investigation of legitimation strategies even more relevant, especially because such a context is unprecedented in the last hundred years. Moreover, together with BRI legitimation processes during this unique situation, this study raises the issue of rhetorical legitimation strategies. This issue is investigated by analyzing a coherent corpus of media articles confronted with the socio-political international issue of the BRI.

To be precise, deriving from the knowledge regarding the process of legitimation, which is understood as a normative process, through which the actor country contextualizes its identity, interest, words, and actions (Reus-Smit 2007), this chapter aims to examine China's rhetorical legitimation through its state-controlled media. The existing literature also focused on China's political strategies through BRI and remarked BRI is an attempt by China to channel its overcapacity, while pursuing geopolitical and geo-economic strategies. In this process the BRI invited distrust and criticism from the international community, the support of which is needed for legitimation (Yang 2022). Furthermore, the unexpected COVID-19 pandemic created an international situation where the distrust and questions of the sustainability of the BRI project were amplified exponentially. While this study aims to fill the detected gap in the literature, it also draws a modest limit to its

research scope. As Bexell (2014) argues, it is not necessary that all the acts of legitimation by an actor are accepted by the recipient and translated to the actor's expected result. Thereby, the acceptance and outcome of legitimation require a separate study, whereas this study strictly examines the strategically crafted rhetorical narratives in the course of legitimation of the BRI by the Chinese media. Moreover, this study does not evaluate the effectiveness of the legitimation process and/or the reception of the same, but only analyzes and contextualizes the message from the actor.

The projects under the BRI are spread across sectors, industries, countries, and continents. Hence, it is important for the BRI to take multilevel legitimation and constant innovation into consideration, in order to legitimize itself across the sectors, industries, countries, and continents. The BRI project is promoted as an innovative system of the Old Silk Route from an institutional perspective; moreover, the present BRI is also innovative in the way it is practiced (Brakman et al. 2019). The BRI serves as the fundamental base for other institutions proposed by China such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. Furthermore, the BRI project laid claim to previously existing institutions such as Confucius Institutes, which is the BRI's foothold in the education sector linking Chinese and foreign universities (Malik 2020).

While there are multiple ways to investigate the BRI's legitimation through media, such as radio, television, newspapers, and magazines, this study considers newspapers as analytical foci to examine the BRI's legitimation, as the newspaper reports are comparatively serious and published after research, which is majorly missing in other sections of media (Jones, Shanahan, and McBeth 2014). In order to understand the discourse promoted by Chinese media, this study chooses the *Global Times*, which is focused on an international audience, for data collection. The *Global Times* is a tabloid newspaper under CCP's flagship *People's Daily* focused on a nationalistic perspective on international issues, as many practitioners claim (Arifon et al. 2019; Huang 2016; Jiang 2019).

Although the media are controlled by the single-party state, Brady (2016), Cheng (2008), Shirk (2011), and Stockman (2015) attempted to explore the impact of commercialization and marketization on China's media. They all argued that Chinese media practices and discourse reflect the CCP ideology and political agenda while not being driven by the market (Brady 2008; Young 2013; Stockman 2015). This study attempts to use the outcome of the previous studies on the relationship between CCP and Chinese media in order to address the following research question: How did Chinese media attempt to rhetorically legitimize the BRI to the international community in the initial stage of COVID-19 pandemic?

China's initial narrative in response to the COVID-19 pandemic is particularly significant in order to understand China's immediate modification of BRI narrative in an unprecedented crisis.

Choosing media as intermediary between the rhetor and targeted audience is popular in discourse studies focused on legitimation processes (Deephouse and Suchman 2008). Moreover, the *Global Times* comes under the *People's Daily*, which is the CCP's mouthpiece (Gitter and Fang 2018). The degrees to which certain topics are covered by the media serve as assets for discourse scholars to assess and predict the legitimation process, supported by empirical evidence. Hence, the media's role as an intermediary in the legitimation process is well accepted and validated (Foot and Walter 2015; Freedman 2015; Hameiri and Jones 2016; Loke 2016). The significance of the narratives promoted via media and their impact on the public mind are well documented (McCombs 2004). In the twenty-first century, more attention has been paid to persuasive strategic narratives to attract support for foreign policy at home and abroad (Li 2009). The specific attention to narration reflects two hypotheses. First, storytelling is the most natural and persuasive form of communication. Second, individuals and groups construct their identities through narration (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle 2013). Many international relations scholars agreed upon being more cautious, explaining that direct strategic narrative needs to be credible first before being persuasive (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle 2018). International relations theories such as constructivism and poststructuralism also emphasize the adoption of different discourse patterns to formulate national identities, roles, and policies (Bially-Mattern 2005; Hansen 2006; Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle 2013).

In the case of narrative dissemination, media is assigned a couple of roles to play; first, it takes the charge of responding to the public questions while innovating the legitimacy of the relevant issue. Second, media is assigned to adjust, alter, and modify the collective logic, and thus the action (Shiller 2019). Thereby, this study aims to explore the innovative process of legitimation of the BRI through Chinese state-controlled media. Investigating methods of legitimation, this study scrutinizes the collected materials through different lenses of legitimation process and finds some patterns to conceptualize the findings within the field of China studies.

SITUATING THE STUDY

Since the announcement of the BRI, policy experts and international media and scholars have devoted great and constant attention to the different stages of the BRI. In order to situate the research aim, first this study reviews the

existing literature. The literature review mainly intends to evaluate the kind of research that has been carried out with respect to the BRI and its outcomes. This will help this study to narrow down its research question to fill the research gap. A group of scholars attempted to investigate China's intentions behind the BRI (Wang 2016; Leverett and Wu 2017; Rolland 2017), while some focused on the potential implications of the BRI from various perspectives such as present international power structure and system (Cai 2018; Benabdallah 2019). They concluded that the BRI is an attempt to combine China's geo-economic and geopolitical intentions while challenging existing national and other bilateral initiatives. A group of scholars who studied the BRI from the perspectives of the host countries and potential risk with it defined the BRI as "debt trap diplomacy" (Bräutigam 2020; Carmody 2020; Singh 2021). Another group of scholars calculated the cost and benefits for the BRI host countries and China (Hurley, Morris, and Portelance 2018; Malik et al. 2021; Sutherland et al. 2020); the outcome of these studies argued both for and against the BRI as "debt trap diplomacy." Recently, we could also see some BRI literature with country-specific focus such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, as the flagship project under the BRI (Garlick 2018), and from the perspectives of international institutional dynamics and environmental issues (Chan and Pun 2020; Lim, Chen, and Ji 2021). The outcomes of the aforementioned studies comprehensively confirm that the BRI lacks legitimacy.

Consequently, China has also invested in legitimizing the BRI, which has also been reflected in recent academic literature. The existing literature suggests that a certain country's external communication can be in various ways (Rasmussen 2009); however, the language and the medium can be adapted in accordance with targeted audience. For instance, this study focuses on the media discourse of a Chinese tabloid, *Global Times*, which is mainly targeted at the large international English-speaking audience; hence, we could argue the legitimation strategies employed by the Chinese media are also addressed at the large international community.

The previous relevant research to date also concluded that the legitimacy and longevity of the BRI equates with the legitimacy and longevity of the CCP (Clarke 2017), which creates compelling grounds for the relevant Chinese political actors and Chinese state-controlled media to positively contribute to the legitimation of the BRI. BRI researchers have pointed out the uniqueness of the BRI terminology coined and used by the Chinese government officials and the Chinese media (Li 2016). Yang (2022) focused on official rhetoric disseminated by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, while Deng (2021) focused on the process of building the credibility of BRI. Kuik (2021) analyzed the legitimation process of the BRI promoted by the elites, while advancing their authority and interest in South Asian cases (Laos,

Malasia, and Thailand). The outcome of the aforementioned studies, especially focused on BRI legitimation strategies, not only highlights the need for legitimation of the BRI, but also specifies the different strategies used, which are specific to each target country, and the different modalities, such as use of political elites. Malik (2020) argues that China's BRI legitimation strategy can be considered as being of an innovative nature, but is incoherent and limited to answering questions.

The aforementioned literature largely outlines the criticisms which the BRI receives in relation to its legitimacy; however, a gap in literature is still visible as the BRI's legitimacy in a crisis period such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Understanding the BRI's legitimation, especially during a crisis, is particularly significant as, since its launch, the BRI did not meet with an emergency situation such as that of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The highest level of acceptance as "taken for granted" signifies that the there is no need for innovating in narrative of legitimation (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Suchman 1995). The BRI met with this crisis situation when it was still under the different phases of legitimation in different geographies. The gap between expectations of the BRI and its present acceptance, supported by a few completed projects and coupled with the COVID-19 crisis, raises a relevant question of legitimacy which this chapter addresses within the context of the existing theory of legitimation. In order to address the issue, this study strictly focuses on the legitimation process of the BRI through the *Global Times* in English, as it is the largest first and second combined language group, targeted at the wider international community.

This study strictly limits its scope to a few parameters of data collection and data analysis. The data collection parameter is the texts under analysis, which are from Chinese media where the BRI and COVID-19 are mentioned, published in the succeeding three months immediately after announcement of the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. The data analytical parameter strictly followed the different lens of the legitimation process. Therefore, future studies are encouraged to employ different datasets, which can be distinguished by the time span of the study and data collected from other media. Furthermore, the analytical lens can also be differentiated by investigating how the legitimation of the BRI narrative is received by the member countries. In relation to China's narrative dissemination, examining bilateral cases and their comparisons between two bilateral cases would also be beneficial to comprehend if China's legitimation narratives differ according to the targeted audience and how their strengths and weaknesses can be explained.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Prior to the application of the analytical lens of legitimation, it is significant to comprehend what exactly legitimation refers to and how it is employed by political actors and transmitted through the media in their strategic narrative. The strategic narrative refers to the storytelling practices countries deploy by relying on their social identity (including their historical past) in order to create beneficial internal and external perception of their country (Golan, Manor, and Arceneaux 2019). As a part of strategic narrative, legitimation denotes the process through which the political actors legitimize their words and actions (Reyes 2011). From an etymological perspective, the word legitimation originates from the Latin word "legitimus," which signifies lawful. Consequently, legitimation signifies making something or someone legal or legalized. However, in the present practice, the word legitimation is used as a synonym of "justification" (Reyes 2011). The process of legitimation is often employed by political actors by promoting arguments, counterarguments, perspectives, and opinions favorable to the actor, with the aim of obtaining the interlocutor's approval and support (Reyes 2011). As stated by Neumann (2021): "Written texts found in media, organizational documents like strategic plans and other types of texts are always meant for communication and, thus, meaning making" (Kivle, Tveter, and Espedal 2022, 174). Any author, through their word choices in the media texts, embeds with meaning and conveys specific ideological, strategical and political intentions (Baker, Gabrielatos, and McEnery 2013). These word choices are considered as guidance for readers to the authors' worldviews, social codes, and political values, which are conducive to comprehending the actors' values, and thus their actions (Krebs 2015; Kivle, Tveter, and Espedal 2022). Moreover, the coherent stories promoted by the actors tell us about the identity that the actors wish the others to perceive about them (Krebs 2015).

The analytical process focuses on how actors justify their actions and promote discourse to a certain audience (George 2006; 2019; Caldwell 2009; Goddard 2020). Precisely in the domain of international relations, analyzing legitimation involves unpacking "how political actors justify their policy stances before concrete audiences, seeking to secure audiences' assent that their positions are indeed legitimate" (Goddard and Krebs 2015, 67). There are various strategies of legitimation used by social actors to justify the actions. In accordance with this, the approach to examine the legitimation process can be studied through a combination of categories developed by a group of scholars (Wodak, Reisigl, and De Cillia 2009; van Leeuwen 2018; De Fina 2018; Reyes 2011). This study consulted a set of discourse studies (Jackson 2006; van Leeuwen 2007; 2018; De Fina 2018; Reyes 2011) on

key strategies of legitimation and adapted them according to the data under analysis. Drawing on Reyes' study (2011), the following part explains the key strategies (namely rationale, emotions, hypothetical future, voice of experts, and altruism) and the way in which they are adapted in this study.

The theoretical rationalization proposed by Theo van Leeuwen (2007) and developed by Reyes (2011) is regarded as one of the first steps of legitimation process. In this process, the political communication consisted of words and deeds which are representative of the actor's thoughtfulness and well-evaluated nature. In order to showcase the rationalization in legitimation process, the actor tends to use phrases and words to showcase the mental and verbal process of taking the decision (Reyes 2011) in question.

The appeal to invoke and provoke emotions of the targeted audience regarding an issue to create an in-group is common in the process of legitimation (van Leeuwen and Wodak 1999). Precisely in strategic communication, fear is the most used emotion to trigger the reactions of interlocutors, and so fear is employed in the persuasion process (Reyes 2011). In a political discourse, the fear is mostly developed with the demonization of the actor's enemy, whose ethics and actions are depicted negatively. Besides, the actor overtly and covertly shows the relevant parties who constitute threats to the actor's relations with the targeted people (van Leeuwen 2002).

Any social actor tends to evoke various kinds of emotions to legitimize their words and actions. Precisely this approach of legitimation looks for responses from the interlocutors, such as sympathy, understanding, or similar emotions (Reyes 2010). In order to instigate emotions, the actors impose a favorable argument and convince with a perspective or legitimize a position. Functionally, the emotions serve as the bridge between the actor's understanding of reality and behavior. However, the emotions, as one of the elements of legitimation, can potentially distort cognitive understanding of reality (Reyes 2011). In the process of legitimation, the distortion of emotion is carried out by the actor, by instigating an emotion in the targeted audience by associating the same reality with an emotion that serves the actor's interest.

Deriving from commonplaces in the past, actors attempt to create an understanding between the actors and the targeted people, so that the actor can justify why there will also be commonplaces in a hypothetical future. The legitimation is often attempted through a timeframe of common past, present, and future as well (Reyes 2011). In the following, the prominence of Chinese discourses is scrutinized which use a strategic narrative to create a hypothetical future between China and the targeted country. It is noted that political actors tend to emphasize the present situation to take certain decisions for the future and to materialize them through certain actions (Reyes 2011). These decisions, and the respective actions, are likely to be related to a cause which is justified by some occurrence in the past, and as a consequence which might

occur in the future (Reyes 2011). In other words, the cause of the problem, which is being presented, is rooted in the past and, in order to avoid the same problem in the future, certain decisions and actions are legitimized. In this way, the actor and targeted people are claimed to be able to enjoy a successful time in a hypothetical future created in the discourse.

The actors tend to highlight experts' voices in the context of their own communication to authorize their position and proposal. This process of legitimation is known as voice of expert, and it is achieved through an authorization by the experts (van Leeuwen 2007). While producing institutional and official discourse, the actor(s) or the representatives of the actor(s) use this discourse strategy to present themselves as authoritative sources of information (Rojo and van Dijk 1997, 530).

Altruism is a discursive practice where the actors legitimize showing others as the beneficiary of their action (Reyes 2011). If the actions are shown to be done for others, especially for less privileged ones, the innocent, and vulnerable, the justification for their actions tends to be well-perceived by the mass. Altruism, as a discursive strategy, is mainly used to circumvent judgments on actors' behavior while flaunting a particular community as the beneficiary of actors' generosity (Reyes 2011). The actor claims the well-being of the targeted audience as their concern and they do not expect anything in return (Reyes 2011), which gives birth to the idea of the value system of the actor. By projecting an intention of service for the targeted audience, the actor intends to legitimize its actions and words (Kocourek 2017). Therefore, legitimation through altruism helps the actor to highlight the social good over the self-good in front of the targeted audience.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Soon after the COVID-19 virus was declared to be a pandemic on March 11, 2020, China's state-run media started publishing at least two articles daily on average focusing on China's BRI during and after COVID-19. This study collected a total of sixty-two relevant articles of the aforementioned kind, published within the time window of mid-April 2020 to mid-July 2020, which are the texts under analysis for this study. In order to avoid any potential bias, the texts analyzed underwent a two-step selection process in order to be incorporated inside the corpus. The first step involved looking for BRI-related articles on official websites of the *Global Times*. The search bar was used to filter the relevant articles. The second step was to carefully go through the articles in accordance with the research intent of this study. Here two keywords were taken into account: 1) the BRI and 2) COVID-19.

Developing on the original strategies of legitimation, a group of scholars proposed that the discursive study must be flexible, so that a specific study is able to choose its suitable analytical lens in accordance with the nature of the corpus (Wodak, Reisigl, and De Cillia 2009; van Leeuwen 2018; De Fina 2018; Reyes 2011). This study took into consideration other discourse studies (Jackson 2006; van Leeuwen 2007; 2018; De Fina 2018; Reyes 2011) on legitimation and adapted them according to the data under analysis. This study analyzes the discourse of legitimation while focusing on the discursive frames promoted by the actor (Wodak 2018; 2019; 2020). In particular, the examples of the discursive structures and strategies of justifications published by Chinese media are analyzed through systematic functional linguistics tools of legitimation (Reyes 2011).

The mixed-method or patchwork discourse analysis mainly flows through three streams, from distant reading to close reading, manual to automatic analysis, and inductive to deductive analysis (Parks and Peters 2022). Thereby, this study initiated a deductive and qualitative analysis of the collected data to identify themes of the media narrative and organize them according to the analytical framework. While applying the deductive and qualitative analysis of the collected data, this study also detected evidence which can be used to inductively and quantitively argue for other analytical themes. This fully integrated discourse analysis is the most suitable methodological approach for the collected data (Yang 2022) as it combines qualitative, quantitative, manual, and computer-assisted content analysis to reach a conclusion, avoiding any potential biases (Pashakhanlou 2017). This study employed NVivo software to carry out the corpus-driven discourse analysis.

Along with a paradigmatic shift toward poststructuralism, the discursive research investigations are supported by the core idea of poststructuralism, according to which theory is not separate from reality, nor reality is separate from theory (Devetak 2013). Discourse analysis through the lens of legitimation, especially in a crisis, allows us to contextualize legitimation processes within ongoing world affairs. Such an approach fundamentally shows us the thematic dimensions selected by the actor, in order to understand the actor's emphasis during a crisis. This also allows us to test in detail the coherence of the discourse inside and outside of a crisis. The aim of this approach is to map out the content of the texts under analysis and assign them to the specific discourse strategies under legitimation process (Wodak 2020; 2021). The key analytical concept of legitimation process in discourse studies tends to summarize the texts while highlighting the important information relevant to address the research questions (van Dijk 1992). In accordance with the characteristics of the strategies employed by the actor, the topic is characterized and interpreted within the legitimation framework. The in-depth analysis of the legitimation process analyzes the respective text to identify

the arguments and the construction of strategic narrative to legitimize toward the targeted audience.

FINDINGS

Deductive Findings

This qualitative and deductive part scrutinized the legitimation process according to the aforementioned analytical lens and contextualized legitimation categories. The empirical findings that are listed in the following reflect the legitimation strategies of the BRI in the first three months of the COVID-19 pandemic. Each type of legitimation strategy was detected in the corpus, and they have been discussed further within the context. The first part of the empirical findings led the study to the second part of the findings, which is inductive in nature.

Emotions

Telling true, vivid, and individual emotional stories in a familiar way to foreigners creates a positive image of China (Yang and Pan 2021). This study empirically validates the argument according to which China, in accordance with the targeted audience, employs customized stories to have a better communication effect. The use of words and phrases such as "regrettably undermine humanity's effort to end the pandemic," "enormous sacrifices," "solidarity" (Examples 1, 2, and 3), and other token of emotions in Chinese media can be considered to be used to provoke emotions of the readers.

Fear is one of the most exploited emotions in the process of legitimation. Bauman defines the attempts of provoking fear in legitimation as a liquid fear, which is derivative of actors' interiorization, which is constituted of "a vision of the world that includes insecurity and vulnerability" (Bauman 2006, 3). Most importantly, this fear is instigated, "even in the absence of a genuine threat" (Bauman 2006, 3). This kind of fear is expected to produce a reaction from the targeted audience, to ensure their protection against the threats (Hewer 2022), which, as a result, attempts to legitimize the actor's position. Such derivative fear is instrumentalized by the actors in multiple ways to legitimize their words and actions and to create a favorable discursive environment. The elements of fear, as examples of China's BRI legitimation process during COVID-19 pandemic, are illustrated in the following.

The fear is used by the actor to legitimize the actor's actions and deeds. In this case (Examples 4 and 5), the actor tends to create an imaginary situation to instigate fear in the targeted audience by speculations, drawing on extreme

examples without mentioning detailed facts and their origin (Fairclough 2003). For instance, the way China is perceived by some countries is tagged as "worrisome" (Example 4), which is to instigate a fear of misjudgment on China.

Rationality

Rationality, as a legitimation process, is an attempt to showcase the idea that the process of actions and the decisions for the relevant actions have been taken after thoughtful evaluations. The examples presented here attempt to depict China's thoughtful consideration of the others (rest of the world) during the COVID-19 crisis, and that consequently China provided a solution in the form of the BRI—an argument which rationalizes the existence of the BRI.

The actor employs rationality as a social construct between the actor and the targeted audience in order to make a great sense of the present situation for the community (Examples 6 and 7). In this case, the actor justifies its position as the right side, and invites the targeted audience to be on the right side of the history. The text under analysis also showcases this kind of legitimation strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hypothetical Future

In order to legitimize the actor, their words and actions often related to two major domains: "cause" (something from the past) and "consequence" (something to be avoided in the future). Under this section of the legitimation process, the hypothetical future proposed by the actor is projected as the consequence, only if the other party agrees with the actor. Thus, the actor projects two potential future situations: 1) the bright future if the targeted audience accepts the BRI and 2) remaining in the weakness of the past without accepting the potential solution which is the BRI.

For instance, we could see that the "cause" from the past is highlighted as "COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the world's weakness in disease prevention."[3] Consequently, the BRI has been re-legitimized, in relation to COVID-19 pandemic, as the potential solution to prevent a repeat of similar situations. Moreover, the targeted country-specific articles are included. These portray how the targeted country's future is entwined with China's and refer to Xi's vision of building a shared future. Country-specific articles arguing on the basis of a shared bright future through bilateral and multilateral relationships are published covering almost the entire world (Examples 8 and 9). Furthermore, the proposed future of China has been described as "bright" (Example 9). Among the examples from the corpus that showcase China's use

of hypothetical future as a legitimation process, the hypothetical future is also created to show the benefits of the BRI projects in case they are approved by the targeted country's government, which is the targeted public entitled to receive financial support.

This sentence (Example 10) exemplifies the way in which political actors create hypothetical futures through their linguistic choices to legitimize their actions. Consequently, the future is articulated as a desirable situation for the targeted audience (figure 5.1). However, when the future is portrayed as desirable for the targeted audience, what mostly remains covert is the actor's interest in playing a significant ideological role as the dominant political actor and in exercising power and control over the future situation (Dunmire 2007, 19).

Voice of Experts

Different expert sources are used in journalistic production to provide the context, legitimize a certain narrative, and analyze the discourse (Conrad 1999). Besides these, popular expert sources contribute to the authority of a certain narrative, credibility, and legitimacy (Coleman 1997), especially in controversial issues such as geopolitics. In relation to journalistic production, expert sources are one of the essential factors (Albaek, Christiansen, and Togeby 2003). Chinese leaders from both the past and present, university professors, and subject matter experts are mentioned in the Chinese strategic communication to legitimize their position mainly in two sectors.

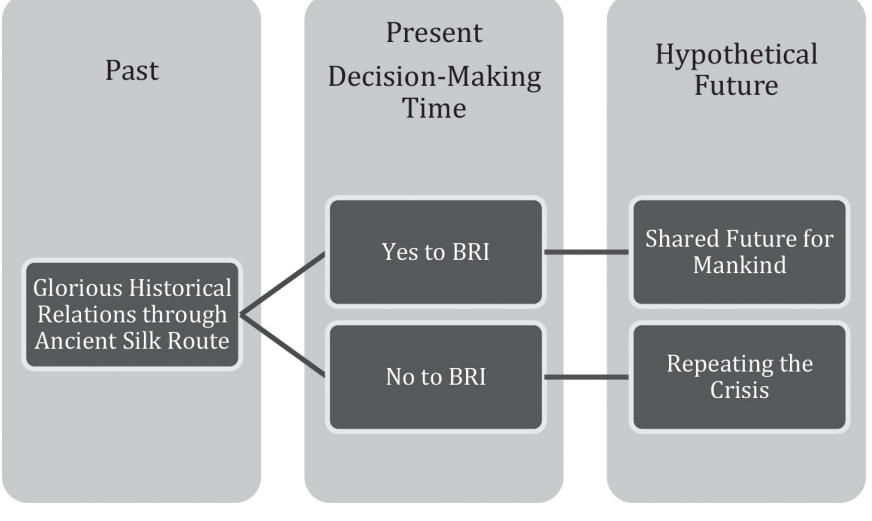

Figure 5.1. Visual Representation of the Hypothetical Future in BRI Narrative

a. In order to legitimize the BRI's benefits in relation to international affairs, an expert of international affairs is quoted (Examples 11 and 12).
b. In order to legitimize the BRI's benefits during the COVID-19 pandemic through traditional Chinese medicine, a few top-level virologists are quoted (Examples 13 and 14).

Altruism

This study also confirms the tendency of deploying altruism as the legitimation process of the BRI during COVID-19 pandemic, as there are plenty of the examples across the corpus. The prominence of altruism strategy in relation to legitimizing the BRI during the COVID-19 period shows that the Chinese side is highly aware of its own hard work (Example 15). Moreover, Chinese media argues that China's benevolent gesture of altruism is wrongly interpreted by the international media. For instance, at the initial stage of COVID-19, when the world faced a shortage of surgical masks, China supplied the masks (Examples 16 and 17). The situation was interpreted as mask diplomacy by the international media, whereas Chinese media has shown it as China's benevolent gesture and criticized international media of being "ungrateful."

Inductive Findings

While examining the corpus deductively in accordance with the analytical lens discussed earlier, this study also detects empirical evidence which conforms with existing literature, which is discussed subsequently.

Identity

The importance of identity political discourse in international relations debates was introduced in 1990s by a group of researchers (Campbell 1992; Doty 1993; Neumann 1996). They pointed out the flexible nature of identity in the process of legitimation, which is adjusted according to the targeted audience. According to poststructuralist theories, the whole world and its objects are constructed through the discursive formations of the actors and their identities, hence the knowledge about the individuals' and states' behavior can be examined through analyzing the construction of their own identity discourse (Hansen 2006, 18).

Building on the actor's own discourse of identity, the actor creates its own definition of certain situations and practices, interprets incoming messages, and expects other behaviors (Examples 18, 19, and 20). Hence, through production and reproduction of identity, the actors co-conceive the world, the

state, and their interests. As the co-constitution of identity and the foreign policy discourse is claimed (Campbell 1992), this section demonstrates how Chinese identity enables and is enabled both 1) by China's strategic narrative in the legitimation process and 2) by Chinese state-controlled media respectively. This work can be considered as an attempt to look for China's strategic narrative influenced by the Chinese identity which foreigners are expected to accept, understand, and approve. This section is guided by an innate understanding of China's national identity and their course of action as legitimized in their strategic narrative of the BRI. An identity is performed and enacted in strategic narrative (Butler 1997; Epstein, Lindemann, and Sending 2018), which is instrumental to comprehend the projected identity (Tilly 1979; Haugevik and Sending 2020).

Commonplaces

In this strategy, the legitimation is achieved through rhetoric, where the actors try to show themselves as sharing the same or similar values so that the core message of the communication can be designed to achieve a common victory (Weldes 1993, 117–18). The similar idea has been developed by Jackson (2006, 28–29), and titled as "rhetorical commonplaces" which are employed in the strategic narratives of the "language of legitimation" (29). Projecting the actor's proposal as a continuation of something from the past is a significant part of legitimation by the actors, attempting to "establish . . . and cultivate" (Weber 1947, 325) a strong belief in their targeted audience. Through this kind of legitimation strategy, the actors attempt to instill two main beliefs in the targeted audience's mind. First, the actor's present actions were/are legitimate, and second, it is necessary to reclaim the glorious common past by continuation of the old practice. Thus, this part of legitimation addresses the targeted audience's questions such as "why should we do this" or "why should we do this in this way." In the process of persuasive talk, we could detect the actor's promotion of rhetorical commonplaces in its wider legitimation strategy.

The revisiting of the glorious past, especially during a crisis, is a very compelling tool to construct a comparative image between dark or hard times and well-to-do or happy times to re-legitimize the BRI's role during and post-COVID-19 crisis (Wodak, Reisigl, and De Cillia 2009). The glorious past of China exporting its technology of making paper, gunpower, printing, and the compass are recalled and associated with the BRI's future as a progress of human civilization. The phrases such as "historical relationship," "helped one another in times of adversity," "progress of human civilization," and "back to ancient times" are found across the corpus (Examples 21, 22, 23, and 24). This is an attempt to imbue the actor's "practical aims" with a

"normative degree" (Berger and Luckmann 1966, 111). The foundation of the knowledge about the actor's values and norms is important to disseminate in the targeted audience, so that their *raison d'etre* is uncontested and they can construct the actor's identity. As in this case, the BRI, which is projected as the tool to reclaim the golden past in the future, becomes important as a part of the legitimation process.

Delegitimation

Besides direct arguments to legitimize actors' words and actions, the actors also produce judgments and discrediting claims about their potential competitors, in order to negotiate upon the available options for the targeted audience (Jenkins 2006; Rymes and Leone 2014). This process of delegitimizing others, as a result, is a part of legitimation, where the actors employ compelling narrative to delegitimize potential competitors and challenges (Ross and Rivers 2018). Delegitimation, as part of a self-legitimation, supports the construction and justification of a specific narrative (Wodak, Reisigl, and De Cillia 2009) by involving and legitimizing itself in contrast to other relevant parties. This section focuses on delegitimation strategies aimed at reinforcing the BRI's legitimacy in the partner countries. Having subjected the text under analysis to an inductive approach (Wodak, Reisigl, and De Cillia 2009; van Leeuwen 2018), this study found the following delegitimation strategies.

Criminalization is a mode of negative representation of the others as criminal, while stressing the words and actions of the opponent (Wodak, Reisigl, and De Cillia 2009). This study found criminalization strategies employed against West-sphere countries, such as "ill-intentioned Westerners maliciously,"[1] "West's pandemic falsehoods debunked,"[1] etc. (Examples 25 and 26).

Minimization, as the second sub-category of delegitimation, is employed inversely to criminalization. Criminalization intends to highlight and exaggerate the negativity of the opponent, whereas minimization intends to portray the opponent as pointless and ridiculous. Criminalization and minimization are often employed complementarily to each other in order to strengthen actors' arguments. For instance, according to the Chinese perspective, the West blamed China for the COVID-19 crisis "to justify the West's inability to fight the pandemic,"[1] hence "[t]here have also been ridiculously [sic] claims for compensation from China."[1]

Delegitimation through comparison (Example 27) is employed by the actor directly comparing itself with its opponent to highlight its benevolence in front of the targeted audience. Such strategies are also amply found in the corpus. Here, the Chinese perspectives on Chinese and Western core

values are directly compared in order to legitimize the BRI by delegitimizing Western values.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has addressed the question of how Chinese media sought to rhetorically legitimize the BRI to the international community in the initial stage of COVID-19 pandemic. Even though the legitimation process of the BRI has been studied by many researchers through different datasets, as of today China's initial BRI narrative in response to an unprecedented situation such as COVID-19 pandemic has not been the focus of extensive research. This is the gap in the literature which the study detected. Theoretically, this study laid its foundation on the poststructuralist concept of the narratives as a reflection of the perceived reality. In order to increase the acceptability of the disseminated narrative, the actor tends to legitimize its words and actions. In order to scrutinize the process and different steps of legitimation of the collected data, this study followed the analytical lens proposed by Reyes (2011).

By understanding the inductive findings with the relevant literature, this study argues that the BRI legitimation narrative portrays China's own perceived identity as a cornerstone of its BRI legitimation approach for the targeted audience. Beside the deductive findings, having gone through the empirical evidence, the study concludes that the corpus also consists of three other legitimation practices: 1) creating a credible image, 2) creating commonplaces, and 3) delegitimizing potential competitors. The BRI legitimation process starts with an identity creation process, where China's civilization identity as a modern, powerful, and influential state is emphasized. Following the creation of China's identity, the study took note of the attempts of creating a common identity which is used to create commonplaces. For instance, China's civilization has been equated with that of Egypt and Greece to invite consensus and understanding of the BRI, especially during COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the nature of the texts under analysis, the BRI narrative typically focuses on China's prevention and control measures, and China's aid to some BRI member countries as a token of cooperation. On the other hand, Chinese media delegitimized a few parties from whom China felt opposition. The data show that China criticized Australia, the European Union, the United States, etc.—countries who asked for an investigation to the origin of the virus—while reporting that China-friendly countries such as Greece and Pakistan received aids and strengthened China's confidence in them.

The relevant literature highlighted the fact that since its announcement, the BRI has been receiving many criticisms and questions in relation to its feasibility and its sustainability (Callahan 2016). The COVID-19 pandemic, which

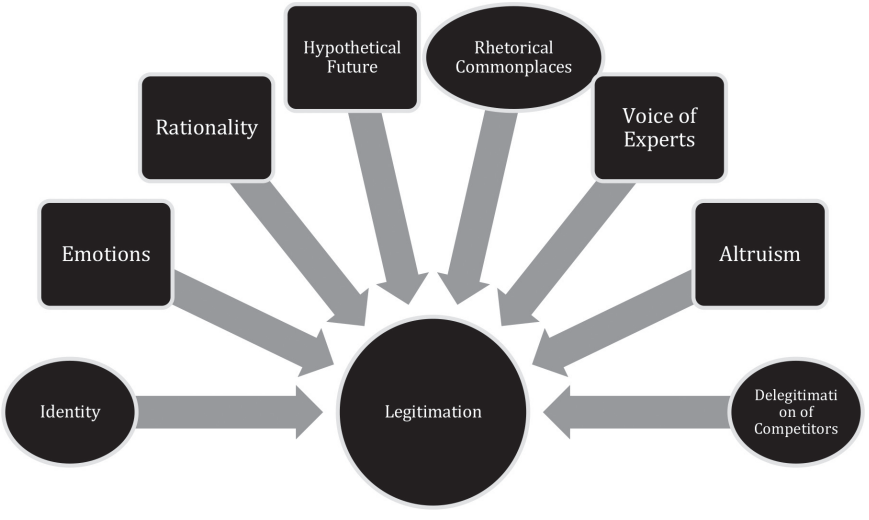

Figure 5.2. A Mind Map of Legitimation Strategies

put the entire world in turbulence, also amplified the uncertainty of the BRI projects. Although one group of scholars acknowledged a multidimensional BRI and its innovations on all institutional levels at a grand scale (Callahan 2016), another group thought that China had misplaced its focus away from the BRI's legitimation process (Malik 2020). The empirical evidence found in the corpus proves that the focus on the legitimation process is very prominent, hence this study argues that the COVID-19 crisis brought China's focus back on to the BRI legitimation process. The findings of the study confirm that the legitimation strategies are incoherent and self-contradictory at times, for instance BRI is legitimized as a way of promoting acceptance of the diversity of political structures, while bluntly criticizing the West, accusing Western foreign relations to be about power, conquest, and submission. On the contrary, the findings also show that the legitimation strategies of BRI are not limited to answering questions, but also extended to rationalize China's viewpoint through various ways, such as a hypothetical future. The empirical evidence also indicates that the upgrading and modifications of the BRI narrative can be formulated as follows: The response to the sacrifice and pain caused by COVID-19 is the BRI, which will lead the member countries to a bright future.

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NOTE

1. Here and after, examples are in the Appendix B.

Chapter 6

Narrating the BRI in Europe

Examining Agency and Positioning in the German Logistics Sector

Connor Malloy and Theo Westphal

INTRODUCTION

The term *die Seidenstraße(n)*, or Silk Road(s), was first coined in 1877 by Ferdinand von Richthofen, the German explorer and geographer, and has come to describe the network of trading routes that carried goods, people, and ideas across Eurasia from approximately the second century BCE to the eighteenth century CE. Since then, the notion of the Silk Road(s) has been employed to frame all sorts of projects ranging from trans-Eurasian railways and highways to diplomatic missions, artistic, musical, and cultural ensembles, national identities, illicit drug markets, and of course, most recently, infrastructure development projects. Recognizing this, whether we refer to an ancient or contemporary Silk Road, we must understand it first and foremost as a narrative invention used to frame and give coherence to an otherwise complex, scattered assemblage of actors, events, and processes (Chin 2013, 194). Accordingly, from this perspective, its application is always shaped by, and therefore reflective of, particularistic political interests and ambitions (Haines 2020). The present chapter is concerned with the most recent reinvention of the Silk Road which is occurring largely via China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The BRI is exceptional for several reasons, including, but not limited to, its global scope and scale, an underlying global demand for key infrastructure (Ruiz-Nuñez and Wei 2015), as well as the background context of China's geopolitical rise and the strategic influence China is gaining through BRI projects (Jakimów 2019; Gong 2019). Although BRI-linked

funding and projects are not exclusive to Chinese companies or governments, China acts as the main driver of the BRI, and this is a key characteristic shaping how other nations and actors perceive the so-called New Silk Road (Turcsanyi and Kachlikova 2020; Callahan 2016).

Since its unveiling in 2013, a flurry of scholarly work drawing on insights from geography, international relations, economics, and history, among others, has bolstered a highly engaged discourse on the BRI, which contributes to understanding the BRI's characteristics, its potential implications for China and the world, and how the Chinese government is pursuing its interests through the BRI (Amighini 2018; Mayer 2018; Smith 2018; Liu and Dunford 2016; Jakimów 2019; Garlick 2020; Hughes 2019; Gong 2019). Considering the decidedly macro implications of the BRI, the existing literature tends to analyze the BRI as a geopolitical process and focuses its analyses on the nation-state and regional level (Garlick 2020, chapter 5). However, the BRI's overt references to the ancient "Silk Roads," coupled with its claims to usher in a contemporary, twenty-first-century Silk Road, continue to draw attention to its narrative elements as well as how these are contested through counter-narratives and undermined by empirical research. Accordingly, narrative research on the BRI maintains this macro perspective, drawing on the imaginary of an historical trans-Eurasian Silk Road, recent domestic and foreign policy initiatives, and China's perception of itself to answer how the *official* narrative and counter-narratives are framed (Mayer 2018; Liu and Dunford 2016; Jessop and Sum 2018). While analysis at the level of nation-states is crucial for our understanding of the BRI and its geopolitical implications, what is largely absent in this literature is how narratives play out internationally at the sub-state level.

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After nearly a decade, the BRI is increasingly manifest in projects around the world and there is a growing interest in examining *how* the BRI is being operationalized and experienced locally. From this "ground up" perspective, Gustavo Oliveira et al. (2020, 1) argue that rather than a coherent, strategic initiative, the BRI is better understood as a "*relational, contested process*—a bundle of intertwined discourses, policies, and projects that sometimes align but are sometimes contradictory." Focusing specifically on regional, strategic interests in China, Jinghan Zeng (2019) and Dylan Loh (2019) also suggest that the BRI is indeed far from a consistent narrative, let alone a strategy, but rather the product of competition between actors jockeying to have their interests (and their narrative) prioritized and realized. Focusing on Pakistan, an important BRI country, Chad Haines (2020) too highlights how the BRI's infrastructure projects produce contradicting narratives of locality embedded in regional political and economic interests.

Through focusing on specific countries or locales where BRI projects are being implemented and the narrative operationalized, the growing literature

on BRI experiences draws attention to key social, economic, and political elements shaping the way the BRI is developing, both as an economic development initiative and a narrative, that are not observable at the level of nation-states. Specifically, we are able to see which actors are involved in advancing projects and how they navigate the contexts in which they operate. Furthermore, although this literature addresses specific cases, what is at issue is the interplay between different scales of politics, economics, and identity, how broader global and regional processes are interpreted and implemented on the ground. The idiosyncrasies and contradictions this "ground up" perspective reveals about the BRI's framing and implementation highlight that bottom-up perspectives of the BRI are necessary to inform a more nuanced understanding of the BRI as a whole.

Building on this increasingly relevant approach to the BRI, this chapter examines how the New Silk Road narrative is being engaged by sub-national actors in Germany's logistics sector. Over the past decade there has been a tremendous increase in the amount of rail freight traffic traveling between Chinese cities and Western Europe, with Germany acting as a key node in the European network. The idea to establish regular freight lines between Europe and Asia is by no means a recent proposition—the first "Silk Road" rail project traces back to the nineteenth century, when the Silk Road phrase was first coined, and throughout the twentieth century efforts were also made to develop a network connecting European countries with China and Central Asia via the Trans-Siberian Railway. However, it was in 2011 that the desire to connect Europe and China with a viable logistics route was given a boost when Deutsche Bahn, the national railway company of Germany, together with BMW initiated a regular rail freight shipment to China. Since then, the number of shipments rose from a few dozen trains in 2011 to approximately 12,400 in 2020, and now accounts for approximately 5 to 6 percent of Europe's economic transport capacity (Lasserre, Huang, and Mottet 2020). Similarly, between China and Europe there are now at least 108 cities included in the network. Indeed, this growth has been driven largely by the BRI, especially thanks to drastically reduced tariffs making rail transport competitive with ocean freight (Baniya, Rocha, and Ruta 2019). Thus, the China-EU rail network has become a key symbol of the New Silk Road, despite predating the BRI, thanks to its clear allusion to the imagined historical version, but also because its rapid expansion served and continues to serve as an ideal storyline to promote the BRI as a success.

Despite Germany's historical and current role in the China-EU rail network, the German Federal Government is not among the 147 countries who have signed memorandums of understanding with China in relation to the BRI. Although Germany ushered in a new government in 2021, the official stance toward the BRI remains unchanged from the previous German Federal

Government's position, which was to refrain joining on the basis of a lack of transparency in the process by which projects are awarded to bidding companies (Bundestag 2020). Accordingly, the BRI is not present in Germany in the same way that it is in Southeast Asian or Central Asian countries, for example, in the form of tangible infrastructure projects. Instead, the BRI's presence is felt in the way it is driving trade flows and the opportunities it presents for the German economy, as well as a certain apprehension relating to a growing reliance on trade with China (Turcsanyi and Kachlikova 2020). Below the nation-state level, firms in Germany's logistics sector and municipalities have taken a much more practical, if not positive approach to the BRI. This is clear in the extent to which the New Silk Road and slight variations of the theme have been integrated into the logistics sector. For example, the Port of Hamburg refers to itself as a "Gateway to the New Silk Road," Contargo, a major logistics company in Germany, refers to specific terminals "connecting to the Silk Road," and even the Deutsche Bahn AG, Germany's state-owned national railway company, refers to its routes to China as part of the "New Silk Road." This contrast between the state's stance on the BRI and logistics companies' self-promoted involvement in and promotion of the BRI is an important tension that informs the way in which the BRI narrative is framed in the German logistics sector.

In many ways German logistics firms' use of the New Silk Road narrative reflects China's presentation of the BRI as an economic "win-win" opportunity for the international community, even as a necessity if logistics firms wish to remain competitive. However, rather than simply reproducing China's BRI narrative, we argue that the engagements made by local actors reflect a reworking of dominant narratives, including counter-narratives, according to their interests and the context in which they take place. Drawing on qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews with five experts from the German industry and local government as well as relevant documents, this chapter addresses some of the ways in which actors in Germany's logistics sector exercise agency in relation to the New Silk Road and link these engagements to specific local interests and contexts. This highlights how the New Silk Road narrative can be embedded and operationalized beyond the dominant narratives, and therefore used to frame other types of regional engagement and initiatives. Furthermore, we argue that this process can contribute to de-centering the narrative weight of the Silk Road away from China to reflect other imaginaries that are more closely embedded in the contexts in which they take place. Thus, we regard the New Silk Road as a fragmented, polyphonic grand narrative within which regional and local narratives play out, which draw on but also pull away from this broader narrative. In doing so, these locally embedded narratives, and the initiatives that they frame, contribute to shaping broader, more dominant narratives.

POSITIONING AND SILK ROAD NARRATIVES

Narratives are understood as structures that give meaning to events and actions, either real or imaginary (Patterson and Monroe 1998). For actors, narratives offer signposts for appropriate, relevant actions and provide information about the context in which these actions are taking place (Loh 2019). A term often used interchangeably with narrative is discourse, which bears a slight, yet significant difference. Following Margaret Wetherell and Jonathan Potter (1992, 90), discourses are understood as interpretive frameworks that provide individuals and groups with linguistic and ideational resources to construct reality (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002). While discourses may be deeply entrenched in power structures, they are nonetheless regarded here as more linguistically flexible than narrative. Accordingly, the way in which narratives give coherence and meaning to stories is by linking them with discursive and social contexts. Therefore, this distinction between discourse and narrative is necessary to highlight in order to examine with greater clarity the ways in which narratives are embedded in discursive and social contexts (De Fina and Georgakopoulou 2015), as well as the ways in which narratives reflect an interplay between "little-d" discourses, such as every day, immediate experiences, and "big-D" discourses, which involve contexts outside of a story's specific events and chronology (Van De Mieroop, Clifton, and Schnurr 2022).

Another important distinction, which is often glossed over, is that between narratives and stories. Indeed, Xi Jinping's famous call to "tell the China story well" is often cited to highlight the ways in which the Chinese Communist Party is working hard to develop narratives that advance its interests (Brown 2020). According to David Boje (2001), stories are mere tellings of chronology, while narratives are constructed after these events and add coherence. From this perspective, stories underpin narratives, and narratives are what give meaning and sense to stories. However, in the case of the BRI, we can also see that master narratives can be directed towards the future by leveraging the past (Mayer 2018). Moreover, in his research on Chinese sub-state actors, Loh (2019) highlights how strategic narrating can play an important role in determining which companies and governments receive BRI projects. In this case, actors position themselves within the official BRI narrative, yet as they are integrated into the BRI through receiving loans and implementing projects, their proposed narratives contribute to filling in and reproducing the official narrative. From the perspective of counter-narratives, skepticism about the BRI as a means for advancing China's global interests frames the discourse around proposals for new projects. Therefore, narratives can also

precede events by anticipating and configuring them into a predicted context, albeit from the perspective of the present.

Successful narratives tend to be those that offer acceptable explanations for events and entail a dynamic, strategic quality that bears on future action (Fenton and Langley 2011; Loh 2019). However, inasmuch as one can follow a certain narrative, one may also opt-out, resist, or subvert the meaning it advances (Bamberg and Andrews 2004). How actors respond to and reproduce narratives is a question of agency as expressed through positioning. The latter is understood here as a construct used to examine how humans make sense of themselves, certain contexts, and perceive their relationship to narratives. As a rule, positions are "situated achievements, which do not sum up to a coherent self" (Depperman 2015, 370). A structuralist view of positioning suggests that actors tend to choose between one narrative and another (i.e., a master versus counter-narrative), in which case it is through choosing available narratives that actors can enact their agency. However, poststructuralist scholarship emphasizes identities as constructed through the negotiation between the self and other (Bucholtz and Hall 2005; Amadasi 2014). In this case, positioning is a performative, negotiated action, which requires agency. Here, agency is not simply about subscribing to a position, but evaluating and distinguishing one's role in an ideational landscape. Accordingly, this view opens up the possibility to regard narrative and discursive positions as "subject to participants' construction and perspectival interpretation" (Deppermann 2015, 370).

The performative aspect of positioning is also important in the case of the Silk Road narrative in Germany, as logistics firms' advertising, inauguration ceremonies, and ways of talking about the New Silk Road and BRI are publicly oriented activities directed at multiple audiences. Therefore, this approach to positioning within narratives is particularly useful in addressing how new narratives can emerge and develop from the ground-up by highlighting how actors construct new discursive resources based on local conditions and leveraging more dominant narratives. In recognizing that discursive actions are directed toward audiences, it is therefore also necessary to take into account who the intended audiences are and what the power relationship is between narrator and audience. Placing emphasis on positioning as a negotiated discursive act allows narrative analysis to move past dichotomous framings, like master and counter-narratives, to examine how individuals draw on or resist narratives as strategic actors, and in doing so, contribute to reproducing and transforming existing narratives as well as developing new ones.

Michael Bamberg (1997, 337) offers a framework, which is further developed by Gabriele Lucius-Hoene and Arnulf Deppermann (2004; Deppermann 2013) to analyze positioning according to three separate levels,

each reflecting different dynamics involved in narration. The first (*level 1*) relates to who the characters are and how they are "positioned in relation to one another within the reported events" as expressed by the narrator. Lucius-Hoene and Deppermann (2004) refine this further by noting that at this level, the characters must be recognized as animated through the narrator's voice, and that their role(s) are strategically included by the narrator from their current perspective. As is the case for each level, linguistic analysis is central to uncovering positioning cues relating to certain contextual dynamics and pleas to rationales that may justify actions. At this level we are interested in identifying which characters are the agents driving action and how the agent(s)'s role(s) is related to certain processes or outcomes. Conversely, it is also possible to identify passive characters and examine what their position does or does not contribute to processes and events. Of equal importance to what the characters are doing is who they are, according to the narrator. Here, we are especially conscious of how "China" is perceived in relation to the BRI, whether as a cohesive entity or as a collection of actors with their own interests, for example.

The second level (*level 2*) deals with the relationship between the speaker/narrator and the audience, and how this relationship is presented. This level, therefore, attends to how the relationship between narrator and audience may bear influence on a narrative's structure and the presence of certain linguistic cues or themes. For example, if the narrator and audience are part of the same group or organization, then certain values and codes are mutually understandable. Alternatively, the narrator may be trying to explain or excuse something, suspecting that the audience is opposed to or unsure of elements within the narrative. It is also the case that narrators can be aware of multiple audiences who may hold differing and perhaps even conflicting views. Thus, narrators may opt to address a key group directly or present a strategically rounded narrative that includes or at least avoids aggravating different perspectives. Again, Deppermann (2013) refines Bamberg's initial framework by highlighting that the narrator's message to the audience must be understood as coming from a position that warrants narrating, such as undertaking actions that will benefit the economy, in the case of German logistics companies.

The final level (*level 3*) asks "how do narrators position themselves to themselves?" Here, Bamberg cautions against assuming the way individuals position themselves will hold in different contexts. However, we may also recognize how these positions may be indirectly set against broader contexts and "big-D" discourses. Particularly in the case of the present topic, dominant narratives are significant in shaping actors' positioning in relation to the BRI, even when they are not alluded to or referenced directly.

This framework is closely linked to Bamberg's work on *small stories* (e.g., Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008), which he and his colleagues refer to as a research paradigm that aims to contribute to narrative theory by focusing on individuals' reflections on lived experiences through conversations and other narrative activities, which are generally overlooked by dominant narrative research methodologies. According to Alexandra Georgakopoulou (2017, 267), small stories, per se, include those "that present fragmentation and open-endedness of tellings, exceeding the confines of a single speech event and resisting a neat categorization of beginning—middle—end. They are invariably heavily co-constructed, rendering the sole teller's story ownership problematic." Although the present chapter is focused on narrative production at the level of enterprises rather than individuals, it is still concerned with the same tensions highlighted by a small stories approach, which are namely fragmentation, open-endedness, and opaque narrative ownership, as well as the dynamics of narrative positioning versus master and counter-narratives.

NARRATING AND RE-NARRATING THE SILK ROADS

Applying this theoretical framework to the study of the New Silk Road and BRI implies that we need to approach them as narratives. Importantly, there is not a single objective narrative surrounding the New Silk Road and BRI that everyone subscribes to, but rather a multiplicity of different narratives. China, as the initiator and main supporter of these initiatives, provides the "master" or "hegemonic" narrative that dominates the discourse, framing the initiatives in overwhelmingly positive terms. Carolijn van Noort (2022, 32–43) disentangles China's infrastructure narrative by highlighting its spatial, temporal, political, economic, technological, and perceptual modalities. Spatially, China highlights connectivity with other partners' infrastructure projects. Temporally, the master narrative includes reference to "historical infrastructure, contemporary needs, and future aspirations" (van Noort 2022, 34). Politically, the narrative focuses on China's alleged non-interference principle. Economically, China concentrates on how Silk Road infrastructures can contribute to deepen economic ties between involved countries and industries. The technological modality of China's infrastructure narrative revolves around its desire to become a standard setter. And, finally, in terms of perceptions, the Chinese side selectively nurtures those of win-win cooperation and silences those of a win-lose relationship. The latter would be part and parcel of "counter-narratives" that paint a much more negative picture, highlighting problems in the initiatives and using this as another ingredient to reinforce the "China threat" perception. In this section, we use relevant sources to deconstruct China's dominant narrative surrounding the initiatives

to provide the necessary analytical yardstick against which the agency of German logistics companies can be assessed in the remainder of the article.

According to China's dominant narrative (see Karmakar, this volume, for an analysis of how Chinese official media tried to legitimize the BRI during the initial stage of COVID-19), the BRI, which is etymologically rooted in the historical notion of the "Ancient Silk Road" (Dong 2019), consists of the "Silk Road Economic Belt" and the "21st Century Maritime Silk Road," which were proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping in two speeches in Kazakhstan and Indonesia in 2013. While the Silk Road Economic Belt is focused on connecting China over land with other regions of Eurasia, the Maritime Silk Road is focused on connecting China over sea with Southeast Asia, Africa, and Europe (Xu and Wang 2019). As mentioned, the BRI is quite comprehensive in scope, ranging hierarchically from clearly most important economic exchanges, including infrastructure projects, such as railway, motorway, and port construction, several international economic corridors, and trade agreements, to political, educational, and cultural exchanges, and touching upon China's energy, security, political, and economic interests (Alon, Zhang, and Lattemann 2018; Amighini 2018; Arduino 2018).

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Because of its vast scope, it is important to distinguish between global BRI, regional BRI, and bilateral BRI narratives. Generally, BRI architects portray the initiative as being based on several basic principles, general ideas, and an overarching global vision, which are adapted to each regional context, and then implemented on the bilateral level between Chinese state and non-state actors and respective recipient countries' agents (Vangeli 2018, 64–65). In terms of basic principles, Chinese observers highlight "extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits" (Wang and Jiang 2019a, 111), and in terms of general ideas, they highlight the BRI's role for 1) deepening the Chinese reform process; 2) pursuing principles of amity, sincerity, mutual benefit, and inclusiveness; 3) actively participating in regional cooperation; and 4) realizing economic complementarities between China and other countries (Wang and Jiang 2019b, 123–25). Two official documents are of particular importance here (i.e., the "Vision and actions on jointly building (sic) Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road" [Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the People's Republic of China 2015], and the "Vision for maritime cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative" [State Council 2017]). These documents propagate the so-called Silk Road Spirit and general principles of the BRI, such as that it is fully based on the UN Charter, the "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence," promoting peace and cooperation, inclusiveness (i.e., being open to all countries, tolerance among civilizations, respecting different development models, following market operation principles, and the goal of mutual benefit and mutual learning ([Ministry of

Foreign Affairs, the People's Republic of China 2015; State Council 2017; see also Chan 2018, 7–8]).

The BRI is Xi Jinping's personal signature foreign policy innovation which, alongside the "Community with a Shared Future for Mankind" (*ren-lei mingyun gongtongti*) narrative, has even been enshrined in the Chinese constitution (Garrick and Chang Bennett 2018; Hu and Li 2018). Hence, it is often argued that there is no exit strategy out of the BRI and that it is simply "there to stay" or "too big to fail" (Vangeli 2018, 68). Other countries' relationship to the BRI can be conceptualized as lying on a continuum, ranging from opposition through formally joining the initiative with varying degrees of commitment (including the possibility of some participants exiting the initiative), to complete integration (Harnisch, Godehardt, and Hansel 2018, 318; Vangeli 2018, 69).

This being said, recent research questions the emerging narrative of the Chinese central government's unimpeded ability to enforce its interests through such a large-scale initiative in a straightforward top-down manner (e.g., Zeng 2017; 2019; Jones and Zeng 2019). Reality is far more complex, and while the agency of international actors (most importantly BRI recipient countries' governments and their domestic politics) has already been mentioned, also within China a multitude of different actors needs to be taken into account. The authoritarian nature of Chinese politics should not distract from the fact that foreign policy making has become increasingly complex in the reform era, with various actors, such as bureaucracies, local government agencies, or the business sector (including financial institutions, energy companies, and other companies), all trying to have their voices heard and their interests promoted in the process (Jones 2017).

At the global level, what is particularly important are general guidelines for the BRI which focus on practical implementation already discussed, but also the general ideational narrative surrounding the initiative that is propagated in rather general terms. The implication is that what needs to be studied is the official Chinese narrative which surrounds the BRI, in order to deconstruct its normative underpinnings. Normatively, at the global level, the BRI is propagated as a single, comprehensive "interpretive community" (Johnstone 2005; Qu 2013; Rao and Lin 2016). Normative justification of the strategy is diffused via China's discursive power (i.e., by framing the initiative in official documents as a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind, which can be seen as the meta-narrative, or strategic narrative [Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, and Roselle 2013], comprising all other discursive tools that Chinese agents employ in framing the BRI and China's role in it [van Ham 2010, 14; see also Callahan 2016, 252], and a positioning of the BRI vis-à-vis other [argely Western] international institutions of finance and aid).

After initially being received rather positively by many countries in the Global South which subsequently became part of the initiative, recently there have been more cautious, skeptical, and even negative or rejecting comments about the initiative. What is new about this recent backlash is that it also includes wariness by many participating countries from the Global South, rather than just the usual Western suspects which have by and large been negative about and refrained from wholeheartedly joining the initiative from the beginning (Smith 2018). This counter-narrative concentrates on notions of "debt trap diplomacy," environmental sustainability concerns, and costs for citizens of recipient countries (Hughes 2019; Moramudali 2019).

These points are the official antipodes of dominant narrative and counter-narrative surrounding the Chinese-led initiatives. What we aim at revealing through our investigation, however, is situated outside of this official sphere. By studying the case of German logistics companies' relationship with the Silk Roads, we zoom in onto a field of narrative- and meaning-making which is situated in-between the extremes of the dichotomous framings of the initiatives as either pure "good" or pure "bad," documenting that business actors such as logistics companies exert influence by both accommodating China's official dominant narrative, and also contesting it at key points. Based on the analysis of interview data,[1] the next sections will provide an in-depth discussion of German logistics companies' agency in narrating the Silk Roads. We will document how these actors' narration is not merely exogenously produced by the two official antipodes, but that there are also instances of endogenous inputs that reflect the reality (i.e., the interests and identity of this specific group of local actors).

DIFFERENTIATING BETWEEN THE SILK ROAD AND BRI

In media, advertising, and public discourse, the New Silk Road and BRI are often used in close connection with one another, if not interchangeably. For example, the recently founded New Silk Road Network in Bremen is an organization designed specifically to connect German companies with the BRI and to leverage its resources. Here, the New Silk Road is purposely being used as a synonym for the BRI. In other cases, the BRI is altogether absent or vaguely referenced. One example is the Port of Hamburg's digital brochure on rail and maritime freight services from Hamburg to China, the title of which reads, "Hamburg—gateway to the new Silk Road." Here, the Silk Road is presented as specifically those logistics networks linking China with Hamburg and the rest of Europe, including both rail and ocean shipping. The brochure also states that "China is investing in the 'BRI'"; however,

no further explanation is given for the BRI. Nonetheless, it is indirectly presented as driving the increase in rail shipping along the China-EU rail network by explicitly linking China's "ambitious plans" with yearly increases in shipping volume. These two examples are of course snapshots of the way the two terms are presented to the public; however, they reflect a general tendency to blur the two together. This is significant because the key message being conveyed is China's role as the central actor driving the New Silk Road.

Without exception, our interviewees viewed the two as connected and inalienable from each other. For example, one managing director for a large logistics firm in Germany referred to the logistics networks developing across Eurasia as, "the Silk Road of the Chinese government" (*Interview #4*), while another director, when asked to explain what the Silk Road was, called it "a political project of Mr. Xi Jinping" (*Interview #5*). Again, the overt message is that the Silk Road is China's project. However, tight as this connection is perceived, the Silk Road is not a synonym for the BRI and is differentiated in two key ways. The first is that, within the logistics sector in Germany, the Silk Road is understood as specifically the logistics arm of the BRI, which includes both maritime and overland transportation routes. This definition is an industry standard and remains consistent in public statements, advertisements, and official images such as maps. Certain firms may emphasize rail over sea routes, or both, such as Duisburg Intermodal, whose Silk Road operations are focused on the China-EU rail network, while the Port of Hamburg emphasizes both the land and maritime routes due to its role as an important shipping seaport and rail hub. Thus, firms tend to frame the New Silk Road in relation to their interests, without necessarily denying its other interpretations and manifestations, such as a so-called arctic Silk Road, or the digital Silk Road, and during the pandemic, a medical Silk Road.

These ways of presenting the Silk Road lead to the second way in which the Silk Road is distinguished from the BRI, which is as a marketing concept or label. Of course, claims have been made that the BRI itself is more of a brand than a coherent policy initiative (Hillman 2018); however, our interviewees were also consistent in pointing out that although they recognized the Silk Road as an integral part of the BRI, the former is "easy to market and less intimidating than the BRI" (*Interview #2*). Another suggested that, as a phrase, the BRI is "*nicht eingängig genug*" or not intuitive enough compared to the New Silk Road (*Interview #3*). Returning to Chin's (2014) argument that iterations of the Silk Road are necessarily (re)inventions, we see these actors expressing a keen, discerning awareness of this semiotic process by which a collection of activities is framed together. Furthermore, this preference for the Silk Road over the BRI reveals a key tension between the two terms and a desire (if not also an effort) to create some distance between these firms' activities and the BRI.

In this case, the preference for the Silk Road as a label is also linked to the presence of the BRI as the official Chinese project. Paradoxically, the two labels overlap, but they also counteract one another, in that to say the Silk Road is not to say the BRI. It is this duality within the Silk Road concept and the flexibility that comes with it that facilitate the narrative space necessary for actors to mediate between dominant master and counter-narratives. Even in cases like the Silk Road Network, which is overtly supportive of the BRI, by choosing such a title they position themselves as adjacent to and independent of the BRI. These two key distinctions between the New Silk Road and the BRI within the logistics sector reflect that actors recognize and leverage fragmented versions of a larger master narrative relating to their own operations and services and excluding unrelated aspects of the BRI. Thus, while still being closely linked with the BRI, these firms contribute to developing new narrative spaces. The following section will apply Bamberg's framework to the positioning of German logistics companies vis-à-vis Silk Road narratives.

LOGISTICS COMPANIES' POSITIONING

In producing public statements, advertising, and inauguration ceremonies relating to the BRI, third-party actors like German logistics companies draw on master and counter-narratives. While still aligning with key aspects of dominant narratives, the narratives these firms produce also reflect their positioning between the dominant narratives. This form of positioning fits *level 2* in Bamberg's framework, as audiences of master and counter-narrators are engaged by selectively referencing positive motifs and distancing themselves from negative ones. In this narrative space in-between master and counter-narratives, there are also significant differences in companies' strategies toward their engagement with the New Silk Road based on their own interests and resources. Going back to van Noort's framework of spatial, temporal, political, economic, technological, and perceptual modalities of infrastructure narratives, we can clearly see that German Silk Road players overwhelmingly focus on the economic modalities and to a certain extent on spatial and temporal ones, but disregard political and technological ones.

Generally speaking, looking at *level 3* in Bamberg's framework, which focuses on positioning vis-à-vis oneself, there was an unsurprising tendency among our interviewees to suggest that their respective companies' main role in the BRI is a rather passive one, trying to benefit from the initiative economically, while at the same time being aware of increasingly negative public opinion toward China in Germany when it comes to human rights or the military connotations of the BRI. In this regard, one interviewee stressed the

fact that Germany was not an official part of the BRI, and that any company commentary touching on political issues would more or less follow the official stance of the German government (*Interview #1*). Another interviewee had a similar perspective on their company's role in the BRI (i.e., that it was only focused on logistics and that they would not continue operating any railways if the geopolitical tensions made that impossible [*Interview #4*]). In this regard, there was a shared acknowledgment among interviewees that the companies' own agency is confined to the realm of logistics and that they are not responsible for the geopolitical side of things. Still, the general trend is that the New Silk Road figures prominently in involved German actors' narratives—the City of Duisburg, for instance, identifies it as a core ingredient of deepening connectivity via water-, road-, and railways as part of its vision to become a "smart city" (City of Duisburg 2019, 13).

In terms of the companies' positioning vis-à-vis Chinese actors (*levels 1* and *2*), the majority of participants argued that, from a business perspective, they tried to accommodate the Chinese side's interests as best as possible, while simultaneously not reproducing the Chinese master narrative. This essentially results in the companies engaging with their Chinese counterparts in a way that does not include the discussion of sensitive topics, but, at the same time, also not participating in the increasingly broad master narrative that the Chinese side is promoting. German logistics companies' participation in the BRI/New Silk Road narrative is limited to the logistics side. This means that they portray it in a very limited way, that is, only as a logistics initiative, which explains their preference for the New Silk Road label. At the same time, Chinese logistics actors also were more directly concerned with the railway lines' operation rather than any official government narrative, as the following quote from *Interview #2* demonstrates:

> We do have employees, most of them are Chinese as well on site, who do most of our relations also with Chinese customers, but sometimes they also come to us especially they are all from the transport sector. They're from the shipping sector. And so, we either show them the port of, . . . we present why we are the best choice for a seaport or as a rail hub in in Germany, these kinds of things. And yeah, most of our communication with them is in English and then they would use, either refrain from that narrative and just speak about the rail connection or . . . the shipping connections itself. As I said, the whole shipping industry is kind of removed from that, they also don't use that narrative when it comes to that. . . . So, when we talk to shipping line clients, when we talk to COSCO or something like that, we talk about the liner connections, we don't talk about the Belt and Road Initiative, or the New Silk Road. So we don't use it in that kind of sense. But when we approach, for instance, new customers, or new railway undertakings, rail operators, like platform companies that do it on a provincial level in China, then they, at least now in the communication that I've

> seen, they actually prefer to use . . . what these connections [are] actually called, so [e.g.,] Zhong'ou Banlie [Trans-Eurasia-Express]. So that's what they would use. . . . But if you use that in like marketing or communication in Germany, then no one knows what that means. (*Interview #2*)

Our analysis suggests that, while the Chinese master narrative is contested by focusing exclusively on the logistics side of the initiative, occasionally bits of the Chinese logistics narrative are reproduced. For instance, in a newsletter from 2018, JadeWeserPort (2018, 1) focused on the role that Germany's largest harbor project could play in facilitating the Chinese long-term vision of a Polar Silk Road (i.e., connecting China and Germany via the Arctic Ocean). In the same newsletter, space was also granted to the spokesperson of the Federal Association of the German Silk Road Initiative, which is a group lobbying for Chinese positions on the BRI (JadeWeserPort 2018, 3) whose arguments resemble a complete embracement of the Chinese master narrative.

Our interviewees generally suggested that the main agency in the initiative originates from China. The positioning vis-à-vis German government actors (*level 1*) implies that there is no involvement of any level of government in Germany (national, regional, or local) when it comes to setting up the railway lines, coordinating their operation, or financing them. The Chinese side, for many years, has been putting a lot of efforts in the railway connections. The financial subsidies, which were given for many years, have recently been announced to be stopped, but this does not mean that China stops the initiative.

This summary of interviewees' responses may suggest that they try to mediate master and counter-narratives in largely similar ways. However, this is not the case, and it is important to stress the diverse ways in which narratives differ even when they come from the same country or the same sector. One area where differences in the positioning become especially apparent is with regards to railway line inauguration ceremonies. While most interviewees suggested that these were mainly aimed at satisfying a wish list from the Chinese side, one interviewee suggested that the ceremony was primarily hosted to bolster local awareness of the company's involvement in the initiative. The following quotes from *Interviews #2 and #5* highlight these differences:

> Question: Have Chinese actors been involved in organizing or directing this event?
>
> Answer: Well, the general consulate here was helping in organizing this event. The consul general took part in it and they also marketed it via their channels. And he helped in finding out when the cargo actually reaches the terminal.

Q: Okay, and you cooperated with them on this? Or was it more separate and then marketing it through the separate channels? Because you just said that the consulate marketed this event through their own channels, right?

A: The press release basically was mostly the same, at least what I saw on their WeChat, and it was also what he said in our video interview, basically. So I would say it was a cooperation, and then we marketed it on all of our platforms.

Q: And what kind of label did you use for the ceremony? Was it then also labelled the New Silk Road?

A: I hope so. Oh, well, more or less. But yeah, I guess we used the label the New Silk Road back then as well. . . . But we are also aware that this is taking over. Like it's something that is like a Chinese narrative as well. But it's very well received on the Chinese side. So like when we did this, we had like a lot of exposure in the Chinese press, on Chinese social media as well. So this then also puts us on the map in terms of [name of city] also being a destination for the New Silk Road.

Q: Would you say that these ceremonies then are maybe more oriented towards the Chinese market?

A: For us, yeah, for us it is.

(*Interview #2*)

The quote from *Interview #2* represents the view that the Chinese side was the main force behind the ceremonies. It also clearly shows this logistics company's positioning toward the Chinese audience (*level 2*), in that they actively tailored the ceremonies according to the audience's wishes. Also, the key actors from both sides cooperated in detail to reach a similar message in their promotional activities. There is a stark contrast to the quote below from *Interview #5*:

Q: How are Chinese actors involved in organizing or directing these ceremonies?

A: The Chinese company was not really involved. So it was just the photo with the local mayor . . . and the CEO of the port . . . and my colleagues. So the Chinese people were not really involved. It was not like in other countries, . . . if you saw pictures from trains going to Munich or to Barcelona, and then they have the dragon in front of the train. It was not something like this, but something that was much smaller, more local, more focused on the local people.

Q: So I get the feeling that if there was a more formal contract emerging in the future, then there might also be more push from the Chinese side and Chinese actors to have such a ceremony?

A: Yeah, if they like that, I would ask my partners if we can do something like that. Otherwise, I'd just like to make the business (sic) in silence and grabbing

> the money out of their pockets. It's not on (sic) my personal focus to have a ceremony. I know they like it, but I guess the local German politicians like it much more.
>
> **(*Interview #5*)**

This excerpt suggests that, in terms of *levels 2* and *3* in Bamberg's framework, the focus should be on doing business (identity claim, *level 3*) and equally implies that the intended audience, Chinese firms, is also important and taken seriously by the German logistics firms (positioning vis-à-vis audience, *level 2*). The different ways in which the ceremonial aspect of the BRI is engaged with by different actors suggest that the BRI narrative and the different aspects it comprises are necessarily interpreted locally, sometimes in drastically different ways. Bamberg's three-level framework helps to pinpoint these different ways of positioning that are crucial to understand German logistics companies' agency in shaping the Silk Road narrative(s).

CONCLUSION

The Silk Road is a powerful, compelling narrative thanks in large part to its flexibility and ability to accommodate diversity and distinction under the umbrella of a single, encompassing process. However, rather than being reiterated in full, we see from the case of the German logistics sector that the Silk Road is a motif being repackaged and presented according to local interests. As shown in the sections of this chapter, this narrative process draws on certain semiotic ambiguities and distinctions between the Silk Road and the BRI to create partial, specific narratives that reference and link up to the BRI, but also reflect the interests of those actors engaged in producing these narratives. Furthermore, we highlight that actors' positioning reflects an awareness of these distinctions as well as an effort to integrate them in a way that balances participation and autonomy. These dynamics are important because they simultaneously contribute to the broader narrative while also advancing specific, local interests. The result is an assemblage of embedded understandings and experiences of the New Silk Road that necessarily confront the notion of a single, cohesive narrative that is led and dominated by China. As this dominant narrative is dependent on being reproduced, in order to maintain its dominance as a narrative, it must continue to accommodate these locally oriented versions.

Despite not being an official participating country in the BRI, Germany is also shown to be an important case to further examine narrative dimensions of the BRI below the level of the nation-state because it is, in part, German companies that contribute to developing this narrative through their own

activities. Indeed, this does not refute the dominant counter-narrative that the BRI is driven and implemented by Chinese actors as a foreign policy of economic development. However, it reveals an additional dynamic that has hitherto been largely overlooked and must be recognized as integral to the New Silk Road narrative. From this perspective, the concept of positioning is especially useful to engage this topic and examine the interplay between levels of narrative and actions. Considering the number of BRI projects that have been completed and are ongoing, this approach bears promise for future empirical scholarship on the BRI.

Following Oliveira et al.'s (2020) call to investigate the BRI from the "ground up," our findings also address the need to examine local agency below the level of the nation-state in relation to the BRI. In doing so, we show that narrative contestation does not only occur between competing narratives, such as master and counter-narratives, but also in the process of narrative (re)production, wherein local forces can reframe and undermine the dominance of a hegemonic, top-down narrative, such as the BRI's "New Silk Road." By empirically illustrating this process of narrative (re)production, we also contribute to the theoretical literature on narrative contestation and caution against an overemphasis on competing narratives. While master and counter-narratives certainly play an important role, focusing on local agents' narrative (re)production proves to be more fruitful.

Future research should expand on the preliminary conclusions arrived at, with a particular focus on testing the central argument in other contexts, such as other industry sectors in Germany or entirely different countries in Europe. By building on Bamberg's framework, further research could shed light on the diverse ways in which other European actors position themselves toward different audiences and themselves, and their roles in contributing to the BRI through (re)producing Silk Road/BRI narratives. Furthermore, it would be useful to analyze to what extent European narrative agency has an impact on how master and counter-narratives continue to be reshaped.

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NOTE

1. All interviews were conducted online in the autumn of 2021. For more information on the interviews, please contact Theo Westphal at theowestphal@gmx.net.

Chapter 7

Rationalization, Polarization, and Moral Tales

Legitimation of China's Leadership in the CCTV Documentary Daguo Waijiao

Elizaveta Priupolina, Tanja Eckstein, and Nele Noesselt

INTRODUCTION

China is often discussed as a rising autocratic power that may challenge the existing world order in a variety of ways—from replacing the United States as a leading state (Layne 2008) to attempts to promote China's values and approaches along with its economic influence within the existing system. China's interpretation of international relations (IR) suggests that multilateralism should replace the existing hegemony of Western democracies. Importantly, this approach is often coined as a more democratic approach to IR and implies that this view should be shared by other states. On the one hand, China's claims to be one of the leading states in international politics are hard to ignore. On the other hand, a range of scholars come to the conclusion that China is not interested in overthrowing the existing system and becoming a unilateral leader. Rather, China's interest is in being accepted by the international counterparts and in establishing stable and possibly amicable relations (Interview I Bochum, October 13, 2022). The analysis of role claims exposed by China supports this view and suggests that China attempts to enact a role of a leading state together with other major powers (Noesselt, Eckstein, and Priupolina 2021a). A *leading power* encompasses several different behavioral patterns and characteristics of a nation, three of which also apply to the current analysis: 1) putting forward initiatives or suggestions,

2) delivering solutions to complicated issues, and 3) being respected by others for showing wisdom and providing advice (Noesselt, Eckstein, and Priupolina 2021a, 19). The ability to legitimize one's roles, behaviors, and choices in the international arena thus gains particular importance.

This chapter attempts to understand the specifics of the legitimation of role claims exposed by China in the China Central Television (CCTV) documentary *China's Major Country Diplomacy* (*Daguo Waijiao* [DGWJ]), aired by CCTV jointly with Xinhua and the Publicity Department in 2017. The documentary outlines China's vision for approaches to foreign relations during Xi Jinping's first term in office in 2013 to 2017 and projects future perspectives. The documentary conveys China's vision of its desired position at the international stage—not as a hegemon, but as a major power, actively interacting with others and participating in the construction of the new norms and principles of global governance and global order. This chapter suggests that DGWJ provides arguments on why these role claims are legitimate and thus should be recognized by significant others. This chapter is focused on how the documentary legitimizes role claims and visualizes recognition. We suggest reading the documentary as a piece communicating China's role claims and legitimizing narratives to three major audiences, namely, the Chinese domestic audience, decision makers/policy analysts in other states, and the general public located outside of China.

The field of analysis of legitimation strategies used by states in the international arena is heavily focused on two key issues, which are legitimation of already established leadership (Schnurr et al. 2015; Eckersley 2016) and behavior of latecomers. The accommodation of newly rising states has been widely discussed from the perspective of their ability to adapt to the norms and procedures established within the existing system of IR. The rising states are believed to accept the established rules and assigned roles through mimicking, social influence, or persuasion (Johnston 2008) or—from the perspective of National Role Theory (NRT)—by submitting to altercasting by current leaders through role acceptance, mimicking, or as-if role-taking (Harnisch 2012; Malici 2006). Latecomers are socialized into the existing system and thus the legitimacy of their roles in the international system is sustained through internalization of the socially approved codes of conduct and through acceptance by the others (for a critical perspective on socialization and Western interpretation of legitimacy, see Pu 2012; Mahbubani 2011). Those who refuse to internalize the established rules or follow altercasting are interpreted as challengers or revisionist powers. Their trustworthiness and the legitimacy of their claimed roles is questioned as their behavior does not align to the existing norms (for critical perspective on the interpretation of China and United States as a complying and a revisionist power, see Chan et al. 2021). However, NRT suggests that there can be a wide range of roles

beyond leadership and followership claimed by agents (Holsti 1970). This study assumes that attempts to secure recognition of diverse role claims may rely on diverse legitimation strategies. The analysis of legitimation of role claims has rarely been conducted within NRT so far, and thus, this chapter is making a contribution to the field by looking at the strategies adopted by China to legitimize its role claims in DGWJ.

In NRT, the enactment of the claimed roles is not possible without significant others. Recognition is thus one of the key concepts that enable the understanding of the dynamics of role claiming and enactment (Malici 2006). From this perspective, persuasion and legitimation of role claims are among the key strategies to gain recognition from significant others and thus to enact the desired roles. In other words, this chapter chooses to conceptualize legitimation not in terms of interest in governing others, but rather in terms of practices aimed at providing greater acceptance of the roles claimed.

Domestic legitimation strategies in China have been carefully scrutinized in recent years. Baogang Guo (2003) demonstrates that since 1949 the Chinese state adhered to two major legitimation strategies, defined as original and utilitarian justification. The original justification is delivered through the (re)interpretation of the traditional Confucian concepts of leadership and legitimacy. Guo outlines four major categories—non-institutional sources of power (the Mandate of Heaven), the personal characteristics of a leader (rule by virtue), the recognition of the (benevolent) leader by the people (rule by consent), and the legality of the rule. The utilitarian justification, by contrast, relies on the ability of the leadership to deliver development and improvement of welfare. Starting from the Third Plenum in 1978, performance-based justification has been serving as a crucial legitimation strategy. More recently, however, China watchers have been observing the surging interest to developing new channels to generate legitimacy. Among them are construction of institutions supporting the regime (Nathan 2003), mass persuasion (Brady 2009), responsiveness (Noesselt 2014; Qiaoan and Teets 2020), and symbolic legitimacy (Wang 2018) through re-emphasizing Confucian values (Noesselt 2015), nationalism, culturalism, and ideology (Holbig and Gilley 2010). Heike Holbig (2013) illustrates that ideology plays a very significant role in domestic legitimation in China. In her view, the importance of ideology is not in that regime supporters are supposed to believe it, but in providing clear criteria for demarcation of internal support groups and providing the rules of the game, limits, and even appropriate language. In line with the updates to the official ideology, the accommodation of Confucianist ideas brough the revival of the emphasis on such values as benevolence, wisdom, righteousness, harmony, loyalty, and filial piety (for an overview of how Confucian norms are reflected in the worldview of policymakers, see Shih 1988).

By contrast, there are few studies focusing on China's legitimation of its international roles and approaches, and the vast majority of the existing studies of China's international legitimation attempts are focused on the analysis of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) discourse. Holbig (2013) finds a lot of similarities in the approaches exercised by China at the international level and at the domestic level of legitimation. Drawing on previous research, this study will attempt to understand China's approach to legitimation of its international roles projected in DGWJ.

The following section provides a brief overview of empirical research on symbolic legitimation strategies and outlines four basic approaches to legitimation which are polarization, legitimation by reference to values, legitimation by reference to temporality, and legitimation by reference to group membership demarcation. The second part of the chapter focuses on legitimation strategies identified in DGWJ and explores the legitimation strategies used to ensure domestic legitimation and to address the discussion of global governance reform.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

DGWJ as a Polyphonic Piece?

This chapter's approach to the analysis of the documentary begins with Mikhail Bakhtin's idea of polyphony. Bakhtin discovered that some pieces are written as monological where only one perspective and only one reality—that of an author—is presented to the reader. By contrast, polyphonic pieces incorporate a range of interpretations and meanings, sometimes even contradicting the author, created by diverse characters in the story. From the perspective of legitimation efforts, dialogism and polyphony play crucial roles in that they allow the legitimator to interact with audiences in a more complex and thorough way. Being involved in polyphonic discourses allows agents "to assume a credible 'voice' in-relation-to 'other' voices, within the dialogue" (discursive authorization), to subject legitimacy claims to rational, normative, and moral verification (discursive validation); and to "harmonise dissent, by either co-opting or antagonising stakeholders towards consensus" (discursive finalization) (Glozer, Caruana, and Hibbert 2019).

On initial impressions, DGWJ seems to be a monologic piece presenting the official perspective of the Chinese government. However, as argued elsewhere (Noesselt, Eckstein, and Priupolina 2021a), a closer look reveals that the documentary is designed as a consensus on the variety of views and interpretations voiced by diverse groups in China. At the same time, the documentary recognizes the existence of some critical perspectives on China's

rise (e.g., the Thucydides Trap debate discussed later or indirect references to expectations of some international partners for China to take on particular roles [responsible power in the early 2000s, democratizing state]). DGWJ responds to critical debates and expectations by outlining the consensus view which was developed based on close scrutiny of Chinese domestic debates. Beyond that, this chapter attempts to demonstrate that the documentary may be seen as a polyphonic piece not only in terms of the ideas voiced, but also in terms of audiences addressed. This study argues that the documentary attempts to identify China's positions on a range of issues as if it were in dialogue with a range of significant others.

The analysis in this chapter identified that the documentary attempts to speak to at least three essential groups: the domestic audience, international political and academic counterparts (decision makers, scholars), and domestic audiences of other states. While the first two audiences are the usual suspects in the research on legitimacy and legitimation, the third group may raise some questions. The central question, of course, would be: What are the purposes of attempting to legitimize one's role(s) vis-à-vis foreign nationals? This chapter assumes that these attempts might be related to China's concerns over the China-threat discourse that has re-emerged following China's political and economic rise. China's soft power strategy has been heavily focused on exposing the positive sides of China's rise and Chinese culture as a way to overcome fear and distrust. Trustworthiness is one of the essential features that need to be cultivated via legitimation mechanisms in order to make the image of China, which has been carefully calibrated by domestic politicians, attractive for foreign nationals.

The audiences targeted in the documentary are not only diverse in terms of the power and importance that they have for China. Beyond that, they are particularly diverse in terms of cultural and historical backgrounds, persuasions, and experiences. Addressing each of these groups requires specific strategies and approaches. In the remainder of this chapter, we will try to demonstrate how diverse legitimation strategies unfold and co-constitute each other vis-à-vis different significant others.

The importance of DGWJ as a complex piece is difficult to overstate. On the one hand, it gives us some insights into China's interpretation of situation, the goals, and desired outcomes. On the other hand, while incorporating a plurality of arguments and interpretations, the documentary provides us with the spectrum of interpretations and approaches, expectations and role claims that might be considered by China when facing particular issues. Such diversity is rarely available in official speeches or official texts, as most of them are designed to address a particular audience.

LEGITIMACY AND LEGITIMATION

One of the most widely cited definitions suggests that legitimacy is "the capacity of the system to engender and maintain the belief that the existing political institutions are the most appropriate ones for the society" (Lipset 1969). Performance, effectiveness, or output are widely recognized as most important sources of legitimacy. Along with this, democratic regimes are believed to derive legitimacy from legal-rational authority and the consent of the governed.

International legitimacy, especially the legitimacy of global governance and the legitimacy of international organizations (IOs), are also carefully scrutinized. Similarly to democracies, many researchers suggest that international legitimacy should be derived from the consent of the majority of the people affected by the decisions of those organizations (Falk and Strauss, 2000; Keohane 2011). Another interpretation suggests that international legitimacy is mainly derived from power which is supported by other essential factors (Mahbubani 2011). Among other basic factors contributing to the constitution of international dimensions of legitimacy, the authors list considerations of the future (Cerutti 2011); morality, legality, and charismatic leadership (Scholte 2011); and popular assent to the justifications of its goals, principles, and procedures (Steffek 2003). Robert Keohane argues that legitimacy can be sociological or normative, and suggests that there are six criteria to evaluate the legitimacy of international institutions: minimal moral acceptability, inclusiveness, epistemic quality, accountability, compatibility with democratic governance within countries (and in the best case, ability to enhance domestic democratic governance), and comparative benefit (Keohane 2011).

In IOs, legitimacy is derived from representativeness, effectiveness, and procedural fairness as well as expertise and the enactability of norms suggested by IOs (Halliday, Block-Lieb, and Carruthers 2010). Sarah von Billerbeck (2020) outlines the multilateral nature, normative content, and specialized nature of their work as essential sources of IOs' legitimacy. Jonas Tallberg and Michael Zürn (2019) suggest that legitimation of IOs relies on authority, procedures, and performance. At the same time, Klaus Dingwerth, Henning Schmidtke, and Tobias Weise (2020) argue that IOs increasingly take on the language of democratic legitimation (rather than using performance-based discourses) due to the increased visibility of this strategy and the high costs of abandoning it once it has been adopted. The debate on the international dimension of legitimacy highlights the divide between legitimacy and legitimation. James Brassett and Eleni Tsingou (2011) suggest

conceptualizing this divide as a spectrum to capture the "methodologically pluralist logic of 'both and.'"

Recently, significant attention has been paid to the debate on the legitimacy of autocratic regimes—sparked by the "surprising durability" of autocracies. Thus, Johannes Gerschewski (2013) outlines three pillars of autocratic stability: repression, co-optation, and legitimation. Christian von Soest and Julia Grauvogel (2017) find that all authoritarian regimes rely on output legitimation. At the same time, they argue, closed authoritarian regimes tend to develop identity-based claims while electoral authoritarian regimes choose to place the emphasis on procedures, thus mimicking democracies. Other studies come to a similar conclusion and outline such legitimation strategies as indoctrination passivity, performance, and democratic-procedural strategies (Dukalskis and Gerschewski 2017), relying on political myths "that narratively articulate the otherwise abstract ideological foundations" (Rudolf 2022), ideology, personality, and international engagement (Grauvogel and von Soest 2017; Tannenberg et al. 2021). Yet, this is the section of the debate where the divide between legitimacy and legitimation is observable most sharply. Indeed, the vast majority of the publications on autocratic legitimacy deal with legitimation strategies rather than the nature of autocratic legitimacy.

The approach to legitimation taken in this chapter requires two clarifications. First, this chapter chooses to understand legitimacy in terms of acceptance of agents or institutions in particular roles. Legitimation can thus be conceptualized in terms of persuading others that an agent can and is willing to enact a claimed role in a way that seems appropriate to the audience. It is important to mention that the legitimation can aim 1) at the overarching level of the nation state, 2) directly at the autocratic regime itself, 3) at specific rulers, and/or 4) at specific political decisions (Kailitz and Wurster 2017). At the same time, it is essential to distinguish between attempts to seek active support and those which seek only passive acquiescence. To gain passive acknowledgement, the entities need to "make sense," whereas for active support they need to "have value" (Suchman 1995).

Second, the literature reviewed in this section suggests that the majority of the discussions of legitimacy and legitimation highlight the importance of the ideational dimension by outlining norms, values, perceptions, imaginations, or morality as crucial elements of legitimacy-building. This implies that apart from the analysis of data associated with performance and effectiveness, legitimation research benefits from contributions aiming at qualitative analysis of norms, ideas, and emotions associated with symbolic legitimacy and legitimation dynamics.

Approaches to Analyzing Legitimation

David Beetham's analytical model describes three levels of legitimation, with legality at the first level, performance and authority at the second, and mobilization of political consent of the domestic population at the third level (Beetham 2013). Heike Holbig expands the model developed by Beetham to access the issue of international legitimation. In her view, legality is associated here with the membership in international organizations with binding force (e.g., World Trade Organization) and active participation in construction of new rules and norms. The performance dimension of the second level is associated with involvement in the global economy, while the authority level is concerned with international cooperation combined with maintenance of sovereignty. The efforts at the level of consent are directed toward mobilization of external recognition and rejection of international criticism (Holbig 2011, 171). This chapter will thus be looking at the third level and try to access the legitimation strategies aimed at the generation of (external) consent, either in the form of active support or passive acquiescence.

Theo van Leeuwen (2007) develops a framework to analyze legitimation with four major types of discursive legitimation: authorization, moral legitimation, rationalization, and mythopoesis. Authorization makes it possible to develop legitimation by reference to authority of tradition, custom, and law, and can be provided in the form of personal legitimation (personal, expert, and role model authority) and impersonal legitimation (authority of tradition and the authority of conformity). Moral legitimation is provided by the reference to discourses of moral values (it can be constructed using evaluative adjectives, naturalization, abstraction, and analogies). Rationalization establishes legitimation by reference to the goals and uses of institutionalized social action, and to social knowledge that endow them with cognitive validity. In this vein, instrumental rationality legitimizes practices by reference to their goals, means, and effects, while theoretical rationality legitimizes practices by reference to the natural order of things (it proceeds in the form of definitions, explanations, and predictions). Finally, mythopoesis provides legitimation which is conveyed through stories whose outcomes reward legitimate actions (moral tales) and punish non-legitimate actions (cautionary tales). Van Leeuwen argues that in multimodal texts, legitimation may also be expressed visually or audially.

Empirically, scholars identify a range of widely used strategies. Thus, John Oddo (2011) outlines four essential legitimation strategies used in domestic call-to-arms discourse in the United States: polarization, legitimation by reference to values, legitimation by reference to temporality, and legitimation by reference to group membership demarcation. Among them polarization is, perhaps, the most widely employed one (van Dijk 2001; Sowinska 2013),

as demonstrated by the analysis of war-legitimating discourses in Israel (Simonsen 2019) and the United States (Schnurr et al. 2015). Another essential strategy is reference to group membership demarcation. Similarly to the earlier discussion, this strategy can be used in both domestic (Selvik 2018; Wodak 2008; 2017) and international discourses. Von Billerbeck (2020) identifies three categories of self-legitimation practices in IOs: narratives, internal communications, and symbols and events. Terence Halliday, Susan Block-Lieb, and Bruce Carruthers (2010) conclude that IOs use a concrete set of rhetorical devices, including formal properties (reflected in the form of the text and arrangement of the content), and external and internal warrants which serve to highlight the legitimacy of their texts vis-à-vis diverse audiences.

Interestingly, using external warrants is often the strategy picked by autocratic states (yet there is evidence of interest in this legitimation strategy from populist regimes, e.g., as discussed in Wajner 2022). Holbig argues that mobilization of external consent is an essential legitimation mechanism of providing domestic legitimacy (Holbig 2013). This argument is illustrated in a study of Cuban approach to using external consent for domestic legitimation. Bert Hoffmann demonstrates how Havana, under the charismatic leadership of Fidel Castro, used cultural exchanges, the health sector, and sports to develop "expansive international legitimation" (Hoffmann 2015, 569).

This chapter draws on this and attempts to inductively make sense of legitimation strategies displayed in DGWJ. The focus is on the analysis of narratives that, we argue, are used in the documentary to convey legitimation of role claims.

Narrative Analysis

This chapter suggests that using narratives as research methods rather than datasets helps to understand the approach to legitimation taken in the CCTV documentary. DGWJ is filmed as a combination of a newsreel and a political documentary. DGWJ rarely provides the viewer with statistical or other types of quantitative information or objective facts. Instead, the major share of content is conveyed through the narratives about diplomatic activities of China and its leader. As outlined in the introduction to this volume, using narratives is associated with making sense of events and bringing in emotional and value-based reflections of experiences and judgments about the narrated events. Similarly, the earlier discussion highlights the important role of values and beliefs in establishing symbolic legitimacy. In other words, it is possible to "enhance the comprehensibility of a new perspective "through continually articulating stories which [illustrate] its reality" (Suchman 1995, 592). This

observation points to the important role that is played by narratives in the process of establishing legitimacy for the role claims.

Among the central issues for the visualized narration in political documentaries is the problem of self-presentation and recognition by others. In the twenty-first century, the rising powers are believed to mimic and copy the rituals and (visual) codes centered on the US normative system in order to attain recognition as an equal (Noesselt 2021, 5). Iver Neumann argues that diplomatic encounters are to be treated as well-planned and rehearsed representations in which the agents are seeking to be appreciated not only by the others but also by their domestic polity (Neumann 2021, 20–24).

RESULTS

The following sections rely on analysis of numerous narratives delivered in DGWJ. One of the central legitimation strategies in the documentary is delivered through the narratives about performance and effectiveness of China's solutions. Apart from that, we find that legitimation in the documentary proceeds 1) in the form of reference to values, traditions, and beliefs; 2) through polarization and implicit group membership demarcation (West versus the Global South, and along the lines of China-US, China-Russia relations); 3) through rationalization and moralization (China delivering solutions in the international arena; China as a responsible major country); 4) through mythopoesis: DGWJ often narrates moral tales (with happy endings in cases where China's suggestions were implemented); yet, the documentary does not use cautionary tales to warn against misconduct; and 5) through the reference to past events (temporal legitimation). Narratives serve as the major medium to convey legitimating efforts by working with the perception, values, and worldview of the addressees, and their key role in DGWJ is to invoke (mainly positive) emotions. The following sections will discuss some particular legitimation strategies in more details.

Shared Values: The Image of Xi Jinping—A Man of the People

DGWJ develops the personal image of Xi along three major lines. First, there is a significant emphasis on how Xi interacts with others. With respect to this, one observes how Xi is very respectful and protective toward elderly people and how he is kind and caring toward children (E6: 00:09:21, 00:26:10)[1] and subordinates. He is referred to as an approachable elderly neighbor (E6: 00:26:00) and as a person that is "kind and pleasant, just like my dad" (E6: 00:30:05). Second, there is an emphasis on Xi's background as a farmer,

who cares about old friends (E6: 00:05:30). DGWJ emphasizes that Xi's personal background helps him understand the concerns of ordinary people. As a result, "the Chinese leader is widely recognized as a man of the people" (E6: 00:21:12). Third, DGWJ creates the image of Xi as a very educated and cultured person with an emphasis on self-education through reading, which is his favorite hobby (E6: 00:05:15). Moreover, he is evaluated as a competent leader with "foresight" who frequently expounds and advocates peace and harmony among nations (E6: 00:34:44–35:15).

The image of Xi is accompanied by the image of Peng Liyuan ("just like my mother" E6: 00:22:43), who is caring, kind, and supportive. In a way that strikingly reminds us of Princess Diana's iconic charity moments,[2] DGWJ displays Peng as a World Health Organization goodwill ambassador for tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS.[3] Together, the documentary suggests, Peng and Xi remind people of an ordinary couple living next door (E6: 00:22:10).

This image might seem to reflect values shared in many countries outside of China, such as love for children, respect for the elderly, and a ruler being kind to the ordinary people. However, analyzed in the context of traditional and historical symbols, the image of China's leader created in the documentary appears far more complex. It seems to project a mix of symbols and elements that can be identified as traditional Confucian and as socialist.

Traditional Chinese, and thus in many cases Confucian, values have re-emerged and been increasingly promoted as cultural and moral values to emulate in China in the past several years. As such, traditional virtues, such as filial piety toward one's parents, elders, and teachers, the focus on family and relationships, as well as the importance of morals (Liang 2021, 31, 36–37), are being re-emphasized in Chinese society today (Lams 2018, 395–96, 401–02; Noesselt 2015; Hammond and Richey 2014, 4–7), after having been denounced or even intentionally eradicated as cultural norms from daily Chinese lives during the Mao era, especially during the Cultural Revolution (Hammond and Richey 2014, 3–4). Portrayed as a leader approaching the magnitudes of paramount leader Mao Zedong, the personal embodiment of moral values by Xi Jinping's own person and his wife creates an image of ideal behaviors and characteristics for others to follow. Representing the nation at home and abroad, the image of the presidential couple thus references traditional Chinese concepts—albeit partially updated and reinterpreted to fit the current circumstances—to gain validity and legitimacy for the Chinese Communist Party among China's domestic audience. Merged with modern elements of accepted international standards, this moral aspect to the legitimacy creates the perception of a morally grounded, characteristically Chinese up-to-date party-state, effectively maneuvering the international arena while staying true to the Chinese context. Hence, the references to

traditional Confucian values engender a sense of closeness and familiarity among Chinese viewers of DGWJ.

The references to socialism are less explicit and can be read mainly by those familiar with the history of socialism in Russia and China. Thus, we learn that Xi's favorite book by a Russian author is *What Is to Be Done* by Chernyshevsky[4] (E6: 00:05:20) and that he practices swimming to stay fit (reminding us of the iconic swim by Mao Zedong as he returned to politics shortly before the Cultural Revolution; for the discussion, see Heaver 2016). DGWJ never mentions the reasons why Xi spent several years in the countryside where he acquired his experiences as a farmer. Yet any student of China's history understands that this was a part of the re-education campaign spread all over China in the years of the Cultural Revolution.

In this way, one can observe how DGWJ constitutes an image of Xi Jinping by mixing elements of traditional Confucian concepts and values with references to socialist symbols. By combining the references and homages to Confucian and socialist values, symbols, and events, DGWJ constitutes what Baogang Guo (2003) calls "original justification." According to Guo, one of the dimensions of original justification is associated with the personal virtues of a leader. This legitimation mechanism is realized through the reference to the Confucian rule by virtue, which is communicated in the documentary in the narratives of respect to elderly people, not seeking personal wealth, listening to the concerns of ordinary people, and self-education.

Another dimension of original justification is the consent of the people. In DGWJ, it is projected through the narratives delivered by the "reception side." Thus, the images of parents emerge from the narratives delivered by ordinary people, but not in the voice-over narration. External consent is also actively projected through the personal narratives in which people share their positive perceptions of China's governance and foreign policy approach. One such case is presented in the narrative of the visit to a home of an ordinary farmer in Costa Rica. After learning that Xi himself used to be a farmer and that he is particularly careful with respect to the needs and concerns of ordinary people, an interviewed local man argues: "this is an ideal form of government" (E6: 00:21:56).

On the one hand, as we can see from the earlier discussion, narratives about Xi Jinping aim at strengthening the domestic legitimacy. The mix of the elements of original justification and socialist meanings delivers a message to the domestic audience that is quite easy to decrypt for those familiar with the historical and cultural context. Narratives of internal and external recognition clearly serve as legitimation mechanisms. Overall, the legitimation efforts target Xi's leadership style as that of a "man of the people" who knows the simple life of ordinary citizens.

On the other hand, there is a range of visual and verbal interventions that can be easily read by international audiences. Thus, we observe how the first lady actively supports Xi in his foreign trips, something which was barely in the spotlight before. Furthermore, we learn some facts about her work and social responsibilities, including her institutional roles within international organizations such as the World Health Organization or UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Another universal symbol used in DGWJ is perhaps the most widespread and popular game in the world—football. Episode 6 narrates football diplomacy as one of the tools which Chinese president used to build connections with various nations and to promote China's positive image. DGWJ goes as far as to claim that Xi Jinping is often referred to in the media as "Mr. Football" (E6: 00:30:09). On the visual side, one often observes Xi using elements highlighting his adherence to Western diplomacy style, such as Xi toasting with the glass of red wine, the increased number of visualizations of the first lady next to him or working independently, or him wearing the Western suit instead of the more "traditional" and more "socialist" Chinese modern tunic suit (中山装).

At the same time, the documentary emphasizes that Xi is not blindly following the approach to diplomacy established in the West. Instead, one observes how Xi is ready to hold on to the existing diplomatic norms and protocols where needed, yet he can also break the protocol in situations that he thinks should be handled in a different way. For instance, DGWJ mentions two examples of Xi breaking the diplomatic protocol to show his respect to elderly colleagues, Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe and Kazakhstan's Nursultan Nazarbayev, and outlines China's attempts to establish new approaches to diplomacy (E6: 00:18:15–18:33).

Global Role Narrations and Their Visual Justification

By putting Xi Jinping at the center of the episodes featuring select examples of global governance and by choosing the BRI as the golden threat knitting the various DGWJ (sub-)episodes, DGWJ visualizes the People's Republic of China (PRC), as represented by its core leader, as a rule-shaping global power. The positive reception—and thus external recognition—of Chinese development projects, as pictured throughout DGWJ, by showing smiling and waving local people, stands in sharp contrast to international reports about civil society opposition to Chinese investment and infrastructure-building activities. The spreading "debt trap" narrative, using the case of Hambantota to argue that China offers investment to weak economies in order to take over their strategic logistical infrastructure, has further added to the negative perception of China's BRI charm offensive. DGWJ, released in 2017, does not include references to negative responses to Beijing's global outreach and

positioning as a global great power (in an imagined multipolar system), nor could it anticipate (or pre-empt) the COVID-19–induced degeneration of China's global image. The visualized success story of China's foreign policy conduct hence primarily targets the domestic audience, and thus serves the stabilization of the Chinese Communist Party's one-party regime via (postulated) external appraisal of its chosen development path. Contestation movements against existing global governance regulations and multilateral institutions are only featured if they question the legitimacy of structures that, according to the official Chinese narrative, represent the interests and governance principles of exclusive circles and hence discriminate against and marginalize the Global South. Protests during the Group of Twenty summits are featured, as they support the Chinese demand for "real" multilateralism (E3: 00:22:54–23:29).

The arrival of Xi and his wife Peng and their descent from the plane are arranged, apparently, in close symmetry to the arrival ceremonies of the US presidents (E3: 00:26:40–26:47). While DGWJ refrains from demanding a replacement of the United States as predominant superpower, DGWJ episodes on the staging and orchestration of China's global diplomacy underline Beijing's claim to be accepted and treated as a global player on a par with the United States. As DGWJ focuses on the years of the Trump administration, it displays select streams of the inner-Chinese contemplations on the window of opportunity opening with the partial withdrawal of the United States from multilateral agreements (especially in the field of global climate governance) and its return to trade protectionism. DGWJ's coverage of China's presence at the World Economic Forum in Davos stresses the positive reception of China's commitment to free trade—Christine Lagarde's appraisal of the PRC and its leader as "embracing the culture of many other countries and civilizations" and (Serbia's) confirmative statement that "everyone fell in love with the Chinese president" (E3: 00:25:34–25:56) convey the message that China's following in the footsteps of the United States as a global power providing (global) public goods is widely welcome.

DGWJ's visualization of distinct "Chinese" values and core patterns of China's international role conceptions and related role-enactment principles (e.g., mediation in local conflicts, as opposed to military intervention, initiation of joint actions to combat climate change in line with Xi's narrateme of "ecological civilization," or the setting-up of multilateral institutions as opposed to "exclusive" membership [as associated, *inter alia*, with the Group of Seven]) adds to the construction of Xi Jinping as a visionary, transactional leader providing the lessons learned from China's stony way to high-speed modernization as a package solution for other states located in the so-called Global South and as a potential answer to global challenges. DGWJ projects the opening of a "new chapter" of global governance, with China as one of its

leading architects, as associated with the sunrise over China's central government district of Zhongnanhai and the allegorical picturing of water (rivers, oceans, waves) (E3: 00:06:25–06:40) connecting continents and standing for turbulent times that require a novel mode of global steering.

At the same time, DGWJ narrates the story of China as a responsible great power, based on the Chinese interpretation of this role frame, by featuring China's contribution to UN Peace-keeping (*inter alia*, E3: 00:00:49–00:58, 00:04:18–04:51). Apart from the compliance with and contribution to existing international arrangements, DGWJ shows Xi Jinping's push for a reorganization of the post–World War II institutional order. The demand for a restructuring and reform of the Bretton Woods institutions is justified as a step on the joint way toward a more just and inclusive global order, and not as a quest for Chinese global supremacy (E3: 00:27:25–28:03). The PRC hence seeks to legitimize its demands as group interests and continues its role pattern of being an *advocate* of Global South interests and legitimate rights.

Mastery of modern technologies and excellency in research and development—as featured in connection with the Chinese contribution to global health and global connectivity—stands at the core of DGWJ's justificatory narrative of the (imagined) positive reaction to China's BRI and global rule-shaping approaches. Reference to socialist ideology is avoided throughout the documentary. The excerpts of Xi's speeches at international meetings (e.g., United Nations, multilateral summits) display a focus on rational solutions and elaborate on China's triad slogan of "peace, development, cooperation." Xi's participation and speeches at the nuclear summits in Den Haag and Washington (E3: 00:14:40–15:22, 00:15:23–15:59, 00:16:00–16:43) highlight the need for binding agreements and (partial) global denuclearization.

DGWJ's water allegories and images of (untouched) nature—mountains, forests—and sunrise signal the entrance into a new era of global governance. While, as seen from the retrospective of 2022, many projects of China's BRI have not even started or are encountering fierce opposition from civilian actors in the targeted countries—as the recent anti-Chinese protests in Pakistan evidence—DGWJ lifts the concept of transactional leadership from the domestic to the global level. Chinese global governance visions are justified in moral terms—as a contribution to world peace and development—and as reasonable, rational solutions to global challenges. Output performance combined with legal-rational layers of legitimacy are hence the two dominant frames underlying DGWJ's visualization of Chinese diplomacy under Xi Jinping.

As DGWJ presents a unilateral role narrative and displays the perception of China's role conceptions by other actors as embedded in a narrative decoupled from political "reality," the visual justification of China's global roles primarily serves the symbolic legitimation of the one-party state at

the domestic level. However, it also establishes a joint narrative and reference scheme for the "official" debate on China's global positioning and thus silences alternative views on China's future role in the global system. The story of China's "peaceful" ascent under Xi Jinping's leadership stresses the need to change the global system from within and to avoid moves that would lead to an overthrow of the existing institutions. The transactional leadership storyline of DGWJ contains a promise for the future—speaking to China's domestic society and, potentially, also winning the hearts and minds of those communities discontent with the US-centered global framework.

Thucydides′ Trap? China-US Cooperation: Learning from the Past

Discussing relations with the Untied States, DGWJ uses the strategies of temporal legitimation, rationalization, and mythopoesis to convince the viewer of the validity of China's position. The Ping Pong Diplomacy phenomenon (E6), as a successful precedent from Sino-US history, elucidates the PRC's belief in the possibility to improve US-China relations from today onward.

Ping Pong Diplomacy is an explicit reference to important historic symbols and events for 1970s Sino-US rapprochement. Chinese President Xi expounds the importance of the ping pong ball for Sino-US relations by emphasizing its ability to spur on the normalization of bilateral relations (E6: 00:36:27–37:03). In connection with the 1971 World Table Tennis Championships in Japan, people-to-people contacts between the nations' teams became the starting point for processes that ultimately led to the establishment of formal US-China relations later that decade. Seeing people, especially the youth, as fundamental to amicable bilateral relations, Xi expresses his hope for continuing the legacy of the "spirit of Ping Pong Diplomacy," so that their youths may promote friendly relations through interactions (E6: 00:37:04–37:30). DGWJ thus establishes the over four decades of Sino-US ties as a period of mutually beneficial exchanges that should be continued nowadays and clearly shows the significance of past events for current times. The events' order and progression allow Xi to imply that the methods that led to ameliorated US-PRC relations in the past retain viability today.

Hence, Xi's reference to 1970s Ping Pong Diplomacy presents a proposed solution to the question of how to manage current Sino-US relations. The appeal to continue with efforts according to the "spirit of Ping Pong Diplomacy" gains legitimacy and persuasive power due to the widely acknowledged success of the original phenomenon in facilitating the thawing of adversarial US-China relations. As such, Xi's approach appears validated by historical precedent: temporal legitimation and rationalization help

create legitimacy for China by arguing for emulating successful past cases to improve current relations.

Furthermore, the ping pong ball's symbolism adds another layer of meaning to these legitimation processes. Highlighting the small ping pong ball's ability to move the large earth ball (E6: 00:36:38–37:03), President Xi presents the viewer with a type of moral tale (mythopoesis) on the significance that small events, actions, and single persons can have for larger world affairs. The countries' professional table tennis players' chance interactions in Japan turned into the opportune moment for the two sides' leaderships to establish contacts. These events spurred on enormous increases in exchanges in areas such as trade, technology, people, and culture. Xi's positive evaluation of this development—visible in his wish to emulate the same dynamic today—reinforces the tale's moral legitimation aspect.

Thus, aspects of China's official understanding of its international standing as a *daguo*, specifically of its role as a *leading power* in relations with the United States, are depicted. The Ping Pong Diplomacy reference illustrates China's initiative to suggest how to constructively develop the relationship. The success of the 1970s case showcases the efficacy of people-to-people exchanges for facilitating the resolution of state-to-state contradictions. DGWJ uses this precedent to advocate further improvement of amicable relations and the possibility of the two powers constructively dealing with any issues plaguing their relationship.

Additionally, DGWJ alludes to China's conviction that a diversity of approaches to interstate relations should be accommodated. For one, the emphasis on Ping Pong Diplomacy implies an appeal to the United States to allow more perspectives to develop through people-to-people exchanges. Beyond this, Episode 2's argument against the Thucydides' Trap[5] fallacy (E2: 00:16:08–17:40) postulates that more possible development paths besides conflict exist for US-China relations, one of which leads toward more cooperation. Moreover, Episode 1 presents another meta-narrative linked to Sino-US relations when Xi evaluates other nations' politicians voicing their opinions on China, without direct experience of the country, as very self-confident and states he would not dare do the same (E1: 00:32:04–32:28). This not only presents a rebuke to other nations' people judging China without knowing the country, but, more importantly, illustrates the need for the outside world to understand China first-hand and on its own terms. This appeal for direct interactions indirectly refers to the differing expectations which the United States, and the West more broadly, has had of China over the decades of official ties. Whether these are hopes for the liberalization or eventual democratization of the PRC in whole or part to match US-centered Western norms and values (Friedberg 2018, 186–87; Nye 2018, 190–91), DGWJ's demand highlights the imperative to accept China's local circumstances, which represents a

call for nations to respect each other's differences, the United States and China included.

Dividing Lines: Friendship(s), Polarity, and Global Governance

One of the key concepts in Chinese foreign policy discourse is communicated in DGWJ through the narrative about China-Russian relations (E2 00:02:56–09:45). This relationship is narrated as an example of "the new type of IR" (新型国际关系), which are defined by such principles as 3 Nos (non-alliance, non-confrontation, and non-targeting of third parties), friendship, mutual respect, and extensive contacts. To justify this new approach suggested by China, DGWJ relies on polarization and group membership demarcation as core legitimation strategies, which are combined with the external recognition and a moral tale.

Polarization and group membership demarcation in this narrative are aimed at highlighting the flaws and problems in the existing IR system caused by the political stances taken by the Untied States. The analysis of the existing world order is delivered through short interludes by experts, thus lending the authoritative power to the arguments. Polarization is created by highlighting the difference between the "traditional theoretical framework"[6] supported by the United States and other Western countries in which world order is "*designed to facilitate opposition and confrontation*" and the China-suggested model which relies on mutually beneficial cooperation and is "*designed to boost the peace and development*" (E2 00:05:37–06:01). Rhetorically, in the previous example, the polarization is highlighted through *mesodiplosis*, the repetition of the same structure within a sentence (出发点in Chinese) which introduces different outcomes.[7] Group demarcation strategy unfolds through the statement of a prominent Russian expert: "We want to live in the multipolar world, not the world dominated by the Americans or more generally the West" (E2 00:05:01), thus highlighting that Russia and China belong to the same group of states, interested in promoting changes in the approach to global governance. Perhaps, even more importantly, this expert opinion interlude indicates the (external) recognition of China as a state which is able to deliver effective solutions. Finally, the example of Sino-Russian cooperation on the BRI serves here as a moral tale which is aimed at highlighting the effectiveness of the approach advocated by China. On the visual side, we observe a sequence of bird-view perspectives, which are associated in Chinese documentaries with the elevated status of the country in question and its ability to act as a major/great power (*daguo*, discussed in Noesselt, Eckstein, and Priupolina 2021b).

As we demonstrated earlier, neither polarization nor group membership demarcation are featured in the narrative on Sino-US relations or on the

global issues. The vast majority of narratives in DGWJ are aimed at creating positive images and discourse of friendship and cooperation. Yet there is another key instance where one can observe how polarization and group membership demarcation unfold outside of China-Russia relations.

The narrative about China-Zimbabwe relations under Xi provides legitimation to China's approach to IR through polarization, temporal legitimation, and the external recognition. Thus, DGWJ informs the viewer that President Robert Mugabe "was once praised by Western powers as a democratic leader, but later he was isolated when he started to reclaim territories claimed by colonial powers" (E6: 00:09:50), which reminds us of the US' and other Western countries' IR, said to be "designed to facilitate opposition and confrontation," as discussed in Episode 2 of DGWJ. Even more so, an interlude with Mugabe's speech at the 2015 Forum on China-Africa Cooperation summit illuminates that China is "a country once called poor, a country which never was . . . [a] colonizer" and that China's approach in Africa is what was expected from the former colonizers and what they failed to deliver (E6: 00:12:27). Here, polarization between China and the United States is underscored through temporal legitimation that reminds us of the pitfalls of "hegemony" through the reference to colonial past and its contemporary bitter legacy. DGWJ not only nudges the viewers towards thinking of the United States and other Western countries as colonial powers, but also alludes to China's century of humiliation and periods of extreme poverty in early years of PRC. Combined with the (external) recognition of China as a major power with a difficult history and high moral values, this obviously serves as a legitimation for China's new type of IR and China's role claim as a leader and major power. Moreover, this narrative suggests group membership demarcation in which China shares similar historical and developmental experiences with African (and perhaps, other) developing states.

CONCLUSION

This chapter demonstrates how DGWJ uses a wide range of diverse strategies to build up the legitimation of China's role claims. Beyond the emphasis on performance, which is, as discussed earlier, perhaps the most widely used one in most of the contexts, DGWJ adheres to the following legitimation strategies: original justification, external recognition/consent, temporal legitimation, polarization, group membership demarcation, rationalization, moralization, and moral tales. The strategies relying on highlighting positive justification of China's role as a major power prevail in the number and frequency of occurrence over those aimed at highlighting conflict and division (polarization and group membership demarcation). Beyond that, we observe

a range of strategies associated with evaluating history. This corresponds to the principle of "learning from the past (mistakes)," which is often cited in China's political discourses. Finally, legitimation strategies associated with negative justification (polarization and group membership demarcation) are rare and are only identifiable in very few narratives. These findings closely reflect the conclusions made by Shubham Karmakar in his contribution to this volume. He, too, observed legitimation by reference to temporality, rationalization, expert opinion, and delegitimating competitors in official discourses aimed at legitimation of BRI at the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In this chapter, again, similarly to the contributions by Sabina Perrino and Connor Malloy and Theo Westphal in this volume, one can observe how the audience is a key to developing the narrative and understanding the intentions of the narrator. This chapter demonstrates how diverse legitimation strategies are used to address the concerns of different audiences in one coherent piece, attempting to take into consideration the specifics of the relations and cultural and historical background of the audience in question. Thus, traditional norms and socialist values are most appealing to the domestic audience and those sharing similar cultural heritage abroad (e.g., some Asian neighboring states). At the same time, we observe attempts to speak to a wider global audience using widely comprehensible symbols, such as charity or love for football.

Perhaps the most fascinating example of how different narratives are aimed at different audiences is identified after comparing narratives about China's relations with Russia and the United States. On the one hand, DGWJ acknowledges that there are speculations over the future conflict between the United States and China as an existing and a rising great power. Opposing the Thucydides' Trap view, the documentary demonstrates China's interest in maintaining good working relations with the United States and emphasizes the idea of constructive competition supported by temporal legitimation and moral tales. On the other hand, we observe how the United States is inferred as the threatening/predatory other in the narratives about contacts with Russia and Zimbabwe. Group membership demarcation and polarization highlight the opposition to the United States and the existing approach to global governance. In those narratives, China is on the side of Russia and Zimbabwe. Even more so, looking closer at the Russian and Zimbabwean narratives, one can see how they differ from each other while employing the same legitimation strategies. Thus, the Russian narrative is mainly focused on discussing the role of emerging major powers in global governance, the pitfalls of the existing world order, and China's suggestion on how to oppose the outdated system controlled by the United States. By contrast, the narrative about Zimbabwe relies on discussing the experiences of the colonial past and acknowledging the struggle of African states to act as independent actors in IR, whose interests are recognized and considered by others. Overall, one

can conclude that DGWJ attempts to secure active support from the states that are dissatisfied with the existing form of the global governance (the so-called Global South, along with Russia) and passive acquiescence from the rest.

Using narratives as research methods in this study contributes to understanding how legitimation attempts rely on narratives to evoke emotional responses by targeting the topics that resonate with particular audiences in terms of experiences, values, and beliefs. The contribution to this volume by Ge and Wang demonstrated how this effect is created to enhance the sense of belonging to a nation for some groups of Chinese people. In this chapter, too, one could see that compared to the official speeches and documents, DGWJ is more compelling for many viewers (especially among ordinary people) as it provides short stories featuring ordinary people, their fears and concerns, Xi Jinping as a benevolent ruler aimed at addressing those concerns, and China as a sincere and considerate agent. In this way, addressing emotions, values, and beliefs, as well as attempting to address unique historical experiences, makes attempts at legitimation more successful. Finally, the significant focus on the legitimation of China's roles vis-à-vis the international audience highlights how China's role claims evolved from those of a country keeping a low profile and a regional agent to the role of a global power.

Finally, this study contributes to the research on democratic and autocratic legitimacy and legitimation. We find that DGWJ uses quite a range of strategies often identifiable with both democratic and autocratic settings (polarization, group membership demarcation, rationalization, performance, and moralization). At the same time, this study shows that DGWJ actively uses legitimation strategies that are more commonly linked to autocratic legitimation (e.g., external consent, output legitimation, authority legitimation [focus of traditions]). This finding, again, highlights the conceptual divide between the concepts of "legitimacy" and "legitimation," especially in the context of international politics, and the importance of through analysis of empirical evidence to develop a better understanding of the specifics of legitimation in IR.

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NOTES

1. Here and hereafter, E1/2/3/4/5/6 refers to Episodes 1/2/3/4/5/6 of DGWJ.

2. For example, Peng holding hands with an AIDS orphan (E6: 00:23:58) or holding a baby AIDS orphan during her visit to Africa (E6: 00:24:17).

3. However, it does not mention Peng's engagement as a UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization special envoy for the advancement of girls' and women's education.

4. The novel suggests that the intellectuals should educate and lead the people in Russia to socialism. The book was highly praised by Lenin and other famous revolutionary figures, and it was officially recognized as a must-read piece in the Soviet Union.

5. The Thucydides' Trap concept—popularized by US political scientist Graham T. Allison from 2012—postulates the inevitability of conflict between an incumbent and an emerging great power due to the established great power's fear of a rival nation challenging its position Twenty-first-century US-China relations are often seen as set for similar dynamics unless the countries undertake significant changes.

6. Here and hereafter, citations in English rely on the official English version of the documentary, and Chinese terms are analyzed based on the Chinese version of the documentary.

7. Opposition and confrontation (or, balance of power [权力制衡 in the Chinese version]) versus peace and development (win-win 合作共赢 in Chinese version).

Conclusion

Elizaveta Priupolina

The contributions to this volume present perspectives on narratives as a research method from the fields of philosophy of narrative, anthropological linguistics, collective memory studies, and China studies. They demonstrate how using narratives as a research method helps to follow a qualitative approach that provides essential insights into the issues associated with political communication, nation-building and nation-branding, role claiming, making one's own history, and perception of others. This volume highlights how narratives contribute to the formation of collective memories and defining nations, how narratives help establish legitimation and sense of belonging and communicate the visions of self and others. Narratives help to articulate perceptions and to nudge audiences toward taking a particular point of view.

The contributions to this volume highlight that studying narratives provides us with the essential information about the context in which narratives are created, evolve, and disseminate. Sabina M. Perrino argues in this volume that narrators deeply engage with the context and the audience and that narratives in interviews can be used as a research method in a variety of fields outside of anthropological linguistics. Offering evidence for this argument, Connor Malloy and Theo Westphal demonstrate in this volume how interviews can be illuminating in terms of understanding the effect of grand narratives on the audience.

At the same time, while being profoundly impacted by the socio-cultural context, narratives reflect core perspectives, values, and beliefs held by narrators which significantly shape their interpretations and decisions. Narratives help us better understand the identity of the narrators, rationales for the narrators to tell their stories, and the characteristics of the desired realities pursued by the narrators. This is closely connected to the broader elaborations on the narrative interpretation of self-consciousness as discussed in the contribution

by Grigorii L. Tulchinskii since narratives provide the possibility to integrate "the continental philosophical tradition oriented to the description of consciousness 'in the first person'" and "the English-language tradition with its emphasis on descriptions in the third person."

Closely connected to this, narratives provide the evaluation of experiences by the narrator. Thus, Suren Zolyan has demonstrated in this volume how narratives constructing historical memory can on the one hand mediate the knowledge about the past. On the other hand, they also serve as media to convey evaluation of those events by the narrator. From this perspective, in studying political entities narratives may serve as a crucial source of information about the ongoing debate and competing approaches to the problem. Particularly, this is essential in the fields where internal debates on policy options are not accessible for the observers. Even more so, in the analysis of foreign policy and international relations, narratives may be helpful in identifying policy change early. As a range of earlier studies demonstrated, the adjustments of the official narratives and shifts in the public support to particular narratives may serve as an important indicator of the upcoming transformations. In this volume, the contribution by Shubham Karmakar attempts to reflect on how adjustment of narratives goes hand in hand with the adjustment of policy approaches depending on the context.

Beyond this, the contributions in this volume highlight how particular modes of narration and specific structures of narratives create perceptions not only through the content of a narrative, but also through the form that a narrative takes (narrative ethos, as discussed in Tiupa 2022). For instance, we observed how re-telling of myths by an authoritative historian may serve the purpose of the construction of historical memory (Zolyan in this volume). Yunfeng Ge and Hong Wang demonstrated in their contribution how talking about nature, scenery, family traditions, or even particular products in a gourmet documentary helps to connect to values and beliefs shared by the viewers and thus deepen the sense of belonging to a nation.

In a range of contributions, audience emerges as one of the central elements of the puzzle to understand narratives and approach the impact that narratives can make on the situation. Thus, narratives are essential to adjust legitimation strategies to particular audiences, as they often evoke emotional responses, thus increasing the impact of legitimation (Priupolina, Eckstein, and Noesselt in this volume; Karmakar in this volume). Analyzing narratives delivered by the audience can also be an effective way to understand the impact of political communication on the audiences. As demonstrated by Malloy and Westphal in this volume, when engaging with political projects, the audiences emerge as an independent agent that does not necessarily re-tell the original justificatory narratives, but rather talks about their own interests and concerns using the framework set out in the original narrative. It is thus

important to highlight that such justificatory narratives, while sometimes missing on persuasiveness, provide the framework for debate which may significantly impact the discussion.

In the context of using narratives as a research method in political science, it is important to highlight that strategic narratives can serve as an essential medium to construct and redistribute power (Daya and Lau 2007).The contribution to this volume has demonstrated how narratives are used by the agents to persuade audiences while establishing international legitimation (Karmakar in this volume; Priupolina, Eckstein, and Noesselt in this volume) and how large-scale strategic projects evolve and adjust to diverse contexts through narratives (Malloy and Westphal in this volume). From this perspective, narratives help us understand how power exercised by various agents is experienced by them and their counterparts.

The role of narratives in developing understanding of political processes is even more important as many scholars conceptualize narratives as performative utterances (Hagström and Gustafsson 2019). As discussed earlier, narratives can be key to constructing and redefining national identities and perceptions of other, allocating particular positions and roles, imagining past and future, shaping sense of belonging, evaluating experiences, and channeling power. Given the important role of audience, the performativity of narratives becomes one of the central characteristics to use narratives in analyzing regional political structures, international relations, and more. For instance, Valery Tiupa (2017) argues that the news status of a narrative is determined by the value reaction of the recipients. In this sense, he suggests, the organization of news discourse is, first of all, a performative work with the perception of an addressee.

Finally, this volume highlights how narratives can serve as the platform for integration of disciplines, since scientific disciplines and theories can be conceptualized as a three-level system of narrative with factual, causal, and goal-oriented levels (Tulchinskii in this volume). This is particularly important in terms of bridging advances of narratology, language studies, linguistic anthropology, and other fields with regional studies. To achieve greater reliability of results, narratives as the research method can be fruitfully combined with a range of other qualitative and quantitative approaches commonly used in social sciences. The benefits of the mixed-methods nested research design have been widely discussed in the field of political science (Lieberman 2005; Malina, Nørreklit, and Selto 2011) and in China studies (Priupolina and Yang 2018).

Quite obviously, using narratives as the research method does have certain limitations. As many other qualitative approaches, research relying on narrative analysis is inevitably subject to the impact of a scholar, including their personal backgrounds, belief and value system, and normative and legal

frameworks they are living and operating in. Particularly in social sciences, using narratives as the research method inevitably brings in certain bias in terms of data selection and specifics of interpretation (Roe 1992). However, as has been repeatedly noted, what scholars know is inseparable from the methods they use (Wendt 1999; Fierke 2004; Herrera and Braumoeller 2004, 16; Lowe 2004) and the epistemic validity is largely context-dependent (Blommaert 2005; Susen 2015). To resolve this, some scholars suggest to acknowledge the importance of the awareness of a researcher's role as data mediator and to strive to consciously minimize it (Herrera and Braumoeller 2004, 17). Others argue that instead of trying to overcome personal impact on results of the research, one can benefit from analyzing different scholarly interpretations, which themselves can function as crucial source of information (Fierke 2004, 36–37).

Another important limitation is associated with the argument that narrative analysis in social sciences, and especially in political science, is overly focused on the level of "empty talk" and ignores "real-life" developments and actions. However, as convincingly demonstrated by Grigorii L. Tulchinskii in this volume, narratives are important for understanding motivational and volitational factors of behavior which are co-constituted by the narrators and the others. From this perspective, analysis of narratives provides us with otherwise hidden information about agents which may be crucial in understanding their actions and "real-life" choices.

In conclusion, the contributions to this volume demonstrate that there is significant potential for future research based on bridging narratology and experiences of anthropological linguistics, philosophy, and China studies (as well as other area studies). Deep theoretical and empirical knowledge on narratives and the specifics of how they emerge and unfold in diverse contexts is a fruitful ground for area studies to take a new angle on the rich data available to them. Using narratives as a research method thus emerges as yet another way to make sense of complex regional dynamics, power structures, and experiences.

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Appendix A

TRANSCRIPTION AND ABBREVIATIONS CONVENTIONS

|	Overlapping utterances
::	Syllable lengthening
:::::	Prolonged syllable lengthening
-	Syllable cut-off
.	Stopping fall in tone
@	Burst of laughter
[. . .]	Three dots between square brackets indicate that some material of the original transcript has been omitted.
[]	Transcriber's comments
Regular font:	Original language
Italics:	English translation

Appendix B

Jessica Thwaite: AQ: Is there a reason for some words and phrases to be in italics? If so, should that reasoning be made clear to the reader?

Example 1: "There are suggestions that 'China concealed the extent of the coronavirus outbreak' and 'China sees opportunity to expand global influence amid pandemic' . . . We must recognize *these as obfuscations that so regrettably undermine humanity's efforts to end the pandemic*."[1]

Example 2: "China's *enormous sacrifices* and tremendous outcomes in fighting the virus."[1]

Example 3: "China has always upheld *solidarity* and cooperation during a critical time."[1]

Example 4: "But a century has passed, and China is no longer what it used to be. In 2020, China no longer needs to worry about foreign invasions, although the public opinion war against China, waged by certain politicians in some countries, is *worrisome*."[1]

Example 5: "One third of Australia's total exports—including iron ore, gas, coal and food—go to China, bringing in around $135 billion a year. The economic *pain* and *job losses* in Australia will mount up."[2]

Example 6: "Progress shows that amid uncertainties brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the trade frictions between the US and other major countries, *the world needs the BRI more than ever* and the initiative could promote the world's economic recovery, provide opportunities for international cooperation in the health sector, Chinese experts said."[3]

Example 7: "*Under the global economic recession caused by the pandemic*, the world needs the *BRI more than ever* as the inclusive initiative will promote regional and global cooperation."[3]

Example 8: "BRI lights *future* for Greece-China ties."[4]

Example 9: "The cooperation against COVID-19 has given the international community an intuitive and profound understanding of President Xi Jinping's vision of building a community with a shared *future* for mankind."[5]

Example 10: "If their proposed projects are approved, they may receive a series of policy supports including government-coordinated financial support."[6]

Example 11: "'From the international level, globalization is transforming from a centralized to a decentralized model. *The BRI matches the transformation and provides more equal opportunities for developing countries*,' Wang Yiwei, director of the Institute of International Affairs at the Renmin University of China, told the *Global Times* on Monday."[3]

Example 12: "*A top-level consultant* in the fight against the COVID-19 outbreak in Central China's Hubei Province said globalizing Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is not political, and refuted claims suggesting it was a form of 'culture invasion' and that China had taken advantage of the pandemic to promote TCM."[7]

Example 13: "*Zhang Boli, an academician with the Chinese Academy of Engineering*, told the Global Times that saving lives outmatches everything during the ongoing battle against COVID-19 and that promoting TCM was not politically motivated."[7]

Example 14: "As early data suggest this *coronavirus* strain appears to have *European origins*. . . . According to Wu Zunyou, chief epidemiologist at the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention . . . fish can be contaminated by workers during capture or transportation."[8]

Example 15: "Seeing China's strong leadership in the global fight against the virus, an increasing number of international media outlets have realized that *China has indeed been practicing the vision it proposed of building a global community with a shared future for humanity*, and has been fulfilling the obligations of a responsible world power."[1]

Example 16: "*Ungrateful* 'mask diplomacy' *accusation*."[1]

Example 17: "'mask diplomacy.' They call it China's 'politics of generosity,' *accusing* China of fighting for geopolitical influence and taking *advantage of the difficulties facing others*."[1]

Example 18: "China today remains exemplary with a very wide margin to expand its potential. It is a relationship rooted by *civilization*, strengthened by *globalization*."[9]

Example 19: "China is seen as holding slightly *more political power and influence* than the US in Southeast Asia today."[10]

Example 20: "China is leading the way in many areas."[11]

Example 21: "The two nations with ties reaching *back to ancient times* are now called upon to work together to promote the spirit of the BRI."[4]

Example 22: "The COVID-19 pandemic once again demonstrates that mankind is interdependent in a community with a shared future. In the fight against the virus, *China* and *Italy have helped one another in times of adversity*."[12]

Example 23: "Egypt and China: *Historical relationship* into the future."[9]

Example 24: "Looking back at the *Chinese history*, the world can see that China spread its technology of papermaking, movable type printing, gunpowder and the compass to other countries and greatly promoted the *progress* of *human civilization*."[1]

Example 25: "West's pandemic falsehoods *debunked*."[1]

Example 26: "They even claim *China shared disinformation* that led to their underestimation of the extent of the outbreak and thus delayed their response to the virus. *Such rhetoric is rampant in the West*, but in essence it is an attempt *to justify the West's inability to fight the pandemic*."[1]

Example 27: "At its core the BRI has the concepts of shared prosperity that recognize and accept the diversity of political structures. These concepts sound insincere to Western ears, accustomed as they are to the Machiavellian idea that all foreign relations are about power, conquest and submission."[11]

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