

Methodological Approaches in Political Psychology:
Discourse and Narrative

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Abstract

Following the assumption that the link between politics and mind is mediated through language, empirical work in political psychology has increasingly utilized methodological approaches emphasizing the study of language. This chapter reviews methodological approaches that emphasize discourse and narrative in political psychology. We discuss the linguistic mediation thesis that underlies these approaches and then review three related methodological traditions: (1) rhetorical and discursive psychology; (2) critical discourse analysis; and (3) narrative analysis. We review the theoretical premises and methodological practices of each approach, as well as representative empirical work relevant to political psychology.

Key words: Discourse, narrative, rhetoric, ideology, politics, method, language, power

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My fellow Americans, all of us in this grand hall and everybody watching at home, when we vote in this election, we'll be deciding what kind of country we want to live in. If you want a winner-take-all, you're-on-your-own society, you should support the Republican ticket. But if you want a country of shared opportunities and shared responsibility, a we're-all-in-this-together society, you should vote for Barack Obama and Joe Biden. (Bill Clinton, September 5, 2012)

In his speech formally nominating US President Barack Obama for re-election at the 2012 Democratic National Convention, former President Bill Clinton used the power of language to forge a link between Obama and the would-be voter. He crafted contrasting societal narratives of “you’re-on-your-own” versus “we’re-all-in-this-together,” evoking contrasting imagery of isolation versus community in the midst of hardship, and linking these narratives to two distinct party ideologies. The speech was rhetorically constructed to motivate and inspire an electorate that had become increasingly complacent amidst continued economic decline and the bitterness of an ugly campaign. Clinton delivered a series of rational arguments about why re-electing Obama would be vital—arguments rooted at least in part, as he put it, in “arithmetic.” Employing a rhetoric not just of reason but also of emotion (“*And if you will renew the president’s contract, you will feel it. You will feel it.*”), he argued that Obama represented not just the sound, logical choice but the only hope for a politics of “cooperation” rather than “constant conflict.”

Clinton’s speech illustrates the way in which language is mobilized to influence a populace to engage in a particular act of political behavior (in this case, casting a ballot for Obama-Biden). It illustrates the way in which politicians use rhetoric to persuade, to evoke, to engage an audience in an identification process by which his or her language becomes *my*

language (Hammack, in press). In other words, politics is in large part a language game in which authorities capitalize on fundamental psychological processes to motivate behavior.

In this chapter, we position the use of narrative and discursive methods in political psychology in relation to the *linguistic mediation thesis* which links cognition, emotion, and action to political settings and processes. Our aim is to connect these methods to a shared intellectual project within the interdisciplinary endeavor of political psychology—the project of linking politics and mind through language (Hammack & Pilecki, 2012). We argue that the study of language in relation to power, accessible through narrative and discursive methods, stands to elevate political psychology’s contribution by integrating levels of analysis (person and setting) and explicitly seeking to explain human action.

We begin by describing the thesis of linguistic mediation that unites narrative and discursive methods in political psychology (Hammack & Pilecki, 2012). We ground this thesis in the history of interdisciplinary social science inquiry on language, context, and mind. We then outline three specific methodological traditions: rhetorical and discursive psychology (RDP), critical discourse analysis (CDA), and narrative. For each approach, we present theoretical assumptions and practical guidelines, along with empirical examples related to political psychology.

Political Psychology and the Linguistic Mediation Thesis

The increasing interest in narrative and discursive methods in political psychology speaks to a more explicit embrace of the idea of linguistic mediation in the link among politics, mind, and behavior. The central tenet of linguistic mediation is that our encounter with the material aspects of the world is rendered sensible through language—systems of signification which, though arbitrary (de Saussure, 1916/1972), imbue meaning and guide action. In other words,

human action commands a world of meaning anchored in language—a world in which we engage with words arranged in such a way as to evoke a cognitive, affective, or behavioral response (Bruner, 1990). Common to both discourse and narrative is the idea that words cluster in such a way as to provide sensibility and coherence to more complex concepts or events. A key empirical question for political psychology is then how individuals appropriate or repudiate narratives and discourses as they engage with the material world.

An emphasis on language, thought, and social context as co-constitutive is not new. Early theorists in the social sciences such as Sapir and Whorf saw thought itself as determined by the words and grammars available in a particular cultural context (e.g., Sapir, 1921, 1949; Whorf, 1956). For example, Whorf (1956) illustrated how the grammatical structure of the Hopi Indian language invokes a reality in terms of “events,” while most European languages are grammatically structured to convey a reality rooted in “things.” Concepts like time, space, and matter are not universally conveyed in the same way across language communities. Rather, the structure of languages often reveals a distinct cultural frame for collective sense-making of the material world (Whorf, 1956). Language thus both conveys and constructs a cultural reality as inhabitants learn it.

Early scholars of symbolic interactionism such as George Herbert Mead (1934) saw language as a particular form of communication, or “gesture,” which was negotiated in the social act. Symbolic interactionists view all social interaction—including all forms of communication—as sites of mediation and reconstruction of social and political realities. In other words, mind and self emerge in what Mead (1934) called the “conversation of gestures” that characterizes all social interaction—that interaction always oriented toward some “generalized other” in reference to which we see ourselves as an object. Social interaction and its

linguistic content is thus always constructed with reference to a community of shared understanding and shared symbolic forms. This perspective on language and social interaction would continue throughout the twentieth century (e.g., Blumer, 1969; Goffman, 1967, 1981).

Ideas about social mediation in symbolic interactionism have considerable overlap with the cultural psychological approach to language and social practice. Vygotsky (1978) has been the most often called upon of these theorists within psychology, positing the concepts of “inner speech” and “social speech” and their convergence in practical activity. But the most explicit of these theorists with regard to language was Volosinov (1929/1973), who linked the use of signs to political projects associated with particular ideologies. Bakhtin (1981, 1984) argued that discourses contain “voices” and that our engagement with language in discursive forms such as the novel is always dialogic. According to Bakhtin (1981), language is comprised of “living utterances” (p. 276), always situated in a particular historical and political context. Through processes of internalization and appropriation, individual psychology is shaped to serve ideological interests that maintain or challenge a given sociopolitical context (Bakhtin, 1981; Volosinov, 1929/1973).

These theoretical perspectives on language, thought, and sociopolitical context emphasize the way in which words and their organization shape individual consciousness in such a way as to serve some end related to social organization. The theses of linguistic relativity (e.g., Sapir, 1921) and symbolic interactionism (e.g., Mead, 1934), in which individuals would seem to possess significant agency in everyday language practice in social interaction, are more “neutral” vis-à-vis political projects and the “ideological state apparatus” (Althusser, 1971). The rise in popularity of a Marxist perspective on language in the 1970s, coinciding with the (re)discovery

of the works of Volosinov, Bakhtin, and Vygotsky, signaled a new politicization of the concept of discourse.

The poststructural movement in social theory aimed to counter a neutral linguistic relativity, seeking to supplant this perspective with a view of language as intrinsically political and hegemonic (e.g., Butler, 1993; Foucault, 1972). Foucault hence illustrates how discourses about sex, sanity, and punishment mandate particular forms of subjectivity—as in “the homosexual” (Foucault, 1978) or “the prisoner” (Foucault, 1977). Subjectivity here is understood not just in terms of a sense of “self-consciousness” but also in terms of subjection to another by means of control or dominance (Foucault, 1982). Hence poststructural theorists such as Foucault view language as inevitably hegemonic and serving the interests of a particular power configuration.

The general thesis of linguistic mediation in political psychology thus views language as co-constitutive of politics and thought within these general traditions of social theory and linguistic philosophy. Methods that emphasize discourse and narrative either explicitly or implicitly adopt this perspective on language, politics, mind, and behavior. In the remainder of this chapter, we outline three specific methodological traditions relevant to political psychology. These traditions should not be interpreted as isolated intellectual projects. Rather, they have mutually informed one another and show a degree of integration with regard to the interdisciplinary endeavor of political psychology (Hammack & Pilecki, 2012).

Rhetorical and Discursive Psychology

Theoretical Assumptions

Rhetorical and discursive psychology (RDP) views language as a form of social action or practice developed in close engagement with opposing ideas about concepts presented in social

texts (Billig, 1996; Potter, Edwards, & Wetherell, 1993; Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Language does not reflect social reality; it actively constructs reality (Potter, 1996). The study of discourse is the study of texts, either realized in products like everyday conversations, interviews, media accounts, or political speeches (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). Discourse serves a social function by constructing versions of reality, as demonstrated by language variation, which individuals may come to internalize and reproduce through their own discursive practices (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Potter, Wetherell, Gill, & Edwards, 1990). Talk then serves the function of creating social categories and, in this way, represents a vital form of social action for study (Edwards, 1991; Edwards & Potter, 1992).

A key theoretical contribution in RDP is the concept of *interpretative repertoire*. Potter and Wetherell (1987) define interpretative repertoires as “recurrently used systems of terms used for characterizing and evaluating actions, events, or other phenomena” (p. 149). They are “clusters of terms...and figures of speech often clustered around metaphor or vivid images and often using distinct grammatical constructions and styles” (Potter et al., 1990, p. 212). Interpretative repertoires, in effect, represent the background knowledge from which versions of actions, self and social structures are manufactured through talk (Potter & Wetherell, 1995a).

The epistemological implications of these theoretical assumptions are significant. Chiefly, a concern with language use in everyday, naturalistic settings challenges the hypothetico-deductive approach at the core of mainstream psychology (Potter & Wetherell, 1995b). Rather, the RDP approach is rooted in an interpretive, inductive epistemology concerned with language as a form of social action. The aim is to discover and analyze the way in which texts illustrate variations that reveal the function of language for social relations and individual understanding. The focus is on interrogating practices through the lens of language and social

interaction (Potter, 1998). Discursive psychology is thus anchored in a constructionist perspective and a relativist, rather than a realist, metatheory common in traditional experimental psychology (Potter, 1996, 1998).

Practical Guidelines

Rather than as either specific paradigm or method, RDP is better viewed as an approach characterized by particular theoretical and metatheoretical assumptions (Potter, 2003). RDP is theoretically rich and anchored in constructionist claims about the relationship between thought and action via language. Theoretical rigor does not, however, reduce the emphasis on empiricism in this approach. Rather than the standard collection of self-report data or observational data that characterizes traditional psychology, RDP focuses on the analysis of texts, hence representing a form of qualitative methodology.

The analytic emphasis in RDP is on how language is used within texts to fulfill particular social actions, such as justifying, explaining, blaming, and the like. Speech is viewed as inherently rhetorical, concerned with the art of persuasion (Billig, 1996). A considerable amount of research has focused on the social category constructions put forward within political rhetoric, specifically the means by which social categories are used to legitimize collective action (e.g., Reicher, Cassidy, Wolpert, Hopkins, & Levine, 2006; Reicher & Hopkins, 1996). Illustrating the ways in which social categorization constitutes a form of *social action*, Reicher and Hopkins (1996) noted the rhetorical construction of common in-group categories within anti-abortion speeches directed to members of the medical community. The formation of a common in-group was predicated on claims emphasizing the similarities between the two communities (e.g., both are principled and caring). Such a rhetorical strategy, Reicher and Hopkins (1996)

argue, aimed to persuade members of the medical community to support anti-abortion positions as well as marginalize the pro-choice community.

RDP studies draw upon textual data, including interviews, conversational data, media reports, political speeches, or any other textual source. Interview data is treated as a socially constructed interaction between researcher and interviewee, which leads to an analysis of interview data as interaction rather than simply responses of interviewees (Wetherell & Potter, 1992). Because many advocates of RDP were influenced by the methodology of conversation analysis (CA; Sacks, 1992), transcription of textual data often proceeds carefully so as to capture the nuances of the interaction (e.g., length of pauses, intonation, etc.). However, unlike CA, discourse analysis in RDP is more interested in the content and function of utterances in a larger sequence, which leads to less of an emphasis on microlinguistic features of the data compared with sociolinguists or some who use CA (see Wooffitt, 2005).

Because of its inductive nature, RDP does not rely upon hypotheses. Potter (1998) compares discursive psychology with ethology and astronomy, sciences which rely upon observational data rather than experimentation. Discursive psychologists often code data, but this coding proceeds more along the lines of a grounded theory, line-by-line approach (Charmaz, 2006) than coming to a corpus of data with a priori categories or quantifying coded data, as is more common in traditional content analysis. Discursive psychologists approach their data with theoretical guidance about a phenomenon (e.g., Wetherell and Potter's [1992] analysis of racist discourse in New Zealand), but the inductive, interpretive approach allows for discovery of potentially unexpected findings and anomalies. For example, Pilecki and Hammack (in press) analyzed conversations about history between Israeli and Palestinian youth participating in intergroup contact. They discovered a "victim vs. righteous victim" interpretative repertoire of

history whereby Palestinian utterances reflecting victimization were countered by Israeli utterances reflecting justification. They argued that this repertoire served as the basis for social category construction and competition for moral status in conversations.

Data analysis in RDP is interpretive, in the sense that the analyst brings his or her particular lens to the data in such a way as to identify themes, patterns, and functions. As in ethnographic and other qualitative approaches, reflexivity of position is key, as the analyst must always consider the way in which his or her interpretations are colored by his or her status vis-à-vis the population or phenomenon of study. For example, Wetherell and Potter (1992) acknowledge their own particular statuses in relation to the context of British colonialism and racism in New Zealand as they analyze their interview data.

Proponents of RDP, though recognizing the interpretive nature of data analysis, often argue for the utility of validation procedures, thus seeking to enhance the credibility of analysis (e.g., Potter, 1998). The presentation of raw data in its intact form is key to the credibility of discourse analysis in RDP, as reader evaluations form an important part of the validation process (Potter, 1998). This approach to the reporting of findings is distinct from traditional quantitative approaches which report aggregate statistics and inferential analyses, rather than raw data.

Some discursive analysts propose an approach that goes beyond text and talk, viewing discourse as an embodied practice tied to identity and place. This approach emphasizes the “lived reality” of discursive practices and how they ultimately reinforce the relations among groups (see Durrheim, 2012; Durrheim & Dixon, 2005). Describing how the lived reality of racial segregation remains in post-Apartheid South Africa, Durrheim and Dixon (2005) note how the infrequency with which Blacks and Whites share the physical space of a recently desegregated beach, coupled with the mutually antagonistic attitudes they express, reflects both

the “lived reality” of racial separation as well as the mutually constitutive relationship between language and spatio-temporal reality (see also Durrheim, 2012).

Lastly, RDP research does lend itself to experimental inquiry despite the epistemological discrepancies that exist between the two approaches (see Potter, 2003). In cases such as these, the effect of particular category constructions (e.g., Herrera & Reicher, 1998) or discursive accounts of events (e.g., Verkuyten, 2005) is examined experimentally. Exemplifying the latter, Verkuyten (2005) found that exposure to immigration rhetoric featuring a “lack of choice” repertoire (i.e., immigrants are forced to come to the Netherlands) significantly increased support for multiculturalism in comparison to the “personal choice” repertoire (i.e., immigrants choose to live in the Netherlands). The use of a particular repertoire over the other was thus associated with attitudes regarding the proper place of immigrants within Dutch society.

In sum, the practice of most RDP research emphasizes the analysis of texts using an inductive, interpretive approach that can integrate design principles common in mainstream psychology (e.g., experimentation) but more commonly involves methodological practices common to other social science disciplines such as sociology, linguistics, and anthropology. Careful attention in analysis is given to the *functional* nature of language with regard to social categories and intergroup relations, thereby directly interrogating political contexts and configurations through analysis of linguistic practices. There is no single blueprint for how to conduct research in RDP, but numerous examples suggest a flexible set of procedures that adhere to fundamental assumptions and call upon key theoretical ideas.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Theoretical Assumptions

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) shares RDP's concern with naturally occurring language and an analytic concern with larger units of utterances than is common in sociolinguistic research (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). But CDA diverges from RDP in its more explicit concern with the way in which language is used to represent ideologies and maintain hegemony. Thus language as used in interaction is assumed to perform social actions that fulfill ideological functions with regard to an existing set of power relations. Discourse is not considered neutral vis-à-vis systems of domination, especially the state and its apparatus (Fairclough, 1992; van Dijk, 1993).

CDA is founded on the key theoretical assumption that inequalities are reproduced in discourse, understood broadly as a linguistic form of social practice that seeks to reinforce dominant ideologies and the social structures they promote (Fairclough, 1992; van Dijk, 1993). Central concepts in CDA research are *power*, *ideology*, and *hegemony*. CDA scholars are concerned with mapping the way in which language is a tool to maintain dominance. The focus on discourse allows for elaboration of how ideologies are embodied in the material reality of language in everyday social practices. Influenced by Marx and Althusser, CDA scholars view ideologies as “significations/constructions of reality (the physical world, social relations, social identities), which are built into various dimensions of the forms/meanings of discursive practices, and which contribute to the production, reproduction or transformation of relations of domination” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 87). Discourse thus empirically reveals the process of domination through ideology and affords a window into the attempt of dominant groups to maintain or secure their hegemony.

Central to the theoretical foundation of CDA is the notion that discourse and social structure are inherently *dialectic*, which provides an entrée into the study of social change (Fairclough, 1992, 2010). Just as discourse is the means by which dominant groups secure hegemony, so too can subordinate groups use discourse to resist and potentially reconfigure social structure. Some CDA researchers argue that the primary aim of CDA is to take a more “top-down” approach emphasizing dominance over resistance (e.g., van Dijk, 1993). Regardless of emphasis, though, the dialectical theoretical stance of CDA allows for a multidimensional analysis that speaks broadly to intergroup relations and power.

Key to the dialectic frame of CDA is the notion of *intertextuality*—the idea that texts contain pieces of other texts, that they are sites of reference for one another and may “assimilate” or “contradict” one another (Fairclough, 1992). The idea of intertextuality can be linked to Bakhtin’s (1984) notions of multivocality or polyphony in discourses. In CDA, attention to intertextuality mandates an appreciation for the history of language and discursive practice, such that the analyst is able to fully consider the relationship among texts (Fairclough, 1992, 2003).

CDA views ideologies as embodied in discursive practices, but these practices are reliant on cognitive models and social representations (van Dijk, 1993). That is, CDA views knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs as structural inequities internalized and then deployed in discursive practice. Thus CDA is concerned with *social cognition*, understood as socially distributed ideas, beliefs, and attitudes, and is intrinsically multilevel in its conceptual foundation and analysis (van Dijk, 1993, 2008). Dominance is reproduced as individuals internalize and appropriate discursive practices that maintain the hegemony of some groups over others. The analysis of attempts to control and manipulate by using discourse to determine social cognition is at the heart of some forms of CDA (e.g., van Dijk, 1993, 2008).

Practical Guidelines

CDA does not constitute a clearly defined methodology but rather an approach to the study of language and power anchored in critical principles (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Like RDP, its general methodological approach is more closely aligned with interpretive and hermeneutic approaches than deductive methods (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Hence the analyst uses his or her own lens to make meaning of textual or other forms of discursive data, always reflexive of his or her position.

CDA researchers call for a multidimensional, multilevel approach to analysis. Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional model views analysis of texts, discursive practices, and social practices as interlinked. Text analysis includes vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, text structure, and the "force" of utterances (Fairclough, 1992, 2003). But the overall effort is interpretive and concerned with linking language to social life. Fairclough (2003) notes that this approach to language analysis stands in contrast to Chomsky's (1957) concern with language as reflective of "syntactic structures" or underlying grammars.

In CDA, the analyst is charged with documenting how language is deployed to maintain dominance or an existing social context of structural asymmetry. For example, Tileaga (2007) has argued that people employ discourses rooted in ideologies of moral exclusion in order to justify prejudice and discrimination. Within this framework, specific groups are viewed as transgressive of normative and place-appropriate conduct. In a series of interview studies, Tileaga (2005, 2006, 2007) found that middle-class Romanian professionals employed this discursive strategy to justify discrimination against Romanies. Depicted as "living in dirt," Romanies become objects of repulsion against the standards of "civilized" society. As such, prejudice and discrimination against Romanies becomes normative (Tileaga, 2007).

The precise nature of how one goes about organizing analysis in CDA is intentionally left unstandardized, though Fairclough (1992, 2003, 2010) offers some measures of guidance. A project relying upon CDA begins by identifying a focus of inquiry related to some social inequality. The analyst then accumulates a corpus of data which will shed light upon this problem. The corpus may consist of written or spoken text, transcribed according to the needs for analysis. Analysis then proceeds from initial description of the use of language to interpretation (Fairclough, 2001)—from the “what” to the “how” with regard to the maintenance of hegemony.

An explicit Foucauldian approach to CDA emphasizes the ways in which discourse informs subjectivity (see Yates & Hiles, 2010). Rather than focusing on how discourse is employed to justify and/or legitimize inequality, the emergence of dominant discursive frameworks within the subject positions of participants is examined for how they reproduce dominance and inequality. Exemplifying this approach, Gavey (1989) analyzed women’s accounts of sexual encounters and noted how discourses of sexual liberation and male “needs” placed them within subject positions in which non-consent was inconceivable. In other words, the subjective experience of women in these encounters was marked by a lack of choice. Reflecting CDA’s emphasis on social dominance, Gavey (1989) concludes that discourses of female sexuality place women in subject positions that ultimately reproduce a form of heterosexual gender relations in which women lack power.

Narrative

Theoretical Assumptions

Narrative is conceived as a conceptual link between politics and mind by viewing the individual’s engagement with the world of politics as fundamentally storied (Hammack, in press). Narrative seeks to link mind and politics through language, both in the form of the

personal narrative and the *master narrative*. While the personal narrative represents an individual's generated account of life events and the meaning of social and political categories, the master narrative represents a cultural script about the meaning of social categories that exists in cultural artifacts and mass texts such as media representations (Hammack, 2011b). Individuals engage with master narratives in the course of their development and construct personal narratives that either reproduce or repudiate key elements—a psychological process with important implications for social stasis and change (Hammack, 2011a, 2011b). The key distinction between discourse and narrative approaches is that narrativists are more concerned with the way in which coherent storylines—featuring plots, characters, themes, and forms—are appropriated. Narrativists assume that stories are central elements of human cognition which significantly impact social and political behavior, including the way in which individuals make meaning of political conflict or social transformation (e.g., Andrews, 2007; Barber, 2009; Hammack, 2011a).

Narrative approaches in political psychology are anchored in four principles (see Hammack & Pilecki, 2012). First, politics and thought are mutually constituted through linguistic practices of narration. The structural configuration of power and interest in a society presents itself to subjects as a storyline about groups and intergroup relations, but this storyline is a site of dynamic co-construction between master and personal narratives (the idea of *narrative engagement*; Hammack, 2011b). Second, the formation of personal narratives represents a universal psychological process by which individuals achieve coherence (e.g., Cohler, 1982). A key aspect of personal narrative development is decision-making (conscious or unconscious) about the content of master narratives, such as whether one appropriates the rhetoric of racism or ethnocentrism in the context of multiculturalism or intergroup conflict. Third, narrative is key to

the formation and maintenance of collective solidarity in thought, word, and action, as nation-states and cultural groups seek to instill a sense of common consciousness (e.g., Hammack, 2008). Here concepts of collective memory and the Durkheimian emphasis on collectives are central to the work of political psychologists who call upon narrative (e.g., Bar-Tal, 2007). Finally, narratives are conceived not as static texts but as constructed through social practice—through acting upon the material world, often motivated by emotion and embodied in social movements (e.g., Andrews, 2007).

Practical Guidelines

Like RDP and CDA, narrative represents more a conceptual and epistemological approach to political psychology than a specific set of precise methodological procedures. Narrativists begin with the assumption that *organized language* in story form represents a key site of inquiry. Data collection and analysis proceed with more attention to the holistic features of text segments than to the more minute features of language that sometimes even discursive psychologists emphasize. Transcription proceeds with less attention to the microlinguistic features of conversation than that the clear meaning of the text segment is conveyed.

Because political psychologists are concerned with multiple levels of analysis (e.g., person, context), narrativists within the discipline are interested in both personal and collective (master) narratives. Personal narrative data is typically collected via interview methods, such as a life-story interview (e.g., Hammack, 2011a). Personal narrative data may also include memoirs and other autobiographical records, or other forms of personal documents (see Plummer, 2001).

To analyze master narratives, historical documents (e.g., party platform documents), political speeches, and/or media accounts are typically assembled in an initial corpus of data. The goal here is to identify the way in which politics and social categories are constructed in more

official accounts. For example, Buckley-Zistel (2009) examined the historical narrative disseminated by the Rwandan government and noted its emphasis on the ethnic unity that existed before the colonial era. Construing the ethnic division between Hutus and Tutsis that culminated in the 1994 genocide as a product of colonialism, this view of history reinforces efforts to instill ethnic unity by effectively erasing ethnic labels from public discourse and stifling the spread of alternative historical narratives.

Narrative analysis may proceed along either an inductive approach in which story elements emerge from the data, more consistent with grounded theory (e.g., Charmaz, 2006), or a deductive approach in which the presence of particular story forms or themes may be anticipated based upon theory. Exemplifying the latter, Fattah and Fierke (2009) examined Islamist narratives for thematic content related to humiliation and betrayal. From this lens, relations with the US are framed as the latest incarnation of the subordination that Muslims have suffered historically. Within this framework, Fattah and Fierke (2009) argue, the Islamist political project of re-establishing a transnational Muslim collective (*Ummah*) becomes legitimized as a means of restoring dignity.

Narrative data is often analyzed according to *form* and *thematic content*. Formal analysis is concerned with the overall pattern of stories that emerges in the data. For example, stories in which central characters undergo formidable challenges but end in a positive place are considered *redemptive* or *descent-and-gain* narratives in form (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998; McAdams & Bowman, 2001). Stories in which central characters undergo challenges but end in a negative place are considered *contaminated* or *tragic* narratives in form (Gergen & Gergen, 1983; McAdams & Bowman, 2001). Analysis of form may proceed according to coding of sequences (e.g., McAdams, Reynolds, Lewis, Patten, & Bowman, 2001)

or by graphic analysis of overall story form as obtained through a “life-line” drawing or life satisfaction chart (e.g., Hammack, 2006).

Thematic content analysis of narrative data is interpretive and may occur either through an inductive, open-coding approach in which themes emerge from the data or a deductive, theory-derived coding approach. Because political psychologists study contexts that range from active sites of war and conflict to stable liberal democracies, the themes that emerge in narrative analysis are likely to be context-specific. However, some theories in political psychology specify themes expected to occur in particular narrative contexts. For example, Bar-Tal’s (2007) theory of the “sociopsychological infrastructure” of intractable conflict posits particular psychological processes presumed to operate in conflict settings, such as victimization and positive differentiation. In some cases, narrative investigators may wish to code and analyze narrative data according to these types of a priori thematic categories.

In sum, narrative approaches in political psychology are fundamentally concerned with meaning-making through stories. There is an emphasis on how language coheres to form a story that appeals to the narrative mode of thought (Bruner, 1986), thereby motivating individuals to act in ways that support or challenge a given political context. Like RDP and CDA, narrative analysis is intentionally unstandardized but follows a set of theoretical assumptions and an interpretive, hermeneutic approach to language and its deployment.

Conclusion

From the rhetoric of politicians to media representations of political conflict and social movements, words are vehicles for the control and regulation of thought, feeling, and behavior. The way in which language is used to describe and construct sensibility of the world and its distribution of power is the subject of inquiry for political psychologists who use narrative and

discourse. This concern with language can be linked both to classic social science perspectives that recognize the power of words to mediate our engagement with the material world (e.g., Mead, 1934), as well as more critical perspectives that emphasize the relationship between language and power (e.g., Foucault, 1972).

Since its emergence as an interdisciplinary project uniting politics and mind, political psychology has tended to employ methodological approaches consistent with the mainstream traditions of psychology and political science. The increasing rate at which political psychologists are calling upon narrative and discursive methods reveals a shift toward more critical epistemological perspectives, as well as toward a more critical interrogation of social and political categories constructed in and through language (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). The purpose of this chapter was to provide an overview of three specific traditions political psychologists have called upon when they invoke discourse or narrative. Our goal was to reveal the common intellectual origin of these perspectives in a thesis of linguistic mediation whereby persons and political contexts are mutually constituted.

Common to narrative and discourse approaches is a constructionist view of the world in which social and political categories are not considered natural human kinds but rather as themselves discourses about power and social hierarchy (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). Regardless of whether one's analysis occurs within the framework of RDP, CDA, or narrative, the empirical project of this strand of political psychology is to use methods that reveal language as a tool to perform action on the world (in RDP), maintain or advance hegemony (in CDA), and provide individuals with a sense of coherence as they take actions consistent with a particular storyline about the political world (in narrative). Hence narrative and discourse approaches have the potential to illuminate processes of social stasis and change as they unfold in linguistic practices,

including conversations and personal accounts, as well as attempts at political mobilization (e.g., speeches).

In the twenty-first century, political psychology stands to serve a vital public interest by providing the kind of interdisciplinary analysis that fuses levels and perspectives to interrogate politics in motion. In the context of an increasingly connected and globalized political world, methods that are able to reveal the way in which language is deployed to challenge or maintain inequalities and conflicts are vital (Nesbitt-Larking & Kinnvall, 2012). Narrative and discourse provide both conceptual frameworks and practical prescriptions for the interrogation of language, power, and social relations that stands to elevate the contributions of political psychology.

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