Applying the Narrative Dimensions Model

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The relatively recent surge of interest in narratives other than the prototypical narrative of personal experience has furthered the domain of linguistically-oriented narrative research in many important ways. However, it has also led to a dispersion of relevant information on the diversity of narrative genres and an insecurity of what should – and should not – be considered as narrative. In order to solve these issue, in a recent article, I proposed the Narrative Dimensions Model, in which I discern two three-dimensional clusters. The first revolves around the narrator and contains the dimensions of ownership, authorship and tellership, while the second focuses on the narrated events and consists of the dimensions of frequency, time and evaluation. Importantly, this model has not been 'tested' yet on real-life narratives and it has thus far not been shown how to apply the Narrative Dimensions Model to authentic stories in which narrators may mix, switch to, or oscillate between different genres to differing extents. The application of this model to the 'messy' business of real-life storytelling is exactly the purpose of this paper. In particular, I draw on stories told by famous business leaders during interviews or presentations that are available online via YouTube and I analyze the multi-dimensional nature of these authentic narratives, after which I position them in the Narrative Dimensions Model. Finally, I conclude this article by discussing the implications of using this six-dimensional approach to (non-prototypical) narratives.

Keywords: business leader interviews, multi-dimensionality, Narrative Dimensions Model, non-prototypical narratives

1 Introduction

In a recent article (Van De Mieroop 2021), I argued that the surge of interest in stories[1] other than the prototypical narrative of personal experience, as described by Labov and Waletzky (1966), has furthered the domain of narrative research in many important ways. In the last few decades, researchers have made significant progress in the study of a wide array of non-prototypical stories, describing not only these narratives' features but also their function in their local, interactional contexts and sometimes also in relation to wider, societal contexts (De Fina & Georgakopoulou 2015). These analyses have in some cases focused on a subset of non-prototypical narratives, such as Carranza's study of low-narrativity narratives, including habitual, counterfactual and hypothetical narratives (1998) and Georgakopoulou's work on small stories, which is an umbrella-term for, among others, projections, shared stories and breaking news stories (2007). Yet, in many other cases, other types of non-prototypical narrative genres are discussed in individual studies, such as chronicles (e.g., Linde 1993), narratives of vicarious experience (Norrick 2013), generic narratives (Baynham 2006), accounts (De Fina 2009) and so on. However positive this increasing amount of studies on the variety of narrative forms and types is, it at the

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[1] Even though some researchers make a distinction between the terms 'stories' and 'narratives', I use them interchangeably in this article.

same time resulted in a dispersion of information over a wide range of sources which made it hard to maintain an oversight of the gamut of narrative genres that have up till now been covered. Moreover, real-life narratives hardly every stick exactly to the 'rules' as described for these genres, especially as they often consist of a mix of these genres, or switch from one genre to another halfway through the telling (see e.g. Van De Mieroop, Miglbauer, & Chatterjee 2017). This lack of an overview as well as the grey area that many authentic narratives find themselves in, has in turn, led to a growing insecurity of what should, and should not, be considered as a narrative.

In order to deal with these issues, I first of all use the often-cited basic criterion of narrative – viz., as consisting of two narrative clauses that are characterized by a temporal progression (see e.g., Johnstone 2001; Norrick 2007) – to discern narratives from non-narratives, as such avoiding to overstretch the label 'narrative'. Secondly, I proposed a model that is based on the concept of dimensions that are "always *relevant* to a narrative, even if not elaborately manifest" (Ochs & Capps 2001: 19, italics in the original). Importantly, this model refrains from distinguishing *between* different genres, as such allowing for the multi-dimensionality of narratives to come to the fore more clearly and enabling researchers to fully capitalize on the locally emergent – and sometimes fluid – nature of the narratives they study. This model consists of six dimensions that can be grouped in two clusters, viz., one revolving around the narrator and one around the narrated events. The 'narrator'-cluster contains the dimensions of (1) ownership, (2) authorship, and (3) tellership, while the 'narrated events'-cluster consists of the dimensions of (1) frequency, (2) time, and (3) evaluation. These dimensions and their relations to the many narrative genres that have thus far been described, are extensively discussed in Van De Mieroop (2021), in which also their representation in two three-dimensional cubes is proposed (see figures 1 and 2 below).
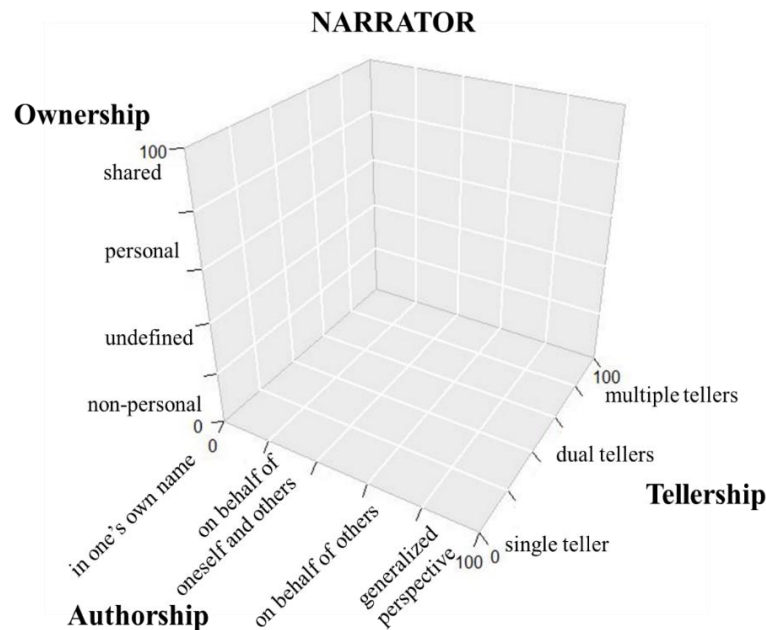
Figure 1. The 'narrator'-cluster of the Narrative Dimensions Model as presented in Van De Mieroop (2021)
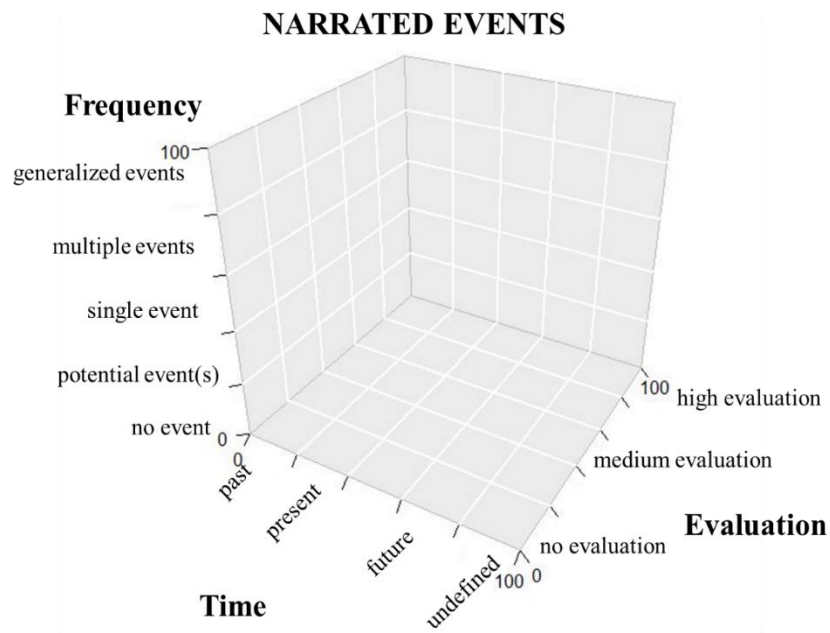
NARRATED EVENTS

Figure 2. The 'narrated events'-cluster of the Narrative Dimensions Model as presented in Van De Mieroop (2021)

Yet this model has not been 'tested' yet on real-life narratives and it has thus far not been shown how to apply the Narrative Dimensions Model to authentic stories in which narrators may mix, switch to, or oscillate between different genres to differing extents. The application of this model to the 'messy' business of real-life storytelling is exactly the purpose of this paper.

2 A mono-dimensional application of the Narrative Dimensions Model on authentic narratives

As discussed above, up till now, the Narrative Dimensions Model has only been discussed in relation to narrative genres in general, with a few hypothetical positionings of abstract examples of these genres in this model. However, as authentic narratives are infinitely more complex than imaginary model narratives, it is important to now test whether this model is useful for researchers working on actual stories. To do this, I draw on stories told by famous business leaders during interviews or presentations that are available online via YouTube. As extensively discussed elsewhere (Clifton 2018; Clifton, Schnurr, & Van De Mieroop 2020), such narratives by famous leaders are often considered to offer a direct route into the 'just whatness' of leadership, and it is thus not surprising that they are continuously produced as well as widely spread and viewed online. At the same time, they offer narrative – and other – researchers a wealth of data that is readily available for linguistic research and I will thus also draw on this huge corpus here for 'testing' the Narrative Dimensions Model.

In order to do this, I transcribed a selection of six fragments from this corpus using simplified conversation analytical transcription conventions (Jefferson 2004). I first analyze each story excerpt in relation to one of the six dimensions proposed in the model and I use a discourse analytical approach that integrates discursive as well as sequential features of these narratives into the analyses. Importantly, I particularly chose these excerpts because they each illustrate how a story can be significantly different from the prototypical narrative of personal experience. This was defined by Labov and Waletzky (1966: 13) as "one verbal technique for recapitulating past experience, in particular a technique of constructing narrative units which match the temporal sequence of that experience". This definition first of all highlights the specific focus of these narratives on events that *really* happened in the *past* which *the* – meaning, *single* – teller has *personally* experienced and is talking about *in his or her own name*. Finally, they also argue that stories not only have a referential function, but that the *evaluative* function is a crucial element of a 'normal' story as well (Labov & Waletzky 1966: 41). Yet, here I especially selected narratives which 'deviate' from these prototypical expectations in terms of at least one particular dimension. Of course, such a one-dimensional analysis does not do justice to the multi-dimensional nature of authentic narratives that this Narrative Dimensions Model aims to promote. This already becomes clear because excerpts from one data fragment occur twice in this discussion (see sections 2.1 and 2.3). Furthermore, this multi-dimensionality is brought to the fore even more explicitly in section 3, in which each fragment is positioned in the model with respect to all the dimensions. From this multi-dimensional discussion, conclusions are then drawn regarding this practical application of the Narrative Dimensions Model.

Thus, in the following subsections, I discuss each of the six dimensions of the model in relation to authentic narrative examples of which I provide the transcriptions as well as the urls of the YouTube videos (which were last checked on March 19th, 2020). Even though I refer to many labels of different narrative genres in this discussion, I cannot provide a full definition of these genres here for reasons of space. Hence, I refer to Van De Mieroop (2021) for a more thorough discussion of the variety of narrative genres that has been discussed thus far.

I now start with the discussion of the dimensions of the two three-dimensional clusters of the model. I first focus on the 'narrator'-cluster (see figure 1) and subsequently describe the dimensions of ownership, authorship and tellership.

2.1 The dimension of ownership

This dimension focuses on the question who 'had', and thus 'owns', the experience that is related in the story (Sacks 1992; Shuman 2015). Often, people tell stories they personally experienced, but they may also talk about events that they experienced together with others, or, alternatively, that they did not experience themselves. In the latter case, we are confronted with narratives of vicarious experience, of which I show an example here. This excerpt was selected from an interview with management gurus Jack and Suzy Welch, from which other fragments were already analyzed for a different purpose by

Clifton (2019). The story revolves around Jack and Suzy Welch's daughter (cf. 'she' in line 31) who gets a raise at work but does not know why. The story is related by Suzy Welch and the excerpt starts with the discussion of the main events, or, in Labov and Waletzky's terminology, the 'complicating action' (Labov & Waletzky 1966).

Excerpt 1. Story by Suzy Welch, available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cp-vmk27udy

```
31  SW   so erm ↑then one da:y (.) she gets a raise
32       (.) in the ↑mail (.) in her paycheck
33       and she calls us and she's ↑ecs:tAtic
34       second only to us being ecstatic
35       (but) she got a raise
36       and she said >i got a raise i got a raise<
37       and we said well why did you get the raise
38       and she doesn't have any idea why↓
39       so: erm because she's related to us
40       we said to her you have to go in
41       and find out why you got this raise
42       no no i don't want to piss him off
43       we said you've ↑got to find out
44       why you got the raise
45       so finally under (.) extreme pressure
46       she went in into his office
47       we can only imagine it was (sort of) like
48       °hi sorry to bother you erm°
49       and so she said i got a raise
50       i'm really happy erm
51       can you tell me why (.)
52       erm and he looked at her
53       and erm said to her me↓rit (.)
54       period that's it
```

In the initial lines of the story, a quick summary of the vicarious experience is provided. Interestingly, from line 33 onwards, the story events shift to a phone call between the story protagonist, viz., the daughter, and Suzy and Jack Welch. As such, the ownership of the story events shift back to the narrator, who now not only has first-hand experience of the events, but who also shares this ownership with her husband – who is co-present during the telling of the story. This high degree of shared ownership is also visible in the story, as the phone interaction is consistently related from a collective perspective (cf. the we/us pronominal form in lines 33-44). Moreover, the reported exchange is seemingly literally replayed before the story recipients' eyes, as the repetition in line 36 and the prosodic emphasis in line 43 illustrate, thus demonstrating the narrator's extended knowledge of these events that she co-experienced with her husband. This then results in a new shift in line 45, back to a narrative of vicarious experience in which the protagonist goes to her boss to ask why she got the raise (lines 46-54). On the one hand, this part of the story is strongly intertwined with the previous part, as the parents' encouragements are the reason for the daughter's actions. This is also implicitly referred to in line 45 ('extreme pressure'). On the other hand, it is also clear that the narrator does not have ownership of this part of the story, as she was not even a witness of these events. Nevertheless, this does not stop Suzy Welch from adding a few performance features, such as

a quieter, but also more high-pitched voice for the introductory turns by the daughter when she engages in the interaction with her boss (see e.g. line 48). Interestingly, this lack of first-hand experience is referred to explicitly prior to this part of the story (in line 47), in which the upcoming performance of the reported exchange between the daughter and the boss is framed as imaginary. As such, Suzy Welch prevents her general credibility as a narrator of a story of vicarious experience from being damaged.

So we could observe in this excerpt that the ownership of the story events shifts back and forth between the extremes of this continuum, viz., from a narrative of vicarious experience to a shared narrative, and that the narrator sometimes signals this changing degree of story ownership explicitly (cf. line 47). I will come back to this story in section 2.3.

2.2 The dimension of authorship

Drawing on Goffman's concept of the 'production format', this second dimension makes a distinction between narrators who assume the role of 'principal' of their story, versus those who act as 'author', viz., as "the agent who scripts the lines" or even of the 'animator' or "sounding box" (Goffman 1979: 17), but who may speak on behalf of others, in- or excluding themselves. A well-known example of stories in which narrators shift away from the 'principal'-role on this authorship dimension, is when generic stories are told, often using generalized actors as story protagonists (Baynham 2006: 383) or drawing on the generic you-form (Stirling & Manderson 2011). We see an example of such a story in the following excerpt that was told by Jeff Bezos in an interview by his brother Mark.

Excerpt 2. Story by Jeff Bezos, available at https://youtu.be/hq89wyzojfs

```
 1 MB    the value of resourcefulness [right
 2 JB                                 [yeah
 3 MB    and erm an[d
 4 JB              [@@@=
 5 MB    =£self-re£liance what how do you
 6       how do you apply that to erm you know the work
 7       that you do on a daily basis how do you-
 8 JB    well i think you kn- know there are a lot of
 9       entrepreneurs and and people pursuing
10       dreams and passions in this (    )
11       you know you always you you the-
12       the whole point of erm of moving things forward is
13       you run into problems you run into failures
14       things don't work
15       you have to back up and try again
16       each one of those times
17       when you have a setback
18       and you back up and you try again
19       you're using resourcefulness
20       you're using self-reliance
21       you're trying to (.) invent your way out of a box
```

After a general topic introduction (lines 1, 3 and 5), Mark Bezos asks his brother a personally oriented question (lines 6-7). Yet, after a few lines of hesitations and reformulations (lines 8-11), Jeff Bezos moves away from this personal frame and adopts a generic perspective. He then initiates a story – as shown by the temporal progression of the events in lines 13-15 – in which it is clear from the start that there is no specific anecdote that will be related, but rather that a general point will be made on the basis of a generalized procedure for 'moving things forward' (line 12). The generic nature of this story is further underlined by the consistent use of the present time narrative as well as the 'you'-form, that "indexes the self as generically or commonly like others in that position", thus establishing "a sense of shared agency" (O'Connor 1994: 47-48). Hence, in short, in this story, the narrator takes up authorship on behalf of an entire, yet undefined, group and refrains from adopting the role of the sole "party to whose position the words attest" (Goffman 1979: 17). This narrative thus forms an example of a story in which the narrator does not take up the role of 'principal', as the teller of a prototypical narrative of personal experience would do.

2.3 The dimension of tellership

As people often jointly experience events, they may share story ownership. In such cases, it is quite logical that when these 'experiencers' are co-present, the events are told by sharing tellership as well, e.g., by establishing dual or multiple tellership constellations. We already saw an example of shared story ownership in excerpt 1, in which Suzy Welch told the story of a phone call with herself and her husband who is co-present during the interview. It is thus not surprising that even though the main part of the story is told by Suzy Welch as a single teller (see excerpt 1), her husband, the late Jack Welch, also contributes to the storytelling. Actually, prior to excerpt 1, it is Jack Welch who initiates the story about their daughter as an illustration of the general point that he is making about 'bosses that don't have the generosity gene' (lines 1-2).

> **Excerpt 3a.** Story by Jack and Suzy Welch, available at
> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cp-vmk27udy

```
1   JW   we talk about bosses
2        that don't have the generosity gene
3        that aren't generous about their praise
4        generous about their rewards
5        steal ideas and take them up as their own
6        all those things
7        so you've got to put timetables on those situations
8        but it's really is the boss' job
9        we have a daughter
10       you might tell this story °of° (.)
11       this one story °°( [   )°° ]
12  SW                  [yeah .h] so we have a-
13       one of our daughters works in l a
```

In this short excerpt, we can observe that after a general description of the topic in lines 1-8, Jack Welch abruptly initiates an illustration by referring to their daughter (line 9).

He then immediately hands the turn to his wife, addressing her directly ('you', line 10) and instructing her to tell a particular story (cf. 'this story', line 10, 'this one story', line 11). When Suzy Welch takes up the turn, she first formulates an affirmative particle ('yeah', line 12) and then initially mirrors the formulation of her husband's story initiation ('we have a', line 12 cf. line 9). Yet, immediately afterwards, she reformulates the orientation phase of the story (line 13). In this orientation phase, she describes that their daughter is insecure about her performance as her boss does not discuss it explicitly with her. Then Suzy Welch describes that their daughter thus depends on her boss' mood as an indication of his evaluation of her work, as we see in lines 22-25 in the following excerpt.

Excerpt 3b. Story by Jack and Suzy Welch, available at
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cp-vmk27udy

```
22  SW   her- her her sense of her performance
23       ↑rises and falls on her bos- boss' mood (.) ok
24       so he's in a good mood she's doing great
25       [he's in a (ba-)
26  JW  [and we get a phone call=
27  SW  =yes so=
28  JW  =if the boss grunts we get a phone call=
29  SW  =@@ £(     )the phone calls and the texts£
30       are related to his moods
31       so erm ↑then one da:y (.) she gets a raise
```

When Suzy Welch sets up this contrast of the boss' good mood (line 24), it is clear that the second part (viz., the boss' bad mood) is still coming up (see the broken-off turn in line 25). Yet, at that point, Jack Welch overlaps her turn by adding an additional aspect to the story, namely that the daughter phones her parents in these cases (line 26). Even though Suzy Welch latches on the start of a concluding turn ('yes so', line 27), Jack Welch re-iterates and extends his earlier addition in the subsequent line. Then Suzy Welch affiliates with this turn by laughing and she picks up Jack Welch's addition by summarizing it (lines 29-30). Finally, she repeats the concluding conjunction 'so' (line 31 cf. line 27) and then initiates the next phase of her story, namely the complicating action (see excerpt 1).

So we could observe that this story is told in a dual tellership constellation, in which Suzy Welch takes care of most of the storytelling, but in which Jack Welch has the crucial role of initiating the story (excerpt 3a), while also contributing additional elements (excerpt 3b). It is important to note, however, that shared story ownership is not a requirement for dual tellership. The following excerpt clearly shows this. It comes from an interview with Indra Nooyi, in which the interviewer, rather than implicitly prompting the interviewee to tell a particular story, starts initiating this story in her place, as we see in lines 1-3.

Excerpt 4. Story by Indra Nooyi, available at
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5lm3q5azqg4

```
1    IR    when you became the president of pepsi
2          you came home one day and your mother was there
```

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3          and she asked you to get some milk=
4    IN    =m[m
5    IR      [and er- >well maybe you could tell
6          the story better than i could<
7    IN    well you know it was way back in two thousand and
8          i was just informed about nine thirty in the night
9          from a phone call that i was gonna be president
10         of the company and so i went home
11         because i was working on the quaker oats deal
12         to tell my ↑family
13         that i was gonna be president of pepsico
14         and i walked in the house and mom opens the door
15         she was living with me at that time .h and
16         i said mom i got ↑news for you and
17         she said well before your news go get some milk
```

In the initial lines of the excerpt, the interviewer initiates a narrative of vicarious experience that revolves around the story recipient as the protagonist (cf. the you-form in lines 1-3). Telling such a narrative about a co-present protagonist is of course rather tricky due to the mismatch in story ownership (cf. the first dimension). The interviewer thus quickly breaks off and hands the floor to the interviewee, explicitly acknowledging that she has more storytelling 'ability' – and hence storytelling rights – than he does (cf. lines 5-6). Indra Nooyi accepts this invitation and re-embarks on the telling of this story by repeating and elaborating on the information that was already provided (lines 7-17). Hence, this story was clearly co-constructed by the interviewer and the interviewee. This is actually often the case, as participants in interviews tend to agree on the topics that will be discussed prior to the actual interaction. Of course, these arrangements rarely surface so explicitly as was the case here. Yet, this excerpt clearly illustrates that even though it may usually not be visible, interview narratives often result from some degree of co-construction with the interviewers, as many studies have drawn attention to before (see e.g. Van De Mieroop & Clifton 2014).

In the following subsections, I turn to the dimensions of the 'narrated events'-cluster (see figure 2), namely: frequency, time and evaluation.

2.4 The dimension of frequency

This dimension is concerned with the frequency of the events that form the focal point of the narrative. These are situated on a continuum from events that have not happened – viz,, disnarrated events – or that could (have) happen(ed) but of which it is uncertain that they do (did) – viz., hypothetical events – over single and multiple events to generalized experiences. Of the latter, we saw an example in excerpt 2, in which Jeff Bezos recounted a generalized sequence of events of which the exact frequency is not only unclear, but also irrelevant. In this section, we show another, rather different, example of a story in which frequency is a crucial element, as the narrative revolves around the contrast between a single, exceptional event and multiple, habitual events in the narrator's life.

Excerpt 5. Story by Phuti Mahanyele, available at
https://youtu.be/mmkmwunlmfe

```
 1    PM    so it is important that even as we are continuing
 2          to try and excel in the roles that we're doing
 3          that we're actually taking care of ourselves
 4          and i know i had a- bad experience of that
 5          because i was very much (.)
 6          and i still am very much in love with my job @ erm
 7          it's a bit of a problem @@ in that you know
 8          when we would have family functions or anything
 9          i would always be away or
10          i would be busy with something else at work erm
11          and i ↑loved it you know on weekends
12          i would have to sneak into the office
13          i'd pretend i'd gone shopping for something
14          and then i'd quickly go into the office
15          and send some emails that y-
16          i just ↑loved being at work so much
17          and then one day
18          i was on my way to a board meeting in london
19          and i suddenly had this intense headache
20          and i'm i was never someone to ever get sick
21          i couldn't understand what this was
22          anyway the long and short of it was that (.)
23          i'd had (this) a stroke
24          and here i was
25          this person who had always been healthy
26          i'd always you know i was always running and exercising
27          and all of this and taking care of myself
28          taking vitamins and all of this e:rm
29          and yet here i was being you know erm
30          finding myself being a patient in a hospital erm
```

In the first few lines, the narrator formulates the story abstract from a general, collective perspective (cf. the we-form in lines 1-3) and then shifts to a personal perspective in line 4, in which she announces the story of a 'bad experience' she had in relation to this story abstract. Then the narrator embarks on the story's orientation phase (lines 5-16), which she illustrates by means of series of typical actions, which, together, form a habitual narrative that highlights the iterativity of these events (lines 8-15). The typical features of this type of narrative, viz., the use of 'would' and the emphasis on the recurrent time frame ('always', 'on weekends'), contribute to building "a holistic picture of the past that speaks for itself" (Carranza 1998: 305). This habitual frame is then broken off in line 17, in which a single event time frame is initiated ('then one day'), followed by a more specific orientation phase (line 18), an elliptic complicating action (lines 19-23) and a resolution (lines 24-30). Yet, interestingly, this narrative of personal experience is intertwined with another habitual narrative about the narrator's health (line 20 and lines 24-28), which is again characterized by repeated activities that emphasize the protagonist's good physical condition.

Thus, even though the main point of the story revolves around the single experience of having had a stroke, the narrator contrasts this event with the habitual experiences of working too hard and taking good care of her health. Importantly, it is through this contrast, that the story is evaluated from a particular perspective. Hence both the narrative of personal experience and these habitual narratives are equally indispensable for making the story's point, thus illustrating the importance of the frequency dimension for narratives.

2.5 The dimension of time

While prototypical narratives of personal experience revolve around events in the past, there are of course many alternative temporal situations, ranging from present, over future to generalized or undefined time frames. Again, Jeff Bezos' narrative (see excerpt 2) is an example of a story situated in the latter time frame. In this section, I show a brief example of a story in a future time frame told by Sheryl Sandberg during a presentation about overcoming the gender bias (cf. lines 1-2).

> **Excerpt 6**. Story by Sheryl Sandberg, available at
> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ltzpvli3hdc

```
1    SS  so what can you do↑
2        what's the bias interrupter↑
3        this one (.) you can fix
4        the next time you hear a woman is too aggressive
5        too ambitious political
6        not as well-liked by her peers
7        you understand it you diagnose it
8        get it down to the specifics
9        and this weekend go to a play↓ground
10       someone will call a little girl bo↓ssy
11       probably her parents
12       you walk up with a big smile and you say
13       that little girl's not bossy (.)
14       that little girl has executive leadership ↓skills
```

The narrator initiates two brief advice stories here (lines 4-8 and lines 9-14) that are situated in a future time frame and that both revolve around the recipients – and potentially also other, undefined people – as the story protagonists of the future events (cf. the consistent use of 'you'). Interestingly, these future events are described as factual and, especially in the second story, fairly specific, but it is clear that they are hypothetical events that should be interpreted as making a general point. So in this story, both the stories' future time frame and their frequency as factually sounding events – even though they are clearly hypothetical – contribute to the rhetorical effect of this excerpt, which culminates in the story climax in line 14 that is treated as laughable by the audience. We thus saw how narrators can play with the time frame of their story to generate a particular effect.

2.6 The dimension of evaluation

Finally, the dimension of evaluation which was described as crucial for transforming a sequence consisting of a mere "a-then-b relationship" into "the more complex normal form" of a *real* narrative (Labov & Waletzky 1966: 41), may also show some variation. While some narratives' degree of evaluation may exceed that of the stereotypical narrative of personal experience (i.c. the account, see e.g. De Fina 2009), in other cases narratives may also 'underperform' in this respect. This is the case for chronicles which typically lack an explicit "single unifying evaluative point" (Linde 1993: 85), but which nevertheless tend to have an – or several – implicit evaluative point(s) (De Fina 2003: 98). We see an example of this in the following excerpt, in which Lucy Quist describes that she was on holiday in Ghana and almost coincidentally landed a high level job at Airtel Ghana, of which she later became CEO.

Excerpt 7. Story by Lucy Quist, available at https://youtu.be/ywhux_ryf8q

```
1    LQ    so i did this test (.)
2          got called back into an interview
((3 lines omitted with information about the exact job
description))
6          i get interviewed by the- the-
7          the ceo for the company in ghana
8          and then he says my ↑boss needs to interview you
9          i interview with his boss
10         and his boss says no no no no no
11         you're not going to work for this other guy erm
12         who is running erm ghana
13         you're gonna work for me i'm running ↑africa
14         and you're gonna work with me across africa=
15   IR    =wow
16   LQ    so i went from holida:y in may
17         to erm interviews and getting a job
18         within erm what was pro- probably
19         like- like a week right
20         and then i went from erm (.) may (.)
21         to erm g- er showing up being o- offered the job
22         to july i was there working
```

In this excerpt, we see that the story strongly focuses on the temporal organization of the information, which is typical of chronicles (cf. Linde 1993: 86). So at the start, the first action (the test, line 1) is mentioned, after which the second (the first interview, lines 2 and 6-7) and third action (the second interview, line 9) rapidly follow, as well as the result of these actions, viz., getting hired for a higher level job than the one the protagonist originally applied for (lines 10-14). This story is then concluded by extensively drawing attention to the time frame of the sequence of events, which is once more summarized in the final part of this excerpt (lines 16-22). Throughout this excerpt, the narrator never explicitly evaluates the exceptional nature of these events, but it is clear – also from the reaction of the interviewer in line 15 – that this is (one of) the implicit point(s) of this story. So in this section we saw an example of a narrative in which the evaluative point

is understated in comparison to what is generally expected of a prototypical narrative, thus showing that there is also variation in relation to this final dimension of the 'narrated events'-cluster.

**3 A multi-dimensional view on authentic narratives in the Narrative Dimensions Model**

Importantly, as I have argued in the introduction, the purpose of the Narrative Dimensions Model is precisely to tease out the multi-dimensionality of narratives and to draw attention to the fact that narratives are situated in a particular position on *all* these dimensions. Hence, I now provide visual representations within the model of the six excerpts analyzed above, thus not only situating them on *one* dimension – as was largely the case in the preceding discussion – but on *all six* dimensions, of which the interrelated position is represented by a star in the 'narrator'- and 'narrated events'-figures. As such, I aim to show that this model draws attention to a variety of features – as captured in the dimensions – that are relevant for all narratives.

In the following figure, we see the representation of Suzy and Jack Welch's story that was discussed in excerpt 1 as well as in excerpts 3a and 3b. This story's dual tellership and its oscillation between the extreme ends of the ownership continuum was already discussed above, but it is also a remarkable story because it shifts between assuming a collective or a vicarious perspective on the authorship dimension. Furthermore, regarding the events that are narrated, the story is relatively close to a prototypical narrative of past experience that is evaluated to a medium extent, but its events' frequency also shifts between habitual and unique – much in the same vein as Phuti Mahanyele's story discussed in excerpt 5.
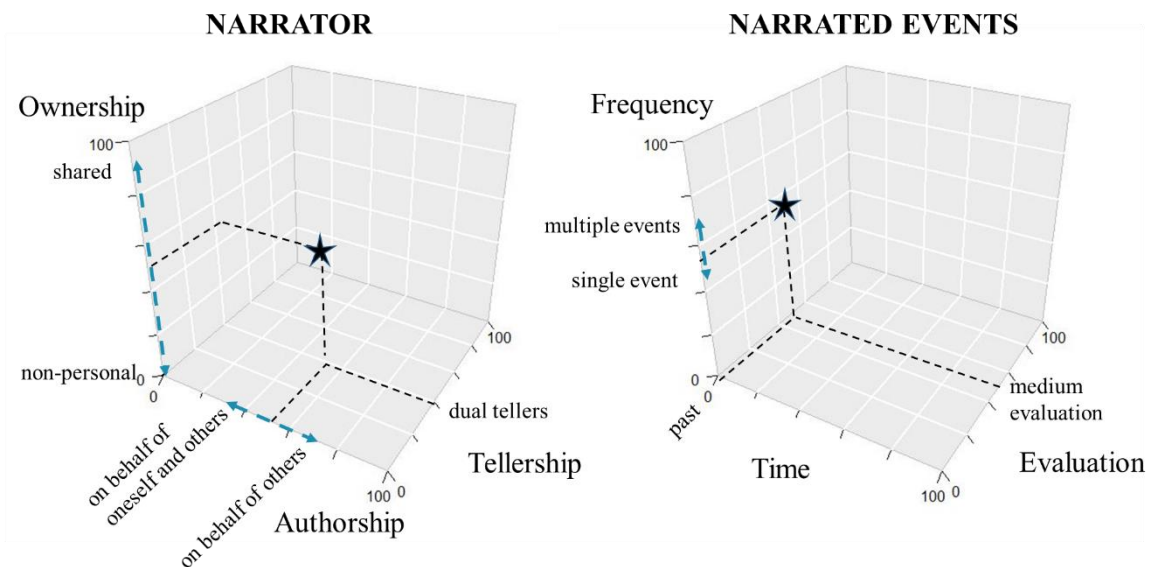

Figure 3. Visual representation of Suzy and Jack Welch's story (excerpts 1, 3a and 3b)

Then, in figure 4, we see that Jeff Bezos' story is situated on the undefined, generalized ends of the continuum of four dimensions, thus clearly demonstrating the highly generic nature of his narrative.
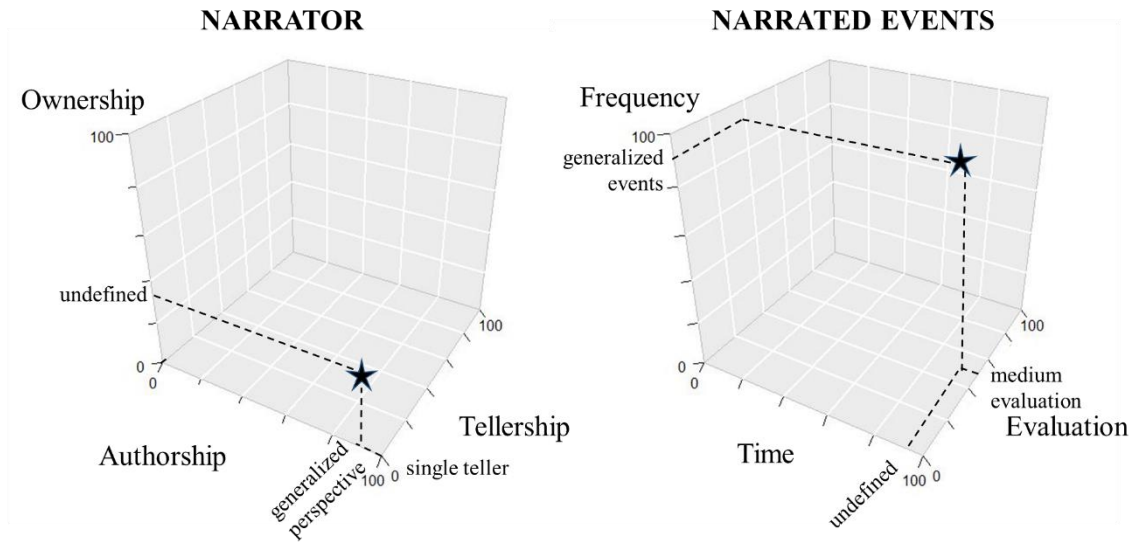

Figure 4. Visual representation of Jeff Bezos' story (excerpt 2)

In figure 5, we observe that Indra Nooyi's story's dual tellership also affects the oscillation in terms of the dimensions of ownership and authorship. Regarding narrated events, this story is situated at the point of a prototypical narrative of personal experience.
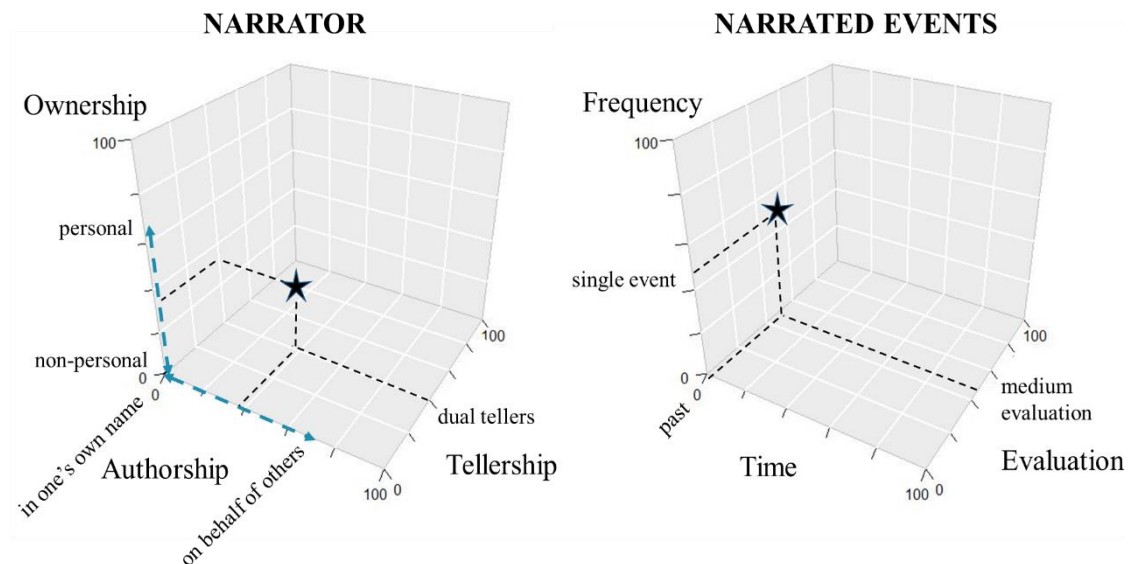

Figure 5. Visual representation of Indra Nooyi's story (excerpt 4)

In turn, Phuti Mahanyele's story is situated at the point of a prototypical narrative of personal experience in terms of the narrator dimensions. Other than regarding frequency (as was discussed above), this is also the case for the narrated events.
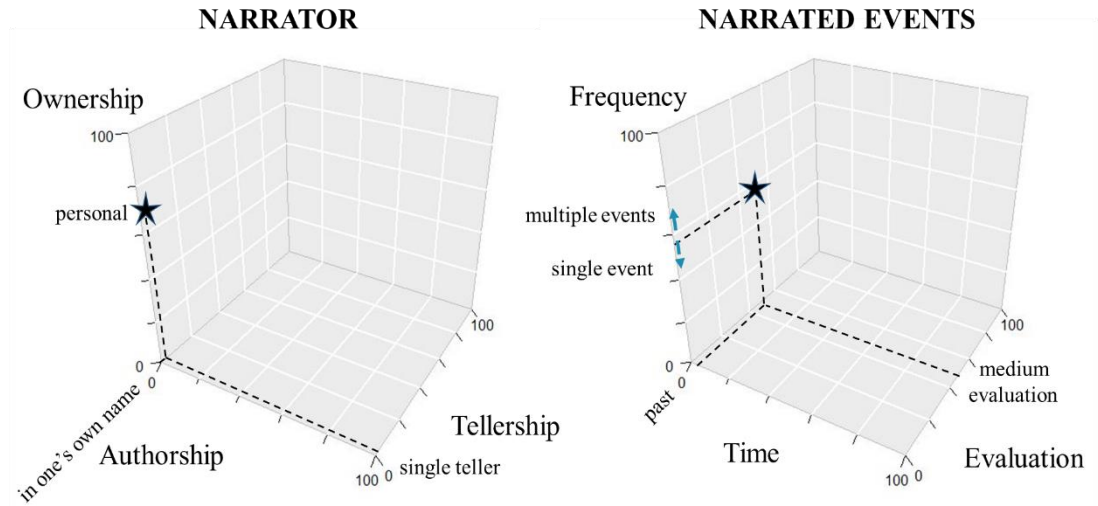
Figure 6. visual representation of Phuti Mahanyele's story (excerpt 5)

Sheryl Sandberg's two brief future-oriented narratives are interesting in many ways, as regarding narrated events, they concern potential future events of which most of the evaluation is implied, thus showing a narrative that is quite different from the prototypical narrative of personal experience. This is also clear in relation to the narrator dimension, as Sandberg, as a single teller, addresses the audience – and potentially also others – as story protagonists who thus hold hypothetical story ownership. At the same time, she thus assumes authorship on behalf of these audience members, as well as of a more generalized group that is potentially included in this you-form. This thus results in the following position on the two clusters of the Narrative Dimensions Model.
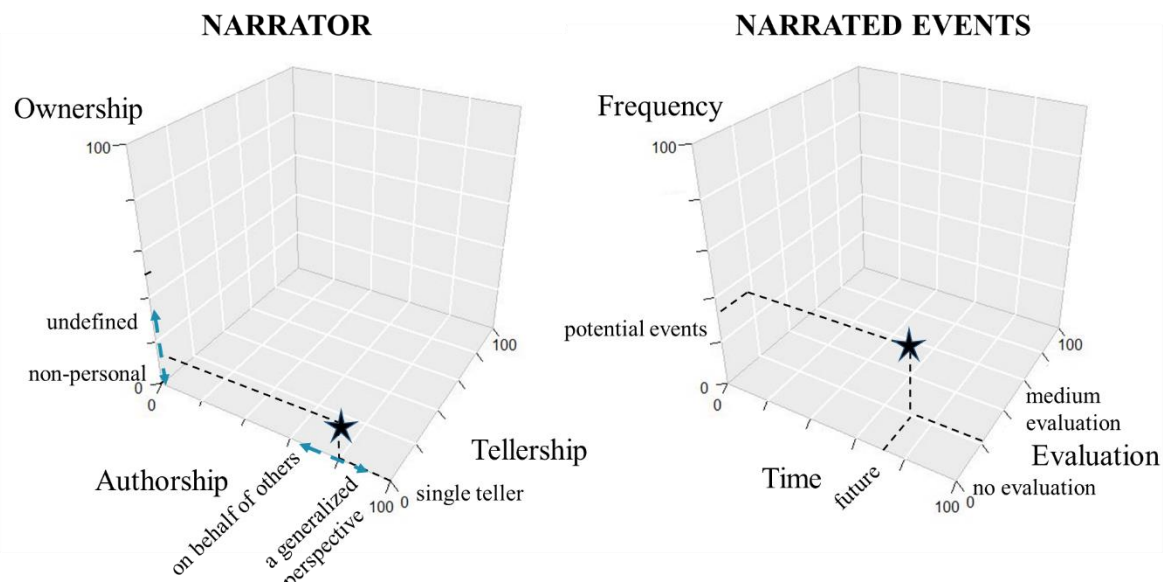
Figure 7. visual representation of Sheryl Sandberg's story (excerpt 6)

Finally, Lucy Quist's story is quite similar to the narrative of personal experience as well, especially in relation to the narrator dimension, but it differs as its evaluation is left implicit, as was discussed above.
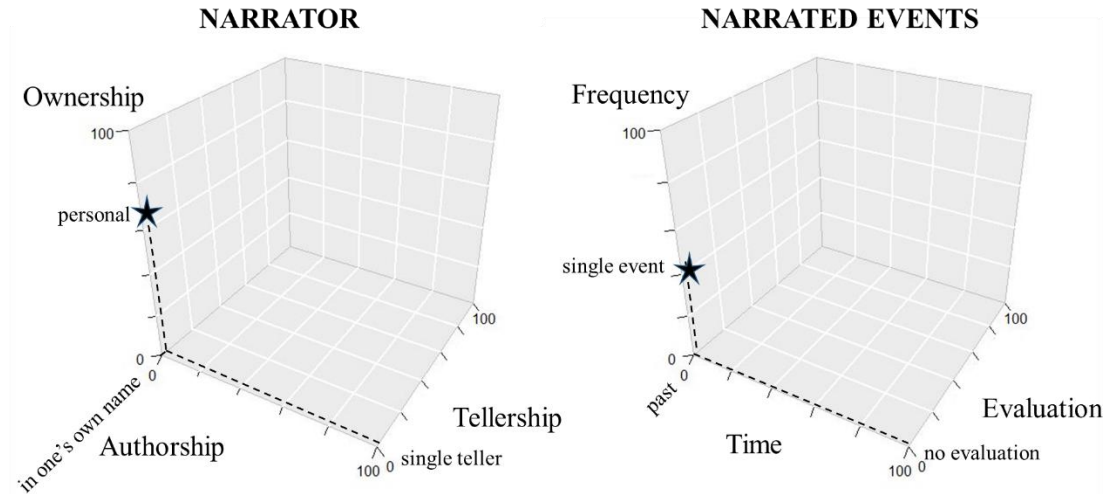
Figure 8. visual representation of Lucy Quist's story (excerpt 7)

These visual representations have not only shown the individual narratives' position in the two three-dimensional clusters, but they have also shown in which respects some of these stories are fluid, shifting between different positions in one or more dimensions from one part of the story to the next. As such, the locally constructed, and sometimes interactionally negotiated, nature of these real life narratives is brought to the fore explicitly by means of the Narrative Dimensions Model.

4 Conclusions

In this paper, I applied the Narrative Dimensions Model that I have thus far only discussed from a theoretical perspective (see Van De Mieroop 2021). In particular, I drew on a small dataset of six authentic stories that were told by famous business gurus and that are publicly available via YouTube. While these stories were each remarkable in one way or another – which I related to a dimension of the model in the discussion in section 2 – I also argued and demonstrated in section 3 that the main advantage of this model is that it does justice to the multi-dimensional nature of narratives.

By capitalizing on this multi-dimensionality, the model overcomes the dilemma that researchers often face when having to categorize a narrative as *either* a generic narrative, *or* a hypothetical narrative, as Sheryl Sandberg's narrative for example (see excerpt 6); or, in the case of Suzy and Jack Welch's story, as *either* a narrative of vicarious experience, *or* a shared narrative. Many narratives may be both at the same time, or may shift back and forth between different positions on the same continuum. This is something that is easily overlooked when researchers aim to classify a narrative within a particular genre.

Yet, I argue that this fluidity is exactly one of the most interesting aspects of storytelling, as narrators – often unconsciously – tend to make these choices not by coincidence. Often this happens for a reason, related, for example, to expectations in the wider social context, to the interactional demands of the local storytelling context, to intra-narrative features, such as dealing with issues of storytelling rights by emphasizing the sharedness of certain events while narrating a story revolving mainly around vicarious experience (see excerpt 1), and so on and so forth. Hence, it is often in the choices, little shifts and changes that narrators make in the course of their narration that certain issues may come to the fore most clearly. By teasing these out by means of the Narrative Dimensions Model, these little 'deviations' may be uncovered more systematically and may thus be more easily available for critical scrutiny.

Finally, in this paper I positioned these real life narratives in the Narrative Dimensions Model to show the relevance of these six dimensions as well as to demonstrate how the model capitalizes on the importance of changes and shifts within these narratives as explained above. Yet, it is not the aim of this paper to incite researchers to *always* position *each* narrative within the two three-dimensional clusters of this model, as I did here. Rather, it is a call to stimulate reflection regarding the particular dimensions that are marked for one narrative or another, and to encourage researchers' interest in the fluidity of real-life narratives and in the creativity with which narrators oscillate on the continua of these dimensions. As such, I hope that the Narrative Dimensions Model helps to do justice to the crucial importance of the 'messiness' of authentic storytelling.

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