American is as American Does:
A Narrative Approach to Nationality as a Social Construct

by

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ABSTRACT

While I was living in Russia, I noticed significant differences in the ways people interacted with me there compared to the ways they interacted with me in America. Further, I noticed that this difference in my social interactions in both countries influenced both my behaviour, and even my sense of self. Following these observations, I became interested in two important questions: how do people understand and express their own identities, and how do social contexts affect these processes? In order to begin to answer these questions, I decided to research into the foundational concepts of social identification and to write a thesis on this topic. Moreover, given that my personal experiences are pertinent to the questions I hope to discuss in this project, I decided that writing an autoethnographic narrative and analysing it would be the most appropriate method to look for evidence in my own experiences that nationality is a social construct.

The main topics of this project are the semiotic (symbol-driven) construction of an identity, how these same semiotic processes mediate social identification, and how these semiotic processes are dependent upon the sociocultural contexts which inform them. This project is presented in six parts: methodology, theoretical background, sociohistorical / sociocultural background, autoethnographic narratives, discussion, and conclusions. The goals of this project are to explore how analysis of autoethnographic narratives can be useful in the study of the points of contact between sociohistorical / sociocultural contexts and social identification, and also, if not to answer, to better understand the questions which prompted me to write this project.

АННОТАЦИЯ

Пока я жил в России, я заметил значительные различия в том, как люди ко мне относились в России по сравнению с тем, как люди ко мне относились в Америке. Ещё я заметил, что эта разница в отношениях между мной и людьми в обеих странах сильно влияла на моё поведение, и даже на моё отношение к себе. Вследствие этих наблюдений у меня возникли два интересных вопроса: как люди понимают свои собственные идентичности, и как влияют социальные контексты на это понимание? Чтобы ответить на эти вопросы, я решил изучить основные концепции социальной идентификации и написать работу на эту тему. При этом, чтобы не скрывать мою позицию участника данного исследования, и чтобы ретроспективно включить личный опыт переживания важных для данного исследования процессов, я решил написать авто-этнографические нарративы о ситуациях и контекстах моей социальной идентификации в России и Америке, и сделать дискурсивный анализ этих нарративов. Я ищу доказательства того, что национальность – это социальная конструкция.

Конкретно, темой данной работы является семиотические (обусловленные символами) процессы конструкции индивидуальных и национальных идентичностей, как эти семиотические процессы влияют на социальную идентификацию индивидов, и как на те самые семиотические процессы рефлексивно влияют социокультурные контексты. Данная работа разделена на шесть частей: методики, базовые концепции, социо-исторический / социокультурный фон, авто-этнографические нарративы и анализы, дискуссия, и выводы. Практической целью данного проекта является исследование пользы анализа авто-этнографических нарративов в исследовании точек связи между социо-историческими / социокультурными контекстами и социальной идентификацией. Моя личная заинтересованность в данной работе заключается в том, что в результате проделанного анализа я надеюсь получить ответы на вышеуказанные вопросы.

CONTENTS

There have been many versions of this work, but what you hold in your hand (or see on your screen) is the closest to my original intent for this work. I spent an embarrassingly long time trying to make this work exceed other people's expectations, and consequently, spent an embarrassingly long time considering this work to be sub-par. I allowed the criticisms of others and my own opinions of this work's limitations to colour the way I conducted it and the ways I viewed it. For a long time, I even allowed myself to think that this work was unworthy of seeing the light of day. But now that I have realised that I have an argument worth making, I understand that no matter how I make it, it will mean something to someone. Throughout the three-year-long process of completing this work, I have learned that academic work is rarely ever complete, and never perfect. There are always new aspects to consider, new notions to explore, and new ways to look at the same old data. However incomplete or imperfect this work ends up being, I would ask that you stay for a while. If for nothing else, I hope you'll stick around for an interesting discussion.

CHAPTER I
1.1 – INTRODUCTION

"What did you like most about Russia?"
                              "It was…quiet there."

Throughout my childhood, I noticed that people could affect the ways in which others interacted with them, either by wearing specific clothing, listening to specific music, saying things a specific way, or speaking a specific language. When I went to Russia as a foreign exchange student, I quickly noticed that everything had changed. It was almost as if *I* was a different person, even though nothing physical about me had really changed at all. What *had* changed was that I was in a new country, I was speaking a language that was new to me, and the things people had assumed about me in America were suddenly gone, replaced with new assumptions. Not only were the assumptions and 'social signals' different, but so were the feelings they evoked in me. These changes in assumptions and social signals were sometimes empowering; at times they were even soothing. However, when other American exchange students came to the university I was studying at in Russia, those same 'American' assumptions about me came back, and I found myself struggling against them. When I returned to America, these differences in assumptions and their connections to those around me continued to occupy my mind, and I wanted to understand the dynamics of what I had experienced.

Let me begin by saying that I am approaching this work from a social constructionist's point of view, which is to say that this work is founded on the notion that language and practice are constitutive of our social world (Bruner 1991, 2004; Bucholtz & Hall 2006; Butler 1988; Meyerhoff 2011). Before beginning this work, I was intrigued by Judith Butler's (1988) ideas about how performance is a big part of gender identity, and how gender was not something that a

person *naturally* possesses, but a social construct that someone *performs*; something that someone *does* or *embodies* every day. This notion of not simply *having* identities, but instead continually *maintaining* them through our actions, resonated with me. For me, the essence of Butler's ideas about performance and maintenance of identity extended beyond gender. Indeed, there are many aspects to an individual's identity, and thus many identities that a person can perform or have ascribed to them. Surely, this is a process which involves social constructs *other than gender* that help to organise the possible identities individuals in a given community can embody? I wondered if the differences I had experienced between my identities in different groups in Russia versus America was due to something I was *doing*, or simply due to differences in the ways I was perceived. I wondered if, perhaps, it was a combination of the two. Because I had experienced such a stark contrast in my own identities across different social groups, I also wanted to learn more about how identity is enacted and construed.

There has been extensive research into identity construction in many different fields. In the interest of brevity, I will focus here on studies conducted within the fields of sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology. A major early foray into the linguistic construction of identity, for example, was conducted in 1963, when sociolinguist William Labov showed that certain speakers' use or non-use of a specific set of two diphthong vowels on the island of Martha's Vineyard were an important component to expressing orientation *towards* or *away from* a 'traditional islander' identity. Labov's 1963 study made a small but significant divergence from the impersonal interview and self-reporting survey methods traditionally employed in social dialectology. The time he spent getting to know the people of the island and trying to understand how participants' identities might influence their language production (with or without their knowledge), rather than simply asking participants to tell him what words they used for various objects, represented the first steps away from dialectology and towards employing ethnographic methods within sociolinguistic study.

Although Labov's study of Martha's Vineyard, as well as the studies he conducted on the production of (r) in the Lower East Side of New York City (Labov 1966[2006]), deal with speakers shifting their style of speech (*i.e.* changing the relative concentration of a sociolinguistic variable in their speech depending upon the amount of attention they are paying to it), his studies were limited to the shifting of style within one context: most often, the sociolinguistic interview. In 2007, sociolinguist Robert Podesva explored how a speaker's expression of their identity can shift between different social contexts. Podesva (2007) conducted a case study of a man called Heath, who was asked to record himself speaking in various social contexts (*e.g.* a casual barbeque with friends, a call to his father, a doctor-patient encounter in which Heath, a medical student, is the doctor). In each of these contexts, Heath was able to control the differentiation in the pitch of his voice, using falsetto to embody a diva persona in the casual context with friends, and not using falsetto in situations where Heath did not want to express the diva persona. Through this work, Podesva (2007) showed that not only sounds, but

pitch range can be used to express and maintain aspects of a speaker's identity, and that these sounds or ways of expressing sounds can be employed differently across social contexts.

While the above sociolinguistic studies have shown that linguistic practice is a very important factor in the expression and maintenance of identities, studies conducted within its sister field, linguistic anthropology, have shown that linguistic practices are far from the only strategies used in identity construction. In the late 1980s, for example, Penelope Eckert (1989) conducted an ethnographically informed sociolinguistic study of the speech of adolescents at Belten High school in Detroit. For her study, Eckert (1989) spent a long time observing the structures of the social networks within the school and was eventually able to recognise two main social categories into which most of the students fell: jocks and burnouts. Eckert (1989) found that language use, clothing style, and 'hangout areas'—all outward expressions of students' orientedness towards either the school or the city of Detroit—were highly important social cues, various combinations of which represented the students' attempts to be perceived as falling into one or the other social category.

A small detail of Eckert's (1989) work which is important to the present study is that she acknowledges the existence of crossovers, or students which started school in one social category and ended up in the other. This seemingly insignificant detail shows us that expressions of orientedness to one or the other social category are not fixed, nor do they precede the social category itself; rather, they are *constructed simultaneously in practice*, and the performance of orientedness towards one or the other category can change. We will return to this notion of simultaneous construction throughout this work.

The above studies have shown that certain social cues can gain meaning in context, and that embodiment or enactment of these cues can vary across contexts. We have also seen that these social cues can represent orientedness to various social categories, and that these social categories can be co-created and maintained through narrative. But what is the mechanism for attaching meaning to social cues, and how does this process lead to the formation of social categories? To answer these questions, Stanton Wortham (2006) and Asif Agha (1998, 2007) engage the Piercian concept of semiotics (or sign-driven processes), and have shown through their various studies that, as small components of language use (such as specific sounds or pitch range) and social cues (such as clothing or 'hangout' spots) are enacted in practice, certain combinations (or 'constellations') thereof gain meaning by contextual association with a particular social category, and thus become emblematic signs. These 'emblems' can then be re-enacted and construed during social interaction, leading to the performance and perception of social categories, which we perceive as identities. A more in-depth discussion of these processes will be conducted in chapter two.

We have seen that sign-driven processes can lead to the construction of social categories (and thus contribute to the perception of types of people that can conceivably fall into those categories) but, as is often true of the 'messy' domain of human happenings (Bruner 1991), the above processes alone only account for certain aspects of identity construction. One other aspect that is relevant to the present project is the *narration* or the *encoding* into language of the self[1] (*see* Duranti 2004 *for a discussion on encoding*). Bamberg (2010), Bruner (1991, 2004), and Ochs & Capps (1996) all agree that telling stories about our experiences is often the key way in which humans conceptualise their being-in-the-world (Ochs & Capps 1996) in relation to others, and have shown through their work that narrative, as one of the principle human faculties for making sense of our lived experiences, can serve to co-construct and maintain the social realities we inhabit, including our own conceptions of who we 'are' and the social categories we fit into. As Ochs & Capps (1996) point out, our "lives are the pasts we tell ourselves" (21). Narratives form a broad category and are not necessarily only constituted by oral versions. In fact, written narratives play as much of a part in the construction of identities and social worlds as do oral versions (Bruner 1991). In fact, identity construction is often achieved through both semiotic processes and discourse practices, both the individual and national levels. In chapters two and three, I will go into more depth on these topics.

It is from the above foundation on previous work that I undertake this project.

Returning to my mention of Butler's (1988) point that gender itself is a performative act (and thus must continually be performed in order to be acknowledged by others, where failure to perform it 'correctly' in terms of established norms can make an individual appear strange to those familiar with the norms), I take it as having been established that "gender [is] an identity that emerges and is negotiated through social interaction" (Meyerhoff 2011:247). In this work, however, I want to explore the notion that *nationality*, insofar as it is performed as an aspect of an individual's identity, *is a comparable phenomenon*. What makes someone American? What makes someone Russian? How can you tell if someone passing on the street is either Russian or American? They may have a sort of Russian-*ness* or American-*ness* about them that causes us to make that construal, and our impressions often feel quite natural. We can say that there is *surely* such a thing as Russian*ness* or American*ness*, and we often know what it looks or feels like to us, but when pressed, we might be at a loss to define or even describe such categories. So, are these categories really as 'natural' as they might feel to us?

For now, I will leave these terribly broad, subjective questions unanswered, as any potential answers would necessarily vary widely across individuals, but I want us to think critically about our assumptions regarding the answers to these questions for the remainder of

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[1] Herein, I follow Ochs & Capps' (1996) definition of 'self' as "an unfolding reflective awareness of being-in-the-world, including a sense of one's past and future" (20-1).

this work. While it is not a big stretch to make the claim that a national identity is not a 'natural' but 'created' category—especially considering a social constructionist point of view—it is a notion I have not seen explored in great detail in the literature I have reviewed. Thus, I think this question poses an excellent opportunity for new exploration: Is nationality a social construct?

In this work I will attempt to show, however superficially, that the nationalities 'Russian' and 'American' are simply taken-for-granted social categories which are constituted in practice, and are informed by discourse practices that serve to build up and naturalise these categories. These discourse practices and the social categories they canonise are co-curated by composite communities of individuals in each country (some groups or individuals enjoying more sway over the collective idea of the category than others). As I have shown above, the notion that performing broader social categories through some 'constellation' of particular linguistic practices and social cues can serve to 'point to' an individual's orientation to a particular place or social category is not a new concept (Agha 1998, 2007; Bucholtz & Hall 2007; Eckert 2009; Podesva 2007; Labov 1963, 1966[2006]; Wortham 2006). The new information I expect to bring to the table through this work is that I will attempt to get at *how and by what means Russianness and Americanness can be embodied through social cues and encoded in discourse practice*, and I will herein attempt to show that *these national-nesses are not 'natural' but social categories which emerge and are maintained within individualised interactions and have been curated through discourse practice over long periods of time*. Specifically, I will analyse text-based personal narratives of my own experiences regarding how I 'do' or 'do not do' Russianness and Americanness through my language and actions, and will explore how those performances or non-performances might serve to position me as belonging to a specific social category.

For the remainder of chapter one, in the METHODOLOGY section, I will outline the various methods that inform this work. I should begin here by saying that I did not set out to do a study of this type at first. After returning from my year abroad, it took me quite a while to process and understand how experiencing the social dynamics of two different cultures affected my behaviour and the way I viewed myself. As such, I was not able to retroactively ask for permission from an institutional review board to study differences in social identification in Russia. Conversely, I am not able to go back in time to conduct a study of people's perceptions of national social categories that would allow me to conduct a more empirically grounded and generalisable study. When I returned home, all I was left with were my notes, pictures, journal entries, social media posts, memories of my experiences, and an insatiable curiosity as to the differing social dynamics I had experienced between two differently cultured environments. Because I am not able to retroactively gain IRB approval to use the primary data I collected in Russia, but I still want to explore the idea of nationality as a social construct, I have created a secondary data source in the form of text-based personal narratives. In this way, I have turned the analytic lens inward, and will conduct a self-study in which I analyse my own experiences in

order to make sense of them. Such a study may not fully answer the questions I have posed, but will certainly constitute a beginning.

The narratives I have written for this work are based on ethnographic observations of my own experiences; in this way, they are *auto*ethnographic, as they represent reflexive interpretations of my own experiences in terms of the ways in which they are culturally constructed. Because the autoethnographic method encourages introspection and constitutes an effort on the part of the researcher to make explicit their own influence on their research and vice-versa, such a reflexive method seems to be well-suited to a study which considers the ways in which the author as an individual contributes to the construction and perpetuation of the social categories into which they may or may not fall. I conduct this study in the hopes that similar studies can be conducted in the future, which can add many detailed voices to the larger conversation about the local construction of social categories.

In order to analyse the narratives that I present below, I will employ narrative analysis methods commonly employed for discourse analytic approaches. In my analyses, I will be looking for *direct textual evidence* of my own contributions to (and internal impressions of) the social categories into which I am sorted (or not sorted), through my performance (active attempts to orient myself to a social category) and/or my perceptions of others' construal (attempts on the part of others to orient me to a social category) of my identity as it relates to nationality. Although it is doubtless that a study of this type would be more meaningful if it were based on conversational data (since, we could assume, the data would be less entangled with my own interpretations and couched in my internal dialogue), as I mentioned previously, I am limited by the post-facto nature of my data and the ethical obligation to protect the people who may have participated in my study (whether inadvertently or otherwise; *see* Gorup 2020 *and* Rapley 2007 *for a full discussion of ethics in discourse analysis*). If I were to conduct a study like this in the future, I believe it would benefit greatly from analysis of conversational data, a point I will return to in the conclusions section.

As it stands, the limitations on the present project renders it to be little more than a theoretically-grounded self-case-study. However, I believe that, given the circumstances of the present project—the *post-facto* nature of my data, and subsequently the methodologies through which I have chosen to conduct this work—a self-case-study would be the most appropriate format for my analysis.

Some may criticise a self-case-study using *post-facto* or pre-existing data as a non-academic endeavour too much like an autobiography, or say that it is not sufficient to conduct a study which does not yield generalisable results. However, case studies and *post-facto* data are commonly used in several different academic approaches and should not be so quickly discounted. As we have discussed above, the case study which Podesva (2007) conducted

allowed him to gain a highly detailed picture of how pitch range can be employed to express aspects of identity, a conclusion which he was able to reach in a relatively short period of time. Had Podesva (2007) conducted a wider study comparing more than one individual, going to the same level of detail at which he examined Heath's speech, it would have taken him far, far longer to reach a result, and his students and colleagues would have had to wait much longer to benefit from his insights. Thus, case studies add a significant amount of important detail to any field and are less time consuming than larger studies which employ a high level of detail. Any number of case studies can later be synthesised together, should generalisable results be desired (Meyerhoff 2011).

Furthermore, *Post-facto* data is often at the heart of discourse analyses, especially those which deal with narratives or other text-based sources which, in and of themselves, may serve to prompt the research (Gorup 2020; Rapley 2007). When analysing personal narratives, such as biographies or autobiographies, the data source is necessarily *post-facto* as it requires reflection on past events (Ellis 1999; Ellis *et al.* 2011; Rapley 2007). As such, the focus of a discourse analytic study may shift as the project goes on, and new connections are made over the course of the analyses (Rapley 2007). *Post-facto* data is also especially prevalent in anthropological studies (Ellis 1999; Ellis *et al.* 2011). For example, ethnographers regularly go into an experience without a clear idea of what they might find, keeping their mind open to what the situation has to teach them, letting their emerging impressions of the focal culture to shape their research, and must later reflect on their experiences in order to reach new levels of understanding (Behar 1996; Eckert 2009; Ellis 1999; Ellis *et al.* 2011).

Therefore, given that my data is *post-facto* (based on my own introspective notes, posts, etc. as a primary data source), and the fact that the limitations of this study have led me to turn the analytic lens inwards towards my 'self', I will be combining components from both of the above approaches: I will conduct a narrative analysis of my own personal narratives through a reflexive, *auto*ethnographic lens, with an eye towards trying to understand the culturally constituted patterns in my experiences and speculating on the semiotic and social dynamics which inform these patterns. This project has thus emerged from within a unique position: this will be the first project (that I'm aware of) that will marry the two methods of *auto*ethnography and narrative analysis together. Whether or not this endeavour will prove to be fruitful is a question that I will leave for the conclusions portion of this work.

In chapter two, in the THEORETICAL BACKGROUND section, I will review some of the current sociolinguistic and linguistic anthropological literature on identity construction, with contributions from works in other fields. I will consider how semiotic processes occurring within communities of practice in general can help to constitute metapragmatic understandings of social categories. Next, in the SOCIOCULTURAL BACKGROUND section, I will explore how wider context affects the metapragmatics of social identification, and consider the interactions between

semiotic processes and discourse practices. Next, I will discuss how both discourse practice and semiotic processes lead to the construction of identities, both at the individual and the national levels; finally, I will attempt to give a (however unbounded) definition of Russian*ness* and American*ness*.

In chapter three, in the AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC NARRATIVE ANALYSIS section, I will present three personal narratives I have written about my experiences in America and Russia, each preceded by a brief summary of context and followed by a short analysis. The first of these is an orienting text that will be analysed for grammatical self-positioning and co-construction. The other narratives will be analysed more in terms of the information discussed in chapter 2; specifically, I will look at how both discourse practice and semiotic processes influenced my identity construction in each situation. Next, in the DISCUSSION section, I will summarise my analyses, looking for overall patterns in social cues and for things I might have taken for granted whilst writing them. Specifically, I will be looking for overall insights into how and why I made particular choices (as represented both in my writing and by the behaviours I describe) and how those choices may contribute to the construction of the social categories of Russianness or Americanness through performances or construals. Meanwhile, I will also be attempting to identify my own biases and assumptions so I can better understand the choices I made, as well as to gain a baseline understanding of how my identity affects my academic work.

In the CONCLUSIONS section, I will briefly discuss some of the possible implications of this work, re-iterate the limitations of this particular study and attempt to provide constructive commentary on how such limitations might be mitigated or avoided, and finally, I will end with a proposal about how a more fully-fledged study may be conducted in the future.

1.2 – METHODOLOGY
1.2.1 – Reflexivity and the Social Sciences

I didn't originally set out to do a study of this type. It was only after I returned to America from Russia and recognised a vague, but nagging sense that *I* had somehow changed as a person that I felt compelled to investigate further. Some may have brushed off such a sense, explaining it away—*'of course I'm a different person, a year abroad is a life-changing experience'*—but I wanted to *understand* that feeling more deeply. I wanted to understand why, even after all of the life-changing experiences I had in Russia, I felt that, in some ways, *I had changed back into the boring person I was before I left*, and I noticed myself doing things, *anything*, to try to *hold on to being the interesting person I became in Russia*. It was noticing this pattern in my behaviour and in my emotions towards my own sense of self that motivated me to begin researching the literature on identity and social identification theory.

In the beginning, I didn't fully understand the true motivation for my work, and it would take me a long time to come to terms with and admit to myself that the motivation stemmed from

a desperate need to better understand my attitudes about my 'self' and how I fit into the world. That, paired with my limited experience with cultural anthropological research, meant that when I started the research process, I had no clear idea of what the goal of my project would be or how to go about it. All I knew was that, when I came home from my year abroad in Russia, I had recognised a pattern in my own behaviour—I would use certain linguistic practices and social cues in an attempt to influence people's perceptions of me, oftentimes succeeding in either *relating* myself to or *distancing* myself from those people—and that my behaviour was highly dependent upon the larger cultural environment in which I found myself; not just on the practices, but the particular people present as well.

My desire to try to find a theoretical explanation for what I had experienced seemed perfectly natural to me, so despite my lack of experience, I decided to conduct a research project to explore that explanation anyway. Unfortunately, since I hadn't decided to conduct a study of this type *before* going to Russia, there was no way I could retroactively ask for permission from an institutional review board (IRB) to use the notes, journal entries, pictures, and social media posts from my year abroad as primary data sources. In essence, without the ability to get informed consent from the people I interacted with in Russia to analyse our conversations, I was left with a need to generate a secondary data source, so I set out to generate a secondary data source that was focused solely on myself.

The secondary data source I generated was in the form of a few personal narratives about my experiences in my country of origin and abroad, and I began by attempting to bring my experiences forward in a way that they could be easily analysed in relation to a theoretical framework. Unfortunately, due to my inexperience, my initial attempts were clumsy, and I wasn't able to articulate what I expected to gain from conducting a study about my own experiences. Moreover, I was told that no one would be interested in such a study, that my experiences were useless unless I could somehow generalise them to others; unless I could use them empirically to say something concrete about an important social issue. Not only that, but I was so inexperienced at the time that I started this project, I had not read enough literature to have truly situated myself within the linguistic anthropological methodological framework. As a result, all my attempts to make arguments, reach conclusions, and express them in acceptable formats remained fragmented, underdeveloped, and less-than-well-grounded in the literature. Discouraged with the seeming irrelevance of my work and with my lack of progress, there were several times during the process when I had to step back from the project and regroup. Despite the vast number of times I have gotten discouraged or wanted to quit, I persisted, and after three long years of working on this piece, I have finally completed it.

Over the three-year period during which I have worked on this project, I have come to understand that the sum of the knowledge within every given academic field is built upon a set of assumptions, which acts as the basis for any investigative inquiry and any findings presented

within that field. Of course, these assumptions are constantly challenged and questioned, and sometimes, as in the case of a paradigm shift, they are even proven to be inadequate and are set aside to make room for new assumptions that fit the data more readily (Bruner 1991; Latour & Woolgar 1979; Meyerhoff 2011). These sets of assumptions can influence the collectively shared ideas within a field about what sorts of information constitute admissible 'facts' and, subsequently, inform the array of 'acceptable' formats in which those 'facts' can be presented (Bruner 1991; Latour & Woolgar 1979). It is paramount for social scientists to be aware of our own assumptions about our work, about what our assumptions say about the 'correct' ways to conduct our work, and to reflect on these assumptions during the research process. Not only will our reflections of help new researchers as they enter into the field, but they have the potential to help established researchers as well.

Social constructionism, the notion that aspects of social reality are constituted in practice (Bruner 1991; Butler 1988; Bucholtz & Hall 2006; Meyerhoff 2011; Rapley 2007), is a main assumption underlying most social scientific fields. According to discourse analysts Sara Shaw & Julia Bailey (2009), "constructivists argue that all knowledge—including taken-for-granted common sense knowledge—is derived from and maintained by social interactions" (416), in other words – all knowledge is constructed, then constantly negotiated and re-negotiated, during social interaction, or language-in-use. Considering this assumption, it is not a stretch to argue that the 'acceptable' formats in which knowledge is shared is also subject to negotiation and re-negotiation as well (Bruner 1991), especially since publishing scientific research, whether it be qualitative or quantitative, counts as language-in-use. Certain ways of knowledge-sharing, through constant use, re-use, and normalisation, will emerge as taken-for-granted formats in a given field (Bruner 1991). Take, for example, the accepted ways of sharing knowledge through the scientific method which, in many fields, privileges studies that obscure the author's part in the work (Anderson 2006; Bruner 1991; Ellis *et al.* 2011; Wall 2006). Recently, for qualitative fields, the postmodernist movement has led a shift away from the tendency by users of the traditional scientific method to 'present only the facts', *obscuring* the author's part in the work, towards explicitly *including* the author's perspective in their work (Anderson 2006; Behar 1996; Bruner 1991; Ellis 1999; Ellis *et al.* 2011; Spry 2001; Wall 2006). Sarah Wall (2006) writes that the goal of the postmodernism movement "is not to eliminate the traditional scientific method but to question its dominance and to demonstrate that it is possible to gain and share knowledge in many ways" (174).

Explicitly including the author's reflections on their experiences in the final product of their work can have many benefits. The practice of conducting work reflexively requires detailed attention to the co-constructive relationship between the author and their work, to how one's own assumptions or biases may influence the results of the work, and to any ethical considerations or dilemmas that were encountered during the research process (Gorup 2020). The important consequence of including these interplays in the final product of the work is that the author's

point of view is explicitly made available for analysis, allowing for a detailed examination of the author's assumptions and biases and bringing these into conversation with the conclusions they reach. Such an approach is referred to as researcher reflexivity (Ellis & Adams 2014; Gorup 2020).

The issue of reflexivity involves as much an examination of biases and assumptions as it is an ethical practice. Meta Gorup (2020) represents reflexivity "in a broader sense" as a practice of self-reflection in which researchers should recognise and explicitly acknowledge that "certain aspects of [their] identities influence the research process" (513; AND *see* Ellis & Adams 2014). According to Gorup (2020), a reflexive approach to research involves "a commitment to a more open and critical *reflection and reporting* on our practices as researchers, including on ethical dilemmas faced in the research process" (513; emphasis mine). Given the above information, there are four main benefits of taking a reflexive approach to qualitative research: an author can a) minimise potential harm to any participant in their study, b) report on their ethical considerations so that other researchers may benefit from them, c) examine their own assumptions and biases in order to be better aware and appropriately critical of them when conducting future work, and d) make more informed decisions about the best formats in which to present their work.

In this project, I will take a reflexive approach. I aim to: acknowledge and discuss the limitations and ethical considerations I faced while completing this work; take steps to minimise potential harm to any oblique participants appearing in my personal narratives; understand my own assumptions and biases about my work and about Russian and American cultures; examine how my behaviour and the behaviour of those around me affected my own understandings of the 'Russian' and 'American' social categories; and attempt to better understand what strategies I might use to 'do' or perform Russian*ness* or American*ness*. I further discuss the limitations for this work in both this chapter (as it becomes relevant to the methodology of the work) and in the conclusions section (where I discuss some possible steps to mitigate or avoid the same limitations). I will return to the ethical considerations for this particular project at the end of the chapter. For now, let's consider the methods and formats I have chosen for this work: discourse analysis and autoethnography.

1.2.2 – What is Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis is a method used in many different fields for a wide variety of purposes and, as such, has commonly accepted guidelines, but no set of hard-and-fast rules governing its use. As Rapley (2007) explains it, the study of discourse is a "collection of vaguely related practices and related theories for analysing talk and texts, which emerge from a diverse range of sources" (4). To maintain a certain level of specificity, Rachel Heinrichsmeier (2020) draws a distinction between "discourses (with a lower-case d)" and "Discourses with an upper-case D" (147). She defines discourses as "language use and practices – talk and writing in specific settings and contexts" and Discourses as "wider social processes such as ideologies and

wider social norms or value systems" (Heinrichsmeier 2020:147). In light of the constructivist assumptions informing this work, it is easy to see how language use and practices in general tend to co-construct wider social processes such as norms and value systems – in other words, discourses help give rise to Discourses. In this work, I will be considering how both discourses and Discourses contribute to construction of identities in social contexts during interaction, and how discourse practices might reflect attempts to challenge or perpetuate certain social norms specific to certain Discourse practices. In the interests of specificity, let's focus on the subset of discourse analysis that is most relevant to the present project, narrative analysis or Narrative Inquiry.

According to Gorup (2020) "Narrative Inquiry (NI) refers to the interdisciplinary endeavour dedicated to the study of the lived experience as narrated by those living it" (518). Narrative inquiry usually focuses on the study of narratives (either oral or text-based) and can include analyses of "life stories, personal narratives, oral histories, and performance narratives" (Gorup 2020:518). Narrative Inquiry can pose many unique challenges to the researcher, not the least of which is a discordance of opinions or interpretations between the authors of the narratives and the researchers themselves (Gorup 2020). The self-case-study I conduct in the present project can serve to simplify this challenge somewhat. Since I am both the author and the researcher, I am in the unique position of knowing both of those perspectives, and so there is no potential for discordance in my interpretations of my own narratives, lending this work a coherency of interpretation that may not be present in other narrative inquiries. However, the potential for discordance between the researcher and the *reader* of the work will always exist. In fact, "NI presupposes" that "each narrative can be interpreted in more than one way" (Gorup 2020:522), so it will be helpful to keep this in mind as we continue our discussions. In fact, I invite others' interpretations of my narratives and conclusions, even if (and especially if) they disagree with me, as multiple perspectives will only serve to strengthen our inquiry into the topic of nationality as a social construct.

Analysis of narratives can be tricky, as the multitude of interdisciplinary approaches to narrative analysis—paired with, the vast number of formats in which narrative can be presented—means that it is often applied to a wide range of research with various focuses (Bruner 1991, 2004; Ochs & Capps 1996). However, being specific about the type of narrative relevant to the present work will help to focus the direction of the research. Herein, since my data is comprised of narratives I wrote on the topic of my own life experiences, I focus on personal narratives, which Ochs & Capps (1996) have defined as "verbalized, visualized, and/or embodied framings of a sequence of actual or possible life events" which "comprise a range of genres" including text-based genres such as novels, diaries, and memoirs (19).

Personal narratives are those experiential stories which are deemed to be relevant or shareable in a given context, help to simultaneously construct and make sense of social realities

and identities, and specifically have a temporal aspect to them (Bamburg 2010; Bruner 1991, 2004; Ochs & Capps 1996; Ochs 2011; Prior 2011). In other words, they (re)present something troubling, problematic, or simply interesting; they are often told in contexts through which narrators and recipients can construct and make sense of reality in light of the narrative (as co-authors), as well as portray themselves as being oriented to certain categories within the frame of reality as constructed by the narrative (Bamber 2010; Bruner 1991, 2004; Ochs & Capps 1996; Prior 2011). Such narratives are temporal in nature because, not only does the basic definition of a narrative in the Labovian sense involve a sequential representation of an event in a 'first this, then this' fashion (Labov &Wazletsky 1967[1997]), but narratives may also deal with either resolved past experiences, narrations of experiences unfolding in the present, and projections about future events or discussions of imagined scenarios in terms of past or current experiences (Ochs & Capps 1996).

Personal narratives have been analysed in a number of ways and with different purposes: in a bottom-up fashion in terms of grammar and structure (Bamberg 2010; Labov & Wazletsky 1967[1997]), in a top-down fashion in terms of overall plot and genre (Bamberg 2010; Bruner 2004), and in an overall fashion in terms of an interactive-performative approach (Bamberg 2010; Prior 2011). While it would be beyond the scope of this project to go into deep detail on all of the above approaches to analysing personal narrative, I will say that, in many cases, each of the above analytic frameworks in some ways look at the encoding or construction and positioning of 'self' in relation to the 'world(s)' described in the narrative (Bamberg 2010; Bruner 1991, 2004; Ochs & Capps 1996; Labov & Wazletsky 1967[1997]). I apply parts of each of the above approaches to analysing my personal narratives (*e.g.* some grammatical approaches, some exploration of overall plot, and some exploration of how my narratives are co-constructed). However, the construction and positioning of 'self' in relation to nationalities as aspects of identity is what I intend to focus the most on in my analyses.

As I said above, because of the limitations placed onto my primary data, I decided to write reflexive narratives about my own personal experiences in order to make sense of my 'self' in relation to two separate social contexts, Russian and American. Since such an endeavour was prompted by ethnographic observations of culturally constituted experiences (observations of myself as immersed within two separate cultural environments), my research is inherently autoethnographic. The narratives I present in this work were not written from the completely naïve perspective of someone *absolutely and totally* unfamiliar with social scientific methods. Instead, I must acknowledge that the narratives I present in chapter three were written within the larger context of this work, and thus the process of writing them was specifically informed by autoethnographic methods.

1.2.3 – What is Autoethnography? – Goals and Criticisms

I learned about autoethnography a little later in the game than I would have liked but, to quote a well-known idiom, "better late than never". I had read several works that fell under the umbrella of autoethnography in the past, each applied to a wide range of different topics and subfields—linguistic relativity (Cohn 1987), conversational analysis (Barrett 2006), socioeconomics (Gotlieb 2004), and others—and it took me an embarrassingly long time to realise that this method applied to my situation; that there were other people observing patterns in their own experiences, writing narratives to make some sense of those experiences, coming to new understandings by analysing those experiences within some sort of theoretical framework, and *getting published*. Almost immediately after I realised this, I wanted to learn more about the autoethnographic approach and sought out articles on the topic. I read many interesting articles covering autoethnographic method, but I knew I had found exactly what I had been looking for when I started reading Carolyn Ellis' 1999 publication, *Heartful Autoethnography*.

In this enlightening autoethnographic narrative, Ellis (1999) recounts her experiences as she helped a PhD student navigate through her own research process; through learning about autoethnography and deciding whether or not it was a method she wanted to use. Woven into Ellis' (1999) narrative are the quotes and citations of other scholars who have also done work within the young method of autoethnography. Written mostly as a dialogue punctuated with snippets of exposition and quotes from her colleagues, Ellis' (1999) words were readily applicable to my situation and helped me to think about how to construct my own narratives. In fact, I was immediately drawn into the article; the rest of the world fell away, and it was almost as if she was personally helping me with my own project, even though my topic is vastly different than that of her student (not to mention the fact that I happen to be working on my project over a decade since her 1999 article was published). Not only did she directly address many of the uncertainties that I had about autoethnography as a method, Ellis' 1999 work (as well as the work of her colleagues) provided me with some clear answers as to what autoethnography is and how it is a respectable method in its own right.

Sarah Wall (2006) defines autoethnography as "an emerging qualitative research method that allows the author to write in a highly personalized style, drawing on his or her experience to extend understanding about a societal phenomenon" (146). According to Ellis *et al.* (2011), an autoethnographer should "retrospectively and selectively write about epiphanies that stem from, or are made possible by, being part of a culture and/or by possessing a particular cultural identity" (276). In other words, autoethnographers take their positionality *and* their observations of a cultural phenomenon as a starting point for formulating their research questions and present the new knowledge they gain in a personalised manner. In this way, the autoethnographic method presupposes and values the presence of the researcher's point of view in the work, regards it as an essential part of the research process, and thus encourages the reflexive practice

of making the interplays between the researcher and their work explicit[2] (Anderson 2006; Ellis 1999; Ellis & Adams 2014; Ellis *et al.* 2011; Wall 2006).

Ellis *et al.* (2011) refer to autoethnography as being composed of three different parts, the *auto-*, the *-ethno-*, and the *-graphy* portions. *Auto-* is the portion devoted to acknowledging the author's part in the group they are studying (as in-group or out-group), *-ethno-* is the portion in which the author analyses how their experiences relate to (and are influenced by) society and culture, and *-graphy* is the reporting of these experiences and "the application of a research process" (Wall 2006:152). Ellis (1999), Ellis *et al.* (2011), Ellis & Adams (2014), and Wall (2006) agree that published autoethnographies tend to emphasise one of those portions more prominently over the others; in other words, some can be more self-oriented, some more culture-oriented, and some more research-oriented. Some can be much more conventionally scientific in their execution, while others can be more emotionally evocative, but none is less important as a thought-provoking study worthy of being taken seriously (Ellis 1999; Ellis *et al.* 2011; Wall 2006). Such different orientations can be conceptualised as simply falling on different areas of what Ellis (1999) refers to as the "art-science continuum" (673), which is simply a construct for conceptualising the science- or art-orientedness of a particular project.

Overall, Ellis *et al.* (2011) suggest that an autoethnography should contain some of the main components of *traditional ethnography* and *autobiography*, both of which are well-established methods (Anderson 2006; Wall 2006). According to Anderson (2006), ethnographies have traditionally been fully other-oriented, and are "focused outward, on understanding and making understandable to others a social world beyond their own" (Anderson 2006:382). According to Ellis *et al.* (2011), ethnographers typically enter into a group and engage in the process of participant observation, in which they observe the social dynamics of a culture whilst *participating* in the daily life of that culture and, later, write about what they experienced so that the "patterns of cultural experience" (277) they observed can then emerge and become salient to the reader. According to Anderson (2006), "the traditional ethnographer is often largely invisible—a hidden, yet seemingly omniscient presence in ethnographic texts" (383). Behar (1996) calls this practice of participant observation with a subsequent obscuring of the interplays between the author and their work 'oxymoronic', as it first *encourages* participation and then *supresses* the insights than can be drawn from the effects of an outside participant on the work. The gap left in ethnographic texts where the interplays between author and their work could potentially lie is precisely the gap that *auto*ethnography seeks to bridge (Anderson 2006; Behar 1996; Ellis 1999; Ellis *et al.* 2011; Gotleib 2004; Spry 2001; Wall 2006).

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[2] Although autoethnography is not the only strategy which researchers have begun to employ to account for the effects of their positionalities on their research (Latour & Woolgar 1979), for the purposes of this study, it will be useful to focus on autoethnography as it pertains to the narratives in this work.

While ethnographies have traditionally been fully other-oriented texts, autobiographies represent the opposite (Anderson 2006); in other words, they are completely reflexive retellings and self-interpretations of an author's life story (Bruner 2004; Ellis *et al.* 2011; Ochs & Capps 1996). Ellis *et al.* (2011) express that autobiographies tend to be "aesthetic and evocative" (276) and often use narrative elements such as scene, setting, character, dialogue and plot advancement in order to bring the reader into the experience being described and give them the opportunity to relate to it. Ellis *et al.* (2011) also suggest that autobiography gives the author the opportunity to find and "fill a gap in existing related storylines" (276) so as to bring chronology, plot, or order to related but fragmented parts of the larger narrative of the author's personal experiences. As Bruner (1991, 2004) and Ochs & Capps (1996) suggest, this process of 'organisation of personal experiences into a narrative' is precisely the mental faculty that helps individuals to make sense of their being-in-the-world, and thus to conceptualise their 'self' in terms of 'others' and social norms.

Thus, as a method which incorporates parts of the ethnographic and autobiographical traditions, the goal of autoethnography is: a) to observe one's own participation in a given focal group, b) to identify culturally-constituted patterns within those experiences as they relate to oneself, c) to organise related, but fragmented experiences concerning those contacts between cultural phenomena and oneself into a coherent narrative, d) to analyse those experiences, and e) to report on one's own interpretations of them in an attempt to make them available and salient to others, so that readers may relate to those experiences and interpret them in their own ways (Anderson 2006; Behar 1996; Bruner 1991; Ellis 1999; Ellis *et al.* 2011; Ochs & Capps 1996; Gotlieb 2004; Spry 2001; Wall 2006). As Anderson (2006) writes, "the autoethnographer's understandings, both as a group member and as a researcher, emerge not from detached discovery, but from engaged dialogue" (382).

Anderson (2006), Ellis (1999), Ellis & Adams (2014), Ellis *et al.* (2011), Spry (2001), and Wall (2006) all agree that autoethnography as its own distinct methodology is relatively young, and have all expressed that their use of this method has met resistance from their more traditionally-minded reviewers, as the method itself challenges accepted and familiar research approaches. In other words, being a sort of mix between autobiography and ethnography, autoethnographies tend to be held to the standards of one or the other discipline and are criticized accordingly (Ellis *et al.* 2011). Those who are more familiar with **ethnography** may criticise autoethnography for a) being too aesthetic and evocative, b) not being scientifically-rigourous, analytical, or theoretical enough, c) having too small a sample size (*i.e.* an *n of 1*), or d) they may claim that, since autoethnographers write about their personal experiences, that they are "self-absorbed narcissists" (Ellis *et al.* 2011:283). On the other hand, those who are more familiar with **autobiography** may criticise autoethnography as being a) too scientific, analytical, and theoretical, and b) for not being artful, evocative, or engaging enough (Ellis *et al.* 2011). As Ellis *et al.* (2011) rightly point out, "These criticisms erroneously position art and science at odds with

each other, a condition that autoethnography seeks to correct. Autoethnography, as method, attempts to disrupt the binary of science and art" (283). In other words, autoethnography blurs the lines between the arts and sciences, occupies the space between them, and its proponents argue that art can be just as scientifically valid as science can be aesthetic and evocative.

1.2.4 – Autoethnography and Discourse Analysis in Practice

According to Ruth Behar (1996), "It is far from easy to think up interesting ways to locate oneself in one's own text" (Behar 1996:13). The reflexive researcher has to ask themselves some difficult-to-answer questions: How much of oneself should be included in the text? How much self-reflection is too much? What is the purpose of the project, and what purpose will it serve to give personal information about the author to the reader? Behar (1996) suggests that knowing when to reveal one's positionality "require[s] a keen understanding of what aspects of the self are the most important filters through which one perceives the world and, more particularly, the topic being studied" (Behar 1996:13). Given the limitations of the present project, whether or not to include myself in the text was not ever a question; the question was *how* to do so. As we have established, the ultimate goal of autoethnography is to "draw deeper connections between one's personal experience and the subject under study" (Behar 1996:13). Given the open-endedness of such a goal, most of the authors reviewed here suggest that the nature of the data and the overall research question should guide the researcher as they decide what aspects of their experience they should include and when to include them (Ellis 1999; Ellis *et al.* 2011; Spry 2001; Wall 2006).

I speak from personal experience when I say that following a method with such open-ended goals can be daunting at first; it may seem that there are too many avenues to explore, too many analytical threads to pursue, and thus the scope of such a project can be very hard to define. In order to help define a plausible scope for an autoethnographic study, Ellis (1999), Ellis & Adams (2014), Ellis *et al.* (2011), Spry (2001), and Wall (2006) all suggest letting the circumstances of the study guide its format and execution. They suggest reflecting on three specific areas in order to achieve this: a) how the author's involvement or stake in the group(s) being studied affects what they can say, b) the types of data one has or will collect, and c) what the author hopes to achieve or the new understandings they hope to reach by analysing their own interactions with the focal group. Below I would like to take a moment to consider a discourse analytic study that can be seen as falling under the umbrella of autoethnography, and to discuss it as an example of how the circumstances of the study guided its execution.

Carol Cohn's (1987) article, *Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals*, is a wonderful example of an author recognising that her involvement in a group she was working with had begun to affect her behaviour and even her very thoughts, then deciding to include that aspect of her experiences in the final product of her work. As Cohn (1987) worked for a year with 'defense intellectuals'—or the group of men whose calculations

and recommendations served to justify and legitimate "American nuclear strategic practice" (688)—she noticed that those intellectuals were habitually engaging in discourse practices that effectively distanced themselves from the realities of nuclear war. In essence, these men took for granted their professional discourse practices, which reduced the subject of nuclear war to a mere theoretical game of strategy, and thus allowed them to talk about disturbing subjects such as the threat of nuclear war with a certain level of detachment, even humour. Cohn (1987) was often shocked by what she witnessed, and the question that initially prompted her research was, "How can they think this way?"

As a woman and therefore an outside observer in such a male-dominated domain, Cohn (1987) found herself in the unique position of being someone with a different perspective for whom those professional Discourses were still salient, so she set to work trying to study these practices as an outside observer. However, one day, she came chilling realisation that, the more time she spent in that environment, the more familiar and less salient those professional Discourses were becoming to her. In essence, after a year of participating in their world, she realised that learning to use these discourse practices had begun to affect her own thoughts and ways of interacting with others. She found herself struggling to conceptualise things that fell outside of the conditions presupposed by the discourse practices themselves. "Soon," Cohn (1987) writes, "I could no longer cling to the comfort of studying an external and objectified 'them'" (688). She then began to ask a new question, "How can *I* think this way?" (Cohn 1987:688). While her goal of making sense of the prevalent discourses within nuclear strategy did not fully change, it certainly shifted to include her own experiences and interactions with the community in which she was participating. Thus, her project shifted from being ethnographic to being *auto*ethnographic.

With her realisation, the data for Cohn's (1987) research shifted slightly as well. What started out as simple observations and excerpts of the types of institutional Discourses practiced by the men with whom she worked soon came to include her own personal experiences of specific times during which these professional Discourses affected her own judgment or thought. In order to explore her interactions with the focal group and reach an understanding about how she could become so embedded within those Discourse practices, she got to work constructing a study which organised and helped her to make sense of these experiences. As a result, what Cohn (1987) found was that, though defense intellectuals claimed objectivity on the basis of their 'rational' Discourse practices, their claims tended to ring hollow. A closer look at the ways in which the Discourses were practiced and what they referenced revealed that the assumptions underlying the Discourses were based, not in reality, but in the realm of detached and theoretical thinking that did not allow for the consideration of the human element, since the subjects of these Discourses were, not the human subjects the nuclear weapons were supposed to be 'protecting' or had the potential to devastate, but the weapons themselves.

Although I do not have such an interesting experience as working with nuclear strategists upon which to base my work, I see a few similarities between the present project and Cohn's (1987) work. She first recognised that she was in a position as an observer to comment on some interesting social phenomena, and later realised that she herself had become a participant in the group she wanted to study and decided to include her own experiences in the final product of her research, taking as her data, not only the observations she made initially, but observations of her own personal experiences pertaining to the research problem. She then looked at her own observations in relation to prevalent defense intellectual Discourses and how they were employed in discourse practice and had something to say about how that affected her own being-in-the-world.

For the present project, I also recognise that, as an exchange student, I am in a unique position of having had the opportunity to observe interactions between representatives of many different cultures in Russian cultural contexts. Without IRB permissions, I am limited in the observations I can make about others, but I have personal experiences pertaining to my own sense of self in relation to two separate cultural contexts which I can take as data for a study in which my reflexive observations will be crucial to my conclusions. From this perspective and with the data I do have, I realise that I have something to say, however limited it may be, about how discourse practices in broader cultural contexts affect my own being-in-the-world.

Since the narratives I analyse as data are written in such a way as to obscure the specifics about other participants in the interactions they depict, my methodology necessarily diverges from that of Cohn's (1987), and another limitation of this project becomes clear: since I am not able to compare my own experiences with those of others, I am limited in what I can say about Russian and American cultures in general. However, my narratives of personal experience and the analyses that follow them represent *my own interpretations* of *my own positionality* in relation to the two cultural contexts. They are relevant because I am attempting to make sense of *my own being-in-the-world in relation to two broader cultural contexts*, not to make sense of the positionalities of others or to generalise my experiences to others. At this point, I'd like to make it explicitly clear that this work intends to look through a microscope at a small portion of the discourse practices and performances that help to inform nationalities as social constructs, and in so doing, I hope to add a small voice to the larger conversation on how practice constitutes the categories which help provide structure to our identities and our social worlds.

A main goal of discourse analysis in general is to actively look for taken-for-granted constructs in interaction and bring them into conscious awareness so that they can be analysed (Heinrichsmeier 2020; Rapley 2007; Sacks *et al*. 1974). Therefore, as I analyse my own narratives, I'm also going to be actively looking for things I may take for granted or don't like thinking about. Just as Cohn (1987) looked at the uncomfortable realities that faced her when she learned to speak in the detached Discourses of defense intellectuals, I believe that a detailed

analysis of taken-for-granted or emotionally difficult things in my own experiences may reveal biases and/or assumptions that I don't usually think about or find hard to face, leading to deeper insights into how my social identification and my academic work can be affected by my states of mind and behaviour. Being aware of these unseen or uncomfortable assumptions and/or biases and actively reflecting on their effects on myself and others can be the first step to understanding myself and my own actions better, and I truly believe I will be a better social scientist for it. Being more aware of my own point of view and how it affects not only my work, but my everyday life, can help me to be more constructively critical of my own work, and can help me minimise harm to participants in my future studies. If these methods of inquiry prove to be fruitful for identifying assumptions and biases, they could be applied to future studies.

1.2.5 – Ethical Considerations and Disclaimer

Now, I'd like to briefly address the main ethical considerations for qualitative studies such as this. As mentioned above in our discussion of researcher reflexivity, Gorup's (2020) suggestions to *reflect and report on* any ethical dilemmas faced during the research are good practices since, once published, they can potentially help future scholars who may find themselves in similar situations. In light of this, I believe that such a practice should be the standard in social science studies, which is why I attempt to exemplify it here.

Following Rapley (2007) and other current literature on Discourse Analysis, Meta Gorup's (2020) article focuses on problems of ethics and integrity within different approaches to Discourse Analysis, though her suggestions are equally as applicable to autoethnographic approaches which involve multiple participants. Overall, Gorup (2020) outlines the ethical concerns surrounding most works employing a Discourse analytic approach as involving a) gaining **informed consent** from participants in order to respect their autonomy, as well as getting **permissions** from any institutions within which research will potentially be conducted, b) expressing a commitment to the **anonymity** of the participants and the confidentiality of the data generated by participants, and c) making sure "to minimize the risk of serious harm to research participants" (511). Both Rapley (2007) and Gorup (2020) acknowledge that ethical concerns, and thus the attention paid to them, are often context and/or circumstance dependent, and Gorup (2020) suggests that such issues need to be assessed and reassessed over the course of the research project.

Gaining **informed consent** entails providing "enough information about the nature and purpose of the research" (Rapley 2007:25) so that "prospective research participants [are] given a clear choice regarding whether or not they wish to participate" (Gorup 2020:512). Depending on the particular circumstances of the research, this can involve seeking explicit consent to record or otherwise use data relating to the participant(s) and providing direct information about how the recordings or data will be used (*e.g.* why and how it will be used in the research project and any other uses or purposes it may serve later). This consent is usually obtained before the

research has begun (Gorup 2020; Rapley 2007). However, for some research designs, it can be tricky to obtain informed consent *before* conducting the study (Gorup 2020).

For studies which employ emergent research designs—in which specific research questions are not usually known *a priori* and rather begin as broad topics of interest that become more specific as more research into the topic is done (Gorup 2020; AND *see* Ellis *et al.* 2011)—gaining informed consent from participants, as well as gaining IRB approval, can be tricky when the researcher does not start out with clear intentions as to what the nature of the study will be and how the data will be used. In such cases, Gorup (2020) highlights that "it is impossible to fully inform research participants ahead of the data collection of the precise research focus and analytical directions to be taken" (519) and suggests that "ethics should ideally be negotiated with and adjusted to research participants rather than fixed at the outset" (518). Gorup (2020) suggests that for projects with an emergent research design, it can be important to both check in with an IRB and attempt to gain informed consent from participants at more than one interval during the research process, especially at points when the focus is better understood by the author. Therefore, for future reference in studies such as this, it will be imperative that the IRB is kept apprised of changes in the research focus and that consent from other participants is secured at several points during the research process. Exactly *when* to gain it will have to depend on the specific shifts in research focus and when they occur.

Due to the *post-facto* nature and emergent design of the present project, informed consent was not obtained from people who interacted with me during my stay in Russia and cannot be retroactively obtained. Since I have designed this project in such a way as to cast the focus on myself instead of others, it can be argued that the people other than myself appearing in my narratives do not represent direct participants (as they are not the focus of the study) and thus may not have to be asked for permission to use data that has been synthesised into a secondary data source. In any case, if I am to do a study like this one in the future, I will want to be conscientious of the narratives I may want to include in my study and thus, I could provide anyone I interact with a statement that I am conducting research and if they do not wish to be included in it, to co-sign an agreement with me in which I promise to exclude any data that they appear in. I regret that this precaution could not be implemented in the case of the present project.

In regards to the issues of **anonymisation** and **minimisation of potential harm** to participants, I would like to briefly discuss the issue of relational ethics, or the ethics surrounding implication of others when studying accounts of personal experiences (Ellis 1999; Ellis *et al.* 2011; Gorup 2020; Rapley 2007). This is perhaps *one of the most important things to keep in mind while conducting a study which draws from autoethnographic or discourse analytic approaches*. Ellis *et al.* (2011) explain that, because of the delicate nature of personal narratives, researchers are at liberty to **anonymise** the narratives they include in their work; in other words,

researchers may change the names, appearances, and genders of people appearing in their narratives, as well as change any identifying details about places or the circumstances of an interaction (Ellis 2011; Gorup 2020; Rapley 2007). This is done to **minimise potential harm**, or to ensure the safety and privacy of those involved in the study, and is not intended to be a dishonest representation of what happened (Ellis 1999; Ellis *et al.* 2011; Gorup 2020; Rapley 2007). Sometimes, however, changing details about people, places, and circumstances can dramatically alter the dynamics of an interaction, and thus, researchers must always be conscientious about which stories they choose to include, what aspects of the narratives they choose to alter and, if possible, to ask permission of the person(s) involved so that they may have a say in how they are portrayed in the narrative (Ellis *et al.* 2011).

In the present study, although I have not received approval from an IRB and am thus unable to obtain informed consent to conduct this study, I am nevertheless committed to anonymisation and the minimisation of potential harm to the people appearing in my narratives.

DISCLAIMER:
I, George Strohl, in order to minimise potential harm and to protect the safety and privacy of those appearing in my narratives, have herein altered certain individuals' genders, I do not name participants other than myself, I avoid making unnecessary statements about others' appearances, and all personal circumstances herein are fictionalised (with the exception of my own). I also abstain from telling stories which are inherently negative or inflammatory in nature towards others. In my autoethnographic narratives, I am purposefully vague about others in my descriptions of how my performative attempts are taken up by those people, and I actively try to engage with stories in which the focus is mainly on me, the contexts of my inclusion within or exclusion from broad national social categories, and how my behaviour and choices contribute to that inclusion or exclusion.

CHAPTER II
2.1 – THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In the previous chapter, I outlined how the methods of discourse analysis and the autoethnographic method can be applied to presenting qualitative research on the self in a narrative format, and how these methods, when applied in the manner I apply them here, are inherently reflexive. I explained that I had noticed culturally constituted patterns in my experiences of how I positioned or conceptualised myself, which prompted me to explore processes of social identification within a larger theoretical framework. In this section, I review current literature on the metapragmatics of identity construction and thus briefly outline the theoretical background that provides us with the foundation to talk about these processes.

In this section I introduce three main topics: 1) **communities of practice**, which represent the local environments in which much of social identification occurs, 2) the semiotic processes that constitute and mediate **metapragmatic models of identity**, and 3) **processes of identity**, understood as processes of sameness and difference. All of these topics inform each other and also come to bear on how interactants perform or construe orientedness to social categories during social identification. It is productive to explore these topics to build the necessary foundations for our discussion of the constitution of group identities through both semiotic processes and discourse practice in the following section.

2.1.1 – Communities of Practice

The term **communities of practice** represents a relatively recent adaptation of the sociolinguistic term 'speech communities' in order to shift focus from studying linguistic structures to allow for studying language-in-use as a social practice. While the concept of speech communities is still very much applicable to research done in fields such as interactional linguistics or sociolinguistics, since its focus lies mainly in the ways that communities can be conceptualised in terms of the way their speech is unique to their communities, fields such as linguistic anthropology and pedagogy needed a way to expand the focus of the term beyond simple speech practices and into the realms of the practices *beside* language which can act to bind a community together (Ahearn 2017; Kroskrity 2004; Wortham 2006).

In her chapter on communities of language learners, Laura Ahearn (2017) lists three criteria which must be present in order for a group to be considered a community of practice: 1) there must be "mutual engagement" between members of the community towards 2) a "joint enterprise", and 3) members must have a "shared repertoire" of norms, skills, habits, behaviours, values, or beliefs (133). Ahearn (2017) gives the following examples of communities of practice: "members of a family, students in a linguistic anthropology class, faculty members in a particular department" …*etc.* (133). Taking the first example she gives, we can imagine that members of a family tend to be 1) 'mutually engaged' with each other (they interact with each other often, especially if they live under one roof), 2) share the 'joint enterprise' of keeping the household running smoothly (*e.g.* they must take out the trash and wash the dishes), and 3) they have a 'shared repertoire' of family practices, which could range from a collection of inside jokes to a particular 'protocol' for house cleaning. Considering Ahearn's (2017) other examples, it is clear that individuals can be *both* members of a family *and* students in a linguistic anthropology class simultaneously. Thus, Ahearn's (2017) definition of communities of practice includes the fact that they are "emergent groups that are fluid and overlapping, and that have greater or lesser importance or relevance for individuals depending on the circumstances" (119).

In sum, the defining features of **communities of practice** are: any given individual can be a member of multiple communities of practice at varying degrees of importance to the individual and even to varying degrees of awareness (Ahearn 2017); they are thus a multiplicity

of fluid, overlapping, and nesting groups of individuals, loosely connected by frequent interaction among members, common (or at least similar) goals, and a shared (albeit to differing degrees) repertoires of skills, habits, behaviours, norms, values, and/or beliefs. Because such communities of practice are socially constructed and can represent loci for a given individual's sense of being-in-the-world (Ahearn 2017), they are "ideal for looking at the complexities of identity formation" (134), which is one of the reasons that this concept is useful in our discussion of social identification.

2.1.2 – Signs and Semiotic Processes

Now, before we get too far into the topic of social identification, we'll need to ask one important question: What are identities? As defined by Agha (2007), identities are "images of self perceivable by others" which, he argues, are the very thing "upon which social practices of identity ascription depend" (234). If we remember Ochs & Capps' (1996) definition of the 'self' that we saw in the footnotes for the introduction, we know that 'self' is understood to be "an unfolding reflective awareness of being-in-the-world" (Ochs & Capps' 1996:20-1). Thus, *identity encompasses self and is co-constructed, both by an individual's own self-conceptions and others' conceptions of images portrayed by a given individual which reflect that self*. Agha (2007) further states that,

> [I]dentity is a count noun which … implies a class of enumerable things. It implies the existence of countable and pluralizable facts of sameness and difference that can become objects of study … [but] Identity is usable as an analytic term only if the rubric can be connected back to the processes by which the things it names get formed. (234)

In other words, the term 'identity' seems to imply 'countable' traits that we tend to think of as 'facts of sameness and difference' in relation to one or more social categories, but in truth, Agha (2007) is trying to convey that the processes which form it are much more complicated. Agha (2004) highlights that identity is actually "a variable phenomenon", which can change in practice and can only be approached "from the standpoint of the semiotic activities through which its variation is exhibited" (237). Therefore, in order to use identity as an analytic term, we must not gloss over the complex and sign-driven ways in which identity emerges in social practice.

The concept of semiotics, or the study of the complex processes through which signs and symbols gain meaning, has been taken up by scholars in social scientific fields as a way to conceptualise the sign- or symbol-driven processes in our social lives (Ahearn 2017; Agha 1998, 2007; Bucholtz & Hall 2006; Kroskrity 2004; Pierce 1935[1998]; Wortham 2006). C.S. Pierce's semiotic theory describes "a typology of signs which trichotomizes signing activity into symbols, icons, and indexes" (Kroskrity 2004:513; *see* Pierce 1935[1998]). Kroskrity (2004) defines **symbols** as representing "an arbitrary relationship between form and meaning," such as the word 'table' arbitrarily standing for a specific category of furniture, **icons** as representing a "formal resemblance in the form of the sign" to that for which it stands, such as 'quack' resembling the

sound a duck makes, and **indexes** as signs for which "meaning comes from some contiguity, or association, between a linguistic form and a pragmatic context" (513), as in the case of the word 'you' conditionally indexing or 'pointing to' the addressee in a specific interaction, depending on the speaker. Below, I focus most on the **indexical** sign, as it is this type of sign which most often forms the basis for social identification as it gains meaning through social practice.

In chapter five of his book on social identification theory, Agha (2007) aims to show that "a person's social identity, or identities, become determinate only through a class of semiotic processes whereby images of personhood are coupled to or decoupled from publicly perceivable signs" (233); or, put another way, the meanings of socially perceivable *signs* become associated with a socially recognisable 'type of person', and thus come to *index* a specific identity. Agha (2007) refers to such *indexical* signs as any socially perceivable thing which can function as a **diacritic**. The term **diacritic** traditionally refers to a notation mark used by linguists during phonetic transcription to differentiate similar phonological sounds from one another (Bussman *et al.* 1996), here borrowed by Agha (2007) to refer to "Any perceivable phenomenon contextually associable with an individual (*e.g.*, any aspect of appearance, conduct, or appurtenance)," (249-50) which "functions in interaction to *differentiate one social kind of actor from another*" (248; emphasis mine). That is, any sign that can come to index (or point to) a social actor as being different from another in a social interaction can be thought of as a **diacritic** sign.

According to Agha (2007), any diacritic can subsequently become **emblematic** of a particular socially recognisable kind of person. As Agha (2007) puts it, "A diacritic-under-a-designation is an emblem, a more complex type of sign" (250), which is to say that any diacritic sign can become emblematic of a designation (or a social category) as soon as it becomes associated with a socially recognisable type of person in the context of social interactions. The reason Agha (2007) distinguishes **diacritics** from **emblems** is that "a single diacritic can come under different designations," or "be viewed as emblematic of different things by different people" (250). According to Agha (2007) it is rarely the case that a single diacritic or emblem is performed or construed in isolation, and construal of signs is always positioned on the observer's knowledge.

Let's consider again Eckert's (1989) work at Belten High school in the suburbs of Detroit. She identified a few things that I have been referring to as 'social cues', which were taken to represent outward expressions of students' orientedness towards either the school or the city of Detroit: language use, clothing style, and hangout areas. While this does represent a slight simplification of Eckert's (1989) findings, the fact remains: these 'social cues' were used as *indices* associated with two different social categories: jocks or burnouts[3]. For example, in terms

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[3] It should be noted that these categories were named by Eckert (1989) and reflect her understandings and interpretations of the situation at Belten High. These categories could have been *named* anything—they could just as

of language use, the students who tended to speak with more vernacular sociolinguistic variants were sorted into the burnout category, and those who used more standard variants were sorted into the jock category. In this way, since each of the 'social cues' served to differentiate the jocks from the burnouts, they can be referred to as **diacritics**. Further, since each of these diacritics became salient to the students and came to 'point to' either category, they can be referred to as **emblems** of one or the other category. However, it is very important to understand that there were students who represented in-betweens, or those who showed attributes of both categories. None of these emblematic 'social cues' appeared in isolation from other emblems, and it was the overall *combination* of language use, clothing style, and hangout areas, considered all together within the frame of the positioned cultural knowledge of the participants in the Belten High community of practice, that ultimately 'sorted' each student into one or the other category.

Now that we have a clearer idea about the different ways of referring to these indexical signs, let's shift our focus to *how* these types of signs become linked to each other (and, thus, associated with different social designations/categories) in practice.

2.1.3 – Metapragmatic Models of Identity

In chapter two of his book on social identification in the classroom, Wortham (2006) describes the processes through which **emblems** are organised into loosely-related groupings called **metapragmatic models**. Like Agha (2007), Wortham (2006) defines a sign as "any utterance or object that people find culturally meaningful" (32). While Wortham (2006) explains that signs can be indexical or emblematic of socially recognisable kinds of people, he constantly emphasises that "signs of identity *do not directly establish social identities*" (35; emphasis mine). Instead, he writes, "Individuals behave in certain ways or possess certain characteristics, and those behaviours and characteristics are interpreted by the individuals and by others as signs of identity, as indications that the individual belongs to a recognised social type" (Wortham 2006: 30). In other words, the specific combinations of language practices, clothing styles, and hangout areas that Eckert (1989) identified did not *directly stand for* the categories of jock or burnout. Rather, they *pointed to* or *indexed* a particular category as being relevant to a particular student's identity. Like Agha (2007), Wortham (2006) suggests that no sign is meaningful in isolation, and that it is only through appearing in context with other signs during interaction that they can become emblematic of a socially recognisable 'kind of person', and clarifies this point by suggesting that any sign is only meaningful "with respect to a 'metapragmatic' or 'metacultural' model" (32).

While Wortham's (2006) work gives me the impression that there can be metapragmatic models of many different socially constructed things other than identities (such as Discourses), I

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easily have been called *nerds* and *rockers*—whatever the case, it is unlikely that the diacritics that were taken to be emblematic of those categories would change much, as they were specific to that community of practice.

focus here on his concept of **metapragmatic models of identity**, which he defines as "a model of recognizable kinds of people … participating in a recognizable kind of interaction", and explains that they are "'meta'-pragmatic because they frame the 'pragmatic' or indexical signs of identity" (32). "In most everyday interactions," Wortham (2006) explains, "a set of signs collectively comes to presuppose similar relevant contexts and one metapragmatic model (or a small set) that would be appropriate for interpreting or reaction to the focal individual's identity" (34), and that "[a]s participants give off more signs of identity across an event, the signs tend to converge on one metapragmatic model as the most appropriate for interpreting or reacting to individuals' identities" (36). In other words, (recurrent) *patterns of indexical signs in context* come to constitute different **metapragmatic models of identity**, which in turn can provide templates to either enact a model of identity, or against which to interpret signs embodied or performed by a social actor, thereby being informed by both self-conceptions and images of self, made perceivable to others.

      Metapragmatic models thus provide frameworks for organising loose groupings of more or less socially recognisable emblems into *genres* – mental bookshelves for storing loosely-related groupings of emblems, if you will – and we have a whole mental library of these loosely-related, sometimes overlapping metapragmatic models. According to Wortham (2006), a main source of information for constructing these mental models comes mainly from personal experience socially identifying or being socially identified during interactions, based on the *combination of diacritics*—or what Wortham (2006) refers to as "contextualization cues" (32)—enacted or construed as emblems. However, according to Wortham (2006), while some metapragmatic models are gained through personal experience over relatively short timescales, other metapragmatic models can be inherited from others across larger timescales, either through socialisation or through directed interactional attempts to influence a given individual's perceptions (such as through the media). Wortham (2006) explores how, through various social processes, metapragmatic models can become **contextualised**, **enregistered**, and either **stereotypic** or **naturalised**. These are designations for models which are built at different indeterminate timescales, either at or near the *event level* or at the *sociohistorical level*. I have organised these models here in more or less the order of shortest to longest construction time[4].

      Metapragmatic models built at *event-level* timescales (*i.e.* constructed mostly in local contexts of social interaction) are highly context-bound, which is to say that the emblems which form them are difficult to discuss across contexts. Such metapragmatic models are most likely to be below the level of salience or general awareness. For example, you may have been in a social interaction where the actions and appearance of a person you just met gave you a very vague impression of what kind of person they might be, but you can't quite describe it when you tell

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[4] Wortham (2006) highlights the fact that metapragmatic models can never be complete because they are constantly constituted, reconstituted, referenced, construed, and transformed during social interaction. While the information here is a slight simplification of his concepts, a full exploration of Wortham's (2006) theories on social identification would be beyond the scope of the current project.

the story later, and you may be inclined to say, "I don't know, I guess you just had to have been there." **Contextualised** metapragmatic models such as these vague impressions are constructed at very short-term event-level timescales and are thus fairly context-bound. **Enregistered** metapragmatic models are still constructed at short-term event-level timescales, but are less context-dependent in that they involve cumulative attention to a focal identity (Wortham 2006). In other words, imagine now that you've had more than one social interaction to form these impressions of what kind of person that individual might be. Now that you have more information, you may be slightly more able to talk about what kind of person they are, even if the specifics are still difficult to pin down.

There are also metapragmatic models which are constructed at *sociohistorical* timescales (initially constructed in social contexts and then perpetuated and transformed over much longer periods of time). The emblems which form them still require a social identification event in order to be construed as emblematic of a certain metapragmatic model, but these particular models tend to be much less context dependent, which is to say that the emblems that form them are acquired mainly through socialisation or through directed attempts to influence individual perception, and are thus readily discussable across contexts (Wortham 2006). In the following section, I give the most attention to metapragmatic models constructed at these sociohistorical timescales, as they themselves (and the emblems which represent them) are most likely to be above the level of general awareness in a given community (or overlapping groupings of communities of practice) and are thus more readily available in the literature.

Stereotypic metapragmatic models are still initially built at event-level timescales, but such models are widely circulated (*i.e.* discussed across contexts, and frequently referenced, construed, perpetuated, and transformed during interaction) within and amongst communities of practice over long periods of time, and have thus had a lot of time to gain (and lose) emblems as they are circulated (Agha 1998; Wortham 2006). Social identification involving stereotypic metapragmatic models are not only built in the interactions that an observer or social actor has in their lifetime, but in the interactions of many others, who a) recognised a certain combination of diacritics in practice, b) made associations with them as being emblematic of a certain kind of person, whom they passed judgments upon, and c) transformed and perpetuated these models of over hundreds of thousands of interactions over their collective lifetimes. Wortham (2006) points out that "Widely circulating sociohistorical models of identity often seem inevitable, as if members of a certain group always get socially identified in stereotypical ways" (39).

Stereotypic metapragmatic models which serve some sort of group interest, such as a sociopolitical or socioeconomic interest, are likely to become **naturalised**, or treated as natural or inevitable presuppositions of social identity in relevant contexts (Wortham 2006). Such models can either be above the general level of awareness or below it, but as they often serve group interests, are widely treated as "beyond contingency or dispute" (Agha 2007:258) by

members of the communities of practice in which they circulate, regardless of their salience. Processes of *erasure*, "or the elimination of distinctions that make particular erstwhile groupings [of signs, people] henceforth marginal or invisible" (Agha 2007:271), facilitate the naturalisation of certain metapragmatic models (Wortham 2006). In other words, a group which has systematically erased or obscured differences in their practices would constantly pose, construe, and perpetuate their own interest-serving metapragmatic models as the only relevant ones, and they may or may not even be aware of it. Thus, while stereotypic models of identity may have a sense of inevitability or naturalness to them, this natural feeling is not 'natural'; rather, it has necessarily been socially constructed within the very same processes that gave rise to the models themselves, and its seeming 'natural-ness' is a function of the high frequency of its construal in practice and its positioning as 'indisputable'.

While it may seem now that events of social identification are mediated by metapragmatic models of identity built at only two different timescales—sociohistorical and event-level—and must therefore constantly shift between the two, Wortham (2006) explains that social identification is much more complicated than that. Wortham (2006) refers to this shift between timescales as a "macro-micro dialectic" (40)—with *sociohistorical* timescales representing the macro, and *event-level* timescales representing the micro—but stresses that this notion of oscillation between two nodes in a binary does not paint the full picture of social identification as it happens in practice, since "claims about the macro-micro dialectic often mask macro-level determinism" (41). In other words, such claims tend to ignore strong influences from those models built at longer timescales, and fail to account for those influences which are below the level of general awareness, such as processes of erasure that can serve to obscure potential influences from other models.

Wortham (2006) states that metapragmatic "models of identity" are not static, rather they "can be transformed in practice" and that "we cannot know out of context what a 'macro-level' model will mean for any individual or situation" (41). Therefore, Wortham (2006) explores the notion of *mutual-constitution*, and argues that "instead of describing individuals and events as already formed and 'affected by' or 'creating' social categories and institutions," it is more productive to explore the "constitution of selves, events, and institutions in *practice*" (42; emphasis mine). In other words, it should be emphasised that the individuals and events are themselves constituted by the very same social practices that give rise to social categories and institutions. According to Wortham (2006), in order to get a clearer understanding of how social identification works in practice, one must not forget that, although "events and acts are always mediated by more widely circulating sociocultural patterns that are evoked in particular events" (42), they also play a part in constituting, reconstituting, and transforming these processes. Thus, Wortham (2006) proposes 'practice' as acting in the capacity of multiple and innumerable intermediate timescales between the *sociohistorical* and the *event-level*, occupying the space between the two and tying them together in highly complex, reticulated ways.

In this way, like other semiotically mediated concepts (such as communities of practice), **metapragmatic models** are multiple, fluid, and overlapping. They represent mental templates of the possible kinds of people in the world, constituted by loosely-related groupings of diacritics which can be construed as emblematic of the metapragmatic model they constitute. Emblems can be construed or enacted in relation to these models more or less successfully, various models built at sociohistorical timescales may be more or less prevalent among members of any given community of practice and, as they are multiple, the models can overlap and contradict one another. People can be aware of these models to varying degrees, and, being more or less context-bound, they serve to mediate processes of social identification both at individual and group levels. Metapragmatic models are constructed in practice across several different timescales, drawing from differing and complex configurations of relevant information (in the forms of diacritics, emblems, or groupings of emblems in context).

2.1.4 – Summary

Above, I explored how the process of social identification is complex and has a lot of abstract, moving parts that work together during interactions. We have discussed how **communities of practice**, **images of self** and **processes of identity**, **metapragmatic models**, and the **semiotic processes** that mediate them *all* contribute to the processes of social identification.

To recap, the process of making images of 'self' perceivable to others involves the enactment of indexical signs called diacritics which can serve to differentiate one social actor from another. When certain combinations of these diacritics occur together frequently, they can begin to point to a particular model of a socially recognisable type of person. These models are *meta*pragmatic in that they organise those groupings of pragmatic, indexical signs together as diacritics-under-a designation, or the particular name given to the metapragmatic model (*e.g.* 'jocks' or 'burnouts'). These metapragmatic models are thus both constituted in interaction *and* serve as templates, with reference to which identity is performed and construed during interaction. Another important aspect of these models is that they are continually constructed, negotiated, and re-negotiated over time, with the shortest extreme being the event-level, the longest extreme being the sociohistorical level, and the frequency with which these models become relevant in practice (whether members of a given community of practice is aware of them or not) forming the intervening continuum between the two extremes. We will return to the notion of stereotypic and naturalised metapragmatic models in the following section, when we talk about stereotypes and the concepts of markedness / unmarkedness.

2.2 – SOCIOCULTURAL CONTEXT

Now that we've talked about the semiotic processes of social identification in terms of signs and associated groups of signs, let's add another aspect to it. As we established when we first talked about Eckert's (1989), *non*-linguistic signs often occur in context with linguistic signs. Eckert (1989) dealt mostly linguistic signs like phonological variants and specific lexical choices, but those aren't the only kinds of linguistic sign. Another way we can make our self-images perceivable to others is through *discourse*. But how do we do that? In essence, we put on a show.

2.2.1 – In-grouping and out-grouping: Practice and Performance

According to Butler (1988), Bucholtz & Hall (2006), and Duranti (2004), we often *perform* our identities, both by embodying non-linguistic signs and through discourse practices, and that these performances often index a specific social group or category. Bucholtz & Hall (2006) point out two significant components of identity that relate to the formation and maintenence of social groups: *sameness* and *difference*, which were discussed in Agha's (2007) terms in the previous section. Like Agha (2007), Bucholtz & Hall (2006) emphasise that "sameness and difference are not objective states, but phenomenological processes that emerge from social interaction" (369). In their work, Bucholtz & Hall (2006) refer to *sameness* as a process which "allows for individuals to imagine themselves as a group" (369) and *difference* as a process which "produces social distance between those who perceive themselves as unlike" (369). Considering what we know about self and identity, we can see that *processes of sameness* involve recognising others that are similar enough our 'selves' that we see them as falling into the same category as we do (such as a man recognising another man as falling into the same gender category as he does), and *processes of difference* involve not recognising (or choosing not to recognise) others as similar to ourselves, and thus thinking as that as falling into a different category than we do (such as a man seeing a woman and recognises her as belonging to a different gender category). Hereafter, I will refer to processes of sameness as **in-grouping** and processes of difference as **out-grouping**.

However, these processes don't stop at recognition. According to Bucholtz & Hall (2006), individuals can *attempt* to in-group or out-group themselves in relation to any number of social categories and thus **performatively** attempt be recognised as a member or non-member of a group. Judith Butler (1988) addresses this idea of performativity in her essay on gender, discussing it in terms of constantly embodying and maintaining our identities, which implies a sense of deliberateness that I'd like to take a moment to address. According to Alessandro Duranti (2004), "the notion of representation of *agency* is intimately tied to the notion of performance" because "In using language, we are constantly monitoring the type of person we want to be (Self) for Others … The way we handle the expression of agency has a major role in

this routine and yet complex enterprise" (466; emphasis mine). Duranti (2004) refers to **agency**[5] as a quality of entities that 1) "have some degree of control over their own behavior", 2) "whose actions in the world affect other entities' (and sometimes their own)", and 3) "whose actions are the object of evaluation (*e.g.* in terms of their responsibility for a given outcome)" (453). When we attempt to be identified in a certain way, we are, in essence, exercising our control over our behaviour in order to attempt to influence the actions of others (i.e. we may be attempting to influence them to see our 'selves' as we do), and insodiong, we are subject to evaluation by others.

However, Bucholtz & Hall (2006) point out that, while certain diacritics are **performative** – they can *be performed* and thus reflect more active and deliberate choices (such as the ways in which we express ourselves through discourse, or the brand of jeans we choose wear), others can be **non-performative**, such as those related to parts of ourselves over which we have little to no control (the shape of our nose, the natural colour of our hair, our skintone, our height or weight…etc.). Further, Bucholtz & Hall (2006) and Wortham (2006) both draw attention to the fact that *co-construction* matters in the performance and construal of emblems; in other words, performative processes of identity involve both the *social actors' attempts* to make their self-conceptions perceivable to others *and* the *others' construal* of those attempts. As social actors, we can make educated guesses, but we cannot know *a priori* how an observer is going to construe our attempts to perform a certain identity. Although we may perform a diacritic for a specific reason, it may not get taken up in the way(s) we intend, it may be challenged, or it may go unnoticed altogether. Let's consider some examples of these dynamics from my own life that deal with the differential construal of both non-performative and performative diacritics occurring simultaneously.

I speak Russian and I have red hair. One of these diacritics is performative in that I have agentive control over my ability to speak Russian; the other is non-performative, because my hair is naturally red; I haven't dyed it say, green, which might be taken up as making a particular statement. This particular combination of diacritics—or in Wortham's (2006) terms, 'contextualisation cues'—has led Russian people to socially identify me as a Russian-American Jew on several separate occasions. In those particular cases, these contextualisation cues were taken as *related* (or belonging to the *same* metapragmatic model). Firstly, my red hair is reminiscent of a specific stereotypic emblem of Jewishness in Russia, where the remaining Jewish populations are predominantly Ashkenazi (Safran 2005) and have a high prevalence of red-headed people. Secondly, my accented Russian is apparently reminiscent of that of a heritage speaker of Russian who grew up in the United States, which is where many Russian Jews ended up after they were displaced from Russia (Healy 1983; Safran 2005). These contextualisation

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[5] While a full discussion of agency would be beyond the scope of this project, it does come up again in the narrative analysis portions, so I will discuss it briefly in this chapter and the next. Please see Duranti (2004) for a more in-depth meditation on agency.

cues can therefore imply (at least to those familiar with these contextualisation cues as indexing *one* relevant metapragmatic model), that I am a Russian-American Jew. Since that particular social identification resonates with my self-conceptions—after all, I *am* Jewish, and I *do* speak Russian (although I am not a heritage speaker)—I am happy with that social identification, but I had not made a performative attempt to elicit it. In these cases, the contextualisation cues 'red hair' and 'Russian-speaking ability' were taken as related indices which allowed those Russians familiar with a metapragmatic model of 'Russian-American Jew' to sort me into that category.

There have also been cases in which these same contextualisation cues—my red hair and Russian-speaking ability—have led American people to socially identify me as non-Jewish, or jokingly, as a Russian spy. In such cases, these contextualisation cues were taken as *unrelated* (or belonging to two *separate* metapragmatic models). During these particular interactions, I had actively *performed* my Jewishness, either by stating it in conversation, or by making reference to Jewish diacritic signs (such as mentioning that I celebrated Hanukkah, or talked about going to temple). Despite my attempts to performatively in-group myself as Jewish, many times observers actively *refute* my performed identity, stating that I "don't look Jewish", possibly because I lack specific stereotypic emblems (*i.e.* dark hair and the strong, 'Jewish nose') that are more likely to be construed as Jewish in the region where I live in America (Lipton 2014), where the larger Jewish populations are predominantly Sephardic (Safran 2005), and have a low prevalence of individuals with red hair. In these events of social identification, observers actively refuted my performative attempt to in-group myself as Jewish, instead voicing that they had construed my red hair as being emblematic of an Irish heritage. In other words, these contextualisation cues were taken as unrelated indices, allowing those Americans to sort me into two different categories, based on the metapragmatic models they were familiar with, which we might name 'Irish person' and 'Russian speaker'.

Since Russian-speaking ability has as much chance to be an emblem in American metapragmatic models of Jewishness as it has of being absent[6], even if I performatively attempt to be identified by Americans in the same way as I have been by Russians, my attempts are likely to be unsuccessful, unless there is an observer present who is familiar with this particular set of contextualisation cues (red hair and Russian-speaking ability) as pointing to one relevant metapragmatic model instead of two separate ones. In the above example, however, it is highly likely that the American observers' ignoring of my attempts to perform Russian-speaking ability as an emblem of Russian-American-Jewishness was unfamiliar to them and therefore was not even considered.

2.2.2 – National Identity and Discourse Practice

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[6] For example, someone living in a region of America with high populations of both Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews, such as New York (Healy 1983; Safran 2005), may be more familiar with Russian speaking ability as being an emblem in a metapragmatic model of Russian-Jewishness.

In contrast to individual identities, which we understand in Agha's (2007) terms 'images of 'self' perceivable by others', national identities are images of a *national* self, informed by the performed self-images of complex composites of overlapping and nesting communities of practice which are comprised of an infinite diversity of individuals. A diversity of this magnitude is difficult to comprehend, much less consistently reference in its actuality. Therefore, as the national identity is referenced in spoken or written discourse practice (such as on the news or in history books) they tend to undergo processes of simplification, in which much of the attention to the diversity which actually forms the whole is erased in the interest of continually identifying simple facts of sameness and difference, a practice that Agha (2007) warns against (AND *see* Bucholtz & Hall 2006). In effect, for ease of comprehension, the diversity of possible identities relating to nations become reduced to easily typifiable and categorisable 'facts' of sameness and difference, organised under a simple designation: the name of the nation.

The practice of simplifying a nation as being a unified whole is so frequent that it has become naturalised. In other words, we tend not to be aware that we think of nations as unified wholes, but the notion comes so natural to us that we can see it reflected in our discourse practices. Take, for instance, these newspaper headlines, which position nations as if they were individuals with a unified agency:

(1) Russia 'meddled in all big social media' around US election[7]
(2) Is America About to Declare a Currency War?[8]

Since discourse practice is constitutive of our social reality, frequently seeing nations portrayed in this manner can influence our metapragmatic impressions of those nations, and we may begin to assume (incorrectly) that nations can act as unified wholes (Silverstein 1989; Bronfenbrenner 1961[2010]). In fact, as we will see in chapter three, I am guilty of thinking of America in this way. I want to be clear that I am advocating against this particular practice, since thinking of a nation as a unified whole acting with unified agency is an *inaccurate portrayal* of the complexities of national identities. In fact it is a dangerous practice, as it privileges certain influential Discourses at the expense of less influential (but none the less valid) discourses, thus only those influential voices get to 'tell' the national story as it unfolds (Silverstein 1989; Bronfenbrenner 1961[2010]; *see also* Adler & Patterson 1970).] However, I identify this practice here as a description of how discourse practices serve to partially construct our impressions of national identities.

The problems with being able to account for complexity in group identities when it comes to other linguistic and non-linguistic signs are just as diffuse as they are for discourse practice. Brown *et al*. (2007), Petersson (2012), Stephen *et al*. (1993), and Silverstein (1989) all agree that

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[7] Please see https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-46590890 for the full article
[8] Please see https://www.reuters.com/article/sponsored/declare-a-currency-war for the full article

it is much easier to conceptualise a complex sense of 'self' in simplified terms of what it is *not*. Bucholtz & Hall (2006) talk about processes of difference as involving the *manufacturing* or *underscoring* of differences between groups, which involves the conceptualisation of self in relation to stereotypic metapragmatic models (Wortham 2006). Thus, stereotypes can provide just the needed mirror against which to conceptualise that 'self' in a positive light, especially if morale is low (Bronfenbrenner 1961[2010]; Brown *et al.* 2007; Stephen *et al.* 1993; Petersson 2012). We know for our discussion of stereotypic metapragmatic models in the previous section that stereotypes are metapragmatic models of self or other which were constituted over sociohistoric timescales and have been naturalised, but they're typically above the general level of awareness (salient to those familiar with them). Thus, simplifications and generalisations like stereotypes are often specifically predicated on this notion of treating entire nations as unified wholes acting with a unified agency (Bronfenbrenner 1961[2010]; Silverstein 1989; AND *see* Adler & Patterson 1970).

In his essay on *Language and Nationalism*, Anthony Smith (1982) suggests that it is often difficult to foster a sense of national coherency and unity for multinational countries, suggesting that these senses must come from a wide variety of factors which can "endow the community with a heightened sense of distinctiveness" (147) from other groups, such as "a myth of common ancestry" or "shared history", a "sense of solidarity", and "one or more elements of common culture" such as "language, customs, institutions, religion, colour[9], and an historic territory or 'homeland'" (147). In the cases of Russia and America, which are both multinational countries, found themselves struggling to conceptualise their identities in terms other than military prowess after the end of world war two, which posed a problem in the face of polarised populaces (Adler & Patterson 1970; Garusova 2010, 2012; Petersson 2012; Popov 2015, 2019; Ziegler 2014).

In his article on Russia's self-images and views of the US 'other', Bo Petersson (2012) suggests that, in this position of relative 'weakness', the two countries found themselves in need of a pretty powerful sort of stereotype, one that could serve to unite their peoples, so they went about fabricating an enemy image of the other (AND *see* Adler & Patterson 1970; Garusova 2010, 2012; Popov 2015; Silverstein 1989; Small 1980; Zhuravlyova 2012). Enemy images, according to Petersson (2012), "constitute a particularly powerful and compelling type of stereotype that tends to guide action" as they conjure "a looming – or at least potential – danger to the collective self" and prompt "the group to close ranks and strengthen its internal cohesion" (14). The enemy images fabricated by either country served as images of other against which to conceptualise a complex national 'self' and were thus mostly perpetuated through Discourse practices in the media for domestic audiences (Adler & Patterson 1970; Garusova 2010, 2012; Popov 2015; Silverstein 1989; Small 1980; Zhuravlyova 2012).

In their 1970 essay, Red Fascism: The Merger of Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia in the American Image of Totalitarianism, 1930s–1950s, Adler & Paterson show how rhetoric and

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[9] It seems clear that Smith (1982) is referring to the colour of one's skin here; a category of 'race'.

imagery was used in the American media to 'enmify'[10] their image of Soviet Russia both before and after World War II. According to Adler & Patterson (1970) "Americans both before and after the Second World War casually and deliberately articulated distorted similarities between Nazi and Communist ideologies, German and Soviet foreign politics, and Hitler and Stalin" (1046). According to Adler & Patterson (1970), by the 1930s, Americans were already attributing the term 'totalitarian' to Soviet Russia, calling up connotations of the fascism in 'Mussolini's Italy' and 'Hitler's Germany' and explain that these Discourses became popular topics in the news of the time.

Adler & Patterson (1970) explain that, during the war, when it became necessary to portray Russia as an ally, the Discourses in the media shifted to focusing on similarities between America and Russia, but this practice "was a temporary façade, a reaction to Soviet war efforts rather than a reappraisal," and that "the Nazi-Communist analogy appeared publicly again as Soviet-American tensions increased near the close of the war" (1051). After World War II, the pre-war enemy image of Soviet Russia came back full force in the American media, and "The tough, but friendly 'Uncle Joe' of wartime propaganda became the paranoid tyrant of the Cold War, aping Hitler" (1060). According to Adler & Patterson (1970), "Once Russia was designated the 'enemy' by American leaders, Americans transferred their hatred for Hitler's Germany to Stalin's Russia with considerable ease" (1046). Adler & Patterson (1970) stress that the Nazi-Communist analogy "itself obstructed accommodation: it did not allow for a sophisticated understanding of power relationships in Europe," it "substituted emotion for intellect," and it "particularly affected the American perception of reality" (Adler & Patterson 1970:1060-1; *see also* Bronfenbrenner 1961[2010]; Silverstein 1989).

According to Adler & Patterson (1970), "It was assumed, without understanding the Soviet security concerns or its national interest, that Russia was simply replacing Germany as the disrupter of peace in Europe" (1056). Due to these Discourses, many Americans subsequently became paranoid that "Russia, like Germany before, was going to sweep over Europe in a massive military attack" (Adler & Patterson 1970:1057). This paranoid belief was based solely on the distorted enemy image of Soviet Russia portrayed in the American media, and many were ignorant of the fact that the recently war-devastated Soviet Union was in no position to mount an attack against America, nor did she have any reason to do so (Adler & Patterson 1970; Kenez 2006; Ziegler 2014). Given the Americans' presumption that "conflict with totalitarianism was inevitable after World War II", the Nazi-Communist analogy prevalent in American media flourished and became self-fulfilling, as Americans had started out believing that "there was no room for accommodation with the Soviet Union because the Communist nation was inexorably driven by its ideology and totalitarianism" (1060).

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[10] Here, I use *enmify* to mean 'turn in to an enemy'

According to Adler & Patterson (1970), this presumption, and its accompanying false attribution, formed "the major weakness of the Nazi-Communist analogy" (1060), but was still "a potent and pervasive notion that significantly shaped American perception of world events in the Cold War" (1046; AND *see* Bronfenbrenner 1961[2010]). Adler & Patterson's (1970) work is a prime example of how discourse practices contribute to constituting national identities, even when those discourse practices are based in false assumptions. So, as we can see, the social construction of group identity through discourse can have real consequences for lived realities (Bruner 1991). Case in point: the Discourses which positioned Russia as America's greatest enemy, fabricated as they were, had real consequences for the international relations between America and Russia; in fact, they probably contributed to the beginning of the cold war.

An interesting point highlighted by Brown et al. (2007) and Garusova (2010, 2012) that I'd like to bring up now is this: the lack of communication between Russia and America during the cold war (and even now) exacerbated the formation of wildly misinformed stereotypes. However, after the fall of the Soviet Union, when the countries started to communicate more regularly again, and American culture rose to popularity among Russians, an interesting exchange of stereotypes happened; and not necessarily of negative stereotypes.

In their exploratory study on cross-cultural public opinion and stereotypes about Russian and American culture in college-age students, Brown *et al.* (2007) found a conspicuous similarity in Russians and American students' responses to American culture. For example, Brown *et al*. (2007) highlighted that "American and Russian participants gave near identical ideological assessments of American culture" (590), especially in responses with regard to freedom and independence. Brown *et al*. (2007) also highlight that both Russians and Americans gave similar examples of objects relating to American culture such as 'Big Mac' and 'money', but explained that "Americans supplied even more examples of 'fast food,' such as 'pizza,' 'chili dogs,' and overall 'greasy food' than did Russians, thus discounting the convenient explanation of stereotyping American culture in this instance", and rather implying "a reflexive outcome of America exporting self-stereotyped culture to Russia" (Brown *et al*. 2007:600)[11]. With their export into another country through the media, those self-stereotypes (or stereotypised images of self) have become perceivable to others where they might not have been before; now they can influence others' perceptions of us, a point which I will reiterate below.

In sum, Stereotypes, be they mundane (self-stereotypes about eating pizza), or malevolent (enemy images reminiscent of Nazi Germany) mediate processes of identity, or the processes of in-grouping and out-grouping that I introduced at the beginning of this section. We have seen that they are can be images fabricated by others in order to simplify conceptualising their own

[11] Brown *et al*. (2007) explain that this self-stereotyped cultural export has been referred to as 'coca-colonization' and 'McDonaldization' (602) but imply that American franchises and companies are not the only source of this export; rather, they mention the influence of and "increasingly prevalent role that television and cinema play in shaping public opinion" (602; *see also* Garusova 2010, 2012).

selves, or they can be images based in fact that our own group has 'exported' for use by others to conceptualise ourselves. No matter what, they have consequences for our lived realities, whether dire (as with the enemy image perpetuated in American news and political Discourses), or mundane (as we will see in the example narrative I included below).

2.2.3 – Marked vs. Unmarked Indexical Signs

As we have discussed in the previous section, both naturalised and stereotypic metapragmatic models are often widely circulated within a community of practice (or within a group thereof) for long periods of time. They are thus constructed at longer sociohistorical timescales, and are usually inherited through socialisation or represent long-ongoing attempts to guide the perceptions of the populations amongst which they are widespread. No matter who the referent of that particular model of identity is (i.e. the 'self' or 'other' on which the stereotype was based), the ones which represent images which are highly relevant to the group identity are usually naturalised (*i.e.* come to be taken for granted), and the ones which serve or have served sociopolitical and socioeconomic interests are usually stereotypic (and often viewed as inevitable). Due to these processes, certain emblems or groups thereof can gain either a **marked** or **unmarked** status, depending on the degree of awareness the observer has of a set of contextualisation cues.

Borrowing from the linguistic concept of markedness, which has traditionally been used in linguistic morphology to describe the form of any given word that differs from or stands out in comparison to a more common form of that word (Bussman *et al.* 1996), Bucholtz & Hall (2006) apply the concept to social categories, or models of personhood. In their synthesis, Bucholtz & Hall (2006) use the term **markedness** to describe "the process whereby some social categories gain a special, default status that contrasts with the identities of other groups, which are usually highly recognizable" (372). The social categories that are highly recognisable are considered to be **marked**, specifically because they stand out in relation to the others; for example, stereotypic metapragmatic models usually fall into this marked category. The ones that come to be taken for granted are considered to be **unmarked**, and the ones that are not highly recognisable can either fall into the category of unmarkedness, or represent social categories which are taken for granted in a particular community of practice, and may represent some sort of social norm.

Now, let us reconsider the examples I gave above of my red hair and Russian-speaking ability. The Russian observers who construed red hair and Russian-speaking ability as emblematic of the *same* metapragmatic model were most likely socialised in an environment in which people with red hair who could speak Russian was a sign of being a Russian-speaking Jew, and thus took the sign to be inevitable. Thus, for them, this sign may have been an easily construable, **marked** stereotypic set of signs. The American observers who interpreted my red hair and Russian-speaking ability as emblematic of *different* metapragmatic models were most likely socialised in an environment where those contextualisation cues were not widely

understood to be related. For some of these American observers, my red hair indicated to them that I must be of Irish descent and they drew an imaginary line in their minds tying me to their metapragmatic model of Irishness, and separately, my Russian-speaking ability was taken as unrelated to that.

However, when the American observers learned that I'm Jewish, they felt compelled to counter my claim, possibly out of surprise as 'jewishness' didn't form a part of their initial contextual metapragmatic image of me. For those specific observers, none of the contextualisation cues indicated to them that they should at all consider 'Jewishness' as a viable interpretation of my identity. Thus, it is probably safe to say that the **marked**, stereotypic metapragmatic model of 'red-headed Russian-speaking Jew' that existed for the Russian observers did not exist for the American observers.

Now let's consider an instance in which an **unmarked** category is taken for granted.

2.2.4 – Putting Theory into Practice

Here, I present a vignette example of a situation in which I performatively out-grouped myself from a group of Americans. This is a brief example of what I will be doing in the narrative analysis portion of this project, included here to illustrate how I will be employing this concept of markedness and how stereotypes can have consequences for individuals' lived realities. In this particular situation, an **unmarked** emblem which I did not attempt to perform was ascribed to me, so I performed a contrary **marked** emblem in an attempt to guide observers' perceptions of me towards an image of my 'self' that more closely resembled my own. In this particular case, my attempt to position myself in a **marked** category was accepted as 'other' by those interacting with me.

Example Narrative - The Unwilling Hamburger Helper (Written in 2019)
During my year abroad in Russia, a large group of foreign exchange students, myself included, all decided to go out to dinner one night. I found out as we were walking that the other American exchange students had heard that there were two different hamburger restaurants near our university. So, the American students—being self-proclaimed 'burger experts'—decided to buy one from each restaurant to determine which of the burgers was better. As we continued walking, the American students were excitedly planning this burger-rating expedition—ignoring my attempts to get their attention—and using first-person plural pronouns that included *me* in their plans. Finally, I spoke up, more loudly this time, "Wait," I said, holding up my hands in protest. "Who said *I* was going to help you rate these burgers?"

When they finally acknowledged me, they turned to me and smiled, their hands outstretched; "Of course *you're* going to help us rate these burgers," one of them said to me. "You're from America!"
In their eyes, that fact alone made me a certified burger expert, too.

There was just one little problem with that. I *hate* hamburgers.

When I voiced this sentiment, the American students were shocked. The French students who were with us were flabbergasted. The Italian students who had come along didn't know what to make of it. The Russian student who was standing next to me couldn't believe it.

One of the American students piped up, "*How* can *you* hate *hamburgers?* You're *American!*"

I thought of stereotypes I had heard about Russians and turned to the Russian student next to me, asking, "Well, do you know any Russians who hate vodka?" She thought about it for a moment and nodded 'yes' with a shrug of her shoulder.

"It's the same thing," I said, "Just because a *lot* of Americans like hamburgers doesn't mean *all* of them do. And I just happen to be one of the ones that don't."

One of the American students asked if I was a vegetarian. When I said no, one of the other American students said something to the effect of, "Hating hamburgers is unamerican."

Fortunately for me, that suited me just fine, and I had a lovely time periodically being called unamerican for the rest of the evening.

This experience, along with many others, stuck with me after I returned home, and I spent so much time thinking about experiences like this that I felt compelled to pursue this particular project when I returned home. What had happened here, I wondered? What had made the other American students so sure that I would agree to participate in a burger-rating expedition without having asked me first? What had made them ask if I was a vegetarian before considering that I simply, really, truly do *not* like hamburgers? Why did they consider 'hating hamburgers' to be an acceptable parameter along which to deny me group-status as an American? Is a hunk of beef, some pickles, and ketchup between two halves of a sesame bun *really* all that important to a national identity? If Stephen *et al.*'s (1993) study is anything to go on, I guess I'd have to say yes.

Once I had done a bit of research into the matter of social identification, I understood that what I had experienced in the above interaction was merely a case of normative erasure of differences. Somehow, along the way, the diacritic 'liking hamburgers' must have gotten stuck in next to 'remembering all the words to the American national anthem'[12] in the metapragmatic model of 'Americanness' that each of my interlocutors had in their minds. According to Bucholtz & Hall (2006),

> "Social grouping is a process not merely of discovering or acknowledging a similarity that precedes and establishes identity but, more fundamentally, of inventing similarity by downplaying difference" … "it may also serve to manufacture or underscore differences between in-group members and those outside the group" (371)

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[12] Another emblem I often fail to perform. But that's a story for another project.

This quote outlines exactly what I had experienced. I had performed a **marked** emblem—not liking hamburgers—which did not fit into the metapragmatic model of 'Americanness' held by my peers, and thus, when I made my attempt to guide their perceptions of me away from their metapragmatic models of 'Americanness' that included this 'liking hamburgers' emblem, they performatively accepted my out-group-ness by loudly voicing it. If I had *performed* the **unmarked** counterpart of that particular diacritic—liking hamburgers—my particular relationship to 'Americanness' probably would never have even been questioned. It might have gone completely unnoticed, because it would only have perpetuated the widely-circulated, naturalised stereotype that all Americans love hamburgers.

2.2.5 – Toward a loose definition of 'Russianness' and 'Americanness'

So now that we've talked about some of the stereotypes that can fall under these metapragmatic models and talked about some of the dangers of simplification, I'd like to re-address Wortham's (2007) concept of the metapragmatic model. Does it adequately capture all of the complexity that can come under a designation? If we think back to some of the emblems we talked about in this section as being related to Russian*ness* in some way—red hair and Russian-speaking-ability on the one hand, fabricated American enemy images of Russia on the other—it becomes pretty clear that not all of these emblems are construed by everyone as being related to Russianness 100% of the time. I don't think of any Russians in terms of the fabricated enemy image of the cold war, and Americans don't consider my red-headed-ness as being indicative of Russian-American-Jewishness. The thing is, metapragmatic models and metapragmatic groups are just that – they're *meta*. These are mental models, which means that, although with more widely-circulated models there might be some overlap, the majority of them are specific to each individual based on their own experiences and socialisation. Thus, these metapragmatic models, just as any kind of knowledge, is never 'point-of-view-less' (Bruner 1991) – metapragmatic models like this are thus subjective and resist definition, simply because they *are unique to each and every individual* and *they're in a constant state of flux as they get negotiated and re-negotiated in practice*.

Thus, I'd like to propose that, yes, Wortham's (2007) concept of metapragmatic models does a fantastic job at capturing the complexity that can come under a designation. However, for the purposes of this work, and towards the goal of loosely 'defining' Russianness and Americanness, I'd like to suggest a slight addition to Wortham's (2007) terms. I suggest that 'Russianness' is constituted by a positioned *grouping* of metapragmatic models, unique to every individual, that come to be associated with Russia in practice. Conversely, 'Americanness' is constituted by a positioned *grouping* of metapragmatic models, unique to every individual, that come to be associated with America in practice. The more familiar we are with a particular group of models, the more resolution we'll have in terms of being able to construe specific diacritics as being emblematic of a specific type of person within that group (such as people from North America being more accurate at figuring out the region a North American is from based on his

accent or the specific lexical choices he makes). The less familiar we are with a place the more likely a lot of those models are to be stereotypic, but even people familiar with an overall group that they fall under can self-stereotype and generalise traits they associate with the overall group as being 'natural' traits.

So, in essence, I'm saying that I cannot tell you in concrete terms what *Russianness* is; I can say that for me, it might be the Russian language itself, or a certain feeling of longing for something I can't quite understand, or singing *подмосковные вечера* with my friends from Russian class, or the smell of tea and pastries, or raspberry seeds on Пломбир ice cream, the crowded metro in the mornings and afternoons, or the camaraderie I feel playing hockey and joking with my friends, slapping at mosquitos while eating fresh fish and grechka on a muggy summer afternoon, or walking on a snow-covered street at twilight and watching my breaths billow out in front of me and enjoying the sparkling reflections of the orange street lights on the snow…but what is the most important to understand is that as a positioned grouping of metapragmatic models, 'Russianness' is an unbounded concept, as impossible to measure as Russia 'herself'[13]. What Russianness means to me is not what it will mean to someone else, and while our individual concepts may overlap, they can never be completely the same, because our experiences, and indeed the historical conventions that make these signs salient/available to us, will necessarily be different.

CHAPTER III
3.1 – AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC NARRATIVE ANALYSES

In his article, *Self-presentation in L2 interview talk*, Matthew Prior (2011) refers to personal narratives as "storied autobiographical accounts through which speakers make intelligible their lives and actions" (61)—here, I substitute the word 'writers' for 'speakers', of course—which acts as a "reflexive process of sense-making for self and others" (64). Self-reflection is also an important part of the act of constructing a narrative (Ochs 2011; Ochs & Capps 1996). As Ochs (2011) points out, it's usually only *after* an event happens in our lives that "we grapple with the contours and meaning of an experience, with narrative as the universal yet imperfect medium to this end" (64). "The act of constructing a narrative," according to Bruner (1991), "is considerably more than 'selecting' events either from real life, from memory … and then placing them in an appropriate order. The events themselves need to be *constituted* in the light of the overall narrative" (8; emphasis in text), which is to say that narratives require a representation of the context in which the narrative is situated.

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[13] A reference to a famous Russian poem by Fyodor Tuchev: "Russia cannot be understood with the mind alone. No ordinary yardstick can span her greatness. She stands alone, unique - In Russia, one can only believe".

For this reason, Prior (2011) suggests thinking of narratives as one-in-a-series (*i.e.* locally/contextually positioned), which involves the careful examining of the context in which a narrative was elicited/told requires regarding narratives as positioned, rather than as being the same/performing the same function across contexts. Per Prior's (2011) suggestions, each of the following narratives are treated as one-in-a-series and were written within the context of this overall work. Decisions about their relevance were made in terms of an earlier version of this work, but the overall stories themselves remain mostly unchanged (some spelling and grammatical errors were corrected).

Before we begin, I still need to discuss a few important matters. In these narratives, a lot of the analysis will be focused on performance (or in this case, deliberate positioning in the text), thus, the concept of agency we discussed in the previous chapter is relevant again. As I have mentioned, I follow Duranti's (2004) definition of **agency** as a quality of entities that 1) "have some degree of control over their own behavior", 2) "whose actions in the world affect other entities' (and sometimes their own)", and 3) "whose actions are the object of evaluation (*e.g.* in terms of their responsibility for a given outcome)" (453). Here, I would like to add that Duranti (2004) identified two levels of *agency in performance*, ego-affirming agency, and act-constituting agency. Duranti (2004) talks about self- or ego-affirming agency in terms of speaking, highlighting that "The very act of speaking in front of others who can perceive such an act establishes the speaker as a being whose existence must be reckoned with in terms of his or her communitive goals and abilities" (455). Duranti (2004) also puts it in another way, "*loquor, ergo agens sum*" (455) or '*I speak, therefore, I am being agentive*'.

Act-constituting agency, on the other hand, has a lot to do with the semiotic processes we discussed in the previous chapter. Duranti (2004) discusses it in terms of indexical positioning, in the same way that explicitly drawing attention to a particular emblem (*e.g.* saying 'I am a doctor', or 'senator, can you comment on this issue?') can "presuppose an existential connection" between the speaker and a certain social category, or "the status of the addressee in a particular profession or public office" (458). Additionally, deliberately performing an emblem (*e.g.* speaking in a certain way, with a certain accent, using certain lexical terms) can 'point to' a certain metapragmatic model as being the most relevant one in a given interaction. In this way, act-constituting agency is the act of "*doing things with language*" (Duranti 2004:459; emphasis in text), or are exerting their ability to affect the actions of others through language.

The *encoding* of agency will also be important for some of these narratives, mainly for narrative (I). According to Duranti (2004) different languages use different linguistic strategies to either emphasise or downplay agency. In English, speakers can *emphasise* agency by writing a sentence with active voice (*i.e.* putting a noun in the subject position of a transitive verb so that the noun is positioned as acting upon the object, as in the sentence *the **cat** ate the fish* – the cat is positioned as an agent acting on the object, the fish. English also allows inanimate objects to be

placed in agentive positions – *the **prices** jumped after the recession*). Or, alternatively, speakers can *downplay* agency by writing the sentence in the passive voice (i.e. placing the object of a transitive verb at the beginning of the sentence – *the piñata was broken* – and then speakers can choose between leaving the agent off completely, naming the agent – *the piñata was broken by **Mary*** – or, English allows positioning of an inanimate instrument as agentive - *the piñata was broken by the **stick***.)

The narratives I present in this chapter are my own personal autobiographical accounts, written in a more or less flow-of-consciousness manner. Specifically, the narratives I present in this project represent snapshots of my experiences, and they are presented here with the understanding that my perspective on them (and thus my interpretation of them) is always subject to change…in fact, my perspective on them has changed many times over the course of this work, and I will make every attempt to address that as I address the main area of focus, the presentation of self as related to categories of nationality. I believe a narrative inquiry into these texts can reveal much about what I was trying to covey or evoke with the prose at the time I wrote them, and also about how my behaviours in those texts contribute to my impressions of Russianness or Americanness.

For narrative (I), I'll be thinking about structure in Labovian terms; although his analysis methods are most often applied to oral narratives evoked during interviews, I find that my first narrative fits with some of his descriptions of a 'typical' narrative format (Labov & Wazletsky 1967[1997]); Also, after a preliminary look, the temporality of some of these stories seems to be revealing, so I will engage Ochs & Capps 1996 discussion of temporality that I mentioned in the methods section. Since narrative (I) below is the longest narrative included in this project, analysing every single little detail therein is outside of this project's particular scope. However, the analysis for narrative (I) *is* the most in-depth of the analyses I conduct for this project. As this narrative was written for a different purpose/has a different function as compared to the other narratives included in this chapter, it is the only one that I analyse specifically for grammatical self-positioning and co-construction, and I highlight things in relation to those analytic approaches that I found the most interesting. The rest of the analyses are conducted in a manner more similar to the analysis of the exemplar narrative that appeared in the previous chapter.

3.1.1 – (I) America: The Land of the Greed (Written in 2020)

For context, I wrote this narrative during the lockdown due to the global Covid-19 pandemic. In terms of structure (in the Labovian sense), this narrative is an *orienting* segment, or the beginning of the series of narratives written for this project. This narrative serves to introduce the narrator (myself) as a main character and to give an idea of my motivations, as well as to 'set the stage' (in terms of setting) for the other narratives to follow. Here, I orient the reader to the contrast in my feelings about the American way of life *vs.* the life I had whilst living in Russia, as well as to the contrasting self-images I associated with each place.

(I.1) As far as I can see, I have no reason to feel at 'home' in America. I did not 'choose' to live in America, I was simply brought into the world here. I was always told to be proud of where I'm from, but I've always found it hard to be proud of living in the car theft capital of America. In a place where my biological father died of a drug overdose when I was 12, an occurrence which isn't even rare for people here. Where we would play 'gunshot-or-firework' at night, or wake up to cops searching for fugitives in our tiny backyard. Where I received death threats at school because I didn't act like everyone else or love like everyone else. Where all my money goes to school and food, and having my own space and my own means of transportation feels like an unattainable pipe dream. Where I can't get my own healthcare because of a tax loophole, but I also can't benefit from my parents' healthcare because I'm 'too old'. Where I experienced wage theft at a job that paid me less than minimum wage. Where I got held up during the night shift at a different minimum wage job, hiding in the dish room with a knife in my shaking hand, hoping to god the guy with the gun wouldn't try to come back to see if I'm hiding the safe. Where I'm consistently missing all of the social milestones that were supposed to tell me when I was grown the hell up (by my age, my parents already had kids, a house, a car, and a stable job, and I'm over here holding onto a knife in a dish room, hoping I don't get shot). I've always found it hard to be proud of living in a place where I work myself to tears, and when it doesn't pay off, I'm the one who's blamed for not 'wanting it badly enough'. Where following my Dreams seems like an empty pursuit.

That's the America I know.

(I.2) Saying the pledge of allegiance in school has always felt like a joke.

One nation under god, indivisible? It has always seemed pretty divisible to me. Nobody here can agree on anything. Some people think you shouldn't wear masks during a pandemic because doing so makes you a 'sheep', and others actually listen to the latest scientific research. Your alignment with either side of the 'two' party system is treated as a personality trait. Politics in America play out more like a football game than actual politics…you're either for one side or the other (and all the other 'teams' are treated like they don't even exist).

Go ahead, vote your conscience.
Did you vote democrat or republican?
What? You voted for the Green Party candidate?
Why would you throw away your vote like that?

With liberty and justice for all? From the very beginning, the American Dream has been denied to people on the basis of race, gender, and creed. Where was 'liberty' and 'justice' when the Native Americans were forced out of their lands, prices placed on their scalps[14]? Where was liberty and justice for the millions of African Americans who were enslaved? Where was liberty and justice when the cops broke down Breonna Taylor's door and shot her in her bed[15]? Where is liberty and justice when cops who kill innocent Americans get acquitted with nothing more than a slap on the hand?!

Where is liberty and justice for the poor guy who works two jobs to take care of his children, only to lose everything when he gets into a car accident and the hospital sticks him with bills that are double his yearly salary, all while the drunk rich guy who hit him pays off the fine and goes on with his life like

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[14] Please see Macedo's (1993) publication Literacy for Stupidification: The Pedagogy of Big Lies
[15] Please see *Breonna Taylor: Grand jury 'not given chance to bring homicide charges'* at
https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-54626809

it's nothing? Where is liberty and justice for the people dying because they can't afford their medical bills[16], or for that matter, the people who can't afford their price-gouged medications[17]?

(I.3) *Yeah, that's unfortunate, but at least in America, there's equal opportunity*. Oh, ~sure. Tell that to the people who are paid less than the rich white dude for doing the same job. *Yeah, that's unfortunate, but at least in America you have freedom*.There it is…that magical word, 'freedom'. Freedom to do *what*, I ask? Does that guy who got hit by the car have the *freedom* to go bankrupt because the hospital charged him exorbitantly for every instrument they used? Do me and my fellow college students have the *freedom* not to be able to afford our own apartments because we're too busy paying to work our butts off in school, trying to maybe improve our lives somewhat? Ah, I see: we must not be working our butts off hard enough. If I just worked my butt off a little bit harder, if I just didn't buy that coffee and avocado toast[18], maybe I could afford a house in 40 years. If I manage to beat the odds. *Oh, but the economy is doing so well*. *It'll trickle down to you eventually*. Don't make me laugh. Reagan told you that lie in the 80s, and I can't believe you're *still* falling for it.

(I.4) How much indoctrination does it take before you can't see the injustices around you anymore? Before you're blind to the suffering that surrounds you? Before you forget how to tell the truth from all the lies?

I was raised in a whirlwind of good ol' boys in red, white, and blue, telling me that everyone had a future in America and then spitting out a racist comment in the same breath. I was raised in a political climate where questioning the things your president did was wrong, *unless*, of course, he represented the 'other side' of the bipartisan system. I was raised in a social climatewhere asking for help was the same as showing weakness. Where the only person you were supposed to count on is yourself. Where everybody around you is a potential competitor. Where it's you against the world. Where if you're unhappy with your lot in life, all you have to do to get the life you want is to work really hard*

*and if you didn't get the things you wanted, well, then, maybe you just didn't *want it* hard enough. Maybe you should have worked harder.

*Buy what you can afford. Oh, you can't afford that medicine you need to survive? Well, that's too bad. Guess you didn't **want it** hard enough. Guess you didn't work hard enough for it*.

(I.5) This is the America I know. The America I know tells you that equal opportunity exists, dangles it in front of you like a carrot so that you're compelled to work your ass off for it, and then blames you for not being able to reach that carrot that they hold just out of your reach in order to keep you coming back to work, day after day. And you know what? I am sick of it.

I'm tired of the notion that I have to live every day like scratching a lottery ticket. I'm tired of the atmosphere of competitivity promoted by the American Dream. Whatever happened to caring about others instead of viewing every single person you meet as a potential competitor? This country was founded and still runs to this day on hate, lies, hypocrisy, inequality, and deception. Am I *really* supposed to be proud of living here? Am I really supposed to *like* it here?

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[16] Please see *'32% of American workers have medical debt, and over half have defaulted on it'*
https://www.cnbc.com/2020/02/13/one-third-of-american-workers-have-medical-debt-and-most-default.html
[17] Please see *'The Need to Treat the Ailing U.S. Pharmaceutical Pricing system'* at
https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/ecpe/united-states-pharmaceutical-pricing/
[18] Please see *'Don't mess with millennials' avocado toast: The Internet fires back at a millionaire'* at
https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/food/wp/2017/05/15/dont-mess-with-millennials-avocado-toast-the-internet-fires-back-at-a-millionaire/

(I.6) I guess it's a fair bit of irony that the first thing that I worked hard on and saw any results from was learning the Russian language. Not only did learning Russian bring me more financial gains than anything I have ever done before (in school or otherwise) to try to improve my situation, but it opened so opportunities for me that I never imagined in a million years that I could have. So is it any wonder that when I went to Russia, my life improved exponentially? That when I got to Russia, I was suddenly able to afford an apartment, train with a hockey club, and work on myself; or that being a native English speaker, I was being *offered* jobs almost every week; or that I suddenly had the freedom to go wherever I wanted *whenever* I wanted, to come home at any hour without worrying about waking my parents up; or that I suddenly had the freedom to plan my schedule the way *I* wanted to, and that without the constant background noise of *"oh, America's so great,"* I finally had some peace and quiet?

Freedom. Independence. Opportunity.

(I.7) Perhaps the most ironic thing about the entire situation was that, when I was in Russia, I suddenly had access to all of these carrots that America had dangled in front of my face; they were suddenly within my grasp.

And I didn't want to leave.

Now, don't get me wrong, I do realise that some of this was artificial…I was only able to afford an apartment and play hockey because I had taken out a student loan in America. And I'm acutely aware that my perspective would likely be different if I had been born in Russia. But considering the life I had when I went there as a foreign exchange student, if I had stayed and gotten a job(s) there as an English teacher? I would probably have been able to continue living the same lifestyle…and *then some*. Besides, I made some lasting friendships there that I will cherish for eternity. When I lived there, I finally felt as if I was *living* rather than merely surviving. Is it any wonder that I wanted so desperately to belong there?

Again, structurally, this is an *orienting* text, the purpose of which is to provide information about myself and my motivations, as well as the main settings (America and Russia). Overall, it serves to orient the reader to my positionality as the narrator and to introduce the two main places before later getting into smaller, individual acts of social identification in either place. In addition, this text introduces the *problem* or *complication* (Labov & Wazletsky 1967[1997]) to my personal narratives: I enjoyed living in Russia so much more than I do living in America, and while part of that was artificial, I still feel more positively-oriented to Russia than I do to America.

Self-positioning in the beginning of the narrative
As the narrator, I employ a few different strategies to make my images of 'self' perceivable to the reader. In paragraph (I.1), for example, I use a lot of passive voice:

(I.a) I was simply brought into the world here.
(I.b) I received death threats
(I.c) I experienced wage theft

Here, I'm using passive voice, not only as a strategy to downplay my own agency, but to obscure the agent of the action (*see* Duranti 2004), effectively positioning myself as a helpless victim of circumstance, not as someone who makes things happen, but *to whom* bad things *just happen*.

Interestingly, when I do use active voice in paragraph (I.1) in relation to myself, it's usually paired with a negative word, or a negation:

(I.d) I did not 'choose' to live in America
(I.e) I didn't act like everyone else
(I.f) I can't get my own healthcare … I also can't benefit from my parents' healthcare

Alternatively, when I did use active voice in paragraph (I.1), there's a sentence where I specifically choose an action that downplays my own agency: in the narrative about the restaurant holdup, I portray myself as using the control I have over my actions to actively *hide* from a threat, rather than using that agency to affect the actions of the gunman. I don't portray myself as the hero fighting off the gunman with a knife, but as a cautious person who knows a losing struggle when he sees one.

Another interesting part about the holdup narrative is the switch that I make from past tense to present tense:

(I.g) I got held up during the night shift … hoping to god the guy with the gun wouldn't try to come back
        to see if I'm hiding the safe.
(I.h) by my age, my parents already had kids, a house, a car, and a stable job, and I'm over here holding
        onto a knife in a dish room, hoping I don't get shot
(I.q) The America I know tells you that equal opportunity exists, dangles it in front of you like a carrot …
        then blames you for not being able to reach that carrot

Here, I'm effectively positioning this problem as an unresolved past problem that is continuing to affect me in the present (*see* Ochs & Capps 1996 *discussion on temporality*). Perhaps at the time I wrote this, I *was* still mentally hiding in that dishroom, guarding what little money I had with a knife, and knowing I was on the losing side.

As far as making my images of 'self' perceivable to the reader, in the beginning of this narrative, I use passive voice to portray myself as a victim of agent-less circumstance who doesn't feel that he himself has any agency (which I express through the passive voice), so, given his lack of good luck (expressed through the negation of those agentive verbs), he is reluctant to take risks (he opts to hide and protect what he has instead), and these are issues that he has not yet resolved (expressed through the present tense). I'll return to self-positioning in the end of the text below, but first, I want to address a part of this narrative that surprised me when I first started analysing it.

Co-construction in the middle of the narrative

This was the most difficult text to analyse, given that I wrote it at the height of the pandemic, when my feelings of hopelessness and stagnation were at their peak. Reader, I was depressed when I wrote this. At that time, Trump was still the president, the economy was 'thriving', but at the expense of those on my socioeconomic rung. I was flat broke, I wasn't sure if I'd be able to afford to continue going to school, I was trying to figure out how to build a life for myself in the middle of a recession, I saw no future for myself, and I felt betrayed and lied to (on behalf of myself and my entire socioeconomic class) by all of the blindly-patriotic slogans and canned phrases I continue to hear over the years, especially the ones that are touted as indisputable truths or seem to reify the status quo. I was so frustrated by the fact that we could let things get so bad that I set about *responding* to those phrases and slogans, and this narrative was the result. I thus *co-construct* this text by responding to an imaginary interlocutor in paragraphs (I.2,3,4, & 6), whose speech is written in italics, and whose speech mostly represents my own reproductions of these blind patriotic phrases and slogans I've heard all my life,

(I.i) *One nation under god, indivisible … With liberty and justice for all*
(I.j) *Did you vote democrat or republican? … Why would you throw away your vote like that?*
(I.k) *in America, there's equal opportunity … in America you have freedom.*
(I.l) *Oh, but the economy is doing so well. It'll trickle down to you eventually.*

However, as the text continues on, my italicised interlocutor seems to turn into something more sinister. The italicised sentences build up this insidious character who blames me for not achieving my goals, even in the face of all of this hardship:

(I.m) *Buy what you can afford. Oh, you can't afford that medicine you need to survive? Well, that's too bad. Guess you didn't **want it** hard enough. Guess you didn't work hard enough for it.*

Since the slogans and phrases and the blaming voice are both written in italics, it is safe to assume that I was constituting a single character here. From my position, I feel that I know this character, because their voice is a constant presence within my inner dialogue, one that constantly repeats things that I have heard all my life. Incidentally, this invasive presence in my inner dialogue disappeared when I went to Russia, giving me this sense of peace and quiet I refer to at the end of paragraph (I.6). And, indeed, the long strings of italicised words *also* disappear in paragraph (I.7), mirroring this shift from the loud *America* setting of the first parts of the narrative (paragraphs I.1-5 and parts of I.6), to the quiet *Russia* setting in the end of the narrative (parts of I.6 and I.7). Not only does the co-construction stop at the end of (I.6), but the way I position myself also shifts into the active voice in (I.6) and (I.7). Interestingly, I still have a lot to say about America, and the way I position this location in paragraphs (I.5) and (I.7) as opposed to the way I position Russia really surprised me.

Positioning of the characters at the end of the narrative
My presentation of 'self' through the active voice in paragraph (I.6) shows a marked shift from the non-agentive 'self' in paragraph (I.1). Here, I am more focused on what I was able to

do, and connect these abilities to my desires without negating them as I do earlier in the narrative:

(I.n) I was suddenly able to afford an apartment, train with a hockey club, and work on myself
(I.o) I suddenly had the freedom to plan my schedule the way *I* wanted to

In paragraph (I.7), I shift in temporality, imagining what my life would have been like if I had stayed in Russia, and even in this imagined future, I'm still focused on my active ability to have taken advantage of those opportunities and freedoms and abilities:

(I.p) I would probably have been able to continue living the same lifestyle

Interestingly, my 'self' isn't the only character I end up positioning as agentive with the active voice. In paragraphs (I.5) and (I.7), I position America, a location, as *agentive* – as having a certain degree of control over 'her' own actions and being able to affect the actions of others:

(I.q) The America I know tells you that equal opportunity exists, dangles it in front of you like a carrot …
  then blames you for not being able to reach that carrot
(I.r) I suddenly had access to all of these carrots that America had dangled in front of my face

This positioning of America as agentive when I have spent most of the time in this narrative presenting myself as non-agentive is very telling about my position on American life. This, paired with the presence in my internal dialogue as being made up of slogans and phrases pertaining to America, It seems that *I am holding this agentive idea of America responsible for those circumstances I presented as non-agentive through the passive voice earlier in the narrative*. In (I.q), I position America as being able to *blame* people, but it turns out that I have been blaming *her* right back.

Interestingly, I don't do this agentive positioning with Russia at all. In this narrative, Russia is always presented as a simple location, always juxtaposed with prepositions 'in' or 'to':

(I.s) when I went to Russia, my life improved exponentially
(I.t) when I was in Russia, I suddenly had access to all of these carrots

The above points bring to light some interesting points about my relationship with these concepts of Russia and America. Whereas Russia is represented here as a simple, non-agentive location where *I* am the agent who has freedom, independence, and opportunities, I represent America as an agentive and overbearing *character*, whose multiple voices not only permeate my inner dialogue, but who has so much control over me that *I have no agency when I'm with her*.

In paragraph (I.7) I do acknowledge the artificiality of these feelings, and I specifically try to acknowledge my romanticised version of Russia vs. my tainted view of America. In that paragraph I am trying to portray myself as *understanding* that these impressions I have of either

place are specifically biased; in other words, I'm trying to position myself as *aware* that I see Russia through rose-coloured glasses and that I see America through broken aviator shades. However, during that point in my life, I still wasn't ready to let go of the romance. I still wanted to belong in the land of opportunity, independence, and freedom that, ironically, for someone like me, America just *isn't*.

The above grammatical, structural, and temporal effects didn't become salient to me until I did this analysis, and it has been eye-opening. At the time I wrote this narrative, I simply wanted (and possibly needed) to let out my frustrations, and I didn't realise at all that I was employing so many strategies, not only to attempt to position myself in the eyes of the reader as justifiably disillusioned with my life in America, but also to illustrate the stark contrast in my experiences between the two places. No matter what, this exercise of looking deeply into my interpretations of my experiences, no matter how uncomfortable and surprising it may have been, was very revealing. Now that I have a better understanding of what my previously unexamined assumptions were about my relationship to both Russia and America, I can be more critically aware of the choices I make regarding those places in the future, and I can also apply this understanding to the other narratives I have included below.

3.1.2 – (II / III) Differing Functions of Utterances in Russian (Written in 2020)

This narrative is comprised of two smaller narratives, one set in America and the other set in Russia. They are presented together here since they are both on the same topic; that is, in both cases, I perform an emblem of 'russianness' by speaking Russian, but the position of this emblem in context and the purposes of the particular Russian utterances I used in each case are different and thus each event has very different outcomes.

(II.1) Before I left for Russia, I spent one year and six months studying the language. At first, I'm sure learning to speak Russian was a way for me to prove to myself that I could work hard at something and see some actual results, but I learned very quickly that it had other benefits as well. I found out right away just how much easier it was to sharpen the differences between me and others, simply by speaking a language that not a lot of the people in my general circles could understand, and I learned that I could use my knowledge of Russian to avoid stressful or unpleasant situations.

(II.2) "Hey, cutie, what are you doing tonight? I'd like to show you a good time…"

(II.3) The voice comes from the man a few seats away from me on the bus. Unfortunately, it's not an unfamiliar situation to me, as I do look a little effeminate for a man.

(II.4) I pretend not to notice when the guy moves to a seat closer to me. I'm busy setting the alarm on my phone to ring in five seconds.

(II.5) "Hey, honey, I'm talking to you, why won't you—"

(II.6) He's interrupted by the beeping of my phone.

(II.7) "Алло, Саша?" *Hello, Sasha?* I pretend to answer. "Привет! Как ты там без меня?" *Hi! How are you there without me?*

(II.8) The man's whole demeanour changes. Not only does he seem taken aback by the unexpected deep voice, but he has no clue what I just said. I have effectively placed two barriers between him and me, a language barrier and a physical barrier in the form of a telephone.

(II.9) He gets off at the next stop.

(III.1) Interestingly, while in Russia, I never felt the need to use English as a defence mechanism. Instead, I would outgroup myself using a specific Russian phrase in situations when I needed help, or when I didn't feel that I knew the proper social response. During my first few months in Russia, I found myself making the same excuse to people over and over, "Извините, я – студент по обмену," *Excuse me, I'm an exchange student*.

(III.2) It was two weeks after I had arrived in Russia. I had already gotten settled into my apartment, gone to school for a week, and started my classes. I had been told by the ladies in the international office that it would be cheaper to ride the tram in to school if I had a debit card, but only by a few rubles, so I didn't have to go get a debit card if I didn't want to. Nevertheless, I found myself staring down the front door of the Sberbank a few streets down from my new apartment. I walked determinedly into that lobby like I knew what I was doing. I was going to set up a debit card in Russia even if it killed me.

(III.3) I took a number and sat down to wait. When my number was called, I walked right up to the desk, ready to make my case.

(III.4) "Здравствуйте, как я могу вам помочь?" *Hello, how can I help you?*

(III.5) That's all she had to say, and suddenly my mind went blank. It suddenly hit me that, at that point, I had only spent a year and a half studying Russian, and there I was, *in Russia*, I'd just rented my first apartment *ever* a few days prior, and I was in a bank trying to get a Russian debit card. My face must have been as blank as my mind was, because the attendant cleared her throat and asked again,

(III.6) "Здравствуйте? Как я могу вам помочь?" *Hello? How can I help you?*

(III.7) "Извините," I said. "Я – студент по обмену," *Excuse me, I'm an exchange student*.

(III.8) Thankfully, when the attendant learned this, she was very understanding and patient with me. She asked me where I was from and how long I had studied Russian, and she guided me through the process of filling out the paperwork which, although probably understandable to me now, was dizzying at the time. My use of the phrase "I am an exchange student" gradually diminished the more time I spent in Russia and got used to different social situations. When I did say it, people tended to enunciate and slow their speech, most wanted to know where I was from, and nobody was ever rude to me after having found out this fact about me.

Here, the utterances I used to out-group myself in each situation are both in Russian, but they have very different functions. Let us consider the focal utterances in question. From narrative (II):

(II.7) "Алло, Саша? Привет! Как ты там без меня?" *Hello, Sasha? Hi! How are you there without me?*

54

Utterance (II.7) is, in effect, a greeting. Although this utterance was said in response to the man's attempts to flirt with me, its function is not to greet, but to establish a boundary. Since this interaction occurred in a city in America with a relatively small number of Russian speakers, my use of this utterance to establish a boundary was predicated on the assumption that the flirting man would not understand Russian and therefore be discouraged from interacting with me. Fortunately, my assumption paid off. With this utterance, I successfully exercised my ego-affirming agency by performing a **marked** emblem, Russian-speaking-ability, as a way to out-group myself and thus put up a barrier between me and my interlocutor.

Next, the focal utterance from narrative (III):

(III.7) "Извините, я – студент по обмену." *Excuse me, I'm an exchange student*.

Utterance (III.7) effectively functions as a plea for help. In this case, I exercise my act-constituting agency by explicitly naming the category I fall into, a category of 'foreignness' under the designation 'exchange student'. What is interesting is that, here, I am performing an **unmarked** emblem, Russian-speaking-ability, which *can conceivably* index 'russianness' as the appropriate metapragmatic model and thus *might* serve the purpose of in-grouping me, and yet in this context, it has the *opposite* effect: I succeed in out-grouping myself. The possible function of the emblem 'speaking-Russian' as indexing Russianness is negated in context by occurring in context with a different sign: the content and function of the utterance itself. Thus, we can see that, although the simple act of speaking in a certain way can have indexical effects, what was most important in positioning myself with respect to a particular metapragmatic model was the discursive functions of my utterances.

3.1.3 – (IV) Friendship (Written in 2018)

The following narrative is one of my most cherished and vivid memories of Russia. I had already been in Russia for 10 months; I had established myself there and I was fairly comfortable there, even though I had some refrigerator troubles. I consider this short interaction between me and the refrigerator repairman to be one of my most formative experiences influencing my metapragmatic models of 'Russianness'.

(IV.1) On one occasion, during my final months in Russia, the refrigerator in my apartment—which periodically and unexpectedly made a very loud rumbling noise that could be quite disconcerting late at night—completely stopped working, spoiling about 20 dollars-worth of groceries. I called my landlady to help me deal with the situation, and she sent over a repairman to fix the old refrigerator.

(IV.2) The repairman was a very friendly older man. I remember him coming into my apartment and removing his shoes (as is customary in Russia) and I apologised that I didn't have any house slippers that were in his size, but he still slipped the small woollen ones by the door (which I had bought just in case I got any visitors) over his toes and shuffled in to take a look at the refrigerator.

(IV.3) One of the things that will always stick in my mind is what he said about the refrigerator when he saw it. His eyebrows shot up and he looked at me, then pointed at the refrigerator and said,

(IV.4) "Столько не живут," *They don't live this long*.

(IV.5) As it turns out, the refrigerator was about 25 years old which, at the time, was only a year younger than me. He was able to fix it, however, and as he worked, he explained to me what he was doing and how the refrigerator had stopped working. The cooling tube at the back had apparently gotten clogged, and I distinctly remember that when he bled the pressure, a big plume of black dust shot up out of the copper piping, making us both cough before we broke into fits of laughter. He had apparently never seen a clog this bad before.

(IV.6) As he patched up the copper pipe, he asked me where I was from, what I studied...I used that out-grouping phrase again, explaining that I was an exchange student from America who studied Russian at a local college. He told me he was happy to meet me and congratulated me on my Russian skills. He told me he knew very little English, but that he knew a little German, and we chatted about his family, about how things were during the Soviet Union, and about what a shame it was that all the world seemed to care about anymore was money.

(IV.7) There was a moment when he pointedly asked me how to say "дружба" in English. I told him it was "friendship", and he repeated the word a few times before smiling and going back to what he was doing. I didn't think anything of it, but when I had finished helping him take his tools back out to his car, he turned to me, shook my hand, and said, in English, "Russia, America – friendship."

This is a pretty mundane interaction, but what makes it special to me is how it influenced my metapragmatic model of Russianness. In paragraph (IV.5), I specifically outgroup myself, as I had become accustomed to doing when people asked me where I was from:

(IV.5) I used that out-grouping phrase again, explaining that I was an exchange student from America who studied Russian at a local college

I performed the same **marked** emblem I had performed when I was asking for help in narrative (III), but in a slightly different context and with a slightly different result. What was different about this particular context was that, while I was getting help from him, this out-grouping phrase hadn't acted as the prompt for getting that help. Thus, the new function of this same utterance in this new context was simply done as part of an exchange of information typical when two people meet for the first time.

Whatever the discursive function of that utterance might have been, I know that I had specifically intended to outgroup myself, simply because I had gotten used to doing that in contexts where I was introducing myself to someone else for the first time. I was completely taken off guard (and pleasantly surprised) when this man effectively rejected the out-grouping function of my utterance, as we can see in this example from paragraph (IV.7):

(IV.7) when I had finished helping him take his tools back out to his car, he turned to me, shook my hand, and said, in English, "Russia, America – friendship."

I cannot know exactly what this man may have intended by his use of this phrase, but I absolutely know how I felt when he said it. Not only did he say this phrase in English after explaining that he didn't speak much English, but he shook my hand when he said it. The way I see it, through a physical connection (the handshake) and metaphorical connection (friendship), he took my attempt to out-group myself and threw it away. To me, his message rang out loud and clear: 'sure we're from different places, but that doesn't actually *make* us inherently different'. It is possible for our countries to understand each other and work together, just like we did while he was fixing my refrigerator.

This seemingly mundane made such a big impact on me that I still think of this man to this day…I sure hope he's doing alright. This was one of the formative experiences I had in Russia that changed my perspective on nationalities as some sort of natural category. Our ideas about our national identities are just as interactionally-constructed as the ways we construct our own identities – it's all done through semiotic and discursive practices, and the ways in which it is done or perceived changes with every new context and every intention. The same sign can be interpreted in a multitude of different ways as being indexical of a multitude of different social categories depending on the very specific circumstances brought to the interaction by each specific individual. The possibilities are quite literally endless. And so, maybe if we stop seeing these categories as static and start thinking of them as what they are – nebulous unbounded categories that are constituted in practice – *maybe,* one day, we can truly know peace.

3.2 – DISCUSSION
3.2.1 – Narratives Summary and Discussion

It is interesting that in most of the narratives that dealt with Americanness (including *unwilling hamburger helper*) I positioned myself as having less agency – things *happened to me* and 'incorrect' (in my opinion) social categories were ascribed to me – these things were usually negative. On the other hand, my stories of Russia all tended to be positive – in the stories that are set in Russia, I position myself as not only having agency, but *exercising* it, even when I'm out-grouping myself – what this overall look tells me is that I have positive impressions of Russianness (and thus, in a manner of speaking, my groupings of metapragmatic models concerning 'Russianness' are *positively*-charged), and negative impressions of Americanness (and thus my groupings of metapragmatic models concerning Americanness are negatively-charged). This is a bias I am going to have to keep in check. In my future work, it could affect my ability to represent Americans in a way that is most fair to them, or it may influence me to represent Russians in a way that I may ignore or refuse to accept certain things that would cause cognitive dissonance with my positive mental images of Russia. Now that I'm aware of this bias, I'm going to be more critically aware of how these things can manifest in my future work, and it

may be a good idea to check my work with other analysts so that they can bring things I may have failed to consider to my attention.

I wasn't surprised that I presented myself as having little to no agency in relation to America. It's something I have understood for a long time, and as we can see, it tends to colour the way that I view Americanness as reflected in the way I encode Americanness in my discourse practices (as we saw in narrative I) and in the ways that I resist being identified in terms of overtly American metapragmatic models (as we saw in *unwilling hamburger helper*). Though I didn't really think of this use of passive voice as a strategy I was using to position myself as non-agentive and powerless in terms of Americanness, I can say that this powerlessness and non-agentiveness was salient to me at the time I wrote narrative (I). In fact, these feelings were occupying a great deal of my conscious thoughts at that time. In light of this, it makes absolute sense that this particular state of mind would be reflected so strongly in the grammar of the narrative.

However, my presenting America as agentive in narrative (I) *without* doing the same with Russia came as a big surprise to me. Firstly, while I was somewhat aware that I tended to think of nations in simple terms—that is, it came more natural to me to think of nations as unified wholes that act with unified agency—I hadn't been aware that this tendency might show up in my discourse practice. Secondly, what surprised me the most was the co-construction; the fact that I seemed to be responding to utterances that I associated with America, and insodoing, I created this overbearing character who actively took away my agency and *blamed me for it*, and with the way I constructed these voices, it seems pretty clear that the character I created was supposed to be an *abstract representation of my feelings towards America*. In fact, I was a bit uncomfortable with the finding at first (although I was also fascinated by it, in a morbid curiosity sort of way). I honestly didn't fathom that I actually conceptualised my relationship with my country of origin in that way, but I wrote it down, and analysing the data simply brought it all to the fore.

Lastly, though I found clear evidence in my narratives that I view America as agentive, it seems bizarre to me that I did not once refer to Russia in the same way. As soon as I realised that I had portrayed America in this agentive manner, I looked to see if I had done it for Russia, too, because I was almost sure that, if I viewed one of the places as a negatively influential agent—as an overbearing person who blames me for failure, as it turns out—I could view the other in a more positive light—as a nurturing mother, perhaps? But I was surprised to find nothing but solid ground; at the time I wrote narrative (I), I apparently viewed Russia, not as *mother-Russia*, but as a simple, non-agentive location. To tell you the truth, I was a bit disappointed to find that.

3.3 – CONCLUSIONS
3.3.1 – Possible Implications

To be honest, I don't believe that situating the dialogue within the narrator's internal dialogue really added anything to the present study. It would have been much more relevant to the present study if the sole focus had specifically been on reflexive *perceptions* of nationality. In the context of the present study, however, other than publishing the author's internal dialogue for the reader to see, not being able to analyse every single part of the narratives due to time constraints made including it somewhat of a moot point. Combining autoethnographic data with narrative analysis can be further explored as a method for accounting for the researcher's own interpretations of their own identity construction, or for examining in-detail perceptions of nationality, but I still believe it would benefit from being situated in relation to other perspectives, specifically on others' perceptions of what the author was doing in specific focal situations. I also now believe that a study like this one would benefit most from a conversation analytic approach, where the specific function of utterances relating to national identity construction in context of a conversation could be analysed, and then the author's interpretations can be reflected in the analysis itself rather than both in the narrative *and* in the analysis. Also, using conversational data will make the context easier to account for. It was almost impossible to account for original context with my personal narratives since, given that there have been a few different versions of this work, I neglected to record the exact context in which each narrative originally occurred (except for narrative (I), since that one was still fresh in my mind).

However, I do believe that there was one benefit to this approach: by analysing the ways in which I wrote that first narrative and noting the specific ways I position myself in relation to Russia and America, I identified a bias that I need to be aware of in my future research, so I'll be more aware of that bias going forward.

3.3.2 – Limitations of this Study

Although I have mentioned the specific limitations of this study in several places, I do feel the need to rehash them here, as well as *add* to the list of limitations, now that all is, as it were, said and done. Since I didn't set out to do a research project at first and it was my experiences that led me to want to retrospectively analyse patterns in my behaviour, this project was, in some respects, done 'backwards'. However, Ellis (1999) does explain that a lot of autoethnographic research is done years (maybe even decades) after the fact, lending credence to the fact that an autoethnographic and discourse analysis approach was the appropriate methodology to apply to my *post-facto*, interpretive secondary data. Besides, if I hadn't had the experiences I had in Russia or noticed the change in my behavioural patterns between the two national/social contexts, I would not have become interested in social identification. So, since I can't 'go back' and record those experiences I had that led me to these realisations, and it's thus much too late to make a transcript of that particular interaction that would allow me to analyse

the 'naturally occurring' talk during those interactions, I did what I could with that I had, and I fully believe it was beneficial in the long run. In other words, though my methods may have been rendered 'unorthodox' by normative standards, it was still a worthwhile study. As researchers, I really think we should welcome these kinds of unexpected angles of study, as well as any 'unorthodox' means of analysing them, as they may very well lead to fruitful insights and maybe even innovations.

One other limitation that occurred to me after analysing the data for this study is that I have no primary data on others' perceptions of their reactions to my attempts to in or out-group myself; the closest I come is the vocal reactions to my dislike of hamburgers in *unwilling hamburger helper* and my interpretations of the refrigerator repairman's actions in narrative (IV). If I do a study based on this one in the future, I will have to take steps to remedy this. If I have an interaction I would like to follow up on, I'll have to ask for permission or get informed consent of the person to a) ask them to reflect on their perceptions of me, and b) to record and analyse those responses. Another thing that occurred to me much too late in the process for this thesis is that I could have asked to hold a 'data session' (similar to the ones outlined by Rapley 2007) to get collegues' feedback on my interpretations of my own texts. Getting other people's interpretations of my own interpretations could have helped me to see more of the things I wouldn't necessarily pay attention to otherwise, to really uncover those things that I truly take for granted and may not be likely to consider.

3.3.3 – Possible Further Research

The work of Michéle Koven (2007) concerning multiple selves in bilinguals partially served as an inspiration to this work. In her work, Koven (2007) analyses the conversational data of second-generation Portuguese immigrants in France, investigating their impressions of having multiple selves, one for each language they spoke. If I were to continue the present project in the future, I would draw from Koven's (2007) example by recording some group conversations, transcribing them, then analysing each conversation line by line for instances of identity construction in relation to nationality.

Through this project I realised that I am particularly interested in identity construction, so I do intend to carry that interest on into my future research. However, I will be the first to admit that this particular project was a mess, not simply because of all of the setbacks and complications that made it so hard to complete this work, but also because at the beginning of this whole project, I definitely did not know how to narrow down the scope of a project to give myself a reasonable amount of work to do. I bit off way more than I could chew and tried to account for too many things in this work, but I suppose the upside to that is that I learned a valuable lesson in how to narrow down the scope of my research through this project. To any

future readers who may be struggling with this, too: focus first on your data, and it will tell you what you can and cannot account for!

All that to say, I don't intend to conduct one exactly like this in the future. Specifically, I think a study based on this one would benefit from me being able to situate my perspective in relation to other perspectives. So, if I do decide to investigate the idea of nationality as a social construct again, I'll try to get some other perspectives on it, and analysing conversational data will allow me to get a more detailed picture of specific utterances that might index national identity in practice, so I may try an interview approach specifically designed to elicit personal narratives that have to do with performing national identity. Lastly, if I am to do a more fully-fledged study based on this one in the future, I will also shift the focus of the study to immigrants, as I believe they would have a very interesting and relevant perspective on whether they continue to 'be' (or 'do') the national identities of their countries of origin or whether they choose to completely stop doing those national identities and why.

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You've reached the end,
  Hope it was fun.
    Thanks for reading,
      Now I gotta run!

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