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# The Structured Narrative Interview

dr. Floor Basten (Campus Orleon)

&

dr. Sjoerd-Jeroen Moenandar (l'Université de la Manouba)

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# The structured narrative interview

- Narrative sociology: how do people give meaning to their lives?
- Research data:
  - Existing data (mass media, internet, life writing...)
  - Gather data (among other possibilities: interviews)
- This presentation:
  - Emplotment
  - Evolution of the interview as research tool
  - The narrative interview
  - Some preliminary findings



# Emplotment

- What makes texts 'more narrative than others'? (Prince)
- Narrative is not a 'diamond in a mine'
- Emplotment is an *action* (Ricoeur/Aristotle)
  - Act of composition
  - Act of refiguration



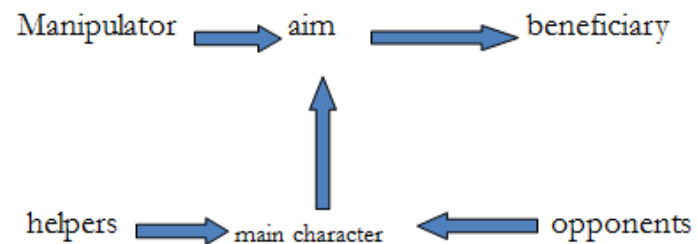
# Narrative sociology

- Narrative
  - Mediates between memory and history
  - Regulates processes of remembering and forgetting
  - Selection (Ricoeur's threefold mimesis)
- Narrative sociology: sociology of emplotment, inquiring into:
  - Processes of attributing causality
  - Processes of foregrounding
  - Processes of inclusion and exclusion



# Narrative sociology

## Actantial model:



**THESE ROLES ARE NOT NECESSARILY THE  
STORY'S CHARACTERS**

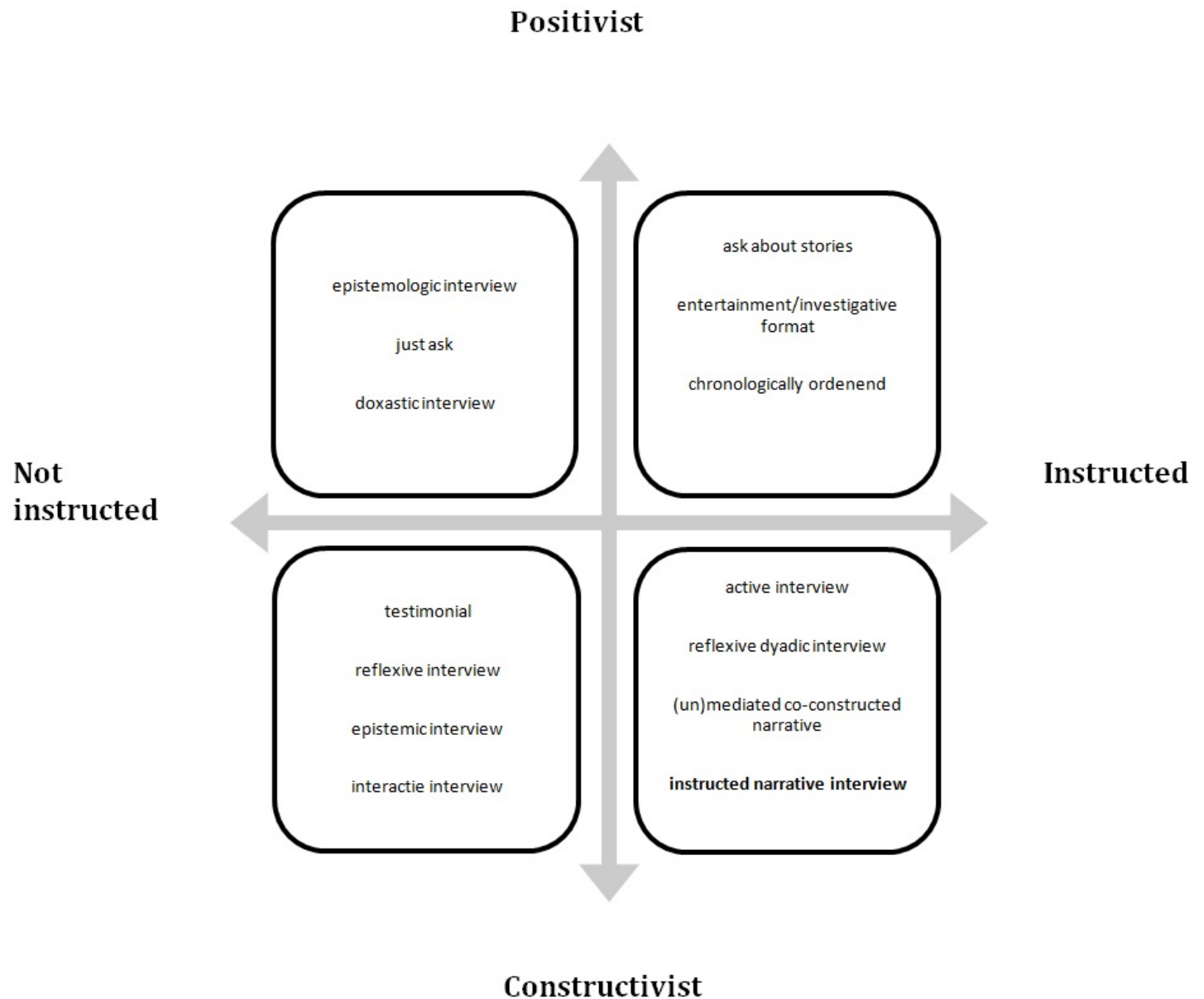
## Narrative schema

1. Manipulation stage
2. Competence stage
3. Performance stage
4. Sanction stage



# Evolution of the interview

- Conduit metaphor
- Interview as construction site





## Elicitation

### 1. Manipulation

- What did you want? (Establishes the object.)
- Why did you want this? (If necessary followed up by Who wanted you to want this/Who caused you to act? – Establishes the sender.)
- When did you decide you wanted [the object]?

### 2. Competence

- What did you need to achieve your aim? (Means.)
- Why did you act in this specific way and not in any other way? (Strategies.)
- Who or what helped you to prepare yourself? (Helpers.)
- Who or what obstructed you while preparing yourself? (Opponents.)
- Did you succeed at once? (Means/strategies.)
- Chronology: When were you ready to act?





## Elicitation

### 3. Action

- How did or didn't you achieve your goal?
- Additional roles: Who or what helped you with this? Who or what obstructed you?
- Chronology: When did you achieve your goal/When did it become clear to you that you would not achieve your goal?

### 4. Sanction

- Who profited from you achieving your aim?
- Who or what suffered from it?
- What are the consequences of you having or not having achieved your aim?



## Preliminary findings

- Narrative
  - Yes, there are 'complete' stories
  - No event, no story
- Narrating:
  - Respondents say that they feel that our instructions are not coercive but natural

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Thank you for your attention

Questions?

[floorbasten@orleon.nl](mailto:floorbasten@orleon.nl)

[moenandar@gmail.com](mailto:moenandar@gmail.com)