

Are self-narratives strategic or determined, unified or fragmented? Reading Breivik's Manifesto in light of narrative criminology

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Abstract

Anders Behring Breivik carried out two terrorist attacks in Norway in 2011, killing 77 people. In a 1500-page Manifesto, he justifies the attacks, describes his ideology and presents his life-story. The Manifesto is Breivik's attempt to present a coherent story, although one that shifts between different, sometimes competing, characters and narrative tones. He relies heavily on the narratives of an anti-Islamic or 'counter-jihadist' social movement, mainly present on the internet, but he makes creative adjustments. Some studies emphasize that narratives are unified, others that they are fragmented. Similarly, some emphasize the strategic and others the structural aspects of story-telling. This article further develops a theoretical framework of narrative criminology. The main argument is that offenders' stories need to be analysed as agency conditioned by culture and context. Such stories must also be understood as attempts at coherency and unity, drawing on a wide variety of cultural narratives and discourses. It is suggested that researchers can benefit from further reflecting on the diversity of ways in which self-narratives are analysed and understood. In line with narrative criminology, it is suggested that when narrative and crime are closely connected, their study gets to the core of the complex causes of crime.

Keywords

anti-Islamic, anti-Islamism, life-story, narrative criminology, political violence, self-story, terrorism

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Introduction

On 22 July 2011, two sequential terrorist attacks took place in Norway. The first was the detonation of a car bomb in Oslo in the vicinity of government buildings and the office of the Prime Minister. The second attack took place less than two hours later at a summer camp organized for the youth division of the ruling Norwegian Labour Party. Eight people died in the bomb explosion and 69, mostly teenagers, were shot dead at the camp. The terrorist, Anders Behring Breivik, was an anti-Islamic critical of the government's policy of multiculturalism. His apparent targets were the government and the future political leadership of the Social Democratic party.

Only hours before the attacks, Breivik had emailed a 1500-page Manifesto, in English, to several thousand people explaining his acts and describing their planning in detail. Although misinformed, contradictory and even dismissed by most of his fellow anti-Islamics, the Manifesto reveals Breivik's symbolic and semiotic universe. It also outlines his life-story and self-narratives. Entitled *2083 A European Declaration of Independence*, the Manifesto quotes, retells and reinterprets the rhetoric of an emerging anti-Islamic movement in Europe. It is a collection of texts from different sources. Some parts are written by other people, such as 39 essays by a Norwegian blogger ('Fjordman'), others, notably the American Unabomber's manifesto written in 1995, are plagiarized but with some minor changes, such as the word 'leftism' replaced with 'cultural-Marxism'. Finally, he is undoubtedly the author of a 58-page diary describing in considerable detail his preparation for the attacks, as well as a 37-page self-interview about his preparations and reasons for committing the attacks.

The Manifesto is a valuable resource for sociologists and criminologists studying the narrative and discursive dimension of crime. Breivik's Manifesto provides extensive and detailed accounts of the offender's self-image as well as his life-story and rationale for committing the acts. Accessing such information is usually difficult and time-consuming. The document evades one of the classical dilemmas of neutralization theory, the forerunner of, and most important inspiration for, contemporary studies of offenders' narratives. Sykes and Matza (1957) have argued that neutralization techniques (such as 'denial of responsibility') precede deviant behaviour and make it possible. Critics have argued that justifications and neutralizations are after-the-fact rationalizations (Hindelang, 1970). Compromises have been suggested, such as describing neutralizations as 'hardening processes' that make it easier to continue offending (Hirschi, 1969: 208), or that neutralizations may not cause someone to offend but in fact maintain it (Maruna and Copes, 2005: 271–281). Having before-the-fact data sidelines this difficult discussion.

The first report from psychiatrists assessing Breivik concluded that he suffered from paranoid schizophrenia, and the second that he had a narcissistic and dyssocial (antisocial) personality disorder. The court sided with the latter team of psychiatrists, and sentenced him to jail instead of a mental ward. While decisive for the court and the Norwegian judicial system, the discussion about diagnosis is not critical for this article: Psychiatric diagnoses are too often seen as the concluding rather than the starting point for sociological or criminological research. My interest in this study is the narrative structure of the Manifesto and the relationship between the text and the crime.

The article demonstrates the fruitfulness of a theoretical framework of narrative criminology through an in-depth analysis of Breivik's Manifesto. It gives special attention to the self-interview and the diary, because both are written by him and most clearly address his identity, life-story and self-narratives. The main research questions are: Are life-stories and self-narratives best understood as artful and creative agency or as conditioned by culture and social context? And, are life-stories and self-narratives best understood as unified or fragmented? When narrative and crime are closely connected, these two questions go to the heart of difficult issues such as accountability and the complex causes of crime.

Narrative criminology

Lois Presser (2009) argues that criminology analyses such narratives in three different ways: as a *record* or facts, as *interpretation* of an objectively given social world or as *constitutive* of crime. The Manifesto

poorly describes the planning of the attacks and contains many inaccuracies and distortions. For example, Breivik presents himself as a popular and outgoing person, yet most who know him describe him as shy and lonely. *Prima facie* analysis of the Manifesto as based in fact is thus not recommended. Breivik's childhood or adolescence does not provide any clues to the thinking behind the terrorist attacks, or at least not to their grave character. There is no direct link between Breivik's life and the acts he committed. His interpretation of 'real' circumstances thus seems less important than the system of meaning (or ideology) he constructs and the self-narratives he presents.

A constitutive or constructivist approach to narratives privileges language, demonstrates how narratives are used to generate self-awareness and emphasizes that narratives are only available through society and culture (Presser, 2009). Narrative criminology 'focuses on how people establish who they are – their identity work – by emplotting their experience' and 'seeks to explain crime and other harmful action as a function of the stories that actors and bystanders tell about themselves' (Presser, 2012). Narrative criminology is an emerging framework (Presser, 2009, 2012; Sandberg, 2010), and it can be useful to address its theoretical influences and linkages to established traditions in the social sciences.

Life-stories or self-narratives have been analysed in a variety of ways that are all of interest for social scientists studying stories. These can be summarized in a simplified model that reflects the research questions in this article. The model also presents the major theoretical inspirations of narrative criminology.

The agency/structure dimension is the action theory of the model and the most analytical or philosophical one. This well-known distinction is, for example, what Bourdieu (1990) and Giddens (1984) tried to overcome in their theoretical frameworks. It refers to whether actors are seen as creative and active or structurally determined. The united/fragmented dimension refers to whether self-narratives are analysed as consistent and coherent or as more situational, diverse and flexible.

The united/fragmented dimension can be analytical. We can choose to search for unity or fragmentation in a self-narrative or life-story. However, self-narratives can also be consistent and coherent empirically or as a result of the methodological approach. Researchers can ask questions in such a way that they bring forth a unified self-narrative. If street offenders are only asked about crime, violence and illegal drugs, for example, they will often present a relatively coherent 'code of the street' (Anderson, 1999). Asking about family, upbringing and children can bring about a quite different self-narrative.

Model 1 illustrates the ways in which self-narratives have been analysed previously in the social sciences. Narrative psychology (e.g. Crossley, 2000; László, 2008; McAdams, 1993; Polkinghorne, 1988), for example, would typically search for unity and assume agency. McAdams (1993: 11 f.) describes how 'each of us constructs, consciously and unconsciously, a personal myth which makes every individual unique'. Analytically, narrative psychologists search for this narrative, and in treatment the emphasis is on changing this self-story (McAdams, 1993). Ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967; Wieder, 1974) and conversation analysis (Sachs, 1995) emphasize that narratives are embedded in, and emerge from, different social contexts. Talk is often seen as constant and strategic shifts between different, sometimes competing, narratives. As narrative psychologists, ethnomethodologists are concerned

Model 1. Theoretical and analytical approaches to the analysis of self-narratives.

	Agency	Structure
Unified	<i>Narrative psychology</i> Focus on the creative and artful construction of a coherent and consistent self-narrative	<i>French structuralism</i> Focus on the reflection of a coherent and consistent pre-authored self-narrative
Fragmented	<i>Ethnomethodology</i> Focus on constant and strategic shifts between different, sometimes competing, self-narratives	<i>Postmodernism</i> Focus on the reflecting of a multitude of self-narratives in a complex and chaotic order of discourse

about agency or what narrators are doing when telling stories, but they do not search for the unified self-narrative.

A narrative is in essence a structure and narrative analysis a search for this structure. Roemer (1997) explains that 'narration' derives from the Latin *narrare* 'to relate', which in turn is rooted in the Greek *gnō* 'to know'. Thus, to know is to connect to a familiar narrative (Roemer, 1997: 13). Many narrative approaches emphasize how self-narratives are determined by the structure of the narrative itself (Labov, 1972). French structuralism (Saussure, 1974), for example, emphasizes the unified structure (e.g. Foucault, 1977), while post-structuralism or post-modernism emphasizes narrative structures but opens up for more diversity and fragmentation (e.g. Derrida, 1988; Lyotard, 1984).

Most researchers and theoretical traditions agree on the importance of seeing how narratives are both united and fragmented and strategic and determined. Nevertheless, researchers within these different traditions still tend to emphasize one or the other. Reflecting upon Model 1 and using it in empirical research can thus assist an understanding of self-narratives and render researchers reflexive about the theoretical underpinnings of their research. This article demonstrates how Breivik's manifesto can be analysed using insights from narrative psychology, ethnomethodology, French structuralism and post-modernism and discusses how choice of narrative theory and analytical strategy influence conclusions drawn.

The creative construction of a coherent self-narrative

Searching for a unified and coherent self-narrative is the most common approach to life-stories, including offenders' narratives (Copes et al., 2008; Maruna, 2001; Presser, 2008). This tradition is inspired by the emphasis in narrative psychology on individuals and their life-stories (Crossley, 2000). An emphasis on coherence and consistency can also be seen in the tradition of neutralization theory and its critics (Sykes and Matza, 1957; Topalli, 2005; for a review see Maruna and Copes, 2005). The underlying premise is that consistency and coherence are the basic aims and characteristics of self-narrating and story-telling (Maruna, 2001: 7).

Searching for a life story is also the most obvious way to analyse the Breivik Manifesto, which is clearly an attempt to create a coherent and unified self-narrative. The Question and Answer section, for example, starts with Breivik asking himself:

Q: How did you first get involved in your current activities?

A: Well, I gained awareness of certain issues at that time. My best friend for many years, a Muslim, had lived his whole life in Oslo West with limited contact with the Norwegian–Pakistani community. Yet, he and more or less 100% of youngsters like him still failed in many ways to be integrated. (p. 1)¹

On the next page he continues answering the question by mixing his life story with implicit references to the Eurabia thesis and plagiarizing the arguments of Ulrike Meinhof (1968) about resistance:

Around year 2000 I realised that the democratic struggle against the Islamisation of Europe, European multiculturalism was lost. It had gone too far. It is simply not possible to compete democratically with regimes who import millions of voters. 40 years of dialogue with the cultural Marxists/multiculturalists had ended up as a disaster. It would now only take 50–70 years before we, the Europeans, are in a minority. As soon as I realised this I decided to explore alternative forms of opposition. Protesting is saying that you disagree. Resistance is saying you will put a stop to this. I decided I wanted to join the resistance movement. (p. 2)

In a tradition of narrative psychology, the inter-textuality demonstrated by the combination of radical leftist and anti-Islamic rhetoric can be interpreted as the work of a competent author creating coherency. Breivik constructs a coherent life-story by making major events in his life, from early adolescence to the present, lead up to the terrorist attacks. Several confrontations with ethnic minorities (listed on pp. 18 f.),

personal experiences with Pakistani Oslo gangs and the abduction of two female Muslim classmates (e.g. pp. 1–3) are used to demonstrate how violent and vicious Muslims are. Moreover, repeated statements about personal friendships with Muslims (e.g. p. 7) neutralize claims that he is driven by bitterness and accentuate his personal knowledge of the problems. Combined, these narratives give flesh and bone to the greater unified narrative, criticism of multiculturalism, and justify the planned terrorist attacks on a personal level.

Other events and experiences from Breivik's life are written into the same unified life-story; for example, participation in a right-wing popular party:

I was politically active within the cultural conservative Progress Party/Progress Party Youth from the age of 16–21(22). I eventually concluded that it would be impossible to change the system democratically and left conventional politics. (p. 21)

Similarly, many years of engagement in business are described as motivated by getting money for terrorism. In this passage, for example, Breivik starts by describing in detail how successful he was in business. Then he goes on to say:

In 2005 and 2006, recession hit my industry, which resulted in lower income margins. As a result I decided to discontinue my company and instead salvage all the funds I could. The most cost-efficient way of doing this in my country is to file for bankruptcy, which I did. I had now completed my goal and I had enough funding to proceed with planning of an assault operation. (p. 4)

In Breivik's life-story, these personal narratives are merged with large-scale political events and accounts of demographic and cultural changes in Europe. The next question he asks himself in the Question and Answer section is this:

Q: What tipped the scales for you? What single event made you decide you wanted to continue planning and move on with the assault?

A: For me, personally, it was my government's involvement in the attacks on Serbia (NATO bombings in 1999) several years back. It was completely unacceptable how the US and Western European regimes bombed our Serbian brothers. All they wanted was to drive Islam out by deporting the Albanian Muslims back to Albania. (p. 4)

He thus connects his own life-story with important international events. He also describes a large network of 'PCCTS, Knights Templar' in Europe, which fights the cultural imperialism of Islam (e.g. p. 3) and signs the Manifesto 'AB, Justiciar Knight Commander, cell 8' (p. 37), indicating that there are at least seven other cells.

The Manifesto does not provide very much reliable information about what actually happened during those years. It contains distortions, exaggerations and inaccuracies throughout. Although unconfirmed thus far, his claim of membership in a terrorist network, and meetings across Europe, seems to be a fabrication. He exaggerates claims of his connection with Pakistani gangs in Oslo, the role he played in the right-wing party, having many friends and being successful in business. The abduction of his classmates also seems to be a lie, or at least a misunderstanding.²

In sum, Breivik seems to reinterpret most events in his life through his relatively recent political radicalization. His accounts of adolescence and international events are shaped, adjusted and reframed in order to justify the terrorist attacks. For example, he states that his business adventures in the early 2000s were motivated by the need to raise money to mount the attacks, while according to friends at that time he was obsessed with the idea of becoming rich.³ His life-story is still invaluable data for understanding why he committed his crimes. The Manifesto presents the life-story he lived by, and the symbolic, semiotic and imaginary universe within which he forged his crime.

The Manifesto can be interpreted as a unified self-narrative, and the agency and creativity he puts into constructing this narrative can be demonstrated. Breivik justifies what he is about to do by constructing a coherent life-story and self-narrative leading up to the attacks. However, in order to do this, he relies heavily on social narratives and the texts of others, almost to the degree that concepts such as creativity and agency are misleading descriptions of his narration.

Reproducing a pre-authored narrative

Breivik was inspired and motivated by anti-Islamic rhetoric, narratives and discourses. He read and sometimes posted material on anti-Islamic internet sites such as Gates of Vienna, New English Review, Brussels Journal, Stormfront and the Norwegian document.no. Language and narratives are essentially social and shared (Atkinson and Coffey, 2003). A structural analysis of offenders' stories emphasizes how narratives are conditioned by the narrator's cultural and social context. These shared and media-mediated narratives lie at the core of interest of cultural criminology, and a study of Breivik's Manifesto is one empirical way of studying how 'cultural forces interweave with the practices of crime and crime control' (Ferrell et al., 2008: 2).

For Breivik, the social context was a relatively closed community of anti-Islamics on the internet. For example, he never met with his idol, the blogger Fjordman, even though they lived in the same city. According to Williams and Copes (2005), the internet attracts marginal groups and assists in their identity construction. It is a practical space within which marginal people can experiment with identity because they can contact similar people and readily ignore objections and rejections. In other social contexts, rejection of self-narratives and experimental identities often has long-term negative consequences (Williams and Copes, 2005: 72). On the internet, stories and narratives are spread online by people who may never meet one another. Many of these stories would remain untold were it not for 'the liminal characteristics of the medium and the expansion of weak ties it promotes' (Denzin, 1998; William and Copes, 2005: 85). The social context of the internet was pivotal in the development of Breivik's identity and therefore in understanding his actions.

The structural aspects of the Manifesto are evident in the way the Norwegian terrorist republished the texts of others, and presented it as part of what he describes as his book. Nevertheless, retelling is basic to all story-telling and text production, and the shared character of narratives is evident in the parts of the Manifesto that he undoubtedly authored. He shared his views of the current situation in Norway and Europe, the Eurabia thesis and the metaphors of 'self-defence', 'betrayals' and 'traitors' with many others and more or less copied text from their 'counter-jihadist' web pages. For example, the title of the Manifesto is taken from the text *Native Revolt: A European Declaration of Independence* written by Fjordman and published in the Brussels Journal.⁴ Close scrutiny of this document reveals how Breivik retells narratives from anti-Islamic web pages, such as the political demands and narratives of Fjordman:

We demand that the ideology of Multiculturalism should immediately be removed from all government policies and school curricula (...) We demand that all Muslim immigration in whatever form should be immediately and completely halted (...) We are sick and tired of feeling like strangers in our own lands, of being mugged, raped, stabbed, harassed and even killed by violent gangs of Muslim thugs. (Fjordman, *Native Revolt*)

This world view and language is echoed in Breivik's text. Many of the metaphors in the Manifesto of 'war', 'colonization', 'invasion', 'treason', the Eurabia thesis and the emotional call for action are also present in Fjordman's document:

The wave of robberies the increasingly Muslim-dominated city of Malmö is witnessing is part of a 'war against Swedes,' (...) Europe is being targeted for deliberate colonization by Muslim states, and with coordinated efforts aimed at our Islamization and the elimination of our freedoms. We are being subject to a foreign invasion, and aiding and abetting a foreign invasion in any way constitutes treason. If non-Europeans

have the right to resist colonization and desire self-determination then Europeans have that right, too. And we intend to exercise it. (Fjordman, Native Revolt)

With the exception of the details of armed resistance and bomb preparation, the narratives and language in the Manifesto are difficult to separate from those of anti-Islamic web pages. The dominant narrative that Breivik represents has much in common with similar images of the ‘oppressed but proud counter-jihadist’ activists blogging on the internet. Some of these ideas and opinions are also present, in more modest versions, in a larger social environment. Some of Breivik’s views resonate with large sections of the Norwegian public. For example, 40 per cent believe that immigration constitutes a threat to Norwegian values, and 50 per cent believe that Islamic values are generally or completely incompatible with Norwegian values (IMDI 2011). Moreover, 50 per cent of people want to stop or severely restrict Muslim immigration (IMDI 2010).⁵ Siv Jensen, the leader of the populist right-wing Progress Party, introduced the term ‘sneak-Islamization’ in 2009, which, although not intended, fits well with the idea in the Eurabia thesis of a conspiracy between Muslims in Norway and the established political elite. Two other members of the Progress Party described the existing policy as ‘cultural betrayal’, adding: ‘Not even if they put up a poster that reads “shot are those who ...”, will we be multicultural’ (my translation).⁶ This is an explicit reference to a poster put up by the Nazis occupying Norway during the Second World War hinting at the idea that Norway is, or will be, occupied.

In general, the similarities between Breivik’s Manifesto and a larger anti-Islamic movement are striking: stories of Muslims raping Europeans *en masse*, violent young Muslim gang members, the Eurabia thesis, prophecies of a coming or ongoing civil war, idealization of self-sacrifice and a call for action against the Islamization of Europe. Nevertheless, although some ideas have a wider resonance, the most important correspondence is between the Manifesto and radical ‘counter-jihadist’ blogs and websites. In fact, the only real difference lies in the political means or solution to the problem. Here, the Norwegian terrorist differs from most, if not all, of his fellow anti-Islamics (Berntzen and Sandberg, 2013) and that may be why it is given little space in the Manifesto. Despite being 1,500 pages long, essential questions, such as the morality of killing innocent youths or the necessity of these atrocities, are answered only briefly.

The inspiration for these acts probably derives from sources such as the school massacres in Columbine in 1999 and in Finland in 2007. During the terrorist attacks in Norway, for example, Breivik planned to listen to music in the same way as the school killers. He also seemed to have been inspired by computer games, such as ‘Call of Duty’, when trying to kill as many as possible is the object. Nevertheless, Breivik had difficulty merging these inspirations with the main narrative of political terrorism, and the planned shootings remain the silent part of the Manifesto. Perhaps he understood the difficulty of combining the school massacre narrative with the narrative of political terrorism. His silence may be an example of agency and demonstrates his striving for consistency. However, it also demonstrates the complexity of language studies and the importance of understanding the different cultural expressions and sources that inspire criminal acts.

Four different self-narratives

Starting with Matza’s (1964) concept of drift, studying cultural complexity is an established tradition in a constructivist criminological tradition. The ethnomethodological tradition, for example, analyses speech acts as tools used to accomplish certain tasks and inspired conceptualizations such as ‘the victim code’ (Wieder, 1974) and ‘telling the code of the street’ (Jimerson and Oware, 2006). Other studies have described changes between self-narratives or discourses as elastic narratives (Presser, 2008), inconsistent story-lines (Brookman et al., 2011) or inter-discursivity (Sandberg, 2009). As described above, Breivik’s Manifesto can be read as a unified self-narrative that relies heavily on anti-Islamic rhetoric from the internet and the broader anti-Islamic movement. However, it can also be shown that he utilizes several, sometimes competing, self-narratives or characters (McAdam, 1993) in his presentation of self.

The professional revolutionary

In the Diary, Breivik pays great attention to the details of how to make a bomb. Technical jargon and the language of the manual dominate long passages. The notes for July 13 – ‘day 73’ serve as one example:

I cleaned my 3M gas mask today. It was full of AL powder/smearing and the multifilters were full of AL dust. Unfortunately, these are my last multifilters (particle and vapour filter combined) so I can't replace them. I do have a couple of sets of particle filters but I believe they won't be of much use to filter the diesel fumes when mixing ANALFO. (p. 54 in the Diary)

A large part of the Diary seems to have been written from the viewpoint of a chemist involved in an ongoing experiment. Breivik offers advice to others with an emphasis on technical details and how to avoid attracting attention. What can be described as a self-narrative of the technically skilled and professional revolutionary is evident in sections in which he describes the professionalism and determination needed to perform terrorist attacks.

In parts of the Question and Answer section, he similarly describes the role of the revolutionary from an organizational perspective. For example, he mentions seven traits that are important for a ‘cell operative’. These are: ‘Ideological confidence, patience, the ability to motivate yourself, keeping sensitive information to yourself, resourcefulness, being pragmatical and insightfulness in your own psyche’ (p. 10). He also suggests that fellow ‘cultural conservatives’ should be bloggers, infiltrate political parties, start a career in the military or in media organizations or academia and have many children (p. 36).

What is striking about this self-narrative is that the cause seems secondary. The bomb he made was inspired by Baader-Meinhof, and he recognizes Al Qaida and quotes both Castro (p. 36) and Shaw (p. 37) as sources of inspiration. In this mode, the emphasis is on the skills necessary to become a terrorist and revolutionary, and the practical organization of a revolution. The language and style of writing are similarly practical and technical, and without feeling or emotion.

The evangelist

In contrast, other parts of the Question and Answer section are characterized by a rather evangelical call for action against the Islamization of Europe. This quote is typical of the way he addresses supporters and followers:

I salute every single brother and sister who contributes day in and day out! You are the true heroes of the conservative revolution! (...) I heard your calling and as a result I did my duty as many more will continue to do. (p. 35)

In some passages, he draws historical lines, which adds to the pathos: ‘For 465 years the Romans were occupying half of Britain: the brave British patriots never gave up resistance (...) Even if the situation looks grim now, it will never be too late. Never surrender!’ (p. 9). In the mode of the evangelist, he addresses his audience more explicitly than in other parts, and some parts can be read as imitating public speeches; for example: ‘You may fight with the pen or with the sword, every effort counts!’ (p. 27). The evangelical style of writing reflects bravado, appeals to feelings and has short and pompous sentences. It is also characterized by the use of exclamation marks indicating an oral form of presentation.

Many other parts are characterized by the use of prophetic and religious language. He describes his followers as ‘brothers and sisters’ and emphasizes that they are many (p. 35). He prophesizes an Armageddon and uses a widespread religious narrative in which things will become worse before they get better (p. 35). He also emphasizes the importance of self-sacrifice (p. 27) and depicts his followers as the ‘chosen people’:

We have taken these thankless tasks upon ourselves because we possess these traits; the self-insight, the ideological and moral confidence and strength and we are willing to sacrifice our lives for our brothers and sisters, even though they will openly detest us. (p. 8)

The religious influence is also evident when he describes his own 'conversion'; for example: 'When I was at the top of my game, I had everything. At least, I thought I had everything when in essence I had lost everything' (p. 26) and 'That's not the kind of person I used to be, but it's the type of person I have become' (p. 27). Finally, many of the symbols he uses are inspired by religion; for example, when he describes how people in the future 'will hold our banner and chant our hymns because they finally understand' (p. 8). The 'hymns' are inspired by a religious world-view, but the 'banner' indicates that he also sees himself as part of a social movement. This combination is not surprising. In fact, many religions can be analysed as religious social movements. Social movement rhetoric more generally often resembles religious language and rationale.

Emotions have for long been neglected in terrorism studies (Cottee and Hayward, 2011), but Breivik's self-narratives illustrate their importance. The self-narrative of the evangelical anti-Islamic differs in many respects from that of the professional revolutionary. While the professional is practical and down-to-earth, the evangelist is emotional and draws large historical lines. Yet there are similarities. Both are dedicated to an extreme cause that demands huge sacrifices. While the professional provides the technical advice necessary to carry out terrorist attacks, the evangelist offers motivation.

The pragmatic conservative

Other parts of the Question and Answer section are less dystopian, more modest and sometimes read like the writing of a pragmatic and intellectual politician. Within what can be analysed as a third self-narrative, Breivik describes, for example, how he studied 'all the major ideologies in depth, everything from Marxism, socialism, Islam, fascism, nationalism, capitalism' and was an extreme libertarian at one point but ended up being interested in cultural identity and 'a more traditionalist conservative school of thought' (p. 21). He also continually refers to his libertarian world-views and the importance of personal freedom. In some passages he mentions curious details of what he would prioritize when his regime took over, such as spending 20 per cent of the state budget on research (p. 10).

In this mode, he emphasizes that he is not searching for revenge and is not driven by bitterness or hate: 'In fact, if they (the cultural Marxists) against all odds renounced multiculturalism today, halted all Muslim immigration and started deportation of all Muslims I would forgive them for their past crimes' (p. 6). He claims to respect Muslims: 'I don't hate Muslims at all. I acknowledge that there are magnificent Muslim individuals in Europe. In fact, I have had several Muslim friends over the years, some of which I still respect' (p. 7). He also describes himself as appreciative of diversity (p. 7) and 'a laid-back type and quite tolerant on most issues' (p. 11). The answer to his own question of whether he opposes all aspects of multiculturalism is illustrative:

No, I don't. I support the continued consolidation of non-Muslim Europe and an unconditional support to all Christian countries and societies (Israel included), in addition to continuing our good relationships with all Hindu and Buddhist countries. As such, I don't support the deportation of non-Muslims from Europe as long as they are fully assimilated (I'm a supporter of many of the Japanese/Taiwan/South Korean policies/principles). However, we should take a break from mass immigration in general (as of 2008 numbers). Any future immigration needs to be strictly controlled and exclusively non-Muslim. Emphasis should be on individuals who can greatly benefit Europe in some way (p. 8).

While the first two self-narratives can be combined, they contrast with this image of a pragmatic and slightly more reasonable conservative anti-immigration politician. In this self-narrative, Breivik comes over as a reasonable person with whom one could negotiate or even reach a compromise. He argues and

tries to negotiate with opponents or convince them by making assurances that he is not an extremist; for example, by stating that he also sees value in diversity and in other cultures.

The social and likeable person

The final self-narrative is a continuation of the third one, but it expands into the private realm. This part of the Manifesto is the least expected. For example, in the Question and Answer section, Breivik asks questions such as: ‘Can you describe your childhood?’ and ‘How would you describe yourself as a person’. In the answers, he adopts an informal tone:

I have a good relationship with my four half siblings, NN [*names three siblings*] but especially NN [*the fourth sibling*]. We get together a couple of times a year. NN moved to Los Angeles 14 years ago and is now settled down with two kids, NN and NN. I talk to her once a month. (p. 11, names are removed to provide anonymity)

He continues by describing his relationship with a woman in the extended family: ‘NN’s girlfriend though is a super-feminist and quite radical Marxist. We have had some very interesting conversations where she has almost physically strangled me: D’ (p. 11). Note that his way of talking could have been that of any ordinary person in the context of everyday social interaction. He is trying to be funny, and the tone is informal and relaxed.

In other parts, he discusses friends and reveals details about his personal tastes and interests (pp. 31–32). We learn, for example, that his favourite destination is Budapest, about his favourite drinks, and that he thinks all countries have excellent cuisine. The Bible and the Quran are both listed among his favourite books. He describes a trip abroad: ‘We spent five days there partying and celebrating. I haven’t consumed that many Absolute and Red bulls since I was in Las Vegas ;)’ (p. 30). He mentions several times that he enjoys going to parties and that he is a socially likeable person: ‘I’ve always been good at socializing, getting to know new people’ (p. 34).

In the extract below, he describes in a casual manner how difficult it had been to hide the preparations for the terrorist attacks:

... A couple of my friends have their suspicions though. However, I have managed to channel these suspicions far away from relating to my political convictions. Instead they suspect that I am playing WoW⁷ (and trying to hide it) and a couple of them believe that I have chosen semi-isolation because of some alleged homosexual relationship which they suspect I am trying to hide, LOL. Quite hilarious, as I am 100% hetero, but they may continue to believe what they want as it prevents them from asking more questions. (p. 6)

When in the mode of the social and likeable person, it seems important to Breivik to be perceived as a heterosexual, normal person who knows a lot of people and is respected by his friends. He admits to being a little shy, and attributes not having a girlfriend to the operation he is planning. This self-narrative is embedded in the informal language often used in SMS messages and chat programmes. He frequently uses symbols such as ‘LOL’ (laughing out loud) and different types of ‘smileys’ in these parts of the Manifesto. Breivik also continually attempts to be funny and to self-present as easy-going. He realizes that these are important social skills in everyday interaction, but not that it seems awkward in this narrative context. His rather narcissistic self-presentation as a normal and popular person is a resort to the language of the new social media, which he seems to associate with normalcy and sociability. This is illustrative of the life Breivik was living in the years immediately before his attacks. His social life was mainly on the internet.

Creative agency or structural determinacy?

In the tradition of ethnomethodology and conversation analysis, it is often emphasized that speech acts must be analysed as symbolic resources used to perform specific tasks (Potter and Wetherell, 1987: 73).

These tasks, however, constantly change, and a narrator will often address quite different contexts, even in short texts and conversations. The different self-narratives in the Manifesto can be interpreted in the same light. In the first, for example, Breivik wants to convince the reader that he is a professional terrorist. The evangelical anti-Islamic, however, can be seen as an attempt to construct a 'hot cognition' used by social movements and political actors to mobilize support (Gamson, 1992, 1995). To engage people requires more than rational arguments. Emotions and appeals to some kind of higher values are also necessary.

Järvinen (2001, 2003) argues that accounts are best understood if they are related to real or imagined accusations. The next two more pragmatic self-narratives, the pragmatic and reasonable conservative politician and the social narrative, can be seen as responses to potential accusations of being an extremist or being mentally disordered. Breivik's descriptions of himself as normal, likeable and social can be seen as a prepared response to accusations he knows he will meet, i.e. of being some kind of inhuman monster. He is explicit about how his character will be judged by the public after the attacks: 'The cultural Marxist/multiculturalist government will likely try to attempt to "assassinate my character" by labelling me as an "insane, inbred, paedophile Nazi loser"'. (p. 5). He realizes that the terrorist attacks and the first two self-narratives will lead to such accusations, and the latter two self-narratives can be seen as creative ways of countering them. This balancing of self-narratives is thus an example of fairly complex identity work.

Self-narratives are flexible (Maruna, 2001). During the trial, for example, Breivik downplayed the 'evangelist' and the 'sociable and likeable' self-narrative and emphasized the 'pragmatic conservative' and 'the professional revolutionary'. Being more in contact with other people over time, he may have noticed how some of his self-narratives resonated better than others, and the problems in combining them. Only once has the 'evangelist' appeared for example, when a rather pompous movie he had made about the threat of Islam and posted on Youtube was shown in court. Then he lost control of his emotions and wept.

There are also signs of creativity and artfulness in shorter passages in the Manifesto. In the Question and Answer section, for example, sentences sometimes accomplish several tasks: 'It's a miracle how I managed to successfully pass through my "vulnerable years" without being subdued by Muslim gangs even once' (p. 17). In this sentence, he manages to present himself as a tough person who is never subdued and, simultaneously, Muslims as aggressive and violent. He thus avoids the 'victim narrative', which he elsewhere criticizes, while still being able to tell stories of victimization.

Breivik, however, is not a good rhetorician or narrator, and he fails to merge the different self-narratives and forms of appeal. For example, as part of the self-narrative of the pragmatic conservative he rejects violence. In this passage, he describes why he did not fight back against Muslim gang members in his youth: 'However, as we didn't share their savage mentality, violence was pointless. We therefore avoided confrontations as often as humanly possible' (p. 19). Seen in light of the crimes he committed, such statements are of course contradictory, as are many other parts of the Manifesto. In a cultural structuralist analysis these shifts between self-narratives would be seen not as an expression of agency but rather as the structural product of the flow of discourses in a particular social context.

Self-narratives and identities are usually fragmented and texts are often inter-textual. Being consistent is hard work that is easier when writing than when talking. A unified or coherent self-narrative will often be the product of a (sometimes necessary) reductive analysis by the researcher as much as a reflection of the actual content of texts or interviews. Changing between different self-narratives can be done convincingly, and many narrators manage to give the listener the impression of a unified self-narrative, perhaps because a unified narrative is expected and thus readily perceived. Sometimes, however, it is less convincing and clearly shows that inter-discursivity is not solely the product of strategic agency by a competent narrator. Inter-discursivity also reflects how text production is determined by a limited discursive repertoire or an order of discourse (Foucault, 1972).

This is an important way to read the frequent shifts between self-narratives in Breivik's Manifesto. The language and narratives of the different discourses Breivik uses more or less structurally determine

the text he is writing. Their convergence would have been managed more convincingly by a more competent narrator, but these shifts are the main reason that the text is hard to read, chaotic and unintentionally comical; for example, when it suddenly shifts from pompous stories about self-sacrifice to preferences regarding clothes and eau de cologne (pp. 31-32). It also gives the text a frightening aspect, like the views of a 'madman'. For example, it suddenly shifts from pragmatic concerns and willingness to forgive, to consequences for those who do not change their opinion: 'We will eventually annihilate every single one of them' (p. 6).

The incapability of merging these four self-narratives with different rationales and logics is one of the most important characteristics of the Manifesto. Breivik is unable to avoid using the technical language of the manual when describing the technicalities and organizational efforts necessary to mount a terrorist attack. When trying to mobilize, he adopts religious discourse, symbols and narratives. When attempting to be pragmatic, he rejects violence and embraces diversity and other cultures, and, finally, when self-presenting as a social and likeable person he is completely embedded in the language of the new social media. Meaning construction is always limited by the dominating discourses in a field. Interviewees for example often shift between conflicting self-narratives within short periods during an interview (Sandberg, 2009, 2010). Although Breivik's Manifesto is an extreme case, self-narratives and life-stories are fragmented, and analysing them as unified will always be a simplification.

Conclusion

Narrative analysis is often viewed as an exercise in hermeneutics, and thus less important than more realist approaches. Presser (2009), however, has argued that narrative writing is an important cause of crime. This is an unusual way to think about narratives, which are more often seen as after-the fact rationalizations, or analysed as in linguistics without any intention or attempt to link them to action. The terrorist attacks in Norway were enactments of a particular set of political narratives, which makes them a crucial object of study in any attempt at understanding the events.

Breivik's Manifesto was written before the acts and is thus not post-facto legitimization or rationalization. Neither does it make sense to describe them as coincidental, or solely a product of mental disorder. Breivik may have had psychological problems, but his world-views and political opinions are shared by many (Berntzen and Sandberg, 2013). He was also dedicated to them. To borrow a phrase from McAdam (1993), the Manifesto describes the stories Breivik 'lived by'. Together with political, socio-economic and psychological studies, narrative analysis can thus add to our understanding of crime, terror and violence. Most acts, not least the dramatic and consequential, need some kind of rationale, and are often present in the form of narratives. Narratives are not a *sufficient* cause, but in many cases (e.g. terrorism) they are a *necessary* cause.

This study reveals how Breivik's self-narratives can be analysed in four different ways; either as strategic or determined or unified or fragmented, using such different perspectives as narrative psychology, French structuralism, ethnomethodology and postmodernism. Choice of analytical strategy has huge implications, and the theoretical approach we take to the study of narratives is thus pivotal to our understanding of a phenomenon. Analysing criminogenic narratives as creative agency, using a narrative psychological approach, and seeking coherence in text, for example, places responsibility on the offender, while analysing them as reproduction of pre-authored narratives shifts the focus to social context. Illustratively, while anti-Islamic organizations struggle to place Breivik's self-narratives to the left in Model 1 (agency), politically leftist actors insist that they should be interpreted using more structural approaches, making the larger anti-Islamic social movement accountable. Studies of textual fragmentation may further strengthen a structural perspective, either in a post-structuralist framework or as an indicator of mental disorder in a psychological approach.

When analysing self-narratives we should draw on all four narrative approaches described in this article. Studies of narratives in general and narrative criminology in particular should analyse self-narratives as agency conditioned by culture and context, and as attempts at coherency and unity drawing on a wide

variety of cultural narratives and discourses. Only in this way will we come to understand the importance of narratives for action. Understanding the nature of narratives is also critical to effectively counter antagonistic narratives inspiring crime and terrorism.

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Notes

1. The Manifesto was accessed via the website: <http://breivikmanifest.com/>. All page references are to the document as presented on this web page. They are unedited and include grammatical errors, typographical errors, etc. Page references that do not indicate something else are taken from the Question and Answer section of the Manifesto.
2. This information about Breivik's life and other aspects of the case referred to here and elsewhere in the article can be found either in the general media coverage of the case or the trial.
3. Available at: <http://www.dagbladet.no/2011/07/27/nyheter/utoya/massedrap/innenriks/17459033/>.
4. Available at: <http://www.brusselsjournal.com/node/1980>.
5. One should be careful with these statistics, however. The first two can be read as answers to an 'empirical' question, while the third refers to a normative view not necessarily related to an antagonistic attitude towards Muslims.
6. Available at: <http://www.aftenposten.no/meninger/kronikker/article3783373.ece>.
7. World of Warcraft. A computer game.

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