

2019

Defining Choices Redefined: Heroic Life Narratives of Taiwanese Buddhist Monastics

Hillary Crane
Linfield College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.linfield.edu/soanfac_pubs



Part of the [Buddhist Studies Commons](#), and the [Social and Cultural Anthropology Commons](#)

DigitalCommons@Linfield Citation

Crane, Hillary, "Defining Choices Redefined: Heroic Life Narratives of Taiwanese Buddhist Monastics" (2019). *Faculty Publications*. Accepted Version. Submission 9.

https://digitalcommons.linfield.edu/soanfac_pubs/9

This Accepted Version is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It is brought to you for free via open access, courtesy of DigitalCommons@Linfield, with permission from the rights-holder(s). Your use of this Accepted Version must comply with the [Terms of Use](#) for material posted in DigitalCommons@Linfield, or with other stated terms (such as a Creative Commons license) indicated in the record and/or on the work itself. For more information, or if you have questions about permitted uses, please contact digitalcommons@linfield.edu.

CHAPTER 1

Defining Choices Redefined: Heroic Life Narratives of Taiwanese Buddhist Monastics

by Hillary Crane

Introduction

“How old are you?” I asked a nun at the start of our interview. “From what life would you like me to begin counting?” she responded, explaining that we are not merely the current versions of ourselves that we are familiar with, but instead are the products of countless lifetimes of karmic action that have resulted in who we are now, and that the choices we make in this lifetime will have repercussions in many lives to come.

Although other Taiwanese Buddhist monks and nuns I interviewed at Zhi Guang Mountain monastery responded in a more conventional way to this question, this nun’s particular answer illustrates recurring themes of monastics’ discourse – discourse that was situated in several overlapping contexts and that served multiple purposes. One of these purposes stemmed from the role of monastics as religious personnel interested in sharing their knowledge of Buddhism. As members of the sangha (the Buddhist monastic community), their first priority is the religious instruction and spiritual cultivation of others. Their life history narratives did more than just inspire and guide, however; they also served to produce a new, positive public image of monastics to supplant the negative one that, founded on a long history of prejudices against Buddhist monastics in wider Chinese contexts, dominated Taiwanese discourse.

In having narratives serve multiple purposes, the monastics in this community are not alone. As many have shown, narratives may create or change the social order (e.g., Basso 1996, Bhaba 1990) and make selves (e.g., Bruner 1991, Ochs and Capps 2001, Pavlenko 2007, Zigon 2008). Through narratives, we come to know ourselves as our narratives enable us to “apprehend experiences and navigate relationships with others” (Ochs and Capps 1996: 21). As these and other

scholars have shown, because they serve wider purposes, narratives cannot be taken simply as straightforward reflections of the narrator's reality, or even their perception of it, but must be seen as situated within specific contexts. As discussed in the introduction to this collection, rather than downplay the intertextuality of everyday narrative practice, an alternative is to take an approach that Bauman advocates and consider "the interrelationships linking the expressive forms individuals may employ in representing their lives to others, however these forms may be generically packaged, presentationally keyed, or semiotically encoded" and see how speakers employ narrative of life experience "as an expressive resource, using it to shape and present the social self in dialog with others" (Bauman 2004: 83).

Within life story narratives, tellers endeavor to conform to wider cultural ideologies. For example, in *Life Stories: The Creation of Coherence*, Charlotte Linde (1993) finds that middle-class Americans carefully craft stories of how they wound up in their current occupations, in order to present a moral vision of the self that conforms to taken-for-granted and widely shared ideologies of what constitutes a good and stable person. Their narratives emphasize their own personal agency as well as their intentions and desires in their career choice. Building on Linde's research, Chris McCollum (2002) examines other stories of middle-class Americans: those of how they selected their romantic partners, or more accurately, how they came to be with their romantic partners independent of their personal agency. While he similarly found that speakers draw on abstract cultural principles to narrate their lives, the themes McCollum uncovered differed dramatically from those Linde found. Rather than emphasize personal agency, intentions, and desires, McCollum discovered that middle-class Americans described the origins of their romantic relationships as involuntary, negating any personal agency. Both studies show the lengths to which narrators will go to ensure their stories adhere to culturally defined themes. That narrators express discomfort when their narratives appear to deviate from these themes also corresponds with the "Looking Good Principle" (Ochs, Smith and Taylor 1989) as, according to that principle, narrators generally make themselves look better than the others who appear in their stories.

What happens when narrators chafe at themes in wider discourse and seek to challenge or undermine them? In a study of narratives and counter-narratives in a small North Carolina town, Sofia Villenas (2001) demonstrates how North Carolinians, particularly white North Carolinians, use moralizing narratives to disparage Latina mothers' parenting skills, and the ways in which these Latinas produce 'counterstories.' These counterstories assert that their parenting before migrating was exemplary and that any problems they have with parenting in North Carolina are a consequence of the new setting rather than their own limitations as parents. Thus Villenas shows that instead of hewing to dominant themes, these Latinas' narratives work to challenge them, specifically by undermining the stereotypes with which they are associated.

Similarly, as I will discuss below, the monastics in this study confront negative stereotypes that dominate within their wider societal context, and challenge these stereotypes by positing counter-narratives. After exploring the monastics' interest in proselytizing both to me and to a wider audience as a context that influences the interview encounter, this chapter will focus on the monastics' response to negative stereotypes and their endeavors to craft a new, positive image of monastics. I will argue that they employ the heroic trope of the *da zhangfu* (大丈夫, 'great man') to reconceive as heroic the life choices they have made that wider Taiwanese society characterizes as immoral. I will show that through their life history narratives, and most particularly with the stories of how they decided to *chujia* (出家, 'leave home'), renounce the world and become monastics, they attempt to reframe monastics as people willing to make tremendous sacrifices for the benefit of humanity. I will demonstrate that through the strategic use of metaphors, coupled with a reframing of what constitutes moral behavior, monastics' life history narratives challenge stereotypes that dominate wider Taiwanese discourse.

Ethnographic Context of Research: Zhi Guang Mountain Monastery

The larger ethnographic study this discussion draws from examines monastic life in a Chan (Zen) monastic community, and began in a time when most large Taiwanese monasteries experienced significant growth. The monastery and its wider affiliate community, which I have given the pseudonym Zhi Guang Mountain, grew exponentially – expanding from 10 monastics in the mid-1980s to over 1000 in the late 1990s – although that growth leveled off shortly thereafter. As is common in Taiwan, about three-quarters of the monastics were women. (Some Taiwanese monasteries are single sex, but the majority of monastics live in communities that include both males and females.) The monastery also housed a relatively small number of lay individuals, most of whom were considering becoming monastics. While the monastery at Zhi Guang Mountain was the organization’s largest facility, housing a fluctuating population of between 300-600 people, the organization also had other, smaller temples and branch meditation centers throughout Taiwan, and in other countries.

The main monastery housed separate Buddhist colleges for men and women. As most monastics were still relatively new to the role, many of those living at the monastery were in school learning about their particular branch of Buddhism, and also how to teach it to others. A significant emphasis of monastery culture was the need to educate others about “right cultivation” – how to live in a way that leads to generating good karmic merit and avoid generating bad. Those who had moved on to branch temples and meditation centers either taught Buddhism to the lay community or served in a supporting role to those educators. The monastery also housed many other facilities involved in outreach, such as a museum of Buddhist art and relics, and a construction complex for its expanding facilities.

For an ethnographic research project focused on the reasons for exponential growth in the number of Taiwanese Buddhist monastics as well as their gender identities, I spent several months attending courses offered at an urban branch meditation center, went on meditation and chanting retreats, and lived for several additional months at the main monastery at Zhi Guan Mountain. I

was given a role there in the guest relations office, where I poured tea and translated on occasion for visitors. As a place where monastery residents and visitors waited for meetings and for transportation into town, this office was a useful setting to make connections to possible interview subjects and conduct participant observation, as well as being a place where I could engage in informal conversations with monastics. I conducted formal interviews, which focused on life histories and emphasized the choice to become monastics, with fifty monastics and lay residents of the monastery, and these interviews and participant observation conducted in these various settings, form the core of my research.

Many-layered Contexts

As many have shown, discourse is always rooted in social settings and cannot be understood without sensitivity to setting-specific, underlying meanings that people access in social contexts (e.g., Briggs 1988, Lutz and Abu-Lughod 1990, Sherzer 1987). Interviews pose a particular challenge to those hoping to gain data that is not affected by the interview process. While some endeavor to control for the effect of the researcher on the materials produced in interviews (e.g., Labov and Weletzky 1967), others emphasize the degree to which interviews are co-constructed between the interviewer and interviewee and the texts generated therein a form of discourse useful to examine as such (e.g., Mishler 1986: vii). As Pavlenko writes, (citing Edwards 1997),

Different versions of the same experience may be constructed with different goals in mind, they may be told to justify, to apologize, to hide, to reveal, or to mislead, and without exception, they are told in an attempt to construct a particular self. Conversation and interaction analysts have repeatedly argued that narrative has to be examined as a fundamentally interactional activity, or, in other words, that we have to analyze not only its structure or rhetorical devices, but also the interactional goals speakers are trying to achieve by telling particular stories (2007: 178).

Narrators choose stories, and selectively emphasize elements within those stories, in order to accomplish the narrator's goals in constructing a particular self; the interviewer collaborates by serving not only as audience but also as co-creator.

While the influence of the researcher in shaping the interview encounter is inevitable and worthy of explicit examination, such influence takes peculiar shape in religious contexts, particularly when those being interviewed are members of a community engaged in proselytizing and the researcher is not a believer. Missionizing religious communities generally welcome newcomers interested in their lives and faith; indeed they anticipate just such interest from potential converts. In such a context, the researcher's questions can be misinterpreted as being of personal instead of academic interest (and researchers may in fact blur those lines themselves). In her research with American evangelical Christians, Susan Friend Harding (2000) discusses how her own position as a secular person led her interviewees to turn their conversations into evangelizing sessions: they would 'witness' to her by describing their conversion experiences. She, in turn, found herself influenced by these encounters, even though she did not convert. For example, driving home after one emotionally intense interview, she describes nearly getting into a car accident:

Halfway across town, I stopped at a stop sign, then started into the intersection, and was very nearly smashed by a car that seemed to come upon me from nowhere very fast. I slammed on the brakes, sat stunned for a split second, and asked myself "What was God trying to tell me?" It was my voice but not my language. I had been inhabited by the fundamental Baptist tongue I was investigating (2000: 33).

For Harding, the witnessing of her interviewees, motivated by their desire to convert her, did lead to a transformation in her thinking, even if only temporarily. Similarly, several anthropologists in the collection *Missionary Impositions* (2013) examine the role their own faith (or lack of it) played

in how they engaged in their research as well as how their interlocutors understood their interest in their lives and utilized the research context as an opportunity to proselytize¹.

The monastics' perception of me as seeker inevitably influenced how they responded to my interview questions. In interactions with me, monastics would regularly employ a number of well-worn rhetorical strategies to try to communicate Buddhist lessons. These strategies resembled those of the Apache in Basso's study who used place names to serve a communicative purpose aimed at the listener:

In addition to everything else—places, events, moral standards, conceptions of cultural identity—every historical tale is also “about” the person at whom it is directed. This is because the telling of a historical tale is always prompted by an individual having committed one or more social offenses to which the act of narration, together with the tale itself, is intended as a critical and remedial response...This metacommunicative message is just as important as any conveyed by the text of the storyteller's tale for Apaches contend that if the message is taken to heart by the person at whom the tale is aimed – and if, in conjunction with the lessons drawn from the tale itself, he or she resolves to improve his or her behavior—a lasting bond will have been created between that individual in the site or sites at which events in the tale took place (1996:55).

Much as Basso's interlocutors used the names of places to 'shoot' those who needed to be reminded of a particular lesson, the monastics at Zhi Guang used their conversations with me to offer religious instruction. Their stories were in fact aimed quite explicitly at trying to help me see the truths of Buddhism. For example, monks and nuns regularly told tales of miracles or of extraordinary feats to illustrate the truth of Buddhism. These included stories of remarkable children (themselves monastics at Zhi Guang) who recited, at the sickbed of a grandparent, sutras they had not previously heard. They also shared accounts of pearl-like relics found among the ashes of the cremated bodies of Buddhist spiritual masters. Monastics also emphasized basic

Buddhist teachings. For example, they repeated many of the Jataka tales of the historical Buddha's previous lives, which take various animal and human forms. In each tale, a life narrative illustrates a virtue of Buddhism. Monastics also regularly relayed the temple's own stories wherein the Master teaches important lessons to students, usually by giving them an impossible or puzzling task to undertake that ultimately allows them to see a profound truth. For example, several monastics told me a story about the monastery's head gardener being told to repeatedly replant a valuable tree despite the replanting damaging the plant. When the gardener voiced his concerns, the Master's reply emphasized the idea of impermanence and importance of letting go of attachments. Through this apparently futile, and even costly exercise, these abstract concepts became concrete for the gardener and he realized the replanting and eventual killing of the tree had been an object lesson. In relaying this story, monastics sought to teach its lesson to a wider audience.

In a similar vein, when asked about their lives before leaving home, monastics would endeavor to persuade me of the rightness of that choice – often explicitly recommending it to me as one I should also choose. Indeed, they used their life histories as inspiring models in their conversation with me, in hopes that they would serve to persuade me to become a nun or possibly to inspire others through my work. Their stories would highlight the monastic life as one that enables a practitioner to separate themselves from the habits that lead to bad karma, such as eating meat. They also highlighted that monastic life allowed for concentration on freeing oneself from the attachments that lead to reincarnation and for teaching Buddhist truths to others. At another monastery where I attended a retreat, my expressed desire to study and write about the lives of monastics led to me being denied permission to continue;² at Zhi Guang, however, monastics saw their own lives as inspiring and my writing about their lives for a wider audience as a possible means of reaching others. Not surprisingly, this agenda influenced their life histories. As Ochs and Capps state, “Personal narratives about the past are always told from the temporal perspective of the present. Narrators linguistically shape their tellings to accommodate circumstances such as the setting as well as the knowledge, stance, and status of those in their midst” (1996: 25).

While the interview context, interviewer-interviewee relationship, and interview audience all must factor into how we examine interview-generated discourse, other factors may also influence that discourse. In her discussion of various sub-populations' retellings of the tale of the 1947 Malagasy rebellion, Jennifer Cole (2003) suggests such foci capture only part of the picture. While narratives are certainly co-created in the interview process, and therefore not only reflect the teller's understanding of the story but also are shaped by the interrelationship with the interviewer as well as the interview process itself, Cole argues that the wider socio-political meanings of the story may also profoundly influence their telling. She found that narrators depicted the same events in disparate ways depending on the role of "moral projects" in shaping the story. These moral projects fell along generational or rural/urban lines. For Taiwanese monastics, the wider context of the reputation of Buddhist monastics influences the way they describe their life histories and their choice to become monastics. It is this reputation to which I now turn.

Bad Reputation

It is worth noting that the problematic reputation of Buddhist monastics in contemporary Taiwan is not a recent invention. Buddhist monastics were historically cast in an unfavorable light in the Chinese tradition that is part of Taiwan's cultural inheritance. In that wider milieu, describing monks and nuns as immoral is nothing new.

In her depiction of Qing era China (1644-1912), historian Susan Mann (1997) explains that historic and literary depictions of monastics describe them as morally suspect, and that Buddhist monastics had a reputation for corrupting others - particularly women they would lead out of seclusion. Because Buddhism challenged traditional Chinese values by encouraging people to emphasize detachment from the world rather than moral obligations to parents and ancestors, Buddhist monastics were regularly accused of immorality. These accusations included scandalous claims against temples, as the following statement by a magistrate illustrates: "Women go to temples or shrines in droves and, on the pretext of burning incense and worshipping idols, they

actually participate in orgies on the premises” (in Mann 1997: 195). Much of the animosity was directed at nuns in particular; for example, a popular saying from the Qing era claimed that nine out of every ten nuns was a prostitute, and the other was mad.

Families in Qing-era China did not want their children to become monastics. As illustrated in the novel *Dream of the Red Chamber*, elite families in particular wanted to keep their daughters from becoming nuns: “It would look very bad for a girl from a family such as ours to enter a nunnery. That really is unthinkable” (in Mann, 1997: 190). By reputation, most Qing-era nuns and monks chose the monastic life out of desperation and came from poverty.³

Contemporary Taiwan is of course a different place and time from Qing era China, yet the negative stereotype of monastics persists. In historical dramas on television, nuns in particular are portrayed as quite silly and often love-struck. Many other images of nuns on television do not enhance the community’s reputation. One nun in particular (whose credentials as a legitimate nun some of the people I spoke with doubted) made regular appearances in Taiwanese game shows, singing and acting in skits. Most monastics describe this behavior as inappropriate; indeed, it arguably violates at least a few monastic precepts.

Aside from problematic portrayals on television, monastics’ poor reputation may stem, in part, from their choice to renounce the world, which is a choice that offends modern sensibilities much as it did those of the past. Taiwanese children are expected to take care of their parents (or their husband’s parents) as they age and to provide them with grandchildren. Further descendants care for ancestors in the afterlife so they can avoid becoming “hungry ghosts”: those with no descendants to make offerings to their spirits. A monastic life wherein one retreats to a temple and pursues spiritual goals may be perceived as a selfish shirking of responsibility by those who remain in the world taking care of those obligations.

Familial concerns are not limited to males who produce heirs. Unmarried daughters, including daughters who become monastics, pose a threat to the family as well as Steven Harrell describes:

[a] girl who dies unmarried cannot have a place as an ancestor on her father's altar. Her family can worship her in some back room somewhere, or donate her spirit table to a Buddhist "vegetarian hall," but in some cases they choose to find a husband for her, marrying her to a living man in a posthumous wedding...and having her spirit tablet enshrined on her husband's family's ancestral altar. In this way, a dangerous ghost, an anomaly in the family system, has been domesticated by placing her posthumously in the normal structural position of a wife and, at least for purposes of ancestor worship, a mother (1986: 108).

Unmarried daughters, then, are a threat to their families after death, leaving parents in a spiritual bind when their daughters join a monastery. Not only are monastics not taking care of their parents as they age and as ancestors in the afterlife, but without descendants, they pose a potential danger to the family after their own deaths.

The reputation of contemporary Buddhist monastics in Taiwan was further damaged in the 1990s, when several monastics were revealed to be swindling and scamming their followers. Although rare, such problematic behaviors were covered by the media and widely discussed in Taiwan. These scandals included some monastics claiming supernatural abilities and doctoring photos of themselves (e.g., using photo editing to add lightning bolts radiating from their bodies, or showing themselves hovering in mid-air), and swindling many individuals out of significant sums of money. Although not as dramatic, some monastic involvement in politics also damaged the wider community's reputation. Fo Kuang Shan [Fo Guang Shan]⁴, a large monastic community in southern Taiwan, drew international attention in 1996 when one of its branches, based in California, hosted a fundraiser for then-US Vice President Al Gore. Most Taiwanese people I spoke with believe that Buddhist monastics should stay removed from politics and other mundane, worldly interests. Such involvement, even though limited to a small minority of monastic communities, confirms stereotypes of monastics as immoral or power-hungry. Some also see

monasteries as schemes to strike it rich. Many I met in Taiwan lauded my choice to study Buddhist monastics by saying it was a good way to learn how to make money. As one acquaintance said, “They all drive Mercedes.”

With such reputations, it is perhaps not surprising that, for the majority of Taiwanese families, having a son or daughter become a monastic is a source of shame. One nun describes her family’s reaction to her decision to *chujia*: “When I became a nun in the 1970s, people thought that becoming a nun was something for grandmothers and women who couldn’t support themselves, widows and abandoned wives. My father thought it was a huge loss of face that I wanted to be a nun and slapped me. I had to run away from home to do it” (in Tsai, 1997: 3). (See Salgado, 2013 for a discussion of Buddhist nuns in other traditions and their perception in wider discourses.)

Parental displeasure was particularly apparent in the summer of 1996 at Chung Tai [Zhong Tai] temple in Puli, when, after a summer retreat, over one hundred participants — mostly college students — decided to become monastics and the monastery’s Master tonsured them without first securing their families’ approval. The media, including international media, showed parents picketing in front of the monastery claiming that the Master had brainwashed their children. They protested that the monastery would not allow them to bring their children home or even to see them. Eventually, the situation was resolved; some of the new monastics returned to their families and others persuaded their families to let them remain. Because a significant number of those involved were students at highly competitive universities, many Taiwanese expressed shock that they would throw away promising futures to renounce the world and enter a monastery.

This event was not entirely isolated, as monasteries grew exponentially around that time to the puzzlement of many. Frequently acquaintances in Taiwan told me about someone they knew — a sister’s friend, a college classmate, a cousin’s ex-girlfriend — who had become a nun or monk. These anecdotes followed a similar pattern: invariably, the young people had been attractive and good in school, had promising careers lined up and good marriage prospects when, to the surprise of friends and family, they renounced the world, shaved their heads, and joined a monastery. These

stories were always juxtaposed against what “everyone knows”: that becoming a monk or a nun is a last resort of those who have suffered a personal tragedy and lost everything. Alternatively, “everyone knows” that most people who become monastics were never good enough “in the world” to succeed in work or school or to find a spouse and so becoming a monastic is a last resort - an alternative to suicide.

Countering the Stereotype

Despite widely believed stereotypes that successful people would not choose monasticism, the narratives of monastics at Zhi Guang described lives wherein they had money, good jobs, good marriages, or, in the case of younger monastics, good prospects. Only one monk described a life of tragedy that fit the conventional wisdom. As he told it, first his sister, then his mother died of a slow, debilitating illness. Shortly thereafter, he lost his job, and his father died suddenly – developing a headache one morning and dying before nightfall. A year later, after his house burned down taking his dog with it, he was arrested. He owned a gun that he did not know he owned (he inherited it with his father’s possessions on his death), and that gun was used in an argument between his business partner and his wife. He was tried and found guilty of illegal firearm possession and served three years in jail, and during his trial, his business failed. He said that it was on leaving jail that he became interested in Buddhism, because it explained his suffering through the concept of karma. When telling his story, he was adamant that despite his bad luck, his choice to become a monastic was not made out of desperation. Instead, he insisted, his misfortunes revealed the truth of Buddhist teaching, and that truth led him to the monastic life. While his story conformed to the stereotype in significant ways, he emphasized his choice to *chujia* as the result of what his misfortune had taught him rather than a last resort.

Most monastics’ life history narratives told a different kind of tale, one in which they lived precisely the kind of life to which others in Taiwan aspire. Rather than forced into monasticism out of desperation, they had what appeared to be good lives, but had found them unsatisfying. For

example, one nun explained her decision to *chujia* as the consequence of her successes. She said she had accumulated so many rental properties that she had grown bored; to maintain her wealth she only needed to sit around collecting rent checks. She had trouble finding things to do with her time, and what she did do was unsatisfying. Television was interesting for only a little while, and she found short-lived pleasure in food, travel, and friendship. Eventually she wanted to find something more fundamentally satisfying, and she started reading Buddhist sutras. From them she learned that she would never find happiness in life's successes or pleasures—that the ultimate goal should be to escape from the suffering of the world and to help others escape it. She said this insight inspired her interest in a meditation class, then meditation retreats, and finally, her desire to become a nun. Her narrative highlighted her choice to *chujia* as one not of desperation due to limited options, but rather of a deep dissatisfaction due to abundance. Monasticism, in her narrative, is a higher calling and more satisfying than worldly pursuits.

Most monastic narratives similarly describe recognizing in Buddhism an alternative to the hollow satisfaction of worldly successes. Particularly for young monastics, life in the monastery offered an appealing alternative for those who wondered whether there was more to life than marriage, career, and family. The teachings they encountered on retreats and in meditation classes characterized those things as attachments that make it harder to escape the wheel of reincarnation. At a time in their lives when they started to question what meaning is to be derived from a life in the world, Buddhism provided them with an answer and suggested an alternative: that the best way to live is to leave home and become a monastic.

Part of the appeal of joining the sangha, according to the monastics at Zhi Guang, was that it required the sacrifice of worldly successes and pleasures in favor of the loftier goal of becoming a bodhisattva. A bodhisattva is someone who, through insight built on years of diligent spiritual cultivation -- or from a sudden inspiration -- achieves the ability to not be reincarnated, freeing the self from the wheel of reincarnation. But the bodhisattva does not use this ability, instead vowing not to leave the world until all sentient beings also attain liberation. The bodhisattva's willingness

to take this vow stems from compassion for all living things and a willingness to forgo one's own reward for the sake of teaching and liberating others. The bodhisattva takes this vow because of the fundamental belief that life is suffering and that reincarnation keeps us trapped in the ceaseless wheel of rebirth. The means for attaining the enlightenment that leads to becoming a bodhisattva is a lessening of attachments, which can best be achieved through severing connections with the regular world and its distractions of various pleasures and ties of affection. According to Zhi Guang's monastics, taking this vow requires a significant commitment. To prove one has the ability to endure the limitless suffering of a bodhisattva, during the vow-taking ceremony monastics hold the lit end of three incense sticks to the skin of the forehead, just above where the hairline would be (if monastics did not shave their heads) and burn three scars into their skin.

Heroism

These scars are a manifestation of what the monastics see as the heroism of their decision to take the bodhisattva vow. In their life history narratives, monastics describe themselves and one another as *da zhangfu*. The words mean literally 'big' (*da*) and 'husband' (*zhangfu*) although alone *zhangfu* is commonly translated as 'fellow'. Outside of the Buddhist context, the use of the term is broad; it is applied to war heroes and people of renown. One nun explained to me that usually *da zhangfu* is only used to describe men, and then only very brave, courageous and wise leaders or war martyrs, "Who is a good example of a *da zhangfu*? In Western history perhaps Napoleon or Alexander the Great. In Chinese history, maybe Sun Yat-Sen, or heroic soldiers in the Sino-Japanese war. There were many heroes in that war; they are all *da zhangfu*." Outside the temple, it can be used to describe anyone who is exceptionally brave, strong, and daring -- even criminals. A non-monastic friend of mine told me that when he hears the word, he thinks of gangsters or crime syndicates⁵.

In a 1992 article, Miriam Levering, a scholar of Chinese Buddhism, discussed the concept of *da zhangfu* as it is found in the Buddhist literature from the Sung dynasty (roughly the 11th and 12th centuries). Levering describes a *da zhangfu* as someone with great courage, who never

hesitates or retreats. “He is fearless, and regards any feat of daring anyone else can accomplish as something he should be able to do also. He does not look up to anyone else, nor is he afraid of anyone else. He is independent, and carves out his own way” (1992: 142). Levering describes this concept as masculine, and quotes the *Hou Han-shu* to demonstrate its gendered association. “A great man, (ta-chang-fu⁶), should be able to fly like a male, not submit like a female” (ibid.: 144). Despite being masculine, the term is sometimes applied to women, yet “[only one who] has seen the Principle of the Buddha-nature is...called *chang-fu*...[T]he *Nirvana Sutra* states: One who has seen the Buddha nature, even if she be a woman, is also called ‘man’... ‘Man’ is equivalent to ‘*chang-fu*’” (ibid.: 145)⁷.

While Levering writes about literature that is almost 1000 years old, the term *da zhangfu* is still used today at Zhi Guang in much the same way. One nun contrasted the ordinary understanding of the term with the meanings it holds at the temple, but echoing the Buddhist texts in which Levering examines it: “Here it symbolizes strength, not violence; we’ve changed the connotation in Buddhism when we use the term. Other people may connect it with violence, but for us it means strength.”

The specific example of a *da zhangfu* most often cited in monastic narratives is Mulan (also known as Hua Mulan or Fa Mulan⁸). Although different versions vary in details, the basic outline of her story is that she left home dressed as a man and fought in the army for twelve years as a substitute for her father, who was ill, and for her brother who was too young to fight. Throughout the twelve years, the story goes, she fought valiantly, no one suspected she was a woman, and her chastity was preserved. After her years in the army ended, she returned home and changed back in to her woman’s clothing, returning to her role as daughter and eventually wife.⁹

For the monastics at Zhi Guang, Mulan is a model of a *da zhangfu* and a hero whose actions, like their own, are unconventional. Outside the monastery, Mulan is usually held up as the model of filial piety, as she went far beyond what is normally expected of a daughter to serve her father. Mulan’s story, like Bahktin’s words (1981: 283), exists in other people’s mouths and other

people's contexts before being utilized for this purpose in monastic narratives. It has, as Bauman and Briggs say, "a history of use" (1990:73). Monastics put a different spin on her story, though, when they compare their own choice to become monastics, in which they leave behind their obligations to serve their families, with her willingness to step outside her expected roles to accomplish heroic feats. They describe their decision to *chujia* as similarly requiring stepping outside their expected roles. Instead of serving their families in the limited way of a child taking physical and financial care of parents or a descendent taking care of ancestors through ritual actions such as burning ghost money, through their bodhisattva vow they help their families, as they help all sentient beings, by educating them about karma and the importance of self-cultivation and engaging in right action. In this way, they serve as models, not of filial piety, but of Buddhist cultivators. Where Mulan's filial piety might seem the precise opposite of the monastic choice to *chujia*, in monastic narratives the decisive moment is a parallel, unexpected, unselfish, heroic act. By invoking Mulan in their own stories, monastics provide not a counter example of filial piety but a comparable one of self-sacrifice outside normal social roles, and one that leads to significant heroism for the greater good.

The Zhi Guang community is well aware that most Taiwanese do not think highly of monastics. By drawing the comparison with Mulan and invoking the *da zhangfu* trope, the community hopes to alter the way monastics are perceived outside the temple. Because *da zhangfu* are courageous, determined, and heroic, the monastics use the term to argue that they, too, are brave heroes who take a courageous and unusual step when they decide to become monastics, instead of choosing the temple after failing in the world.

In this situation, the use of Mulan and *da zhangfu* could be understood as an argument of tropes. James Fernandez (1986) suggests that within certain contexts tropes can be used argumentatively, to shift the perception of the thing associated with the trope. For example, Fernandez explains that when a king is called a lion, there may be three effects of metaphoric movement. First, on hearing the king called a lion, provided the public does not already have an

alternative and clear image of the king, and provided the king has some lion-like qualities, the public begins to think of the king as lion-like. Second, on hearing himself referred to as a lion, again, assuming the metaphor fits into the king's own self-concept (or he lacks a clear self-concept), he begins to perceive himself as lion-like. The final step is for the king to start acting like a lion. "The metaphoric predication can be self-fulfilling. The king can be told so often that he is a lion that he comes to believe it. He roars at his subjects and stealthily stalks those he thinks are enemies to his interest. He finally springs upon them in full and summary justice" (20). Although the first two stages of metaphoric movement may be common, Fernandez says that this last effect of metaphors is rare:

Such persistence in the application of metaphors does not often occur, so that persuasion does not usually pass over into performance. But at a deeper level of fantasy men may hold to predications which cause them irresistibly to organize their world, insofar as they can, so as to facilitate or make inevitable certain scenarios (ibid.).

According to Fernandez, a metaphor's effectiveness stems from the basic human problem of uncertainty. To shape a person's self-perception, metaphors draw on our own lack of self-awareness. Since most people have a vague sense of self, a metaphor can fill in some of the places in which we feel vague about ourselves: "In the privacy of our experience we are usually not sure who we really are. A metaphor thrust upon us often enough as a model can become compelling" (ibid.).

These types of metaphors are not unlimited in their power. They only work on an individual for whom the metaphor is apt. If the king has no lion-like qualities, the metaphor will not work, and no one will see the king as being lion-like. If the king acted more like a predatory shark, or a playful puppy, then the lion metaphor would not catch on, but if he already roars when angry, others may see his direct action taken against his enemies as 'pouncing'. When the

metaphor is apt, a king who has only some lion-like qualities can be seen as having even more.

Moreover, he may begin to see himself as lion-like and might even start acting like a lion.

When the monastics describe themselves as *da zhangfu*, an argument through metaphor takes place and they are perceived of, perceive themselves as, and then begin to act like *da zhangfu*. When the monastics defined *da zhangfu* in their conversations with me, they did so in an attempt to frame the way others perceived them. The framing was primarily in opposition to the character of girls who they describe as having many negative, unheroic characteristics. According to one student at the Buddhist institute:

In Buddhism when we say someone is a *da zhangfu* we mean he has qualities like decency and purity. He has a pure mind and he does good for others. He is not like a woman who only cares about beauty, her own children, about a small world. He is not like a girl who just talks to you, and chats about meaningless things...*Da zhangfu* is about qualities that are found on the inside, not the outside. It's about qualities such as not being afraid of the darkness, and not being the kind of person who is waiting for someone to save you, to give you happiness.

Using the *da zhangfu* metaphor, the monastics try to show to others that they are not like women, who they describe as weak and afraid; instead they are brave and fearless like *da zhangfu*. Another nun draws a contrast between a negative stereotype of girls and *da zhangfu* when she explains:

Da zhangfu are daring and resolved, not like women who are hesitant and stuff. *Da zhangfu* are open-minded, purposive... You know how indecisive girls are; a *da zhangfu* is much more decisive. Yes is yes, and no is no.... So that's what *da zhangfu* means.... Like girls take forever to decide and to think... We say that girls have more worldly thoughts. They like to make themselves pretty and they are narrow-minded... Women are more emotional and hesitant. Girls are more emotional; they get really angry and really happy.

A *da zhangfu* is by definition, then, not like girls. By drawing this contrast, monastics juxtapose their own character to the negative stereotype of girls. Like Mulan, monastics, particularly nuns, leave behind feminine characteristics and instead move about in the world heroically as Mulan did, as *da zhangfu*.

One nun with whom I worked at the reception office told me a story about how all nuns are *da zhangfu*, and therefore men, even if they appear to be women:

When I was in 7th grade I had a classmate that looked like a nun I knew, which was the first time it occurred to me that the nun was a woman. So after school I went to her and said, “you are a girl!” The Master answered, “No, I’m not a girl. I’m a boy. I’m a *da zhangfu*. Becoming a monastic is a big deal; not all men could do it. After becoming a nun, you realize that and you don’t think of yourself as a girl. *Da zhangfu* means a manly man. It means you have enough courage to give up everything. Everybody likes to pursue pleasure, fortune, etc. But when you decide to become a monastic, you have to give up what you have owned. Doesn’t that sound like a manly man?” That’s why the Master said she was a man not a woman.

With her story, this nun explained that the nun she had known was heroic, heroic enough to decide to become a monastic, and therefore a *da zhangfu*. This heroic aspect is key to the definition of a *da zhangfu* and is crucial to the first stage of Fernandez’ metaphoric movement. For others to see the monastics as *da zhangfu*, they need to identify qualities in the monastics already that match the metaphor. Monastics tell the stories of deciding to renounce the world in ways that emphasize the self-sacrifice and bravery involved, highlighting the ways in which their own *chujia* narratives match up with the character of a *da zhangfu*.

The nun with the above story went on to tell me that these days she herself feels much like that nun had described herself feeling, including in how she looks; the experience of being a nun had changed her appearance. She showed me a picture of herself when she first became a nun to

contrast her current appearance with how she used to look. She saw herself as growing visibly more capable.

When it works, the *da zhangfu* metaphor moves others to perceive monastics as having positive, masculine qualities. In the second phase of metaphoric movement, it also causes the monastics' self-perception to change, as it does for the nun above. When they hear others describe them, or when they hear all monastics described as *da zhangfu*, they identify the traits within themselves that are like those of a *da zhangfu*; they begin to see themselves as *da zhangfu* in the same way that the king begins to perceive himself as lion-like when he hears himself described as such. In taking on new identities as monastics, they have dramatically altered the course of their lives and their own sense of self is similarly altered. There is, consequently, an inchoate self that does not yet have a clear shape and metaphors can provide that shape that the self is lacking (Fernandez, 1986). The *da zhangfu* helps them to shape a new self-image in the light of its characteristics. Or, to borrow directly from Fernandez, the metaphor *predicates upon the inchoate*; an apt metaphor fills in the gaps of knowledge about the self.

For the metaphor to have an effect on the nuns' self-perception, they must already perceive themselves as having some of these qualities. In their narratives, they demonstrate they have already acted heroically by making the difficult decision to become monastics. The *da zhangfu* image is also reflected back when they look in the mirror and see their shaved heads and grey tunics. They describe themselves as decisive, unafraid, unemotional, compassionate, wise, and calm – the traits of a *da zhangfu*. They may have associated some of these traits with themselves before they hear themselves described as *da zhangfu*, others they begin to see after they begin to think of themselves as *da zhangfu*—affirmed by the dramatically heroic step of renouncing the world.

The first two stages of metaphoric movement are followed by a third stage in which the monastics begin to act like *da zhangfu*. Again, Fernandez describes the lion-like king as first being seen by others, then seeing himself as lion-like. He then may, under certain circumstances, start

acting more lion-like. This change through metaphor is true of the monastics as well, as their narratives show that they have started not only to see themselves as having the qualities of a *da zhangfu*, but have also started to act like *da zhangfu*.

One nun describes how as a *da zhangfu* she acts differently from before. “Now that I’m a nun, and a *da zhangfu*, I’m much more decisive and I never get scared.” Similarly, another nun feels stronger and says that she is “able to lift up many people” with the strength of a *da zhangfu*. These character traits that the monastics associate with the *da zhangfu* lead monastics to act in new, stronger, and more fearless ways.

The *da zhangfu* trope thus shapes monastics’ sense of self, and monastics cast stories about themselves in this heroic light. For example, one nun described a dream she had that explained her ease with English, her love of swimming, and why she had the good karma to become a nun. In the dream, she was an African-American woman who was being murdered by drowning. She explained that this dream was a memory from her previous life and her love of swimming in this life was her attempt to overcome the bad karma. In the dream, as she was drowning, she decided to forgive her murderers and die in peace. She believed this act of forgiveness in a previous life produced the good karma that enabled her to become a nun. She described it as a heroic, self-less act: the act of a *da zhangfu*. She uses her self-identification as *da zhangfu* as a lens through which to frame her past (dream) self. As Ochs and Capps state, “personal narrative simultaneously is born out of experience and gives shape to experience” (1996: 20).

A regular feature in monastic discourse was a ‘seed’ metaphor they used to illustrate karma and rebirth. According to temple cosmology, every action taken in this life has a consequence, either later in this life or in the next. In this lifetime, the seeds are planted that control the outcome of the next. Having the seed alone does not lead to that rebirth, though; the seed can die without the right kind of light, water, and soil to grow. Both the seed and the other supporting inputs are necessary for the growth to occur. The seed metaphor is used frequently at the temple and in its literature where diagrams of plants are labeled in karmic terms. Monastics use the seeds of past

lives to explain why some are born healthy and others sick, and why only some people have the good fate to be born in a culture where they will be exposed to the dharma. Many monastics say they became monks and nuns because in a previous life they did something extraordinarily good, or because they planted a seed when they made a vow. One nun describes her life in karmic terms using the seed metaphor explicitly: “It’s as though I had a seed before and in this life, the seed blooms into a flower. Fate is like a seed, it grows up inside you naturally and then it flowers. That’s the reason we become monastics.” With this metaphor, too, monastics challenge the notion that they *chujia* only out of desperation. Instead, they say, they are reaping what they sowed in previous lifetimes. They are only able to become monastics in this lifetime because they planted a seed in a previous life and cultivated it with right action.

Conclusion

Although the stereotype of monastics as immoral is old and entrenched, Zhi Guang monastics’ narratives are not the only challenge to that received wisdom. Now even television has a larger number of serious monastics delivering lectures than it does stereotypical depictions of non-serious monastics in historical dramas and game shows. Many monastics are widely seen as significant scholars and accomplished practitioners. Perhaps the best-known monastic in Taiwan is known for her charitable work in Taiwan and abroad. Master Cheng Yan [Zheng Yen], who is sometimes described locally as Taiwan’s Mother Teresa, has founded hospitals and schools, and many Taiwanese donate money and goods in addition to time to her charities. Through her many good works, she has done much to improve the perception of Buddhist monastics in Taiwan (Madsen 2007).¹⁰ Although many in Taiwan contribute to her charity and admire the works of her organization, many other monastics believe that the kinds of community efforts her organization engages in do not address the core of society’s problems. For example, monastics I knew at Zhi Guang claimed that their own work – teaching about how to avoid accruing bad karma – would help more people in the long run as their students became cultivators themselves.

The narratives of Zhi Guang's monastics contribute to tipping the scales in the favor of others seeing their life choices in a positive light. While traditionally Taiwanese culture values obligations to family and ancestors, monastics' framing of their own actions as like those of Mulan contributes an unusual twist both to her story – which is usually framed as the prime example of filial piety – and to their own choices as extraordinary, not in their shirking of their responsibilities to the world, but as similarly reaching beyond expectation to do something heroic. Framing the choice to leave home as a choice made in service of humanity rather than abandoning their families and filial obligations, *chujia* is an act that embodies the heroism of the *da zhangfu*. To monastics, of course, this act does not seem selfish — they see their spiritual practices as earning karmic merit for not only themselves but for all those around them. Monastics view taking the Bodhisattva vow — promising to continue being reincarnated even after achieving release from reincarnation in order to help all other sentient beings also attain release — as a supremely selfless act grander than what their own parents ask of them: to remain in the world and produce heirs.

Through moralistic language, Buddhist imagery, and heroic tropes monastics endeavor to tell their stories in a way that alters how they are perceived by others. In turn, the tropes they use also shape their own self-understanding - as having renounced their previous lives they are new selves – and predicate on the inchoate with a new, improved self-image. As they shed their old lives, they narrate those former lives in ways that help them frame who they are now, not just for a wider audience but also for themselves as their new monastic self-identities are emerging. As Ochs and Capps explain, “narrative is born out of such tension in that narrative activity seeks to bridge a self that felt and acted in the past, a self that feels and acts in the present, and an anticipated or hypothetical self that is projected to feel and act in some as yet unrealized moment – any one of which may be alienated from the other” (Ochs and Capps 1996: 29). For monastics, the model of Mulan and the trope of the *da zhangfu* provide a useful means of framing not only past selves, but also new and emerging selves in their narratives.

Monastic narrators, like others telling their life stories, obviously do not work in a vacuum.

As narrators, we evaluate specific events in terms of communal norms, expectations, and potentialities; communal ideas of what is rational and moral; communal senses of the appropriate and the esthetic. In this way, we affiliate with other members of society both living and dead. We come to understand, reaffirm, and revise a philosophy of life (Ochs and Capps 1996: 30).

Whereas the stories of middle class Americans discussed by Linde and McCollum consistently utilize particular narrative themes to conform to American ideologies about choosing careers and romantic partners, instead, like the Latina mother narrators Villenas described, Taiwanese monastics confront and subvert dominant themes in their stories. These monastics directly challenge the dominant ideologies about their life choices. In doing so, they wrestle, as do Cole's interlocutors, with the wider socio-political and historical contexts their stories draw on and speak to.

Because these monastics are invested in shaping others' perception, in this study the interview setting provided a useful, if particular, tool for eliciting narratives. The stories themselves served a purpose for their narrators when told to me; they were designed, in part, with me as an audience member, as well as potential future audiences that could be reached through me, in mind – both with the aim of shifting the audience's perception of monastics and with the aim of aiding in the spiritual cultivation of that audience. The interviewer's position in the eliciting of these narratives is key. I was both a target of their proselytizing and a potential vehicle through which others could be inspired. I was also someone in a position to help them change their reputations. So while one is normally concerned with, and perhaps interested in controlling for, researcher effects on the interview situation, here the researcher's effect is explicit, and for the interviewees, explicitly useful in that by persuading me (and my future audiences) of the rightness of their lives, they not only change how they are perceived but also help these audiences learn to accrue better karma by following their heroic models. What is at stake in these stories is to correct the widely

held negative image of monastics in Taiwanese society as well as to provide for themselves a perspective on their own previous life as one that was usefully overcome when they opted to leave it behind and become new people as monastics.

ENDNOTE

¹ See Crane 2013 in the above mentioned collection, for a discussion the challenges I faced trying to navigate being a non-believer who was nevertheless interested in Buddhism as well as the ways that being understood as a potential convert provided entre into the community.

² That monastery's Master gave me permission to write about my experiences on the retreat but said that studying monastics as people would generate bad karma for me and any future readers of my writings. He explained that monastics are human and therefore flawed but since they are holy, it is bad to doubt them. If my writing caused people to doubt monastics, those doubts would produce bad karma for my readers, the monastics who were doubted, as well as myself for generating that doubt. For more discussion of this topic see Crane, 2013.

³ For more on monastics' reputation in history, see Crane, 2004.

⁴ For proper names I've maintained whichever Romanization the individual or community employs. The brackets here and elsewhere include the mainland Chinese pinyin system.

⁵ This term is also found in Korean (*taijangbu*), where, according to anthropologist C. Sarah Soh, it means more or less the same as it does in Mandarin (personal communication). The same characters are used in the Japanese expression *daijobu*, where it means "It's OK," or "It's all right, no problem."

⁶ *Ta changfu* is the same as *da zhangfu*. Levering uses another system of Romanization.

⁷ The *Nirvana Sutra* is widely read at Zhi Guang and at other Taiwanese temples.

⁸ The actual historical figure Mulan probably lived during the Wei dynasty (386-557 CE).

⁹ Of course the Disney version differs considerably, most significantly with a love story and a plot point around the revelation she was physically female.

¹⁰ Some recent scholarship adds to the positive portrayal of monastics in Taiwan, particularly of nuns. See, for example DeVito, 2010 and Yu 2013.

WORKS CITED

Bakhtin, Mikhail

1981 Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes Toward a Historical Poetics.
In *The Dialogic Imagination*. M. Holquist, ed. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Basso, Keith

1996 *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language among the Western Apache*.
Albuquerque: University of New Mexico

Bauman, Richard

2004 *A World of Others' Words: Cross-cultural Perspectives on Intertextuality*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Bauman, Richard, and Charles Briggs

- 1990 Poetics and Performance as Critical Perspectives on Language and Social Life. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 19:59–88.

Bhaba, Homi

- 1990 *Nation and Narration*. London: Routledge.

Briggs, Charles L.

- 1988 *Competence in Performance: The Creativity of Tradition in Mexicano Verbal Art*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Bruner, Jerome

- 1991 The narrative construction of reality. *Critical Inquiry* 18:1–21.

Cole, Jennifer

- 2003 Narratives and Moral Projects: Generational Memories of the Malagasy 1947 Rebellion. *Ethos* 31(1) 95-126.

Crane, Hillary

- 2013 Flirting with Conversion: Negotiating Researcher Non-Belief with Missionaries in Hillary Crane and Deana Weibel, eds. *Missionary Impositions*, pp. 11-24. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- 2004 Resisting marriage and Renouncing Womanhood: The Choice of Taiwanese Buddhist Nuns. *Critical Asian Studies* 36(2): 265-284.

Crane, Hillary and Deana Weibel, eds.

- 2013 *Missionary Impositions*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

De Fina, Anna and Alex Georgakopoulou, eds.

- 2015 *The Handbook of Narrative Analysis*. Wiley-Blackwell.

DeVido, Elise Anne

- 2010 *Taiwan's Buddhist Nuns*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Edwards, Derek

- 1997 *Discourse and Cognition*. London: Sage.

Fernandez, James W.

- 1986 *Persuasions and Performances: The Play of Tropes in Culture*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Harding, Susan Friend

- 2000 *The Book of Jerry Falwell: Fundamentalist Language and Politics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Harrell, Stevan

1986 Men, Women, and Ghosts in Taiwanese Folk Religion. In *Gender and Religion: On the Complexity of Symbols*. Caroline Walker Bynum, Stevan Harrell, and Paula Richman, eds. Boston: Beacon Press. (108)

Labov, William, and J. Waletzky

1997[1967] Narrative Analysis: Oral Versions of Personal Experience. *Journal of Narrative and Life History* 7:3–38. (Special volume. M. Bamberg, ed.) [Reprinted from *Essays on the Verbal and Visual Arts*. Labov and J. Waletzky. 1967. J. Helm, ed. Pp. 12–44. Seattle: University of Washington Press.]

Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson

1980 *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Levering, Miriam L.

1992 Lin-chi (Rinzai) Ch'an and Gender: The Rhetoric of Equality and the Rhetoric of Heroism." in *Buddhism, Sexuality, and Gender*. J.I. Cabezon, ed. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Linde, Charlotte

1993 *Life Stories: The Creation of Coherence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lutz, Catherine and Lila Abu-Lughod

1990 *Language and the Politics of Emotion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Madsen, Richard

2007 *Democracy's Dharma: Religious Renaissance and Political Development in Taiwan*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Mann, Susan

1997 *Precious Records: Women in China's Long Eighteenth Century*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

McCollum, Chris

2002 Relatedness and Self-Definition: Two Dominant Themes in Middle-Class Americans' Life Stories. *Ethos* 30 (1/2).

Mishler, Elliot George

1986 *Research Interviewing: Context and Narrative*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Ochs, Elinor, and Lisa Capps

1996 Narrating the Self. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 25:19–43.

2001 *Living Narrative: Creating Lives in Everyday Storytelling*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Ochs, E., Smith, R., & Taylor, C.

1989 Dinner Narratives as Detective Stories. *Cultural Dynamics* 2, pp. 238-57.

Pavlenko, Aneta

2007 Autobiographic Narratives as Data in Applied Linguistics. *Applied Linguistics* 28(2): 163-188.

Salgado, Nirmala S.

2013 *Buddhist Nuns and Gendered Practice: In Search of the Female Renunciant*. Oxford University Press.

Sherzer, Joel

1987 A Discourse-Centered Approach to Language and Culture. *American Anthropologist* 89:295-309.

Tsai Wen-ting

1997 Daughters of the Buddha. *Sinorama*, v. 12

Villenas, Sofia

2001 Latina Mothers and Small-Town Racisms: Creating Narratives of Dignity and Moral Education in North Carolina. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 32(1):3-28.

Yun Chun-fang

2013 *Passing the Light: The Incense Light Community and Buddhist Nuns in Contemporary Taiwan*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Zigon, Jarrett

2008 *Morality: An Anthropological Perspective*. New York: Berg Publishers.