

Research Article

# Identity and Affiliation: The Discursive Identity Construction of New Media Entrepreneurs in Contemporary China

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## Abstract

Given the increasingly significant role of the new media industry in China's socio-economic development and the pivotal position of new media entrepreneurs (NMEs) within this industry, the current study explores how three NMEs construct their identities through shared values, drawing on affiliation framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Semi-structured interviews conducted with NMEs are qualitatively analyzed by Nvivo 15. Findings suggest that value bonds related to industry, time, stress, growth, and family construct the identity network of NMEs. Specifically, NMEs place a high value on personal development and families. The constant changes in the new media industry lead to intense competition, necessitating continuous learning for NMEs. This makes NMEs face great stress and be burdened with highly intensive work, which leads to limited personal time and an unbalanced work and life. Nonetheless, constant changes constitute the core bond of NMEs' identity, as these changes are deeply rooted in the rapid development of the new media industry in China, which simultaneously engender substantial opportunities. NMEs must strive to successfully address the arduous challenges posed by these changes, since those who fail to do so would be weeded out by the intense industry competition and could no longer retain their identity as NMEs.

## Keywords

New Media Entrepreneurs (NMEs), China, Identity, Discursive Construction, Affiliation, SFL

## 1. Introduction

In 2023, China witnessed over one billion users on short video platforms, with the number of professional live streamers reaching 15.08 million. Additionally, the transaction volume in live streaming e-commerce soared to 3.43 trillion yuan [2, 5]. With the significant expansion of China's new media industry, new media professionals (NMPs) are expected to play an increasingly significant role in spurring the country's social economy, positively guiding public opinion, and thereby promoting social harmony and

stability [13, 14, 29]. By strengthening research into the identity of NMPs and understanding the challenges they face in identity development, researchers and policymakers can better understand the role positioning, behavioral motivations, and political attitudes of NMPs, thereby benefiting government departments in guiding them to fulfill their social roles more effectively [12].

NMPs comprise five categories: investors of new media enterprises, management personnel, editorial staff, technicians,

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and online opinion leaders [24, 29]. Previous studies have explored the identity construction of journalists, live streamers, and opinion leaders among NMPs [1, 3, 15, 21-23, 29, 30]. However, research on new media entrepreneurs (NMEs) is relatively sparse. This study aims to bridge this gap by examining the identity performance of Chinese NMEs through in-depth interviews, expecting to offer insights into the challenges NMEs face in identity development, to understand their social mindset and aspirations, and to provide strategies that can harness their potential for constructive contributions to socio-economic development.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Identity and NMPs

Some extant studies have probed into the identity construction of NMPs. Barros and Meadows et al. inquired into role discrepancies experienced by journalists in China and Brazil during their transition from traditional journalism to new media [1, 21]. Zhang, Lü and Ge disclosed serious disparities between occupational identity and self-identity among Chinese female live streamers and grassroots online hosts [15, 30], whereas Dong and Luo found that virtual emotional communities enhanced community membership for both live streamers and fans [3]. Additionally, Wang examined the identity transition process of opinion leaders from traditional celebrities to mobile opinion leaders [23], while Wang and Yang found that opinion leaders in virtual book communities constructed their identities primarily through assessments, perspectives, or stances expressed in their forum posts [22].

Upon analysis, it is observed that existing studies have predominantly focused on the identity construction of journalists, live streamers, and opinion leaders, with little attention given to NMEs, who are integral to the new media industry. To address this gap, the present paper endeavors to analyze the identity construction of NMEs in China, hoping to shed some light on a segment of the new media industry that has been largely overlooked.

### 2.2. Identity and Affiliation

Some aforementioned research has noted the impact of

values on identity negotiation. For instance, shared values were employed by live streamers and fans to reinforce their identities as virtual emotional community members [3]. Within a group, shared values manifest the collective identity by highlighting the deep intrinsic bonds among members. In essence, it is these shared values that affiliate group members.

Martin observed the affiliation relationship and developed the affiliation framework grounded in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) [17, 18-20]. As illustrated in Figure 1, affiliation denotes the process by which individuals align themselves into sub-cultures, configure master identities, and constitute a culture [19]. This process exhibits a bottom-up relationship from the repertoire to the reservoir and foregrounds the shared values among individual members. Affiliation focuses on the impact of language users on language, offering a new research perspective and methodology for identity studies [10, 11, 31].

Meaningful explorations have been conducted on the affiliation process of members with groups. Knight conducted a series of studies on “dialogue affiliation” and found that interlocutors would continuously construct social identity within a group through the use of various affiliation strategies to accept or reject different “value bonds” in conversations [7-9]. Zappavigna and her associates have continued to study “ambient affiliation” on social media platforms, such as Twitter and YouTube [6, 16, 26-28]. Ambient affiliation focuses on how users establish ambient communities with others based on shared values through social media, even without direct interactions [25].

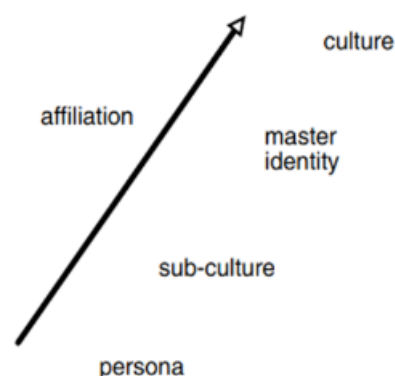


Figure 1. Affiliation framework (adapted from Martin 2010: 24).

Table 1. Background information of informants.

	Gender	Age	Education	Occupation	Work experience (yr)
1	Female	34	Bachelor's degree	Investor, manager, technicians	11
2	Male	38	Bachelor's degree	Investor, manager	15
3	Male	34	Bachelor's degree	Investor, manager	5

Based on the above analysis, the affiliation framework can be effectively employed to analyze the identity construction process of a group based on shared values. Thus, this study applies the affiliation framework to analyze the discourses transcribed from semi-structured interviews with NMEs, aiming to address two key questions: What shared values do NMEs hold, and how do these values contribute to their identity construction as NMEs?

### 3. Methodology and Analytical Framework

#### 3.1. Informants and Contacts

To ascertain the shared values among new media entrepreneurs, this research endeavored to include a diverse pool of informants spanning different genders, companies, and cities. The greater the diversity among informants, the less likely it was for them to share common values; therefore, the shared values extracted from such diversity were more representative. Thus, three selected informants came from three new media companies: one in Chongqing and two in Wuhan, China. They were investors and also served as managers and technicians. They all held bachelor's degrees and were in their thirties. One of them is female and the other two are male, with an average work experience of around ten years. The background information of the three informants is presented in Table 1. Each of these informants owned their own enterprise and represented a typical NME in China.

#### 3.2. Interview Design

These NMEs have been in their careers for more than five years, with an average employment length of ten years. As previously mentioned, this study aims to explore the underlying shared values that constitute the identity of these NMEs. In the interviews, the informants summarize and reflect on their lives and work over an extended period, exhibiting an interpretive reflective pattern that spans over time [4]. Conducting an in-depth analysis of these interpretive reflections will allow researchers to uncover the deep-seated shared values that contribute to the construction of the informants' identities as NMEs.

The face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted in July, 2024, where informants were asked to share detailed accounts for their personal and professional experiences, as well as their perspectives, since they first entered the new media industry. Guiding questions were used when necessary to keep the discussions focused and to ensure valuable information was obtained. The interviewer's role was minimized to avoid disturbance on the natural flow of the informants' reflections. Informed consent was obtained from

all the informants, and the interviews were conducted anonymously to protect their privacy.

#### 3.3. Data Collection

The corpus of transcripts, comprising 33,551 Chinese characters, was derived from 116 minutes' recorded interviews, with each interview averaging around 39 minutes in length. The excerpts selected for analysis in the following sections were translated independently by three doctoral candidates majored in English. A final version was derived from the comparison of their translations in an effort to ensure the utmost accuracy and reliability.

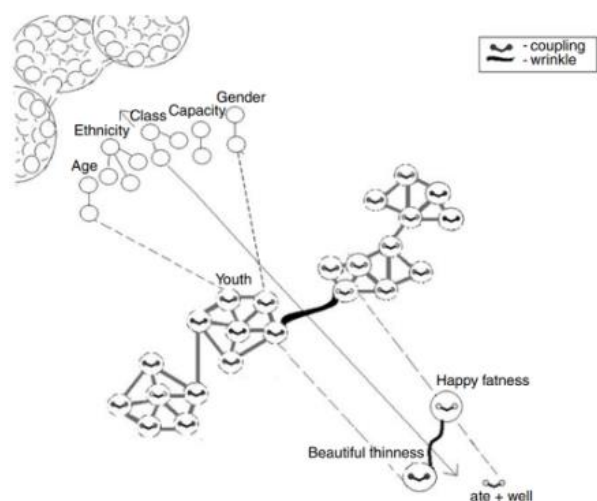
Topics from interview transcripts were firstly categorized by NVivo (Version 15), a qualitative data analysis tool. Both the researcher and research assistants performed parallel analyses of the data, addressing any discrepancies in categorization through discussion. After thorough coding and multiple reviews of the transcripts, the most frequently occurring topics were identified and selected for further examination. Sub-topics and corresponding examples were tabulated for clarity. The discussion then focused on the key couplings, shared values, and bonds that inform identity construction among these prevalent topics.

#### 3.4. Analytical Framework

In this study, the concepts of couplings, shared values, value bonds, and bond networks are employed to dissect the discursive construction of NMEs' identities. Couplings are central to social affiliation [28]. They refer to co-selections of different meanings in a discourse, which can be pairs, groups, clusters, or larger quantities of combined choices [18]. If a coupling meaning is recognized and shared by individuals or group members, it becomes a shared value. This shared value forms a value bond, and clusters of two or more value bonds constitute larger bond networks.

Knight [7] demonstrated the negotiation of value bonds in affiliation, as shown in Figure 2. The bottom of the cline represents bonds realized by couplings of ideational and interpersonal meanings in conversations or discourses. For example, *beautiful* and *happy* embody interpersonal meanings, while *thinness* and *fatness* represent ideational meanings, forming couplings of *beautiful thinness* and *happy fatness*. These couplings illustrate the values that a young female university student group generally shares, i.e. seeing thinness as beauty and gaining weight for dining with family during holidays as happiness. These values are shared by group members, and become the value bonds of the group, and inform the identity of these girls as young student group members. These value bonds could be associated with more general networks, such as "youth", be further linked to ideological networks such as "age", "ethnicity", "class", "capacity", and "gender" (see Figure 2), and ultimately relate

to the bond network of culture.



**Figure 2.** Negotiation of bonds in affiliation (Knight 2010a: 48).

In summary, couplings, shared values, value bonds, and bond networks are effective analytical tools for exploring group or community members, thereby being used to analyze the identity construction processes of NMEs in discourse. In what follows, qualitative analysis is conducted to investigate how NMEs negotiate and construct their identities through these discourse elements.

## 4. Results and Analysis

### 4.1. Topic Distribution

In total, 68 topics were identified across all the discourses. After integrating similar topics, 17 distinct topics emerged. Five key topics were mentioned by all the three informants: industry, growth, stress, time, and family (see Table 2). As noted, when a coupling was recognized and shared by group members, it became a shared value and formed the value bond of this group identity. Consequently, these five topics were further explored in terms of their sub-categories to extract the value bonds.

**Table 2.** Five key topics of NMEs' interview discourses.

	Topics	Number	Percentage(n=3)
1	Industry	3	100%
2	Growth	3	100%
3	Stress	3	100%
4	Time	3	100%
5	Family	3	100%

\*In Table 2, "n" refers to the total number of informants who mentioned the relevant topics during the interviews.

### 4.2. Industry

After careful reading and re-reading of the discourses, three main characteristics of the new media industry were coded and summarized in Table 3: constant changes, continuous learning, and intense competition. All the informants agreed that the new media industry was continuously evolving and changing, from online media, forums, blogs, Weibo, and WeChat, to TikTok, Xiaohongshu, and live streaming, and now to AI content editing plus multi-platform dissemination. Faced with constant changes, NMEs needed to continuously learn and update their knowledge about communication directions and knowledge bases. This rapid development and change also posed huge challenges to enterprises in new media industry. Informant 2 noted that originally, there were twenty to thirty media outlets in Wuhan, but with the emergence of the "super individuals" era, now about 90,000 internet influencers flocked in. The competition in the new media industry was becoming increasingly fierce.

Given the above analysis, these shared characteristics of the new media industry can be rewritten as the following couplings: [attitude: constant/ideation: changes], [attitude: intense/ideation: competition], and [attitude: continuous/ideation: learning]. These couplings are interrelated, since constant changes lead to intense competition, which requires NMEs to learn continually. The three couplings depict the key characteristics of the new media industry, thus fostering the bonds of NMEs' identity.

### 4.3. Growth

Three principal sub-topics related to personal growth were coded and displayed in Table 4: work achievements, inner growth, and enriched experiences. These sub-topics described the growth of NMEs in terms of work, qualities, and experiences. Informant 1 was most satisfied with capitalizing on early opportunities in social media platforms like Weibo, WeChat, and TikTok, which resulted in substantial revenue and fostered deeper team engagement within the new media industry. Informant 2 stressed the importance of cultivating inner strength in entrepreneurs, which enabled them not to break down when faced with formidable challenges and tough times. As long as one did not give up and kept pushing through, they could still achieve success. Informant 3 felt that a single year now packed the experiences that used to take five years to accumulate. Despite the fatigue, he had significantly enriched his life experiences compared to others, which was very meaningful to him. Informants gained improvements from various sources of growth, which can be encapsulated as the following coupling: [attitude: diverse/ideation: growth sources].

*Table 3. Sub-topics of “industry”.*

Sub-topics	Examples from informants' discourses	
	Original text	Translated text
Constant changes	这 15 年来是媒体，泛媒体吧，我们都说，媒体的变化比较快。从这 15 年来说，近 5 年来或者说近 8 年来是变化最快的时期。(被访人 2-1)	Over the past 15 years, the media, or the integrated-media as we all call it, has been changing quite rapidly. In these 15 years, especially in the last 5 or 8 years, it's been the period of the fastest change. (Informant 2-1)
Continuous learning	我觉得对新媒体从业人员来讲的话，他是不断的一个学习以及传播的方向和知识库的更新的这么一个过程。行业发展得非常快。(被访人 1-1)	I think new media professionals need to keep learning, and the way we spread information and our knowledge base are always being refreshed. Our industry has been developing very fast. (Informant 1-1)
Intense competition	所以这种叫超级个体的时代来临了，所以现在都是由网状的多个超级个体所组成的一个信息大平台。无论对经营者来说，或对企业来说，其实都是面临着巨大挑战的。(被访人 2-2)	The era of what we call “super individuals” has arrived. Nowadays, it's a vast information platform made up of a network of multiple super individuals. Whether for business operators or for companies, they are actually facing huge challenges. (Informant 2-2)

*Table 4. Sub-topics of “growth”.*

Sub-topics	Examples from informants' discourses	
	Original text	Translated text
Work achievements	我觉得在工作中最满意的地方是抓住了一些机遇…抓住第一波自媒体的流量，同时也抓住了各个平台的第一波流量自媒体，各个平台，包括微博、微信、抖音创造了很好的营收，以及带领团队能够在这个方面走得更深更远。(被访人 1-2)	What I'm most satisfied with my work is that I have seized some opportunities... catching the first wave of we media traffic, and also capturing the initial traffic on various platforms, including Weibo, WeChat, and TikTok... creating significant revenue, and leading the team to go deeper and further in this area. (Informant 1-2)
Inner growth	我们老师说了一句话，就是一个企业家最重要的事情，一开始并不是知道自己如何把一家企业做好，而是把心修得更坚毅。因为你在做企业的过程中，你会遇到很多的妖魔鬼怪，坎坷周期，对，你随时都会沉沦，你随时都会崩溃只要你一直不倒下，你还是能成功的。(被访人 2-3)	Our teacher once said that for an entrepreneur, the most important thing was not about knowing how to run a business well from the start, but about building up the inner strength. Because when you're running a business, you're gonna face all kinds of hurdles and tough times, you could fall and break down at any moment. As long as you don't give up and keep pushing through, you can still achieve success. (Informant 2-3)
Enriched experiences	第二个就是密度比较大…我跟他们开玩笑，我就说，我们虽然累，但是我让大家，我们比其他人多活了几十年。就是这种感觉，还有深刻的这种感受。(被访人 3-1)	The second thing is that the density of life is quite high... I joked with them, saying that even though we're exhausted, we've lived a few more years than others. It's this kind of feeling, and this feeling is intense. (Informant 3-1)

*Table 5. Sub-topics of “stress”.*

Sub-topics	Examples from informants' discourses	
	Original text	Translated text
Stress from constant changes	这几年中国的经济发生了高速的发展变化…你在面临这种超高速的变化下的应对。这个其实是非常疲劳的一件事情，会比较压力的事情，因为你要不断的去深	In recent years, China's economy has undergone rapid development and change... You have to keep up with this extremely fast change. It is really tiring and stressful, because you've got to keep on deep learning... and continuously



Sub-topics	Examples from informants' discourses	
	Original text	Translated text
	度学习…不断的要去抛弃过去的经验… (被访人 2-4)	discard past experiences. (Informant 2-4)
Management Stress	在你的业务非常熟悉了之后，会面临到一些管理上的问题。你的团队成员更多，特别是你自己独立创业，去做一家公司的时候，会面临到管理上的压力。(被访人 1-3)	When you become very familiar with your business, you'll run into some management challenges. As your team grows, especially when you're starting a company on your own, you'll encounter management pressures. (Informant 1-3)
Entrepreneurship stress	压力比较大嘛。因为创业的成功率基本上也就是 5%，3%，所以压力会比较大。(被访人 3-2)	The pressure is really intense, because the success rate for startups is only around 5%, 3%, so it's pretty stressful. (Informant 3-2)

Furthermore, phrases like “most satisfied”, “the most important thing”, and “the intense feeling” all reflect NMEs' high value on personal development. This can be reformulated as the following coupling: [attitude: high/ideation: value on personal development]. Thus, the bonds of “diverse growth sources” and “high value on personal development” portray the informants' identity as NMEs.

#### 4.4. Stress

Three primary sources of stress were delineated in Table 5: stress from constant changes, managerial stress, and entrepreneurial stress. These stressors, though originating from various sources, were all work-related. Thus, they can be summarized as the following coupling: [attitude: diverse/ideation: work stress].

Moreover, all the three informants highlighted the significant work stress faced by NMEs. Informant 1 chose not to operate a team for entrepreneurial ventures during the pandemic and subsequently joined a unicorn enterprise, thereby avoiding such pressures. However, she noted that many NMEs were under considerable strain. Some who failed to overcome their challenges had become defaulters, as they indeed had no other viable options. Informant 2 remarked on the considerable fatigue and stress caused by the constant changes in the new media industry, internal competition, the decline in the fee model (charging advertisers), and massive layoffs during the transition period (for example, from WeChat to TikTok). Informant 3 echoed

this sentiment, citing the intense pressure due to the remarkably low rate of success for startups. In the light of the above analysis, the three informants concurred that NMEs faced considerable stress from work. Thus, another coupling regarding stress can be encapsulated as follows: [attitude: great/ideation: work stress].

#### 4.5. Time

Three chief attributes of time distribution for NMEs were identified and detailed in Table 6: highly intensive work, insufficient personal time, and unbalanced work and life. Informant 1 struggled to balance work and life, particularly when her child was young. Nevertheless, she expressed a strong desire for more time to pursue personal interests, which was significant for her. Informant 2 was also busy with work. Though he managed to reserve weekends for family time, he barely had time for self-care, and sometimes could not even attend to his health. Similarly, informant 3 was deeply immersed in work, with his life almost entirely occupied by work. He even felt that he had “no life” at all.

These shared attributes can be rewritten as the following couplings: [attitude: highly intensive/ideation: work], [attitude: insufficient/ideation: personal time], and [attitude: unbalanced/ideation: work and life]. These couplings are interconnected, as a demanding workload results in limited personal time and an imbalance in work-life harmony. The three couplings concerning time shape the informants' identity as NMEs.

Table 6. Sub-topics of “time”.

Sub-topics	Examples from informants' discourses	
	Original text	Translated text
Highly intensive work	所以对我们来说，实际上在对生活的感受，就是比较忙…然后第二个就是，由于它的性质，工作和生	So for us, life is in fact quite busy. Secondly, due to the nature of the industry, the line between work and personal life gets relatively blurred. Basically, we're fully committed to work,

Sub-topics	Examples from informants' discourses	
	Original text	Translated text
	活的界限相对来说要模糊一点…基本上就是投身工作，个人的生活肯定要为工作让路。(被访人 3-3)	and personal life has to step aside for work. (Informant 3-3)
Insufficient personal time	你几乎不能，不太可能兼顾自己。不仅没有自己时间，对关注自己会比较少，比如说有时候自己有点小毛病，也懒得去看。(被访人 2-5)	You pretty much can't take care of yourself. You barely have time for yourself or care about your own needs. For example, sometimes you're not feeling very well, you just don't bother to go to the doctor. (Informant 2-5)
Unbalanced work and life	我遇到困难可能就生活和工作的平衡的问题…他很难调和的地方是说当你有了孩子之后，你要去经营一家公司，同时你要有足够的照顾孩子的时间，你一定是有一方面做不好的。(被访人 1-4)	My difficulty may be in the balance of work and life…When you have your kid, you're running a company, and at the same time, you've got to make sure you have enough time for your kid. It's very difficult, and there's just no way you can do everything perfectly (Informant 1-4)

Table 7. Sub-topics of "family".

Sub-topics	Examples from informants' discourses	
	Original text	Translated text
Insufficient care for the family	你要去经营一家公司，同时你要有足够的照顾孩子的时间，你一定是有一方面做不好的…我觉得对家庭的话还是有蛮多亏欠的。(被访人 1-5)	You're running a company, and at the same time, you've got to make sure you have enough time for your kid. It's very difficult, and there's just no way you can do everything perfectly…I think I owe my family a lot, really. (Informant 1-5)
Family companionship	经常有人说我关注工作，无法关注家庭。其实我觉得家庭还是能兼顾的…周末带小孩去玩一玩，偶尔带他们去，我经常节省自己时间，带他们去旅游，然后周末的时候去陪他们。周末的时候基本上放开工作的。(被访人 2-6)	People always say that I'm too wrapped up in work and can't take care of my family. But honestly, I think I can handle both. Like, on weekends, I'll take the kids out for some fun. I try to make time to travel with them, and then be there for them on the weekends. I pretty much put work aside when it's the weekend. (Informant 2-6)
Great family pressures	比如说女朋友要催婚，你怎么还不结婚？你怎么一天看不到人，你晚上又去干嘛了？然后家里面说你创业这么久，你公司到底做的怎么样？这方面压力比较大。(被访人 3-4)	Like, say my girlfriend is nagging about marriage, she's like, "When are you gonna get married? Where have you been all day? What are you doing again tonight?" Then your family's on your case, asking, "You've been running this company for ages, so how's it really going?" It's pretty stressful in this aspect. (Informant 3-4)

## 4.6. Family

Three major sub-topics concerning family were classified and illustrated in Table 7: insufficient care for the family, family companionship, and family pressures. As Table 2 showed, family was one of the six main topics in interview transcripts, thereby reflecting the informants' solicitude for their families. Informant 1 struggled to balance the demands of caring for her child and managing the company, and she was greatly indebted to her family. Though Informant 2 was very busy, he managed to make time for his children on the weekends. Informant 3 confronted great familial stress,

including the pressure from his girlfriend to get married and his parents' apprehensions for his career.

Based on the above analysis, informants have close relationship with their families, and they put high value on their families. The couplings could be summarized as follows: [attitude: high/ideation: value on family]. Moreover, like the analysis about the topic of time, the demanding workload seriously invades the informants' family time and personal time, leading to insufficient care for their families and also great family pressures, which strengthens informants' identity as NMEs.

## 5. Discussion

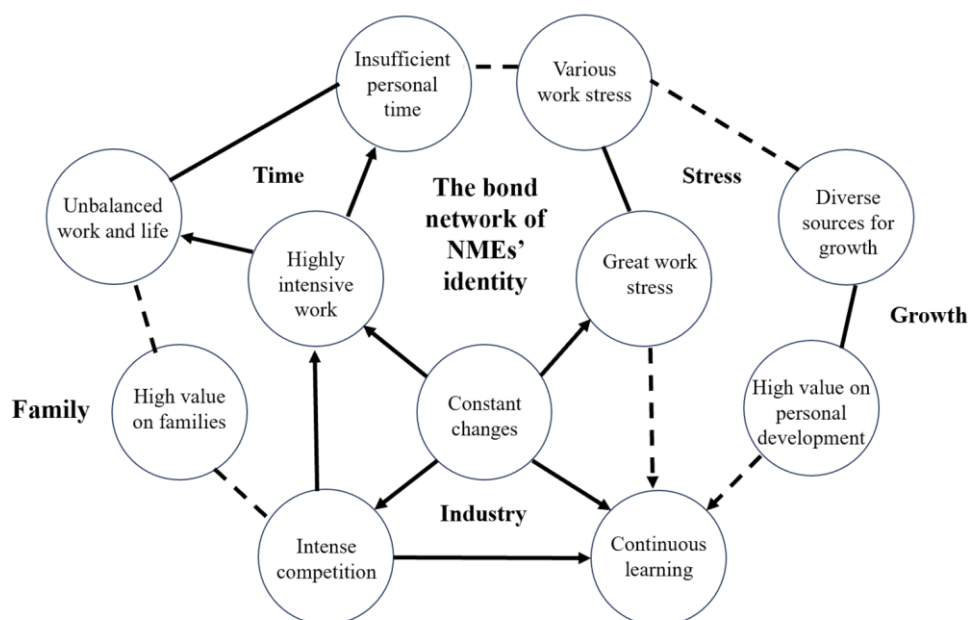
In the light of above analysis, similar couplings are employed by the informants from different genders, companies, and cities, which create the value bonds of their identities. These bonds are connected through diverse relationships, ultimately constructing the bond network of NMEs' identity, as illustrated in [Figure 3](#).

These interrelationships are depicted through various types of lines connecting the bonds. For instance, the straight line without an arrow between *various work stress* and *great work stress* signifies a direct connection with the topic of stress. For bonds within the topic of growth, the straight line with an arrow displays a causal relationship, suggesting that *constant changes* in the new media industry lead to *intense competition* among enterprises and necessitate *continuous learning* for NMEs. Besides, a dashed line without an arrow between *various work stress* and *diverse sources for growth* implies their subtle association with work. Moreover, arrowed dashed lines indicate an implicit causal relationship, where *great stress* and *high value on personal development* may indirectly stimulate *continuous learning* among NMEs. These findings have enhanced our understanding of the relationships among different bonds in the bond network of identity, as discussed by Knight [7-9].

As Figure 3 displays, the bond interrelationships represented by different lines highlight that the *constant*

*changes* in the new media industry are the fundamental cause for the substantial challenges faced by NMEs. These changes not only intensify competition within the industry but also bring about significant stress for NMEs. To deal with *intense competition* and *great work stress*, NMEs are compelled to engage in *continuous learning*, and handle *highly intensive work*, which often encroaches on their personal time. However, despite the challenges, these changes are also closely linked to the rapid development of the industry, reflecting its dynamism and the opportunities. NMEs need to diligently tackle the tough challenges rendered by these changes. Otherwise, they may risk being eliminated by the fierce competition in the industry and losing their status as NMEs.

The informants participated in the interviews independently without prior or concurrent communication. Nonetheless, results show an unconscious alignment with shared underlying values, which are integral to their identities as NMEs. This finding resonates with the research on “ambient affiliation” by Michele Zappavigna and her colleagues [6, 16, 26-28], highlighting the significant role of shared values in fostering affiliation among members and groups without direct interaction. Furthermore, this study broadens the affiliation framework by incorporating NMEs as subjects, validating the utility of couplings, shared values, and value bonds as analytical tools for examining the discursive construction of NME identities [7-9, 17, 18-20].



**Figure 3.** The bond network of NMEs' identity.

## 6. Conclusion

The present study conducted a qualitative analysis on

interview transcripts to explore the discursive identity construction of NMEs in China, by examining couplings, shared values, and value bonds based on the affiliation framework of SFL.



Finding show that the informants employ value bonds, recognized through couplings in topics of industry, growth, stress, time, and family, to build the bond network of their identities as NMEs. Specifically, NMEs highly value personal growth and family life. Meanwhile, the constant changes within the new media industry are the likely root cause for the significant challenges they face. These changes not only intensify competition but also result in substantial work stress. To cope with these challenges, NMEs must engage in continuous learning and manage demanding workloads, which often intrudes into their personal time.

Overall, this study enriches the literature on the identity construction of NMPs by concentrating on their identity formation. Besides, it broadens the application scope of the affiliation framework and provides a more nuanced understanding of the interconnections among bonds of the identity network. It deepens the understanding of researchers and policymakers regarding the challenges in the identity development of NMEs, and assists decision-makers in guiding NMEs to play a more constructive role in socio-economic development. Future research could examine the shared values of other occupational groups within NMPs, such as editorial staff and technicians, and investigate how these value bonds shape their identities within discourse. Additionally, it is necessary to conduct comparative analyses on shared values, value bonds, and identity networks of different occupational groups to offer a more holistic view of identity construction among NMPs.

## Abbreviations

NMPs	New Media Professionals
NMEs	New Media Entrepreneurs
SFL	Systemic Functional Linguistics

## Author Contributions

Huahua Yang is the first author, contributing to the conceptualization, data collection and analysis, originally drafting and finalizing of the manuscript.

Chengyu Liu is the corresponding author, contributing to the conceptualization, methodology, reviewing, and finalizing of the manuscript.

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## Data Availability Statement

The data are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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## Research Field

**Huahua Yang:** systemic functional linguistics, discourse analysis.

**Chengyu Liu:** systemic functional linguistics, discourse analysis, multilingualism, multilingual education, regional and country studies.