Anna De Fina
and Sabina Perrino (eds.)

Storytelling in the Digital World

BENJAMINS CURRENT TOPICS

104

Storytelling in the Digital World

Benjamins Current Topics

Special issues of established journals tend to circulate within the orbit of the subscribers of those journals. For the Benjamins Current Topics series a number of special issues of various journals have been selected containing salient topics of research with the aim of finding new audiences for topically interesting material, bringing such material to a wider readership in book format.

For an overview of all books published in this series, please see
http://benjamins.com/catalog/bct

Volume 104

Storytelling in the Digital World
Edited by Anna De Fina and Sabina Perrino

These materials were previously published in *Narrative Inquiry* 27:2 (2017).

Storytelling
in the Digital World

Edited by

Anna De Fina
Georgetown University

Sabina Perrino
Binghamton University

John Benjamins Publishing Company

Amsterdam / Philadelphia

Table of contents

Introduction

Storytelling in the digital world

Anna De Fina and Sabina Perrino

Georgetown University / Binghamton University (SUNY)

In recent years, narrative analysis, a central area of engagement for sociolinguists, linguistic anthropologists, and social scientists in many other disciplines, has experienced a significant shift from a text-oriented to a practice-oriented paradigm (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2012). Within this perspective, the emphasis is neither on the formal characteristics of stories (Labov & Waltezky, 1967) nor on their conversational embedding (Ochs & Capps, 2001), rather, it is on their functioning within different kinds of semiotic practices. The critical reflection spurred by this recent orientation has brought with it an awareness of the many aspects that contribute to the meaning making processes that take place within and through storytelling. Scholars have underscored the emergent qualities of stories as opposed to their static characteristics, the many social functions that they accomplish and the variety of social practices in which they are embedded. This has led, among other important developments, to the recognition that the canonical story is only one among many narrative genres that include habitual and generic narratives, anecdotes, small stories, accounts and many hybrid forms that are continuously created through users' participation in different discourse practices and communities. The focus on practices has also led to a greater interest in different forms of tellership (Ochs & Capps, 2001) and story authorship and ownership (Shuman, 2005), thus enhancing the study of production formats and participation frameworks in storytelling. Last but not least, a view of narratives as embedded in social practices has brought to the fore the interplay of different contexts and scales in the creation and negotiation of identities, relations and social meaning through the process of storytelling.

An extension of this work has been a growing interest in storytelling within online contexts given the centrality of digital practices in our everyday life today. Early work on narratives in digital environments focused mainly on genres and their different realizations with respect to face-to-face interactions (see for example, Miller & Shepherd, 2004 on blogs; Eklundh, 1994 on electronic mail; and Cherny, 1999 on

chat-room conversations). However, second wave studies (Androutsopoulos, 2006, 2014) have decidedly moved towards the analysis of narrative practices in digital contexts by focusing on the different ways in which individuals and communities use narratives to communicate experience in a wide variety of social media such as Facebook (Kim & Lee, 2011; Page, 2012, 2017; West, 2013), Twitter (Page, 2012, 2017; Giaxoglou, 2017), YouTube (Georgakopoulou, 2014; Jones, 2015) and blogs (De Fina, 2016; Einslauer & Hoffman 2010), among others. These social media have been analyzed not only as platforms per se, but also as springboards of the genres that emerge within those practices and the participation forms and frameworks that are deployed in these different online environments. Except for these works, the existing sociolinguistic literature on digital storytelling is still very scant, especially if we consider the importance of mediated forms of communication nowadays.

In our view, narrative scholars need to look more closely at these new digital contexts because it is through the analysis of semiotic processes within them that new light can be thrown on the types of new storytelling genres that are emerging. The analysis of these processes will also help scholars study: (1) the ways in which these new genres are managed, (2) the ways in which the affordances of digital environments shape tellings, (3) the ways these tellings are shaped by their virtual narrators, (4) the many forms of participation that digital environments provide, and (5) how these new spaces affect the production and reception of narratives. Insights on these aspects of digital storytelling will in turn offer new analytical tools for a better understanding of forms of communication and semiosis in the 21st century.

In this volume, we focus precisely on these issues. The five articles featured here address some of the theoretical and methodological challenges that the growing presence of digital technologies and media poses to narrative analysis. Authors present qualitative analyses representing either online ethnographies or observations across times and modalities of participant practices in digital contexts. The main themes that emerge in the five articles of this collection are the following:

1. the nature of processes of transformation and recontextualization of events that take place offline into stories to be told in various digital sites such as Twitter (De Fina & Toscano Gore), YouTube (Perrino), and Facebook (Georgakopoulou; Simões Marques & Koven);
2. the effects of the anonymity afforded by online contexts on the (co)construction of stances vis-à-vis events (Perrino) or communication practices (Vásquez);
3. the strategies through which virtual communities discursively work together to build and negotiate different kinds of identities, such as "racialized" (Perrino) or "collective" (Simões Marques & Koven) ones;

4. the tensions between the affordances that characterize different online media and the communicative needs of users and the processes generated by those tensions (De Fina & Toscano Gore; Georgakopoulou);

5. the different structures and modes in which users construct and enact participatory practices in a variety of environments (De Fina & Toscano Gore; Georgakopoulou; Perrino; Simões Marques & Koven; Vásquez);

6. the significance of different time dimensions in the encoding, sharing and appreciation of stories (Georgakopoulou; Perrino; Simões Marques & Koven).

These themes illustrate some of the directions in which new research on digital storytelling is going and set the basis for future investigations. In the following section, we turn to a brief overview of each article and show how the above themes emerge in more detail.

Inspired by Bakhtin (1981) and by other scholars working on language and parody, Vásquez explores new parodic genres as they emerge on *Amazon* in the consumer reviews' section. Through her analysis, Vásquez challenges the implicit assumption that narratives authentically reflect the experience of storytellers, showing instead that this is not always the case in parodic narratives. For this author, since parodies are intended as textual "imitations" (Lempert, 2014), these virtual discursive practices often take the form of "mock narratives of personal experience," in which certain "false" identities are enacted. The authors of these reviews, who are not always anonymous, manage to construct fictional personae by performing an online, and thus public, "self-disclosure." By discussing the strategies through which "fake identities" are constructed and revealed, Vásquez shows that narrators and audiences rely on stereotypical associations between social personae and attributes and behaviors and that it is the breaking of those connections through exaggeration that creates the humorous effect. Thus, Vásquez illustrates how the digital realm presents us with various levels of humorous, playful, and "non-serious," ongoing and developing discourse. In this respect, while parodies are actual reviews of certain products, ironically, the details of these products are often missing in their descriptions while sarcasm and improbable stories abound.

Focusing on a Twitter story that went viral online after being posted by an individual user in 2015, De Fina and Toscano Gore explore its retellings, recontextualizations (Bauman, 1975; Bauman & Briggs, 1990) and ensuing transformations across various digital spaces. Through a close analysis of the several sharings of the main story, the authors propose that online retellings present various specificities with respect to the ones that happen face-to-face. They note the emergence of a particular kind of recontextualization, a reflexive process that they call "nesting" of the original events into a new meta-story, or "a story about the story." This meta-story focuses on a new protagonist, the original teller, and on the credibility of the

narrative and the legitimacy of retweeting it rather than on the events themselves. Processes of online retelling also show how virtual users navigate the affordances offered by different media and their limitations. Thus, social media allow for the lifting and re-embedding of entire strings of text but also for the indexing of new interpretations through photos, memes and other kinds of semiotic resources. At the same time, participation frameworks (Goffman, 1981) are constrained by media affordances and take up particular forms in these online retellings. While the lines between authors and narrators become blurred, the ways in which audiences can participate and offer their opinion are constrained by the spaces and modalities determined by each platform.

Analogously to De Fina and Toscano's emphasis on digital recontextualizations, but focusing on migration related discursive practices in Italy, Perrino explores the interactional dynamics between commenters of a YouTube video in which a Northern Italian politician's racist remark has been digitally recontextualized in significant ways. Unlike what often happens in Italian face-to-face conversations around migration issues, Perrino shows how commenters take racialized stances more explicitly, given the overall anonymity of the online environment. In Perrino's case study, YouTube commenters took various stances by using certain discursive strategies, such as tropes of bestiality, capitalization, punctuation, the use of deictics, hypothetical constructions, and parallelism. Besides applying notions of footing (Goffman, 1981), stance and stance-taking to the YouTube environment (Chun, 2013, 2016; Chun & Walters, 2011; Rymes, 2012), Perrino analyzes these racialized stances through a scalar approach as well. As she demonstrates, scales are never ideologically neutral (Carr & Lempert, 2016), especially in the field of migration where political stances can assume different meanings if scaled up or scaled down (Blommaert, 2015; Dong & Blommaert, 2009). While they co-construct their digital stories, YouTube commenters align with, and thus encourage participation in, a widely circulating ideology in which certain identities are reinforced by excluding migrants. Thus, by negotiating their positioning and stance discursively, YouTube commenters create "exclusionary intimacies" (Perrino, 2017) that promote separation and ethnonationalism in a newly reconfigured European continent. In this respect, as Perrino demonstrates, YouTube seems to become a social space and network where racialized stances are amplified and shared at a very fast rate. And this can aliment hegemonic ideologies that are quickly reproduced transnationally as well, given the global reach of YouTube.

With a geographical focus in Europe as well, Simões Marques and Koven explore how diasporic Portuguese in French-speaking settings use Facebook as a platform to tell their stories about their holiday trips to Portugal. These narratives are co-constructed not only with individuals who experienced the trip, but also with an "imaginary audience" (Marwick & boyd, 2011) residing "abroad," through postings

that cross cut temporal and spatial scales. In this sense, virtual participants jointly yield a sense of collective and simultaneous identity as belonging to the Portuguese diaspora. They do so, the authors remind us, through the use of deictic pronouns such as the individual *I's* and the collective *we's*, and thus they connect individual storytelling events about holiday trips to the larger social dimension of the diasporic wish to return to Portugal in a possible future. These virtual participants' discursive practices reveal various kinds of chronotopes (Bakhtin, 1986; Blommaert and De Fina, 2017; Irvine, 2004; Koven, 2013; Lempert & Perrino, 2007; Perrino, 2015), in which time and space are intertwined in salient ways. As Simões Marques and Koven show, this "spatiotemporal simultaneity" is particularly visible in the digital realm when virtual participants can be simultaneously online and on the road, virtually enjoying a vacation "together." By reaching participants across borders in complex ways, Facebook posters and commenters can thus narrate their individual trips as they were part of a diasporic collectivity by being both online and on the road at the same time. The authors show how these digital discursive strategies can help better understand individual stories as they are co-constructed collaboratively so that a sense of a broader diasporic Portuguese "collective identity" (Van De Mieroop, 2015) can be enacted and experienced transnationally and across borders.

Building on her recent research on "small stories" in social media (Georgakopoulou, 2013, 2014, 2017), Georgakopoulou explores narrative stance-taking on Facebook statuses and selfie-posts. She notes how the increased systematicity and normativity of this practice are related to two concurrent phenomena: (1) the growing number of technical facilities that lead users to encode the present moment in story form and (2) the simultaneous diversification in users' strategies to personalize their self-presentations and to select their own audiences. Georgakopoulou tracks selected participants through a period of several years to show how they responded to Facebook's changes and affordances with small stories that present different characteristics: for example, the increased use of visual elements and the reduction of text to brief captions to "show the moment." The author also demonstrates the increased role of knowing recipients selected through tagging and other measures in the creation of narrative stance-taking on Facebook. In her words "[t]he fact that close friends can serve as knowing co-narrators has in turn made the sharing of the moment highly allusive with plenty of online-offline, more generally, transmedia, connections." Thus, another important consequence of new affordances for audience selection has been the strengthening of transmedial meaning making and of the links between online and offline communities and activities. Like in the other four articles in this collection, audience engagement is key in Georgakopoulou's research as well, since it is through the various reactions by virtual participants that stories can be experienced, co-constructed, and even erased after an ephemeral shared moment, depending on the social media or the app that is used.

To summarize: contributors in this edited volume present reflections on important aspects of digital storytelling while also advancing an agenda that puts the analysis of user practices at the center of attention. In terms of relevant themes, we have seen that authors focus on questions that are central to digital storytelling: from the diversification of time/scale connections in narrative to the profound changes in available participation formats, from the deployment of new strategies of identity construction to the invention of creative ways of coping with the limitations imposed by the affordances in different media, from the effects of anonymity to the interplay between online and offline contexts in storytelling. At the same time, authors emphasize the need for qualitative methodologies that allow for an understanding of participant practices as the focus of their research. Thus, data collection and interpretation in these articles are based on online ethnographies or on sustained observation of ways in which participants organize and regulate storytelling and the way they react to it in different environments.

Besides addressing key issues of theory, practice, and methodology in digital storytelling, this collection of articles aims at challenging and at advancing narrative studies in this emerging field from a sociolinguistic and linguistic anthropological perspective. It is our hope that the authors' analyses will advance debates about digital storytelling and that they will provide useful directions for this promising research.

References

Androutsopoulos, J. (2006). Introduction: Sociolinguistics and computer-mediated communication. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, *10*(4), 419–438.
https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9841.2006.00286.x

Androutsopoulos, J. (2014). Moments of sharing: Entextualization and linguistic repertoires in social networking. *Journal of Pragmatics* (Special Issue: The Pragmatics of Textual Participation in the Social Media) 73: 4–18.

Bakhtin, M. M. (1986). *Speech genres and other late essays*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Bauman, R. (1977). *Verbal art as performance*. Waveland: Prospect Heights.

Bauman, R., & Briggs, C. (1990). Poetics and performance as critical perspectives on language and social life. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, *19*, 59–88.
https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.an.19.100190.000423

Blommaert, J. (2015). Chronotopes, scales, and complexity in the study of language in society. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, *44*(1), 105–116.
https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-anthro-102214-014035

Blommaert, J., & De Fina, A. (2017). Chronotopic identities. On the timespace organization of who we are. In A. De Fina, D. Ikizoglu & J. Wegner (Eds.), *Diversity and superdiversity. Sociocultural linguistic perspectives* (pp. 1–15). Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

Carr, E. S., & Lempert, M. (2016). *Scale: Discourse and dimensions of social life*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press. https://doi.org/10.1525/luminos.15

Cherny, L. (1999). *Conversation and community: Chat in a virtual world*. Stanford, CA: CISLI.

Chun, E. W. (2013). Ironic Blackness as masculine cool: Asian American language and authenticity on YouTube. *Applied Linguistics*, *34*(5), 592–612.
https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amt023

Chun, E. W. (2016). The meaning of *Ching-Chong*: Language, racism, and response in new media. In H. S. Alim, J. R. Rickford & A. F. Ball (Eds.), *Raciolinguistics: How language shapes our ideas about race* (pp. 81–96). New York: Oxford University Press.
https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190625696.003.0005

Chun, E., & Walters, K. (2011). Orienting to Arab Orientalisms: Language, race, and humor in a YouTube video. In C. Thurlow & K. Mroczek (Eds.), *Digital discourse: Language in the new media* (pp. 251–272). New York: Oxford University Press.
https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199795437.003.0012

De Fina, A. (2016). Storytelling and audience reactions in social media. *Language in Society*, *45*(4), 473–498. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404516000051

De Fina, A., & Georgakopoulou, A. (2012). *Analyzing narrative: Discourse and sociolinguistic perspectives*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Dong, J., & Blommaert, J. (2009). Space, scale and accents: Constructing migrant identity in Beijing. In J. Collins, S. Slembrouck & M. Baynham (Eds.), *Globalization and language in contact: Scale, migration, and communicative practices* (pp. 42–61). New York: Continuum.

Einslauer, V., & Hoffmann, C. R. (2010). Once upon a blog … Storytelling in weblogs. In C. R. Hoffmann (Ed.), *Narrative revisited: Telling a story in the age of new media* (pp. 79–108). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Eklundh, K. S. (1994). Electronic mail as a medium for dialogue. In L. van Waes, E. Woudstra & P. van den Hoven (Eds.), *Functional communication quality* (pp. 162–173). Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Georgakopoulou, A. (2013). Storytelling on the go: Breaking news stories as a travelling narrative genre. In M. Hatavara, L.-C. Hydén & M. Hyvärinen (Eds.), *The travelling concepts of narrative* (pp. 201–224). Philadelphia: John Benjamins. https://doi.org/10.1075/sin.18.13geo

Georgakopoulou, A. (2014). Small stories transposition and social media: A micro-perspective on the 'Greek crisis'. *Discourse & Society*, *25*(4), 519–539.
https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926514536963

Georgakopoulou, A. (2017). Narrative/life of the moment. From telling a story to taking a narrative stance. In B. Schiff, E. McKim & S. Patron (Eds.), *Life and narrative. The risks and responsibilities of storying experience* (pp. 29–52). Oxford: Oxford University press.

Giaxoxoglu, K. (2017). Storying leaks for sharing: The case of leaking the "Moscovici draft" on Twitter. *Discourse, Context & Media*, *19*, 22–30.

Goffman, E. (1981). *Forms of talk*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Iedema, R. (2003). Multimodality, resemiotization: Extending the analysis of discourse as multi-semiotic practice. *Visual Communication*, *2*(1), 29–57.
https://doi.org/10.1177/1470357203002001751

Irvine, J. T. (2004). Say when: Temporalities in language ideology. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, *14*(1), 99–109. https://doi.org/10.1525/jlin.2004.14.1.99

Jones, R. (2015). Generic intertextuality in online social activism: The case of the It Gets Better Project. *Language in Society*, *44*, 317–339. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404515000214

Kim, J., & Lee, J. (2011). The Facebook paths to happiness: Effects of the number of Facebook friends and self-presentation on subjective well-being. *CyberPsychology*, *14*(6), 359–364.

Koven, M. (2013). Antiracist, modern selves and racist, unmodern others: Chronotopes of modernity in Luso-descendants' race talk. *Language and Communication*, *33*(4), 544–558. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langcom.2013.04.001

Labov, W., & Waletzky, J. (1967). Narrative analysis: Oral versions of personal experience. In J. Helm (Ed.), *Essays on the verbal and visual arts* (pp. 12–44). Seattle/London: University of Washington Press.

Lempert, M. (2014). Imitation. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, *43*(1), 379–395. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-anthro-102313-030008

Lempert, M., & Perrino, S. (2007). Entextualization and the ends of temporality. *Language and Communication*, *27*(3), 205–211. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langcom.2007.01.005

Marwick, A. E., & boyd, d. (2011). I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately: Twitter users, context collapse, and the imagined audience. *New Media & Society*, *13*(1), 114–133. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444810365313

Miller, C. R., & Shepherd, D. (2004). Blogging as social action: A genre analysis of the weblog. *Into the Blogosphere Articles*, *22*, 1–21.

Ochs, E., & Capps, L. (2001). *Living narrative*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Page, R. (2012). *Stories and social media: Identities and interaction*. New York/London: Routledge.

Page, R. (2017). *Narratives online. Shared stories in social media*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Perrino, S. (2015). Chronotopes: Time and space in oral narrative. In A. De Fina & A. Georgakopoulou (Eds.), *The handbook of narrative analysis* (pp. 140–159). Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Perrino, S. (2017). Exclusionary intimacies: Racialized language in Veneto, Northern Italy. *Language and Communication*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langcom.2017.02.006

Rymes, B. (2012). Recontextualizing YouTube: From macro – micro to mass-mediated communicative repertoires. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, *43*(2), 214–227. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1492.2012.01170.x

Shuman, A. (2005). *Other people's stories*. Urbana/Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Van De Mieroop, D. (2015). Social identity theory and the discursive analysis of collective identities in narratives. In A. De Fina & A. Georgakopoulou (Eds.), *The handbook of narrative analysis* (pp. 408–428). Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

West, L. (2013). Facebook sharing: A sociolinguistic analysis of computer-mediated Storytelling. *Discourse, Context & Media*, *2*, 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2012.12.002

"My life has changed forever!"

Narrative identities in parodies of *Amazon* reviews

Camilla Vásquez
University of South Florida

New parodic genres have emerged across diverse forms of digital media. Sometimes these parodies take the form of mock "narratives of personal experience," with authors drawing on a range of discursive resources to perform particular identities and in doing so, to create texts written from imagined perspectives. In this article, I focus on parodies of user-generated product reviews on *Amazon*. For over a decade, *Amazon* users have contributed thousands of parodies of reviews written about real products. This analysis focuses on a sample from a data set of 100 parodic *Amazon* reviews written about five different products (which have become the targets of a large number of parody reviews), and demonstrates how authors perform self-disclosure to construct fictional personae. I demonstrate how these discursively-constructed narrative identities are central to the ensuing and improbable narrative events represented in the parodic texts.

Introduction

As we spend more and more time online, we engage in various kinds of narrative practices in many different online spaces. Scholars of online discourse (e.g., Georgakopoulou, 2007a, b; Page, 2010, 2011, 2012; Page, Harper & Frobenius, 2013) have pointed out that the affordances of different internet platforms are transforming narrative possibilities. This is particularly evident when it comes to matters of constructing narrative identities in online spaces. In this article, I focus on the discursive construction and performance of "imagined" or "false" identities in a set of parodic *Amazon* reviews. I argue that the performance of certain types of identities is often central to the ensuing and improbable narrative events represented within the parodic texts. By demonstrating the interrelationships between

narrative structures and narrative identities as a distinguishing feature of parodies of reviews, this article contributes to the scant research on review parodies more specifically, while simultaneously contributing another dimension to our understanding of humorous, playful, and "non-serious" internet discourse, more broadly.

Identities online

As the boundaries between online and offline realms continue to grow more blurred, our digital practices diversify and continue to change and evolve – changes which are also reflected in our understandings of those practices. Early scholarship into digital practices related to online identities (in the era referred to as Web 1.0) often stressed the liberating potential of the internet. For instance, as cyberscholar Sherry Turkle explained in her 1995 book, *Life on the Screen*, in online spaces, words suddenly seemed to matter more than bodies, as individuals discovered that they were no longer tethered to their corporeal identities when interacting online: "You don't have to worry about the slot other people put you in as much. They don't look at your body and make assumptions. They don't hear your accent and make assumptions. All they see are your words" (p. 184). Similarly, Danet (2001) documented how, in the early-mid 1990s, users of MUDs (multi-user dungeons) engaged in "extensive collective role-playing," which involved the crafting of "elaborate fictional personae" – playful performances of identity that were, in many cases, sustained over a long period of time (p. 16).

These early optimistic and emancipatory discourses about identities online tended to be based on data from online environments where anonymity was the norm. However, earlier online potentialities have since given way to the rise of social media, where users' profiles are increasingly networked across multiple platforms, and where it is increasingly difficult to detach from the ways in which our identities are both experienced and perceived by others in offline contexts. Whereas earlier forms of online communication seemed to foster both language play and identity play due to the affordances of predominantly anonymous online spaces (e.g., Danet, 2001; Turkle, 1995), much of this has changed in the last 10 years – in the era referred to as "Web 2.0" – where the authentication of a user's "real" identity is increasingly a requirement for interaction on and with many, if not most, online platforms. Nevertheless, in some digital spaces, pseudonymity continues to remain a possibility, as individuals can choose userIDs which variously reflect – or obscure – their (offline) identities, and where they are not required to authenticate their "real" identities. As Danet (2001) pointed out, when "identity is disguised, participants enjoy reduced accountability for their actions, and can engage in 'pretend' or 'make-believe' behavior of all kinds" (p. 8). More recently, Varis (2015) has addressed the issue of "real" versus "fake" identities online, and has pointed out

that "identities and self-representation are contextual: they appear with a specific function and uptake in mind. This also goes for 'false' profiles – they serve a purpose for their creators, and should not be automatically dismissed as uninteresting" (p. 63). This article expands on this last point, as it focuses on the construction of "false" identities, which have been fashioned with a particular purpose and a particular context in mind. In this article, "false" identities refer to the fictional narrative identities that are crafted and performed by authors of parody reviews. In this context, such narrative identities are especially illuminating in revealing how stylized, artful performances are often central to the overall construction of online texts which are "non-serious."

"False" identities

Due to their performative nature, it has been well-established that narratives of personal experience may be exaggerated or embellished. Nevertheless a common – even if, more often than not, tacit – assumption held by many narrative scholars (e.g., Baynham, 2011; De Fina, 2003; Labov, 1972; Linde, 1993; Ochs & Capps, 2001; Van De Mieroop, 2015; Wortham, 2001) is that narratives of personal experience do, at least to some extent, reflect the lived experiences of their tellers. However, there is always the potential for the opposite to be the case – as has been pointed out by Bucholtz and Hall (2005). Bucholtz and Hall call this phenomenon "denaturalization." As they explain, "In denaturalization […] what is called attention to instead is the ways in which identity is crafted, fragmented, problematic, or false. Such aspects often emerge most clearly in *parodic* performance …" (p. 602, emphasis mine). As I will illustrate, the pseudonymous affordances of the *Amazon* review space offer the potential for exactly this type of "denaturalized" identity play in parodies of reviews.

Parody

Drawing on the work of Bakhtin (1981) and other scholars of literary parody (e.g., Denith, 2000; Hutcheon, 2000; Rose, 1993), I understand parody as a textual imitation, which usually combines humor and critique. In order to be successful in this mimesis, an author must possess the ability to imitate various voices. As will be shown below, authors of review parodies imitate the voices of legitimate reviewers as they appropriate recognizable discourse features of the genre (Vásquez, 2014) such as, for instance: addressing the audience directly through use of second-person pronouns and imperatives, thanking the business for the product (sometimes done in earnest, sometimes done sarcastically to express disapproval), providing

a rationale for the number of stars given in the overall rating, revealing personal information to establish a sense of credibility, and so forth.

Yet all parodies also entail some kind of double-voicing, wherein the author adopts a second voice that exaggerates, critiques, ridicules, interrogates, or otherwise polemicizes, the first voice. In this way, parodists create "the image of another's language and outlook on the world, simultaneously represented and representing" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 45) – and that "image of another" is just as fictive in the *Amazon* parodies discussed in this article as it was in the literary characters originally described by Bakhtin. Summarizing parody as "an intentional stylistic hybrid," Bakhtin further explains that "in parody two languages are crossed with each other, as well as two styles, two linguistic points of view, and in the final analysis two speaking subjects" (1981, p. 76). As I will illustrate in the analysis, one of these speaking subjects in Amazon parody reviews is that of the fictive "narrator," an identity that is claimed and constructed by the parody's author. Rather than using personal information in order to establish a sense of credibility (as authors of legitimate reviews tend to do), authors' performed self-disclosures in parody reviews are often essential in producing the distortion and exaggeration that signals to readers that the given texts are, in fact, parodies.

Parodies of *Amazon* reviews

As online reviews have become well-established as a genre of computer-mediated communication, and have grown both in their number and their influence (Vásquez, 2014), parodies of the genre have also appeared on sites such as *Amazon*, alongside legitimate reviews (Vásquez, 2016). Blending implicit forms of social critique with humor, many of these parodic texts have been further circulated in different online contexts, such as newspaper stories, blog posts, and other social media. However, scholarship on the topic is still limited to only a handful of studies. For instance, in their quantitative analysis, Skalicky and Crossley (2015) drew on prior computational work (e.g., Reyes and Rosso, 2011), which aimed at identifying the linguistic patterns characteristic of satirical, or parody, reviews compared to legitimate reviews. In their corpus of 750 *Amazon* reviews, Skalicky and Crossley found significantly higher proportions of past tense verbs as well as concrete words in parodic reviews. They suggested that this strong past tense orientation is linked to a narrative tendency in parody reviews,[1] pointing out that the creation of "a fanciful

---

1.   The past-tense reporting of actions or events that took place prior to the story's telling is the foundation of sociolinguist William Labov's influential model of narrative (1972; Labov & Waletzky, 1967).

narrative of a past event may be one larger rhetorical strategy" used by authors who create such texts (p. 79).

In a different corpus-based study, Ray (2016) analyzed a set of 671 parody reviews of one popularly parodied product on *Amazon*: the Bic Cristal for Her Pen (discussed in more detail below). Specifically, Ray focused on the stylized, gendered language features found in these parodic texts, defining stylization as "the process of appropriating discursive features of a given stereotype, and *projecting personas* that present hyperbolic versions of them" (p. 43, emphasis mine). Although Ray pointed to the role of stereotypes in constructing fictional personae in parody reviews, he did not address the narrative dimensions of these texts. Conversely, Skalicky and Crossley's quantitative analysis drew attention to the narrative features of parody reviews, but did not engage with the narrative identities constructed in such texts. This article brings together these related issues, as I examine how authors of reviews construct and perform narrative identities in parody reviews written about five popularly-parodied products on *Amazon*.

Writing from a folklore studies perspective, Blank (2015) argues that authors of parody reviews "have managed to carve out a vernacular niche within the institutional confines of Amazon, establishing a vibrant digital venue for performative discourse and play" (p. 286). The analysis below takes up Blank's emphasis on performativity and play as well, in considering the humorous dimensions of these texts, thereby adding to the scant research literature on this relatively recent digital literacy practice. Also, by the quantitative corpus-based approaches, the following discourse analysis offers a complimentary qualitative perspective, by examining how particular narrative identities are discursively constructed in *Amazon* review parodies.

Methods

To compile a sample that represented some of the most popular and widely-circulated reviews of frequently parodied products, I consulted the website, *knowyourmeme.com*. The following five products appeared on the site under the search term, "*Amazon* parody reviews": *Mountain Three Wolf Moon Short Sleeve Tee, Tuscan Whole Milk, Hutzler 571 Banana Slicer, BIC Cristal for Her Ball Pen*, and *AutoExec Wheelmate Steering Wheel Attachable Work Surface Tray*. For each of these products, I downloaded the first 20 reviews automatically displayed by *Amazon*, in the order of the site's default "Top" setting, and created a data set of 100 parody reviews. After downloading the 100 texts, I read each one and confirmed that it was a parody. This was also corroborated by the fact that many of the most highly rated reviews for these products were followed by reader comments orienting to

the humorous nature of the texts, rather than to their utility in guiding consumer decision-making. In addition, the majority of these texts also had "helpful votes" numbering in the hundreds, thousands, or tens of thousands, as I discuss below.

The frequency information provided in Table 1 illustrates just how popular these parodied products are. The second column of Table 1 lists the total number of reviews for each of these five products, as of September 2016. This demonstrates that products which become popular targets of parodies on *Amazon* can have reviews which number in the thousands – considerably more reviews than ordinary, non-parodied products (Vásquez, 2014). It is worth pointing out that although the earliest documented parody review appeared on *Amazon* in 2005 (Zeller, 2006), new parodies and new helpful votes for this set of products continue to be added to the present day.

Table 1. Number of reviews and "helpful" votes for 5 popularly parodied products

Product	Total # of reviews	Highest # of "helpful" votes for a single review
AutoExec Steering Wheel Work Tray	1,248	25,991
Tuscan Whole Milk	1,881	22,801
BIC Cristal for Her Ball Pen	2,202	41,192
Three Wolf Moon T-Shirt	3,117	40,642
Hutzler 571 Banana Slicer	5,574	55,681

The third column in Table 1 shows the highest number of "helpful" votes for the top review listed for each product. It is worth noting that whereas votes of "helpful" for bona fide reviews normally have to do with readers' assessment of how useful or informative a particular review is, helpfulness votes for parody reviews are most likely *not* analogous with "the review was helpful." Instead, in these cases, "helpful" votes function more as a signal of readers' appreciation. This phenomenon is similar to what has been discussed about the multiple meanings of the *like* function on *Facebook*, which extend beyond simply liking the contents of a post (e.g., Fuchs, 2014; Lee, 2014; Varis & Blommaert, 2014). Such an interpretation is supported by typical user comments posted on *Amazon* in response to parody reviews, the majority of which orient to the humorous nature of the texts. Of course, there is no way of determining how many individuals in total have actually read a given review. Because it is unlikely that all people who read reviews actually rate them as "helpful" (or not), the frequencies in column 3 of Table 1 provide a very conservative estimate of the number of individuals who have read at least one parody review for each product – the actual number of readers is probably much higher. I have included these numbers to give a sense of how widely-circulated these particular texts are. As Varis and Blommaert point out, the social meanings communicated

by "responsive uptake activities" online – in this particular case, giving a "helpful" vote in response to a parody review – typically have as much to do with the actual content of that which is being liked or voted upon, as they do with an individual signaling his/her membership in some group (often a loose collective). In other words, clicking *Yes* in response to *Amazon*'s prompt of "Was this review useful?" in this context creates a sense of "ambient affiliation" (Zappavigna, 2011, p. 801) with "like-minded people" (Varis & Blommaert, 2014, p. 7).

Findings

Although there are some shared themes that emerged across narratives for the five different products – for instance, a common metanarrative about the transformative nature of the given product (as illustrated by the quotation in the article's title, and as discussed further below) – the following section is organized product by product, in order to also provide insights into patterns related to certain types of narrative identities that are more product-specific. Due to space restrictions, I focus on only one parody review written about each product; however, I also discuss trends found in the other parody reviews written about that same product.

Steering Wheel Work Tray

According to its *Amazon* product description, the AutoExec Steering Wheel Work Tray is designed to be attached to a vehicle's steering wheel "for the mobile worker on the road, needing support for their tablet or a great place to write" (http://www.amazon.com/AutoExec-Wheelmate-Steering-Attachable-Surface/dp/B00E1D1GY6). Presumably the Steering Wheel Work Tray is intended to be used while a vehicle is stationary, yet this is not indicated anywhere in its *Amazon* product description. Nearly all authors of parodies of this particular product appear to have noticed this oversight, and make reference to using the Steering Wheel Work Tray while driving. The implicit critique in texts such as these targets the widespread social phenomenon of multi-tasking, or maximizing time efficiency by engaging in two or more activities simultaneously – in this case, while operating a moving vehicle. More specifically, these parodies mock a product that could be interpreted as promoting such irresponsible and dangerous behaviors. Very often, transgressive humor is created as authors construct elaborate mock narratives which feature the narrators, while driving, engaging in highly inappropriate multi-tasking activities (e.g., changing a baby's diaper, mixing cocktails, loading a gun) and, as a consequence, losing control of and crashing the vehicle, being pulled over by police, hitting pedestrians, and so on.

The humor in Example (1) is highly transgressive, as the author claims to use the steering tray for consuming illegal drugs while driving his children to soccer practice. In line with Skalicky and Crossley's (2015) findings, this review text contains numerous concrete words, as the author describes a series of "imagined" narrative activities in very specific terms. Furthermore, the overarching metanarrative in Example (1) is about the transformative nature of the product (i.e., "my life has changed forever!").

(1)   As a cocaine addict on the go, I have lost countless ounces of blow as I have inefficiently tried to to snort lines either from my dashboard or straight from the bag while navigating the modern motor way. But thanks to the AutoExec Steering Wheel Desk Tray, my life has changed forever! It's the perfect size for me to cut lines and still have room to rest my razors and rolled up bills. It also stops blood dripping on my lap when I get nose-bleeds! Now I can drive my children to soccer practice without having to choose between their safety and my coke habit. Thanks AutoExec   [*Steering Tray, 14*][2]

The author of Example (1) starts off his narrative with an explicitly presented identity claim, or performed self-disclosure, as he positions himself as "a cocaine addict on the go." This appears to be a fictional identity, since it is highly unlikely that an individual would claim such an identity based on illicit activity, even in a semi-anonymous/pseudonymous public sphere such as the *Amazon* review space. Besides serving as a signal to readers that what follows is likely untrue, this performed self-disclosure also serves as a foundation for the improbable narrative activities that follow. Contributing to the obvious "fakeness" of this author's performed narrative identity are multiple references to the illicit drug itself (e.g., "cocaine", "blow", "coke"). This is further reinforced with multiple references to drug paraphernalia (e.g., "razors", "rolled up bills", "the bag"), as well as to drug-related activity (e.g., "snort lines", "cut lines", "nose-bleeds"). The repetition of so many extremely explicit references to drug use (along with the hyperbolic "blood dripping in my lap"), juxtaposed here with the quotidian activity of "driving children to soccer practice," further signals to readers that this is a parody and not a legitimate review.

Other Steering Tray parody authors inscribe different types of identities into their texts, in order to build narratives around those identities. For instance, the author of another parody review of this product claims to be an airplane pilot, who uses the steering tray to hold a laptop in the cockpit as he plays video games, while the author of a different parody review claims to be a school bus driver, who uses the product to check email and social media while driving. Claiming such specific

---

2.   https://www.amazon.com/gp/customer-reviews/R3US7B4W6QEBKB/ref=cm_cr_getr_d_rvw_ttl?ie=UTF8&ASIN=B00E1D1GY6 (Last accessed 1/13/17).

occupational categories explicitly is central to the narratives that are built around those identities. In other words, using the product for playing a video game or checking social media is especially irresponsible – and therefore even more improbable – when one's occupational role involves transporting others. Therefore, often it is the claiming of very specific identities that makes the actions described in the parodies particularly outrageous – and, by extension, more than likely untrue.

Nevertheless, in terms of their structure, the way in which many of these authors begin their review – i.e., with an explicit identity claim (e.g., "As a cocaine addict on the go …", "As a school bus driver …") – is very similar to what occurs in many non-parodic reviews (not only those found on *Amazon*, but also on other websites), as review writers claim specific and situationally-relevant identities to establish their credibility and contextualize their evaluation of a given product or service (Vásquez, 2014). Moreover, the author's direct address to the company at the very end of Example (1) (e.g., "Thanks Autoexec") has also been documented in legitimate reviews (Vásquez, 2014). Thus, even though parodies of reviews differ from bona fide reviews by presenting patently improbable scenarios and unlikely identities, by intertextually drawing on features of legitimate reviews, authors of parodies simultaneously display their in-depth knowledge of the very genre they are imitating.

Banana Slicer

As seen in Table 1, the Banana Slicer is one of the most popularly parodied products on *Amazon*. This product is a plastic banana-shaped form with a series of evenly-spaced horizontal bars, designed to press through a peeled banana and to create instant slices. Authors of parody reviews of this product create humor in various ways, for example, by alluding to other (unlikely) tools they claim to have used to slice bananas prior to purchasing the banana slicer (e.g., ceiling fans, guns, hammers). In this case, parody authors appear to be mocking a product that is unnecessarily specialized. Example (2) below is the top-ranked review on *Amazon* for this product, and as can be seen in Table 1, this text has received over 55,000 "helpful" votes.

(2)   For decades I have been trying to come up with an ideal way to slice a banana. "Use a knife!" they say. Well … my parole officer won't allow me to be around knives. "Shoot it with a gun!" Background check … HELLO! I had to resort to carefully attempt to slice those bananas with my bare hands. 99.9% of the time, I would get so frustrated that I just ended up squishing the fruit in my hands and throwing it against the wall in anger. Then, after a fit of banana-induced rage, my parole officer introduced me to this kitchen marvel and my life was

> changed. No longer consumed by seething anger and animosity towards thick-skinned yellow fruit, I was able to concentrate on my love of theatre and am writing a musical play about two lovers from rival gangs that just try to make it in the world. I think I'll call it South Side Story. Banana slicer … thanks to you, I see greatness on the horizon.   [*Banana Slicer, 1*][3]

Instead of explicitly claiming an identity, the author of Example (2) invokes his performed identity more implicitly through a relationship of entailment. By referring to his parole officer, the author positions himself as an ex-convict. While less socially transgressive than the scenario presented in Example (1), the narrative in Example (2) is every bit as improbable. Once again, multiple instances of exaggeration and hyperbole (e.g., "a fit of banana-induced rage, consumed by seething anger and animosity towards thick-skinned yellow fruit") help to construct the author's fictional personae as an emotionally volatile and irrational individual, simultaneously signaling to readers that this text is a parody and not a legitimate review.

As in Example (1), the author of Example (2) constructs a meta-narrative of product-related transformation ("my life was changed") – and, in this case, of redemption as well, as the author discursively performs a narrative identity of an ex-criminal with anger issues who, after becoming reformed, has become a lover of musical theater. In this way, the performed intensity of the author's identity in the first part of the parody gives way to a "lighter" ending to the narrative. In terms of Labov's sociolinguistic model of narrative (Labov & Waletzsky, 1967; Labov, 1972), the text in this example is a typical narrative: conveyed primarily in past-tense, with an orientation, evaluation, complicating action, and resolution.[4] As is common in oral narratives of personal experience, the author of Example (2) also uses reported speech to create drama and to engage his audience.

Tuscan Milk

Originally, *Amazon* was an e-retailer that sold books online. Around the time that *Amazon* expanded into selling other types of goods (including perishable goods) online, Tuscan Milk was one of the first products to become the target of parody reviews on *Amazon*'s website. A *New York Times* article from 2006 calls these early parodies "a high-concept commentary on [the] bookseller's corporate overreach" (Zeller, 2006). Perhaps because individuals have been posting parodies about

---

3. https://www.amazon.com/review/R2XV0DBIL2KQU4/ref=cm_cr_dp_title?ie=UTF8& ASIN=B0047E0EII&channel=detail-glance&nodeID=1055398&store=home-garden (Last accessed 1/13/17).

4. Vásquez (2012) provides a brief summary of Labov's model as applied to online review data.

this product for over a decade, Tuscan Milk parodies tend to be quite varied in their form and style. Some parodies of this product rely on recognizable literary works as their structural foundation (e.g., Poe's "Raven", Coleridge's "Kubla Khan", Dickinson's "Because I could not stop for Death"), while other authors adopt a format that is more conventionally associated with online reviews, as for instance, in Example (3).

(3)   Shipping was fine, and the product was not damaged in any way, but my husband and I (both of us have college degrees, mind you, his in Engineering) could not figure out how to assemble this. No instructions, no diagrams, not even a lousy cheap allen wrench. So basically, weeks after purchase, we're using it as a one gallon paper weight. I haven't gotten any response from Tuscan. It earns two stars simply because it is heavy and does do a fair job of holding down the stack of newspapers awaiting recycling.   [*Tuscan Milk, 13*][5]

Strictly in terms of its formal features, of all the parodies presented here, Example (3) looks the most like a legitimate *Amazon* review. Like the many bona fide reviews on *Amazon*, the author of Example (3) discusses matters such as shipping, the condition in which the product arrived, and attempts at customer service interactions. Example (3)'s author also provides an explanation for the star rating she gave (i.e., "It earns two stars simply because it is heavy"), a discursive practice identified in reviews found on many reviewing sites, including *Amazon* (Vásquez, 2014).

However, even though the performative humor here is much more subtle than in the other examples, this text is clearly a parody, given the unlikely scenario crafted around two adults who are unable to figure out how to use a gallon of milk without instructions. Especially relevant in this instance are the discursively constructed identities of the author and her husband, as *college-educated* individuals – one of whom even has degree in Engineering. These identities make the given scenario especially improbable: one would expect that college-educated individuals would be able to figure out how to use a gallon of milk without a set of instructions. Indeed, the textual crafting of fictional "confused consumer" stories is a practice found across parodies written about several different products (Vásquez, 2016). Authors generate humor in these texts as they discursively construct reviewer personae who are "not clever enough" to understand how to use a very simple or obvious type of product, such as a gallon of milk. In writing parodies of Tuscan milk, many authors appear to be mocking the absurdity of buying a perishable good online, while other authors may be mocking some authors of legitimate reviews; in particular, targeting

---

5.   https://www.amazon.com/gp/customer-reviews/R3FRYLQ7DHAEEB/ref=cm_cr_getr_d_rvw_ttl?ie=UTF8&ASIN=B00032G1S0 (Last accessed 1/13/17).

those reviewers whose comments really do reveal that they do not understand how to properly use a given product (Vásquez, 2014).

Three Wolf Moon T-Shirt

The first parody review of Three Wolf Moon T-Shirt, a garment displaying an image of three wolf heads howling at a moon, is reported to have been posted by a North American university student in 2008, who picked up on the product's "unfashionable, blue-collar appeal" (Appelbome, 2009). One of the most widely-recognized parodied products available on *Amazon*, the Three Wolf Moon T-Shirt quickly became an internet meme, appearing in several other forms of digital and mass media, as documented on its dedicated *Wikipedia* page (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three_Wolf_Moon). Nearly all parodies of the Three Wolf Moon T-shirt are narratives of miraculous transformation, focusing on how wearing the garment endows the consumer with magical powers, such as superhuman strength, and/or enhanced sex appeal and virility.

From the perspective of performed identities, Example (4) presents an especially interesting text. Unlike the authors of the other parodies discussed here, the author of Example (4) is a public figure: former *Star Trek* actor-turned-activist and social media celebrity, George Takei. Well-known for his humorous social media posts on *Facebook* and *Twitter*, Takei has also posted 25 parody reviews on *Amazon* under his real name (Blank, 2015), including one for the previously-discussed Autoexec Steering Tray, as well as the one for the Three Wolf Moon T-shirt, shown in Example (4).

(4) This shirt has changed my life! Before, I couldn't walk through the aisles at Wal-Mart, graze on the buffet at Sizzler, or even take in a round at my local miniature golf course, without people pointing and saying, "Hey, you're that Zulu guy from Star Wars, aren't you?" Even if I wore sunglasses, I'd still get mistaken for Yoko Ono.
But with The Mountain Three Wolf Moon Short Sleeve Tee, the SHIRT now draws the eye. One young teen even shyly approached me, and instead of asking for a picture or an autograph, simply smiled conspiratorially and whispered, "Team Jacob, right? Me, too. He's sooooooo dreamy."
Yes he is, young lady. Yes. He. Is.   [*Three Wolves, 2*][6]

---

6. https://www.amazon.com/review/RYRFJTR97GGJV/ref=cm_cr_dp_title?ie=UTF8& ASIN=B002HJ377A&channel=detail-glance&nodeID=1036592&store=apparel (Last accessed, 1/13/17).

The identity play in Takei's parody reviews is often multi-layered, as he projects multiple identities simultaneously. He frequently makes some type of reference to the fictional world of *Star Trek* – such as his character (Sulu), his-costars (Leonard Nimoy), the program's fictional spacecraft (Starfleet Enterprise), etc. – yet many of his reviews also include references to Takei's real-life husband, Brad. In Example (4), Takei writes from the perspective of himself as a celebrity, which he depicts here in the form of reported speech from a fan who recognizes him in public. (The fan's represented speech humorously misattributes *Star Wars* for *Star Trek*, and erroneously refers to Takei's character as "Zulu" instead of "Sulu.") Takei makes several other popular culture references as well, such as being mistaken for Yoko Ono, and the "Team Jacob" reference to the popular *Twilight* series.

Just like the authors of other Three Wolf Moon parodies who index a working-class identity or low-brow tastes through mentioning specific products or brands (e.g., Big Gulp, Pabst Blue Ribbon, Waffle House), Takei's narrative includes these elements as well (e.g., WalMart, Sizzler). Similar to other Three Wolf Moon parodies – and similar to the previously-discussed Examples (1) and (2) – Takei's text is also constructed as a narrative of transformation ("This shirt has changed my life!"). Yet, Takei's parody is also distinct from many of the other parodies written about this particular product because rather than taking up the same set of tropes which appear across numerous parody texts (i.e., the shirt attracting members of the opposite sex, the shirt endowing the wearer with superpowers such as superhuman strength, etc.), the "transformative" action here is more subtle, and ostensibly has to do with granting Takei anonymity by diverting attention away from his publicly recognizable face. Thus, Takei's parody uniquely blends elements which are plausible and based on his real-life status as a celebrity, along with elements which are, quite likely, fictional (e.g., shopping at Walmart, being mistaken for Yoko Ono).

BIC Cristal for Her Ball Pen

Amazon's product description of the BIC for Her Pen (a package of several pastel-colored ball-point pens) appears as five bulleted points, two of which read "Elegant design – just for her!" and "Thin barrel to fit a woman's hand" (http://www.amazon.com/BIC-Cristal-1-0mm-Black-MSLP16-Blk/dp/B004F9QBE6). Several authors of parodies intertextually reference these descriptors, by crafting reviews in which they describe their own hands as "tiny", "delicate", "weak", or "womanly", and/or use language that indexes other types of "for her" products (e.g., "heavy flow days", "not-so-fresh-feeling"). This is illustrated in the reviewer's use of "my tiny womanly hands" in Example (5).

(5)   Sadly, my tiny womanly hands were unable to open the package. Thanks a lot Bic. :(I'm hoping one of my 257 cats will chew open the package for me.

[*Bic, 18*][7]

Example (5) – which is not an excerpt, but is actually the complete text – makes use of hyperbole (i.e., "257 cats"), and takes up the repeated "woman's hand" trope by referring to the author's inability to open the package of pens due to her "tiny womanly hands". As was mentioned with respect to Example (1), the author's direct address of the business here (i.e., "Thanks a lot Bic") is a feature that occurs in non-parodic consumer reviews as well (Vásquez, 2014).

As illustrated by Example (5), not all parodies are highly detailed, paragraph-length narratives; many are constructed as very short stories. Like Example (5), the majority of parody reviews of the BIC for Her Pen tend to be concise "small stories" (Georgakopoulou, 2007a, b) of about 2–3 sentences on average. Yet, in spite of its brevity, Example (5) demonstrates a strong first-person orientation, with three first-person pronoun references appearing in just a few lines of text. In addition, as Ray (2016) has pointed out, themes invoked in this set of parodies are related to traditional gender roles and stereotypes; for example, there are numerous references to sewing, cooking, baking, knitting, shopping, and being dependent on men (financially and otherwise). Furthermore, Vásquez and China (forthcoming) have observed that, in nearly all Bic parodies, authors explicitly inscribe either their gender identities (e.g., "as a 'full-figured' <u>woman</u>, at last pens for <u>us ladies</u>", "I'm a <u>male</u>") or their relational identities (e.g., "I bought these for <u>my wife</u>", "I found one of these in <u>my husband's</u> shirt pockets") into their texts, in order to performatively enact the gender stereotypes that the parodies rely on. Humor is created through the presentation of improbable situations (such as having "257 cats"), exaggeration, and pushing recognizable gender stereotypes to absurd extremes. The repeated reworkings of both a similar format (e.g., the small story), as well as a recognizable set of discursive and thematic resources by different authors, demonstrate their understanding of how parodies of this particular product operate: in other words, by deploying the same set of resources in their own texts, they demonstrate that they "get" the joke. Indeed, posting parodies that are similar to other previously-posted parodies is another way of constructing a sense of ambient affiliation, or conviviality, in this particular online space. In other words, all of this narrative activity contributes to the formation of a specific online participatory community (Page, 2011).

---

7.   https://www.amazon.com/gp/customer-reviews/R7M95LI25ATCK/ref=cm_cr_getr_d_rvw_ttl?ie=UTF8&ASIN=B004F9QBE6 (Last accessed 1/13/17).

Discussion and conclusions

The narrative of personal experience as the dominant mode of textual organization is a characteristic of virtually all parody reviews. Indeed, 95 of the 100 parody texts in the data set analyzed here could be characterized as narratives. Although authors of legitimate *Amazon* product reviews tend to include some narrative elements (Vásquez, 2014), most typically they focus equally on the description and evaluation of a given product. In contrast, as seen in the previous examples, most parodies of reviews do *not* include detailed description of product features. Instead, their primary focus is on imagined scenarios, or situations (which are typically absurd, extreme, or improbable) conveyed from a first-person perspective. Parody reviews are nearly always formulated as narratives – even if they are presented as concise small stories, comprising only a few sentences.

In their quantitative analysis, Skalicky and Crossley (2015) found a significantly higher proportion of past tense verbs and concrete words in parody reviews compared to legitimate reviews. This finding is consistent with the observations presented here: parody reviews tend to be highly narrative, focused on actions and events that (purportedly) took place in the past. The higher frequency of concrete words found by Skalicky and Crossley in parodies of reviews is also likely linked to the careful construction of tales told from a very specific "first person" point of view, as illustrated in the examples discussed here as well.

Furthermore, many review parodies of various products rely on a common meta-narrative: stories of personal transformation directly attributed to the product, as seen in the Banana Slicer, Three Wolf Moon Shirt, and Steering Tray examples, and often formulated in terms of "my life has changed forever," or similar variants. What further marks these narratives as obvious parodies is the use of other forms of hyperbole and exaggeration, as well as transgressive humor, which often centers on taboo subjects (e.g., illicit drug use, weapons or violence, sexual content and situations).

Like many authors of bona fide reviews, authors of parodies also inscribe information about their social identities, such as their gender, their family role, or their educational status (e.g., "As a cocaine addict on the go", "my tiny womanly hands", "both of us have college degrees") into their texts. In legitimate reviews, these types of references typically serve as an appeal to ethos, or as a claim to the author's credibility (Mackiewicz, 2010a, b), and can also provide readers with additional context for interpreting an individual reviewer's evaluation of a given product (Vásquez, 2014). However, as seen in many of the examples above, these forms of performed self-disclosure in parodies of reviews typically serve to construct fictional personae, often relying on recognizable "types" of people who do not appear in legitimate reviews, such as drug addicts or ex-convicts. They also help to set the stage for the

absurd or improbable events that the narratives are constructed around. Writers of parody reviews must negotiate a tension between the predictable and unpredictable, between the conventional and the creative. They must draw on established, recognizable discourse features of the genre of reviews, yet they must also craft texts that are identifiable as an *imitation* of that genre, as opposed to just another example of the genre itself. To avoid producing clichés, they must create texts that are somehow novel in the performative humor that they enact. The discursive construction of unusual narrative identities is central to this process.

References

Appelbome, P. (2009, May 24). Think a T-Shirt can't change your life? A skeptic thinks again. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/25/nyregion/25towns.html?_r=0

Bakhtin, M. (1981 [1935]). *The dialogic imagination: Four essays*. M. Holquist (Ed.), trans. Caryl Emerson. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Bakhtin, M. (1984 [1941]). *Rabelais and his world*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Baynham, M. (2011). Stance, positioning and alignment in narratives of personal experience. *Language in Society*, *40*(1), 63–74. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404510000898

Blank, T. (2015). Faux your entertainment: Amazon.com product reviews as a locus of digital performance. *Journal of Folklore*, *128*(509), 286–297. https://doi.org/10.5406/jamerfolk.128.509.0286

Bucholtz, M., & Hall, K. (2005). Identity and interaction: A sociocultural linguistic approach. *Discourse Studies*, *7*(4–5), 585–614. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445605054407

Danet, B. (2001). *Cyberpl@y: Communicating online*. Berg: Oxford.

De Fina, A. (2003). *Identity in narrative: A study of immigrant discourse*. Amsterdam: Benjamins. https://doi.org/10.1075/sin.3

Denith, S. (2000). *Parody*. London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203451335

Fuchs, C. (2014). *Social media*. London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446270066.n2

Georgakopoulou, A. (2007a). *Small stories, interaction, and identities*. Amsterdam: Benjamins. https://doi.org/10.1075/sin.8

Georgakopoulou, A. (2007b). Thinking big with small stories in narrative and identity analysis. In Michael Bamberg (Ed.), *Narrative – State of the art* (pp. 145–154). Amsterdam: Benjamins. https://doi.org/10.1075/bct.6.15geo

Hutcheon, L. (2000). *A theory of parody*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Labov, W. (1972). *Language in the inner city*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Labov, W., & Waletzky, J. (1967). Narrative analysis. In J. Helm (Ed.), *Essays on the verbal and visual arts* (pp. 12–24). Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Lee, C. (2014). *Facebook 'like' as communicative act: Evidence from online and offline spaces*. Paper presented at 20th Sociolinguistics Symposium. Jyväskylä, Finland.

Linde, C. (1993). *Life stories: The creation of coherence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mackiewicz, J. (2010a). Assertions of expertise in online product reviews. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, *24*, 3–28. https://doi.org/10.1177/1050651909346929

Mackiewicz, J. (2010b). The co-construction of credibility in online product reviews. *Technical Communication Quarterly*, *19*, 403–426. https://doi.org/10.1080/10572252.2010.502091

Ochs, E., & Capps, L. (2001). *Living narrative*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Page, R. (2010). Re-examining narrativity: Small stories in status updates. *Text & Talk*, *30*(4), 423–444. https://doi.org/10.1515/text.2010.021

Page, R. (2011). *New narratives: Stories and storytelling in the digital age*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Page, R. (2012). *Stories and social media*. London: Routledge.

Page, R., Harper, R., & Frobenius, M. (2013). From small stories to networked narrative: The evolution of personal narratives in Facebook status updates. *Narrative Inquiry*, *23*(1), 191–213. https://doi.org/10.1075/ni.23.1.10pag

Ray, B. (2016). Stylizing genderlect online for social action: A corpus analysis of ‘Bic Crystal for Her’ reviews. *Written Communication*, *33*(1), 42–67. https://doi.org/10.1177/0741088315621238

Reyes, A., & Rosso, P. (2011). Mining subjective knowledge from customer reviews: A specific case of irony detection. *Proceedings of the 2nd workshop on computational approaches to subjectivity and sentiment analysis*. Association for Computational Linguistics (ACL), 118–124. Retrieved from http://www.aclweb.org/anthology/W11-1715

Rose, M. (1993). *Parody: Ancient, modern, and post-modern*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Skalicky, S., & Crossley, S. (2015). A statistical analysis of satirical Amazon.com product reviews. *European Journal of Humor Research*, *2*, 66–85. https://doi.org/10.7592/EJHR2014.2.3.skalicki

Turkle, S. (1995). *Life on the screen: Identity in the age of the internet*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Varis, P. (2015). Digital ethnography. In A. Georgakopoulou & T. Spilioti (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of language and digital communication* (pp. 55–68). London: Routledge.

Varis, P., & Blommaert, J. (2014). Conviviality and collectives on social media: Virality, memes and new social structures. *Tilburg Papers in Culture Studies*, *108*. Retrieved from https://www.tilburguniversity.edu/research/institutes-and-research-groups/babylon/tpcs/item-paper-108-tpcs.htm

Vásquez, C. (2012). Narrativity and involvement in online consumer reviews: The case of TripAdvisor. *Narrative Inquiry*, *22*(1), 105–121. https://doi.org/10.1075/ni.22.1.07vas

Vásquez, C. (2014). *The discourse of online consumer reviews*. Bloomsbury: London.

Vásquez, C. (2016). Intertextuality and authorized transgression in parodies of online consumer reviews. *Language@Internet*, 13, article 6.

Vásquez, C., & China, A. (forthcoming). From “my manly husband …” to “…sitting down to take a pee”: The construction and deconstruction of gender in *Amazon* reviews. In P. Bou-Franch & P. Garces-Conejos Blitvich (Eds.), *Analysing digital discourse: New insights and future directions*. Palgrave-Macmillan.

Van De Mieroop, D. (2015). Social identity theory and the discursive analysis of collective identities in narratives. In A. De Fina & A. Georgakopoulou (Eds.), *The handbook of narrative analysis* (pp. 408–428). Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Wortham, S. (2001). *Narratives in action: A strategy for research and analysis*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Zappavigna, M. (2011). Ambient affiliation: A linguistic perspective on Twitter. *New Media & Society*, *13*(5), 788–806. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444810385097

Zeller, T. (2006, August 9). On Amazon, all of a sudden everyone is a milk critic. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/09/technology/09milk.html?_r=0

Online retellings and the viral transformation of a Twitter breakup story

Anna De Fina and Brittany Toscano Gore
Georgetown University

The retelling and sharing of stories is not a new phenomenon. Many narrative analysts have devoted research to these processes. But the culture of participation (Jenkins 2006) in the digital world has brought sharing to a completely new level by allowing users not only to broadcast their opinions and evaluations of a story but also to reappropriate it and recontextualize it in infinite recursions. We focus on such process of transformation of a narrative in different media and social media outlets through the analysis of the viral spread of a story posted by an individual Twitter user in 2015. Specifically, we illustrate how participation frameworks change from one retelling to another and how the original story becomes "nested" into a new meta-story centered on the Twitter user as a character and on the viral spread of the story.

Keywords: digital media, stories, narrative, Twitter, social media, storytelling, audience, retelling, viral, participation

Introduction

One of the most important characteristics of narratives in social media is their potential to become shared and to circulate beyond the site in which they were initially posted. This is particularly evident when stories go "viral" since the amount of sharing goes up exponentially multiplying not only the amount of readers of the original story, but also users' ability to shape the telling. As we will discuss below, the sharing of the same story can be compared to retellings of narratives in more traditional formats, but it is also profoundly different and presents researchers with interesting questions related to their analysis. As Page correctly observes social media offer

> significant and unprecedented opportunity for narrative researchers to observe patterns of storytelling production, and reception in a way that is less tractable for offline examples of face-to-face or written forms of narration.   (2012, p. 9)

It is indeed our objective in this paper to investigate the process of circulation of one story that went viral in social media. The story, a chronicle of a couple's break up that happened on an airplane told by a Twitter user, was retwitted, reposted and retold an infinite number of times in different media and we study what this process of sharing entails. In particular, we seek an answer to the following questions: What kinds of changes does the original story undergo when reposted elsewhere? How are production and reception formats transformed through the process?

In order to answer these questions we analyze the main thematic foci of the retelling as reflected in the titles and framing of the events in different social media platforms, the semiotic resources that authors used to convey and comment on the story and to make their own voice heard through the retelling, the way they relate to audiences and how the latter respond, in brief, the entextualization of this narrative. We also analyze and discuss ways in which audiences responded to the postings through comments. We find that the process of sharing and circulating the story produces a "nesting" of the original events into a new meta-story, or "a story about the story" that involves focusing on the original teller, the credibility of the narrative and the legitimacy of tweeting it rather than on the events themselves. We also find that the authors of the postings and articles use many different strategies to frame the story and to express their own point of view. At the same time, we argue that each retelling is configured within a new participation framework that involves specific roles for tellers and audiences. Indeed, audiences are sometimes openly invited to comment and sometimes more indirectly addressed. In brief, we show that retelling a story on social media involves complex practices that can only become apparent through a bottom up analysis.

In the following sections we will present our theoretical-methodological framework and the constructs that are used in the analysis. Then we present our data, the analysis of thematic foci, participation formats and comments and offer some concluding remarks.

Theoretical-methodological framework

Recent years have seen the solidification of a shift in narrative analysis from narratives as texts to narrative as practices (see De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2008, 2012) that was initiated by a convergence of work in sociolinguistics (Schiffrin, 2006), linguistic anthropology (Ochs & Capps, 2001) and conversation analysis (Sacks, 1992 [1970]) all pointing to the interactional embedding of narrative and

to the significance of processes of appropriation and negotiation of stories in interaction. From a narrative as practice perspective (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2008) storytelling is a complex process of reconstructing, reevaluating and making sense of events that takes place within specific media and is in turn embedded within different practices. Thus, not only what counts as a narrative, but also how stories get to be produced and shared is open to continuous redefinition as semiotic and social practices multiply and diversify every day. The ever increasing use of the internet and the growing literature on online narratives have also pushed towards a convergence of interests between practice oriented narrative analysts and analysts of narratives in online contexts. Indeed, the study of narrative within digital contexts requires a practice approach and such orientation is reflected in what Androutsopoulos (2006) has called "second wave" studies. According to this author, first wave studies focused on the formal and genre characteristics of internet "texts" and did not pay enough attention to "the socially situated discourses in which these features were embedded" (p. 420), a focus of second wave approaches. Recent research on storytelling in digital environments reflects this interest in the embedding of narratives within practices. Scholars who have investigated a variety of environments such as Twitter and Wikipedia (Page, 2012), YouTube videos (Georgakopoulou, 2014; Koven & Marques, 2015), Facebook posts (Lee, 2011; Page, 2012; West, 2013), and blogs (De Fina, 2016) have adopted approaches to their data that highlight participants' practices, including ways in which narrators construct stories, ways in which such stories are shared and ways in which audiences react and shape the tellings, as well as affordances and semiotic resources, that is meaning-making tools, related to the use of different media.

Among the constructs that have often been invoked in these works is the conception of narrative in terms of different dimensions as proposed originally by Ochs and Capps (2001), Goffman's (1981) ideas on authorship and participation and Iedema's (2003) concept of "semiotization." Below we discuss the application of these constructs in our paper.

Retellings and resemiotization

Although our paper focuses on the retelling of a story, the kind of retelling that goes on online is very different from what happens face-to-face mostly due to the high level of interaction among users fostered by the culture of participation (Jenkins, 2006). In that sense, previous studies of this phenomenon are only relatively relevant. Here we will leave aside the wide cognitively oriented literature on retelling as a way of assessing children's development or students' competence in narrative and will only discuss some antecedents in discourse analytic and sociolinguistic

research. From that perspective, retellings of stories received some attention in the 1980's, particularly within anthropological and cross-cultural studies of story-telling. For example, retold stories were the focus of research in linguistic anthropology, (see Bauman, 1986; Hymes, 1985; Sherzer, 1981) inas much as they were elicited repetitions of traditional narratives. In those investigations the focus was on the performative characteristics of narratives. Also, from an anthropological perspective, Scollon and Scollon (1984) studied oral retellings among Atabaskhan speakers focusing on children. From a cross-cultural perspective Chafe (1980) studied how retellings of the same film changed according to the nationality of speakers. Norrick (1998) was among the first to study retellings of conversational stories. He focused on performances of what could be regarded as the same story by narrators to different audiences and investigated the characteristics that allowed for the recognition of a kernel story. Further studies of stories told in interactional contexts also centered on the functions of stories told more than once (Norrick, 1997) or of different renderings of the same story to different audiences. Trester (2013) for example analyzed two versions of a story about the actions of a prankster looking at their differences in terms of evaluative devices. Cook-Gumperz (2011) investigated how the same event, the closing of an academic department, is reconstructed by two different people to show that retelling style can index different positionings. Schiffrin (2006), who investigated retelling of Holocaust stories by Jewish survivors, was the first scholar to attract attention to the idea that retelling involves reframing of events through the integration of different contextual elements. In particular, she looked at how an experience that has been told by different sources, through the narrator's incorporation of the voices of other family members, becomes a unitary story in retellings.

Another perspective on retelling which is relevant to the present paper is the investigation of how stories circulate among specific communities; and how the same story, or at least the same basic story elements, get repeated among members of that community in ways that contribute to the formation of a shared story. Just such a case was the focus of the Wortham et al.'s (2011) study of payday mugging narratives in a new Latino community in Pennsylvania. Wortham et al.'s work reflects a greater awareness among sociolinguists and anthropological linguists of the importance of analyzing discourse across speech events and across media (see Agha, 2007; Agha & Wortham, 2005). In the case of social media and digital environments in general, circulation involves sharing, which in turn allows for a much greater possibility of intervention on the original story by participants. That is why the concept of resemiotization has been frequently invoked by scholars working with discourse online (see for example Georgakopoulou, 2015; and Leppänen et al., 2013). According to Iedema "resemiotization is about how meaning making shifts from context to context, from practice to practice, or from one stage of a

practice to the next" (2003, p. 41). As we will argue below, resemiotization is a form of entextualization (Bauman & Briggs, 1990). Jedema views resemiotization as a particularly important process in power-laden practices that reconfigure the way subjects, identities and actions are given meaning. Thus, a teacher may record an interaction with a child as deviant and that recording will lead to a number of procedures that will end up with the appending of a deviancy label to the child. This way of approaching resemiotization underscores how the embedding of texts into different semiotic practices leads to changes not only in the way texts are read but also in the definition of relations between participants in those different practices.

In this paper we propose a particular form of resemiotization, "nesting", as a specific construct to describe retellings in social media. As we will explain below, "nesting" involves the creation of a meta-story (a story about the story). In this process the original story does not disappear, but becomes nested in the meta-story. We examine a story tweeted by an individual Twitter user from her personal account. When the story becomes viral a new story emerges: the story of the Twitter user tweeting story1. We will show how story1 is still present in various forms within story 2. It is interesting to note that our own analysis of this narrative represents a form of "nesting" in that we are also telling a story about a story and in this way we are adding yet another level of resemiotization to the ones that are studied here. Worthy of mention is also the fact that, like the internet sources that we analyze, we are violating the character's privacy by proposing yet again the story of her break up. This is an ethical dilemma that much of the work on digital discourse must face and that in our case has no solution given that although we have access to the teller of the breakup story, we have no way of contacting its main victim: the protagonist of the plane fight.

In order to understand the affordances of different sites and the processes of sharing, analysts need to look at forms of production and participation. Goffman (1981) has greatly contributed to such understanding with his theorizations about authorial roles and participant roles in interaction. In particular, we will discuss how Goffman's proposal to decompose the notion of speaker into different roles allows us to see how tellership may be altered and reframed in a retelling by creating a new author of the story that can take different alignments to the original teller. In fact, retellings in social media also profoundly alter participation frameworks. First because original audiences of a story are now incorporated into the story and may become, to a certain extent, story characters; and secondly because audience participation reflects the affordances of different media and their aims in terms of imagined audiences. Thus, we will also discuss how audience participation may take different forms in the various internet sources that we analyzed. Thus, Goffman's deconstruction of the notion of hearer also becomes relevant here as this author pointed to different participant roles for audiences, including the possibility of

being a principal addressee, a ratified or unratified participant or an over hearer. And even though most of the time the actual audience of an online act of communication is hard to pin down, when participants respond with comments they do select their addressees and also authors sometimes make it clear who their intended audiences are. Goffman's idea of deconstructing participants roles is therefore extremely useful for both offline and online contexts.

It has been noted in the literature (see Boyd, 2010; Marwick, 2010) that authors of social media content always have an imagined audience, even when they don't exactly know who will read their material. This is not only true of individuals such as Twitter users, but also of digital companies who tailor their content to specific imagined audiences. The different aims of these diversified media determine different choices in the way they organize audience participation and in the degree to which they allow it. In turn these choices have an impact on the kind of retelling that takes place on a particular site.

Data and sources

Data for this article come from Twitter and therefore we will give some background information on the way this microblogging site works. Twitter was created in 2006 and was originally developed for use on mobile phones (Marwick, 2010, p. 117). The site continues to grow exponentially in popularity and influence on audiences in general, and on newsmaking media as well, to the point that in 2016 it involved around 317 million active users on average per month (STATISTA, 2016). By asking the question "what's happening", Twitter prompts participants to post short, 140 words maximum messages on any topic that can also include embedded photos or other multimedia materials as well as links to relevant sites, individual articles, blogs, and so forth. Tweets posted go from personal stories to political commentary and from moment to moment reflections to news. In terms of participant structure, users can choose other Twitter users or accounts to follow and can, in turn, have their own followers. However, as described by Marwick and Boyd (2010) "there is no technical requirement of reciprocity, and often, no social expectation of such. Tweets can be posted and read on the web, through SMS, or via third-party clients written for desktop computers, smartphones, and other devices. These different access methods allow for instant postings of photos, on-the-ground reports, and quick replies to other users" (p. 117).

Thus, users can respond individually to other users or just post updates for their followers. Twitter differs from other social media networks, like Facebook for example, in that users seem relatively unconcerned with privacy and the audience for updates tends to be relatively unknown to the individual posting. The fact

that most information posted is publically available also helps ensure a constant stream of information. Page (2012) describes Twitter as "an electronic 'word of mouth'". Indeed Twitter offers a perfect platform for users to share information, build awareness of relevant happenings or topics, and gain visibility. Such visibility has also increased through the growing use of hashtags that allow users to label content (for example specific phrases, names, etc.) or to easily find content they are interested in. We will go back to the question of audience below when we come to the analysis of our data.

Our analysis is based on the retellings of a story first posted on Twitter and then subsequently retold on a variety of internet sources. In this paper, we focus on a small random selection of sites and platforms taken from the results of a Google search for the hashtag #PlaneBreakup. Among the website surveyed, four (BuzzFeed, the Man Repeller, Mashable and Thrillist) characterize themselves as digital platforms seeking to create and cater to an online community with different interests, three are gossip websites (Guest of a Guest, the Mirror and Perez Hilton), two (Facebook and Storify) are social media platforms, while six (the ABC 7 Eyewitness News, Metro, New York Post, NY1.com, Fox 11, and the Examiner) are more traditional local and entertainment news sites. Further details on these sources will be given throughout the analysis.

The original story was created when a young woman named Kelly Keegan on August 23, 2015 used her personal Twitter feed (@Keegs141) to live tweet the break up of an anonymous couple sitting across the aisle from her on an airplane during a flight delay. Encouraged by her Twitter followers, over the course of the next two hours in approximately twenty tweets, Kelly broadcasted highlights from the couple's conversation and actions, using the hashtag #PlaneBreakup (Keegan, 2015, August 23).

Kelly's first tweet was relatively detached from the preceding posts on her Twitter feed, and it provided a kind of visual and thematic context for her narrative. Through the photo (see Figure 1), Kelly visually asserts her proximity to the actions taking place, which helps her to establish herself as a credible witness to the events.

But this snippet of a story could have ended there if she had not been initially encouraged by a request from another Twitter user, @BarstoolReags, who prompted her to continue by writing "you need to live tweet this". Kelly obliged, and in the subsequent tweets she narrated the unfolding story of the couple's breakup to her Twitter followers. The main narrative line is constructed through transcribed turns of dialogue alternatively attributed to "GIRL" or "BOY", accompanied by her comments, reactions and some descriptions of what is happening moment to moment and photos (Keegan, 2015, August 23). Thus, tweets that individually present an "open-ended," fragmented structure, when taken together construct a storyline that unfolds in time (Page, 2012). Tweets are intertwined with comments

(Keegan, 2015, August 23)

Figure 1. The First Tweet

by @BarstoolReags who continues to be an active audience member at times even encouraging the progression of the narrative, through comments and questions. Other examples of participants interacting with one another in various ways are also buried in the comments; these include requests for more information or clarification (like "Katey Pierini's tweet: "STFU if you don't live tweet this I'll die"), throughout the narrative, illustrating the potentially collaborative nature of storytelling through social media.

Somewhat contrary to the normal preference for recency and new information on Twitter, Kelly's first tweet garnered the most shares (9.2k) and likes (11k) on her feed (Keegan, 2015, August 24) (see Figure 1). Although not all websites make these metrics available, some do, for example Mashable's page shows 8k shares (Koerber, 2015). These high numbers confirm the tellability of Kelly's story. Indeed, over the next twenty-four hours her story went viral. It spread across the Internet, re-tweeted by thousands of other Twitter users, shared on Facebook and blog sites by individuals and media entities, and posted by news sites.

Analysis

In this section we discuss how the retelling took different shapes for the various internet sources considered here. In particular, we are going to analyze the differences in thematic focus, in the use of semiotic resources and in the participation framework that characterizes each platform.

Thematic focus

With respect to the themes that become the focus of the different social media sites, it is useful to start with the title references, that is the people, processes and events that make it into the titles. These will guide us to an analysis of the main trends in the focus of reporting.

Table 1. Summary of story titles categorized by themes

	Kelly as Twitter user	The tweet and its content	The tweet going viral	The tweeting	The #	The original protagonists
Guest of Guests			X			
NY1.com			X			
ABC 7 Eyewitness News			X			
Thrillist	X					
Storify		X				
PerezHilton	X					
New York Post	X					
Mirror	X					
Metro		X				
Mashable					X	
Man Repeller				X		
Fox11 News	X					
Facebook					X	
Examiner	X					
BuzzFeed						X

As we see from Table 1, six titles refer to Kelly as Twitter user, two refer to the tweet and its content, three refer to the tweet going viral, one refers to the tweeting (as a process, for example "What's public, what's private and the plane break up"), two report the title of the hashtag (#PlaneBreakup), and one refers to the protagonists of the original story. Looking at how these titles were related to subtitles and to the rest of the articles, we find different thematic foci that can be summarized as follows:

1. The original story and its protagonists
2. Kelly as Twitter user
3. The tweet and tweeting process itself

Before analyzing the way the story is retold, however, we need to discuss how tellership is modified in online contexts. Let us remember that Goffman distinguished between author (the party responsible for the utterance), principal (the person or group on whose behalf the utterance is communicated) and animator (the speaker physically producing the sound or, in this case, the writing). In storytelling contexts we can often identify the author with the teller. Retellings in social media always involve a change in the original tellership arrangement. Indeed, when Kelly tweeted the story on August 23, she was the teller and her addressees were people who have access to her tweets. Among them there was, however, at least one principal addressee, that is @BarstoolReags, the user who had prompted her originally to tweet the whole story. Retellings in all cases involve a complication of the tellership format in that the teller is now the author of the new story. The audience changes as well as it shifts to the people who access the particular site. In that sense, the new teller becomes a sort of co-teller, whose interaction with Kelly (the original teller) is subject to a variety of manipulations.

Let us now return to the issue of topics managed in each case. It can be said that the story and story protagonists as a thematic focus received the least attention in comparison with the other two themes. Indeed, BuzzFeed was the only site that put the emphasis on the protagonists of the story rather than on Kelly and on her tweet, by proposing the following title: "A Guy Allegedly Broke Up with His Girlfriend On A Plane Before It Even Took Off" (Smith, 2015, August 24). Although the author, Kevin Smith, keeps some distance from the absolute veracity of the facts reported through the use of the adverb "allegedly" in his title, the piece revolves around the bad behavior of the boy and the strangeness of the couple's actions through a process of alignment of the co-teller (the author of the article) with Kelly's perspective, as expressed in her tweets, which are reproduced under lines of text that summarize and introduce her reactions to the situation. See the following example in which the comment precedes a series of original tweets reproduced in their entirety:

> She told Barstool Sports the woman was "crying loud enough to capture the attention of everyone in the front of the plane".   (Smith, 2015)

The new teller however does not disappear behind Kelly, as Kevin Smith proposes his own interpretations of the event as a premise to some of Kelly's tweets. This is the case in the following example. The text "Maybe they were just trying to forget about the whole spat?" precedes Kelly's tweet describing the couple ordering six vodkas and bloody mary mix, which clearly instantiates Smith's role as co-teller and interpreter of the events in the story.

The focus on the original story is confirmed in the preface of one of Kelly's tweets provided by Kevin Smith, whose comment here refers to the "plot" as the focus itself (see Fugure 2).

Plot twist: Who's Charlotte?

> **Kelly Keegs** ✔
> @keegs141
>
> 𝕐 Follow
>
> "I'm going to ask Charlotte. I'm going to ask her the minute we get home and we'll see if your STORIES MATCH" (Omg scandal who's Charlotte?)
>
> 8:33 PM - 23 Aug 2015 · Raleigh, NC
>
> ↩   ↻ 2,234   ♥ 3,427

(Smith, 2015)

Figure 2. Smith's comment on Kelly's Tweet

It is interesting to note, however, that this focus on the original story does not prevent the author from keeping Kelly and her tweeting under his radar as well. Indeed, as it was shown, she is the one presented as the teller of the story throughout the article through the reproduction of her tweets and the summary of her reactions. However, once the tweets have been reproduced and the original event has been told, the author shifts his attention to the fact that Kelly's story has become a trending sensation. In this part of the retelling another tweeter's comment on the fortune of Kelly's tweets is reproduced while the author's conclusion binds Kelly's tweeting of the story with the taleworld protagonists by foreseeing a desirable end to the events witnessed by Kelly and by indirectly conveying that her own tweeting may contribute to such ending: "It didn't take long for Keegan's coverage of the breakup to trend on Twitter. Fingers crossed the poor girl ditched that guy as soon as they landed" (Smith, 2015).

BuzzFeed's treatment of the retelling provides a glimpse into an important phenomenon that characterizes retellings not only in the examples that we are discussing but in social media more in general. We will call the process "nesting" as a form of entextualization and resemiotization. As noted by Leppänen et al. (2013) the concept of entextualization was proposed by Bauman and Briggs (1990, p. 73) in order to describe the processes through which texts are lifted from their original contexts of appearance and are inserted within new contexts and thus reused and reinterpreted in particular ways. Leppänen et al. noted that entextualization could be complemented with the construct of resemiotization as proposed by Iedema (2003) to describe social media phenomena. In the authors' own words:

> Entextualization highlights how such recycling involves two related processes: de-
> contextualization – taking discourse material out of its context – and recontextu-
> alization – integrating and modifying this material so that it fits in a new context.
> With entextualization in our analytical toolkit, it becomes possible to investigate
> how social media participants, through extracting 'instances of culture' (language

> forms, textual or other semiotic material) and relocating these in their discourses
> and repertoires, perform identity at the grassroots level of social media activities.
>
> (Leppänen et al., 2013, p. 7)

We propose "nesting" as a specific construct to describe retelling processes in social media. The process involves the transformation of a story into a new story about the story (a kind of meta-story). This second story can focus on story1 (or parts of it) and/or on aspects of the production format of story1. In any case, story1 in its original form never completely disappears but it is always nested into the new context.

In the case being discussed here, the great majority of the websites that we analyze reproduce the tweets originally posted by Kelly, while a few summarize them and they all provide specific framings for interpreting the tweets. But the original story is to some extent still part of the new context. The difference that we see between "nesting" and constructs such as "resemiotization" or "rescripting" (Georgakopoulou, 2015) that have been used in the literature is that both terms refer to more general processes in which texts are embedded within new semiotic practices (that may involve their transformation into stories as in 'rescripting') but do not capture the specificity of narrative retellings as the parallel telling and evaluation of two stories: an original one and a new one, which is a kind of meta-story.

This co-presence is evident in all the retellings, no matter their focus. Indeed, as we mentioned before, titles and articles may stress Kelly's role in producing the tweets, or the progress of these tweets from an exchange among Twitter users into a viral story reproduced across the social media sphere, but they also necessarily summarize the original story for their audiences.

Another aspect of these processes of sharing that already emerged in our analysis of the BuzzFeed post is that the meta-story (i.e. the story of tweeting the events and/or of the tweets going viral) takes up the qualities of an emerging drama. Indeed, some of the media sites which recount the #PlaneBreakup story also start incorporating a kind of "morning after" component, that is a narrative about what Kelly did or said after becoming famous and how her new audiences reacted to those different actions. Thus the writer in Fox 11 adds information on what Kelly said to her new followers and how they responded to her new tweets as can be seen in the following quote (Figure 3):

Keegs warns her new followers they won't be seeing live tweeting of reality dating on a regular basis.

> **Kelly Keegs** ✓   ＋ **Follow**
> @keegs141
>
> I hope all 7k of my new followers like drunk tweets about wine and Netflix
>
> 8:21 AM - 24 Aug 2015
>
> ↩   ⟲ 503   ♥ 4,366

(Neugebauer, 2015)

Figure 3. Fox 11's Neugebauer embeds Kelly's tweet in her own narrative

In other cases, new inedited tweets are added. For example, Mashable reports one such tweet prefacing it with the following introduction, "Keegan followed up with an "exclusive" email to Bar Stool Sports, a website associated with the Twitter account that begged her to live tweet the incident" (Koerber, 2015).

Events that took place after the story was tweeted sometimes make it into the title, particularly when the focus is on the legitimacy of tweeting the story, as we will see below in the case of Mirror. When the focus is on Kelly or her tweeting as is the case in most social media platforms analyzed, in general there is a shift from the evaluation of the events to an evaluation of Kelly's actions or of the process of tweeting someone's private life in light of different criteria. Some media present her as the protagonist, give some information on her and recount how she gained a vast audience with her tweets. Such is the case with Maida (2015) on the digital media company Guest of a Guest site. By reproducing an interview format with Kelly (defined as an "ex alumna"), the author focuses on her transformation into a Twitter celebrity, highlighting the story of her tweeting and the consequences in terms of the backlash that the tweets caused. The interview focuses on the way she became an internet sensation and closes with photos of Kelly "Before she was famous". But it is important to note that in this case as well the Twitter story is reproduced both in the title through a photo of the initial tweet and by printing two parallel columns of text: one with the questions and answers in Maida's interview with Kelly and the other one with the sequence of tweets in which Kelly tells the original story (Figure 4).

(Maida, 2015)

Figure 4. Guest of a Guest page 1 of story

In other cases, the stress is not so much on Kelly but on the process of tweeting, yet in other instances it is on both. For example, the author of the Fox 11 piece, presents the story as produced by an "airline passenger" and introduces the story abstract (i.e. a summary of what the story was about) by referring to the act of tweeting as something that can happen to anybody who is having a fight on an airplane. The writer concludes with a warning that if you pick an airplane flight as a venue to break up, not only will it be the most awkward flight, but it will likely get shared with the world on social media (Neugebauer, 2015). What happens however, in this social media outlet and in others, is that the narrative starts incorporating audience reactions to the story as part of the new story.

Many of the sites evaluate Kelly on the tellability of her story in the sense of judging her ability to make it interesting and to create a good performance. The author in Examiner (2015) highlights Kelly's qualities by noting that she "thoughtfully illustrated the show" (meaning the loud fight between the members of the couple) and that her rendition was "better than a soap opera or the Kardashians". S/he concludes that Kelly "found a way to make unbearable awkwardness tolerable and funny". However, most of the other sites evaluated either the original storyteller credibility or her right to divulge the story (Examiner, 2015).

Credibility appears to be a big issue in the evaluation of Kelly's tweets in various sources. For example Lee (2015) on the Metro website sets the stage for the non credibility of the story in the article's title, which reads "#PlaneBreakup: Why I refuse to believe it's real". In this case as well the report starts with the viral spread of the tweet and then embeds Kelly's tweets with the premise "in case you need a

recap" (Lee, 2015). What follows is a list of reasons why the tweets cannot be real: among them the fact that there are photos and no videos on the tweet feed, the fact that faces cannot be distinguished in the photos and the absence of light in a photo that was supposed to be taken a few minutes after another one in which the sun was visible. Interestingly, this article also relates Kelly's story to another story that is presented as a hoax though a hyperlink. Thus, intertextual connections between different narratives are embedded directly in the retelling.

Credibility is sometimes incorporated as a central concern even in the title of articles. Storify's (2015) title reads "#Planebreakup: Inflight Entertainment or Elaborate Hoax?". The author goes on to reproduce the tweets (as usually preceded by framing comments) however, credibility is taken up at the end and it is related to Kelly in that the reporter highlights the fact that she is "a High Point Graduate with a degree in Marketing and Communications, highly endorsed for her social media skills". Such observation implicitly conveys the high possibility that Kelly tweeted the story to heighten her social media visibility (SmarterTravel, 2015).

Legitimacy, more specifically telling rights, constitutes the other big topic on which some of the media articles focus. Indeed, after Kelly tweeted the story old and new followers were divided over the moral right of making a very private moment public and on whether Kelly had crossed a line. In some cases, this debate is reported directly through the tweets that followed the posting of the story. For example, McCrum's story on the Mirror (2015) incorporates the consequences of Kelly's tweeting in the title "Woman Live Tweets Couple Break Up and is Accused of Humiliating Them". The format here is that of a chronological reporting of the "tweeting event" and its development online, including audience reactions in the form of tweets during and after. The report is prefaced by a kind of abstract in which the center of interest of the title is maintained: The break up is presented as global news after it was tweeted and the consequence was a global backlash. As the whole tweeting event is presented through the original tweets (which include positive and negative comments) the author of the piece does not take a position, but invites users to react.

Finally, the story of Kelly's tweets is in some cases taken as a starting point to reflect on issues related to the internet and privacy (see Gal, 2002, on the topic of the separation between private and public space). This is the case for example with Medine (2015) on the Manrepeller site. The title of this piece clearly foreshadows the dilemma "What's Private, What's Public and the Plane Break up" and the body of the article presents a kind of dialogue in the form of instant messages between the author and another collaborator to the site. The text messages revolve around the fact that nothing is really private any longer and what that implies for the way people act in public. It is interesting to notice that this is the only website that does not reproduce any aspect of the original Kelly story: not the tweets or the photos,

but only a summarized and schematic version of what happened in terms of a kind of "archetypal story".

Use of semiotic resources

Our Internet sources differ in many ways in the manner they insert the narrative within their own page and in the use of semiotic resources. Table 2 shows the extent to which the original material in the story is re-used and the extent to which new semiotic resources (such as drawings or new photos) are introduced.

Table 2. Semiotic resources by website

Inserts	Original tweets+photo	Original photo	New photos or drawing	Tweets reframed
Guest of a Guest	X			
NY1	NA		NA	NA
ABC 7 Eyewitness News	X			
Thrillist	X			
Storify	X			
*PerezHilton	X			
New York Post		X		X
*Mirror	X			
*Metro	X			
*Mashable				
Man Repeller			X	
Fox 11	X			
Facebook		X		
Examiner		X		
BuzzFeed	X			

We need to clarify that many of these characteristics do not apply to NY1 because the site in question embedded a video containing the news of the tweet going viral together with other news. The category of "Tweet reframed" refers to the reproduction of the written part of the tweet but without the Twitter original framing. It is notable, for example how 9 out of the 15 sources surveyed use both one or more of the original photos uploaded by Kelly and her tweets and three of them which did not include the tweets, did include the photo. In four of the cases, however,

the photos were manipulated to include the co-tellers' own framing (for example the inclusion of a question mark or other comment on the image). Other kinds of semiotic resources used refer to buttons and links to other online sources and we discuss those below. From this brief survey it can be noted that the physical reproduction of the story in its original form was a very common strategy among the different media and that the reproduction of a story into a retelling in most cases takes the shape of physical embedding of parts of it.

Participation frameworks

Different constructs have been proposed to capture the complexities of production and reception in storytelling from an interactional perspective. Ochs and Capps (2001) have talked about 'tellership" basically to refer to "the extent and kind of involvement of conversational parties in the actual recounting of a narrative" so as to include the possibility of interactive co-construction (2001, p. 24). They classify tellership on a scale including one active teller and passive listeners to many tellers and listeners. On the other hand both Goffman's (1981) constructs about participation frameworks and formats and Goodwin's (1986) theorizations on audience participation have been very important to understand storytelling as a dialogical and interactive process. Indeed, Goffman decomposed both the figure of the speaker and that of the hearer in order to capture the different authorial roles and the degrees of ratification that audiences to an interaction may receive. He distinguished between the animator (the "sounding box", i.e. someone who does not cover an authorial role), the author (someone taking responsibility for the talk) and the principal (someone "whose position is established by the words that are spoken, or someone speaking "as a member of a group, office or category") (Goffman, 1981, p. 144–145). Goodwin (1986) underlined how narrators design their talk in view of their recipients and how the latter may profoundly alter the emergence of a story in a variety of ways, for example by positively collaborating in its telling and leading to additions and explanations or by contesting aspects of tellers' messages or of tellers' rights or even by completely ignoring the story.

These constructs are particularly important for understanding storytelling in online environments since, as we have seen, those environments offer unprecedented occasions for collaborative production of narratives and sharing and negotiation of their content. In the specific case that occupies us now, we have, as was argued, in all cases under analysis some form of co-tellership, as Kelly, the original teller, is now the protagonist of a meta-story which is recounted by one or more new tellers. At the same time, social media, online news sites, blogs and the like, produce content that is always "audience designed" since they tailor their messages to specific recipients be they in good part known as in Facebook sites be they imagined as in

most of the other cases. What differs in these contexts is the degree of alignment between the original teller and the teller of the meta-story and the degree of encouraged and instantiated participation.

Authorial roles

These elements (production formats, audience design and audience participation), which have been often ignored in studies of face-to-face storytelling, are very hard to ignore in the case of online environments as their importance is evident in the analysis of texts produced in those contexts.

We have alluded in our previous analysis to some of the differences in the production format. In the various internet sources that we studied different authors take diverging alignments to Kelly's narrative. Some act almost as animators, or in Goffman's terms, "sounding boxes" (Goffman, 1981, p. 145). For example, we saw this case with BuzzFeed's and Eyewitness News' reports where authors appear mostly in the title (calling the break up "alleged" and presenting the story as going viral in the second) and in some clarifying lines of text before the tweets. But for the most part the articles involve a reproduction of Kelly's tweets.

In other cases, we have a much stronger presence of the co-teller, who actually acts as an alternative teller and provides a specific frame for the story. This is the case with Guest of a Guest, which frames Kelly as a new star and therefore presents the author as an interviewer of Kelly while at the same time reproducing her tweets in a two page column format that sees Kelly's tweets on one side and the interview on the other (Maida, 2015). Something similar happens with Storify's report, in which the co-teller includes his/her own voice, for example by noting at a certain point "clearly we are missing some details" or including new material that covers reactions to the story. For example in Storify the authors preface a new tweet with the following lines: "Can't help include this excellent Samuel L. Jackson reference by a tuned in tweeter" (SmarterTravel, 2015).

In some cases, the intervention of the co-teller involves a negative framing that, as we have seen, calls into question the veracity or legitimacy of the account. In these cases, the author appears more forcefully, through the inclusion of further comments, new tweets and longer conclusions. Such was the case with the Metro article, in which the author signaled his incredulity in the title, in a photograph reproducing one of the original images in Kelly's tweet with a question mark and in the conclusion in which the arguments against Kelly's veracity are summarized (Lee, 2015).

Audience participation

In this section, we discuss comments posted on the social media sites. Below we present a table that classifies all comments into categories. Different websites, social media and platforms deeply differ also in terms of the degree of participation that they prefigure and encourage on the part of audiences. These choices reflect the focus of the media and their expectations in terms of roles for imagined audiences.

For example, in terms of content sharing, all the sources that we studied allow for sharing content on Twitter and Facebook, but some are more interactive and include a much wider range of possibilities (up to 150 embedded symbols for links).

As we will discuss below, five among the sources we studied encourage and have comments, others do not allow for comments but allow for reactions. For example, Perez Hilton allows for reactions for each and every one of the author's summary of parts of the story so that users can express comments such as "LOL" or "Amazing!". It also allows users to start following Kelly or retweet and like her story by clicking on her own tweets reproduced in the feed.

Some sites include both comments and reactions. For example, BuzzFeed provides a reaction button including things LOL, heart, fail, cute or the possibility of including a GIF. In some cases, audience presence is prefigured through direct appeals indexed by the use of certain linguistic strategies such as requests for comments and submissions or direct appeals through the use pronouns like "you", "your", etc. For example, the author in Perez Hilton (2015) tells users "Check out Kelly's Tweet, part invasion of privacy and part HIGHlarious". The Facebook site Passenger Shaming encourages submissions on this topic. Yet, others state "I want to read the comments" (Medine, 2015).

Analysis of comments

In this section we analyze more in detail the comments posted on the social media site that allowed for that form of participation. Combining the five sources we studied generated nearly 350 comments. The comments were classified based on their content or main theme. The themes can be subdivided in thematic foci following De Fina (2016). The following categories were used:

1. Characters refers to the taleworld figures;
2. Additional story components refers to the addition of some element to the original story;
3. 2nd story refers to the invention of a new related story;
4. Credibility refers to whether the story is true;

5. Tellability refers to whether the story is worthwhile telling;
6. Legitimacy refers to the right to tell the story to the public;
7. Narrator 1 refers to Kelly as the author;
8. Narrator 2 refers to the author of the article retelling the story;
9. Other participant refers to comments directed to other users in the thread;
10. Photos refers to comments to the original photos posted by Kelly;
11. New Photos refers to new photos posted by users;
12. Unrelated comments refers to comments that have nothing to do with the story or the retelling.

If we group comments by thematic foci we can distinguish three basic categories in comments 1 to 9 (we are excluding 10 to 12 since those may have different foci). Comments in categories 1 and 2 can be further classified as pertaining to the tale-world, comments in category 3 can be subsumed as pertaining to a second story and comments in 4 to 9 can be further classified as pertaining to the storyrealm.

As seen in Table 3 the Passenger Shaming Facebook group received the most comments (151) followed by the BuzzFeed (140), Manrepeller (32), ABC7 (15) and Mirror (only 4). In general, the comments followed the way the prompt was formulated. Thus the Facebook page is dedicated to exposing bad passenger behavior and has over 460,000 likes. The site used one of Kelly's original photographs with the caption "The great #PlaneBreakUp of 2015" and links to the story on the Mashable's site with the same title along with subtitle "A woman live-tweeted a couple allegedly breaking up while her flight was delayed …" (Koerber, 2015). For this reason the

Table 3. Analysis of thematic foci in the comments

	Total N of comments	Teleworld		2nd story	Stroyrealm								
		Characters	Add'l story components	2nd story	Credibility	Tellability	Legitimacy	Narrator 1	Narrator 2	Other commenters	Photos	New photos	Unrelated comments
ABC 7	15			1	2	1	3	8					
Buzzfeed	140	21	1	6	25	18	25	20	4	3	5	1	11
Facebook	151	44		8	14	6	18	11		22	12	6	10
Man Repeller	32	3		4			14	3	1		3		4
Metro													
Mirror	5					1	3		1				
TOTALS	343	68	1	19	41	26	63	42	6	25	20	7	25
PERCENTAGE		20	0	6	12	8	18	12	2	7	6	2	7

majority of comments, nearly one third, are concerned with the characters and their behavior, for example see the following (Figure 5):

> **Jack Stone** The guy is an idiot. Who the hell breaks up with someone before takeoff? Everyone knows that you break up with them after you land and have secured your baggage. If you break up before the plane takes off then you have to spend a few awkward hours next to that person during the flight.
> Like · Reply · 🔘 7 · August 24, 2015 at 6:57pm · Edited
>
> **Laura Jordan-Payne** LMAO @ Eric
> Like · Reply · 🔘 1 · August 24, 2015 at 6:41pm

(Passenger Shaming, 2015)

Figure 5. Comments posted to the wall of the Passenger Shaming Facebook group

Other comments focused on Kelly and whether or not her tweets represented an invasion of privacy, whether or not the story is true, other photos, and one another. Over twenty comments also appear to be interactions with other group members.

While the title of the post on the Passenger Shaming site has a fairly neutral tone, the Mashable post addresses several themes. It begins with a photo from Kelly's original feed with a superimposed caption of one of Kelly's tweets, "This guy just broke up with his girlfriend and she's SOBBING" (Koerber, 2015). Mashable's author Brian Koerber then opens his article with a few sentences of commentary about the characters and their behavior, then adds, "though we aren't convinced the following events are genuine." While this story also addresses the legitimacy of Kelly's decision to publically live-tweet the story, the main theme of the retelling seems to be whether or not Kelly's story is true (Koerber, 2015).

The Mirror, a U.K. based online tabloid, received the fewest number of comments. In the months after Kelly's Twitter story went viral, only five people posted comments on the webpage in response to the prompt, "Have your say in the comments below". Interestingly, in the poll just below the comment prompt, which asks "Was Kelly wrong to live-tweet the couple's break-up?", over 1000 people answered. The title of the article is also somewhat provocative, "WOMAN Live-Tweets Couple's break-up on plane – and is accused of humiliating them", as it leads the reader to express an emotional reaction to Kelly's tweets. Indeed, here the majority of the comments also seem to respond to the prompt. Three out of the five comments pertain to whether or not Kelly had the right to publically tweet the narrative of their argument. We see a correspondence between a prompt on the website and the comment themes on other sites too.

In the case of ABC7 Eyewitness News, a local news website for the Los Angeles area, while still relatively few people commented, over half of people wrote to share

their opinion on Kelly as a person. There is no prompt on the page and the title seems to be rather neutral, compared to the Mirror's. One possible explanation for the higher number of comments is the proximity, in that this it is a US based news site as opposed to the Mirror which caters to an international audience that understandably would be less interested in local gossip on non-celebrities. There is also more diversity among the comment themes for this article. Primarily though, as is the case cross all five sites that allow comments, people were concerned with the legitimacy and credibility of the story.

As mentioned previously the Man Repeller post is the only one from our sample that does not include any of Kelly's Tweets, and the article is clearly focused on the topic of privacy. Just above the comment section, the site offers an open ended prompt, "thoughts?" which generated 34 comments; some readers posted more than once. Not surprisingly, over half of the comments are aligned with the legitimacy of Kelly's tweets, did she have the right to tweet about the couple? It's interesting to note that the next most common type of comment was a second story idea that looked at the personal experiences real or hypothetical of the commenters.

Finally, just as the BuzzFeed posting incorporated more themes than others, the 140 comments also address a wide variety of themes. The characters of Kelly's story remain a central theme, but the comments demonstrate a fairly equal level of interest in the legitimacy or credibility of the story and in Kelly. It's interesting to note that commenters on this article also address legitimacy of BuzzFeed and the author of the post, reinforcing the idea that the presence of a new teller is noted.

Looking at the general results represented in Table 3, it can be said that given the amount of comments on Facebook and Buzzfeed, these two sites drive the trends in comments and as we noted, their own framing influenced the thematic focus of the comments. This explains why Facebook participants made so many comments on the characters and BuzzFeed participants made so many comments on credibility. All in all, the highest number of comments was on the characters. On the other hand, looking at the average percentage for each of the foci also provides interesting insights into audience participation in social media. While comments on the story characters are the highest in percentage, if we group comments into the categories proposed above, we find that 20% of the comments relate to the taleworld, almost 62% pertain to the storyrealm and just 6% relate to a second story. This confirms results already found in De Fina's (2016) study of audience participation in online storytelling according to which participants in social media are more focused on reflexivity regarding the context of the telling than on the story. On the other hand, these results are also consistent with the fact that the 2nd story, i.e. the narrative about Kelly tweeting the original story, is itself a meta-story in that it focuses on the action of telling a certain story and its consequences: both positive (popularity) and negative (breach of privacy).

Conclusions

In this paper we analyzed a Twitter story that went viral and its retellings in digital media contexts. We found that in such an environment retellings in most cases involve a reflexive process through which the original story becomes embedded or "nested" in a meta-story in which the original teller is now a character to be judged and evaluated and whose act of telling also becomes evaluated in light of how tellable, credible and legitimate it was. We saw that the story that originated from the tweets does not disappear although it becomes the object of a series of transformations. It does get reframed through the co-teller's eyes but it is also largely reproduced by means of the embedding of the tweets and photos through which it was told. This is probably due to the performance value that derives from the high tellability demonstrated by its having gone viral. We discuss the different ways in which the authors of the retelling present their role as new tellers showing the existence of a continuum from more evident to less explicit presence of an authorial voice accomplished through the use of different linguistic and semiotic resources. The latter include the reproduction of tweets and photos, the insertion of new photos or drawings, the graphic framing of original photos, and the addition of comments to the photos or tweets. We found differences in audience involvement and reactions among the different sites. Sites differentially appealed to their audiences and audiences participated in sharing and commenting on the story and the meta-story in part following lead questions and cues found in the social media and in part with a focus of their choice. Comments, again, took aim at the teller of the story and the process of telling more often than at the characters and events in the original breakup taleworld.

All in all, our analysis shows that the practice of sharing stories in digital media is characterized by different choices of strategies for framing and different participations frameworks. However, we also demonstrated that there is a common trend towards a a shift in focus from the taleworld of a story to the storyrealm, that is to the storytellers, the audiences themselves and in particular the process of telling.

References

ABC7.com. (2015, August 24). Couple's breakup on flight goes viral. Retrieved from http://abc7.com/society/couples-breakup-on-flight-goes-viral/954900/

Agha, A. (2007). *Language and social relations*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Agha, A., & Wortham, S. (Eds.). (2005). Discourse across speech events: Intertextuality and interdiscursivity in social life. Special issue of the *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, *15*, 1–150.

Androutsopoulos, J. (2006). Introduction: Sociolinguistics and computer-mediated communication. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, *10*(4), 419–438.
https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9841.2006.00286.x

Bauman, R. (1986). *Story, performance, and event: Contextual studies of oral narrative*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511620935

Bauman, R., & Briggs, C. (1990). Poetics and performance as critical perspectives on language and social life. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, *19*, 59–88.
https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.an.19.100190.000423

Boyd, D. (2010). Social network sites as networked publics: affordances, dynamics, and implications. In Z. Papacharissi (Ed.), *Networked self: Identity, community, and culture on social network sites* (pp. 39–58). New York/London: Routledge.

Chafe, W. (Ed.). (1980). *The pear stories*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Cook-Gumperz, J. (2011). Entextualizing institutional memories: Retelling the academic story. *Text and Talk*, *31*(4), 429–446. https://doi.org/10.1515/text.2011.021

De Fina, A. (2016). Storytelling and audience reactions in social media. *Language in Society*, *45*, 473–498. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404516000051

De Fina, A., & Georgakopoulou, A. (2008). Analysing narratives as practices. *Qualitative Research*, *8*(3), 379–387. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794106093634

De Fina, A., & Georgakopoulou, A. (2012). *Analyzing narratives. Discourse and sociolinguistic perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

The Examiner. (2015). Retrieved from http://www.examiner.com/article/passenger-tweets-couple-s-plane-breakup-broadcasts-disruptive-duo-s-drama[1]

Gal, S. (2002). A semiotics of the public/private distinction. *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, *13*(1), 77. https://doi.org/10.1215/10407391-13-1-77

Georgakopoulou, A. (2014). Small stories transposition and social media: A micro-perspective on the Greek crisis. *Discourse & Society*, *25*(4), 519–539.
https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926514536963

Georgakopoulou, A. (2015). Sharing as rescripting. Place manipulations on Yuoutube between narrative and social media affordances. *Discourse, Context and Media*, *9*, 64–72.

Goffman, E. (1981). Footing. In *Forms of talk* (pp. 124–159). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Goodwin, C. (1986). Audience diversity, participation and interpretation. *Text*, *6*(3), 283–316.
https://doi.org/10.1515/text.1.1986.6.3.283

Hilton, P. (2015, August 24). Woman Life Tweets A Couple's Devastating #PlaneBreakup! Read The Tense Tweets HERE! Retrieved from http://perezhilton.com/2015-08-24-woman-live-tweets-couple-breaking-up-on-plane#.WByoQeErJE5

Hymes, D. (1985). Language, memory and selective performance: Cultee's "Salmon Myth" as twice told to Boas. *Journal of American Folklore*, *98*, 391–434.
https://doi.org/10.2307/540365

Iedema, R. (2003). Multimodality, resemiotization: extending the analysis of discourse as multi-semiotic practice. *Visual Communication*, *2*(1), 29–57.
https://doi.org/10.1177/1470357203002001751

Jaccoma, G. (2015, August 24). Woman live-tweets couple's awful #PlanBBreakUp on delayed flight. Retrieved from https://www.thrillist.com/travel/nation/airplane-break-up-gets-live-tweeted

---

1. This website is no longer available on the internet. We retrieved it November 12, 2015.

Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide*. New York: New York University Press.

Keegan, K. (2015, August 23). This guy on the plane just broke up w his girlfriend and she's SOBBING. @kellykeeggs Retrieved from https://twitter.com/keegs141?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw

Koerber, B. (2015, August 24). The great #PlaneBreakUp of 2015. Retrieved from http://mashable.com/2015/08/24/plane-breakup-tweets/#1O5FVMEunOqg

Koven, M., & Marques, I. (2015). Performing and evaluating (non) modernities of Portuguese migrant figures on YouTube: The case of Antonio de Carglouch. *Language in Society*, *44*(2), 213–242. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404515000056

Lee, M. (2015, August 24). #PlaneBreakUp: Why I refuse to believe it's real. Retrieved from http://www.metro.us/news/plane-break-up-why-i-refuse-to-believe-it-s-real/zsJohx---dXPZiahe2xIhc/

Leppänen, S., Kytölä; S., Jousmäki; H., Peuronen, S., Westinen, E. (2013). Entextualization and resemiotization as resources for(dis)identification in social media. *Tilburg Papers in Culture Studies*, Article 57. Retrieved from https://www.tilburguniversity.edu/upload/a3d5524e-4413-4772-9f96-9fe0ee714c6f_TPCS_57_Leppanen-etal.pdf

Maida, S. (2015, August 24). #PlaneBreakup-Gate: GofG Alumna Kelly Keegan On How To Become A Twitter Trending Topic. Retrieved from http://guestofaguest.com/new-york/social-media/planebreakup-gate-gofg-alumna-kelly-keegan-on-how-to-become-a-twitter-trending-topic

Marwick, A. D., & Boyd, D. (2011). I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately: Twitter users, context collapse and the imagined audience. *New Media Society*, *13*(1), 114–133. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444810365313

McCrum, K. (2015, August 24). Woman live-tweets Couple's break-up on Plane – and is accused of humiliating them. Retrieved from http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/weird-news/woman-live-tweets-couples-break-6309968

Medine, L. (2015, August 26). What's public, what's private and the plane break up. Retrieved from http://www.manrepeller.com/2015/08/the-plane-break-up.html

Neugerbauer, C. (2015, August 25). Airline passenger live tweets #PlaneBreakUp of another couple, it gets awkward. Retrieved from http://fox11online.com/news/offbeat/airline-passenger-live-tweets-planebreakup-of-another-couple-it-gets-awkward

Norrick, N. (1997). Twice-told tales: Collaborative narration of familiar stories. *Language in Society*, *26*, 199–220. https://doi.org/10.1017/S004740450002090X

Norrick, N. (1998). Retelling stories in spontaneous conversation. *Discourse Processes*, *25*(1), 75–97. https://doi.org/10.1080/01638539809545021

NY1. (2015, August 25). In The Papers 8/25/15. Retrieved from http://www.ny1.com/nyc/all-boroughs/papers/2015/08/25/in-the-papers-8-25-15.html

Ochs, E., & Capps, L. (2001). *Living Narrative*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Page, R. (2012). *Stories and social media: Identities and interaction*. New York/London: Routledge.

Passenger Shaming. (2015). Facebook Group. Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/PassengerShaming/

Rosenbaum, S. (2015, August 24). Passenger live-tweets couple's epic breakup on plane. Retrieved from http://nypost.com/2015/08/24/new-yorker-live-tweets-couples-epic-breakup-on-plane/

Sacks, H. (1992[1970]). Stories take more than one utterance; story prefaces. In G. Jefferson (Ed.), *Harold Sacks: Lectures on conversation*, Volume 2 (pp. 222–238). Oxford: Blackwell.

Schiffrin, D. (2006). In *other words*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511616273

Scollon, R., & Scollon, S. B. K. (1984). Cooking it up and boiling it down: Abstracts in Athabaskan children's story retellings. In D. Tannen (Ed.), *Coherence in spoken and written discourse* (pp. 173–197). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Sherzer, J. (1981). Tellings, retellings and tellings within tellings: The structuring and organization of narrative in Kuna Indian discourse. In R. Bauman & J. Sherzer (Eds.), *Case studies in the ethnography of speaking* (pp. 249–273). Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

SmartTravel. (2015). #PlaneBreakup: Inflight Entertainment or Elaborate Hoax? Did Kelly Keegan really witness a couple breaking up during her delayed flight or did she put her highly endorsed skill of social media marketing to the test?. Retrieved from https://storify.com/smartertravel/how-tweeting-on-an-airplane-can-change-your-life

Smith, K. (2015, August 24). A guy allegedly broke up with his girlfriend on a plane before it even took off. Retrieved from https://www.buzzfeed.com/kevinsmith/airplane-breakup-nightmare-live-tweets?utm_term=.cejoExRdV#.jv5YN6dOL

Trester, A. M. (2013). Telling and retelling prankster stories: Evaluating cleverness to perform identity. *Discourse Studies*, *15*(1), 91–109. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445612466472

West, L. (2013). Facebook sharing: A sociolinguistic analysis of computer-mediated storytelling discourse. *Context & Media*, *2*(2013), 1–13.

Wortham, S., Allard, E., Lee, K. & Mortimer, K. (2011). Racialization in payday mugging narratives. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, *21*, 56–75.
https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1395.2011.001097.x

Recontextualizing racialized stories on YouTube

Sabina Perrino

Binghamton University (SUNY)

When stories (re)appear in YouTube videos, they are recontextualized not only by their titling and editing, but especially by chains of online comments. This article explores how a Northern Italian politician's racialized story, which was first recontextualized by a TV news reporter on a YouTube video, is further recontextualized for different ends by commenters on that video. I show how these commenters negotiate and reframe the racial aspects of digital discourse and its sociocultural meanings through their various responses and across different temporal and spatial scales. By applying linguistic anthropological and sociolinguistic theories and narrative analytical tools to digital storytelling, this study emphasizes how racialized language is neither stable nor unidirectional, but is rather constantly negotiated discursively among various groups of virtual audience members. Besides investigating the pragmatics of narrative interaction in the digital realm, this article speaks to methodological challenges that surround the study of online storytelling.

Keywords: digital storytelling, Italy, *Lega Nord*, migration, narrative, racialized language, scales, stance, YouTube

Introduction

> quando vedo la Kyenge non posso non pensare a un orango
> when [I] see Kyenge, [I] can't help but think about an orangutan
> (Roberto Calderoli, July 13th, 2013)

In September 2015, Italian Senator Roberto Calderoli of the *Lega Nord* ('Northern League') political party was found not guilty for inciting racial hatred when, on July 13th 2013, he made a racist remark against former Minister Cécile Kyenge, who was the new Italian Minister of Integration at that time. In May 2014, she was also elected Member of the European Parliament. Former Minister Kyenge was born in Congo, in Central Africa, and has been an Italian citizen for many years, having

arrived in Italy in 1983 as a student of medicine and having become an ophthalmologist after her university studies. In his remark, Calderoli compared her to an orangutan, as the epigraph above shows. While the trial against Senator Calderoli is still taking place and while he has other charges to face, Calderoli's remark has traveled a long way in the press and in the digital media, including YouTube videos that have recontextualized his utterance in various ways.

Through an analysis of the interactional dynamics among commenters of a YouTube video in which Calderoli's racist remark was recontextualized, this article explores how racialized stancetaking can develop rapidly in this anonymous digital environment and how spatial and temporal scaling (Carr and Lempert, 2016b) can be used to reframe racialized stories in various ways and with different pragmatic ends. This YouTube video's commenters participate in overtly racialized stances and thus create a "participatory" solidarity with Calderoli and against former Minister Cécile Kyenge. Yet, at times, the same commenters scale up their discourse by directing their offensive remarks to a "wider," nativist public who is anxious about foreign migrants. By co-constructing their digital stories against Ms. Kyenge, YouTube commenters align with, and thus encourage participation in, a nativist ideology in which Italian identities are reinforced by excluding newcomers to Italy. By negotiating their positioning and stance discursively, YouTube commenters create exclusionary intimacies that promote racialized separation from migrants in a newly reconfigured European continent. Although YouTube has the potential to make stances on racialized stories widely known and to reinforce hegemonic ideologies, given the transnational scope of YouTube and its seemingly ever-growing popularity since its inception in 2005, it is important to appreciate the discursive dynamism of stances and racialization. The racialized stories examined in this article, together with Calderoli's original racist remark, demonstrate how boundaries between Italians and migrant groups are varied and worked out discursively in this digital environment.

By focusing on how racialized stories around migrants are enacted by YouTube commenters, this article shows that it is crucial to better understand and identify the nature of this emerging racialized language in the digital world so that racializing issues can be addressed by researchers and politicians in a historical moment in which discriminatory stances against migrant groups have been on the rise around the globe. Before presenting the YouTube video which recontextualized Calderoli's racialized remark and its subsequent recontextualizations by YouTube commenters, I describe the main theoretical framework on which this article is based.

Recontextualizing racialized stories on YouTube: Stancetaking and scaling

In recent years, linguistic anthropologists, sociolinguists, and social scientists more generally have recognized that internet-based digital storytelling is as important as face-to-face storytelling. Social media such as texting (Gershon, 2010), Facebook (Gershon, 2010; Lee, 2011), Instagram, Twitter, Flickr, Tumblr, WhatsApp, YouTube (Chun, 2013, 2016; Chun and Walters, 2011; Rymes, 2012), or blogs (Dayter, 2014, 2016; Jaffe and Walton, 2011; Myers, 2010; Page, 2011, 2015) have been fertile sites for studying the production and circulation of digital narratives and digital interaction. By sharing their stories about current political trends, for example, commenters engage in discussions with friends and with other participants who can align or disalign with them from various perspectives. In particular, YouTube constitutes a space not only where performances of racialized discourse and parody are often made but also where stances are taken on these performances. As Chun and Walters (2011) have argued in their work on Orientalism and humor on YouTube, this video-sharing and social-networking site has introduced a culturally significant mode of sharing information and experiences, thus providing its users a space for moving beyond traditional "speech communities" (Gumperz, 1968). The digital space provided by YouTube gives participants the chance to appear to move across time and space in new, unexplored ways. Even participants who feel that they are separated by physical distance – as YouTube commenters may assume about each other by default – may engage in interactions that digitally display their mutual alignments or disalignments, thus making it appear as if they cross boundaries that otherwise separate them. The medium of YouTube does not of course determine any one type scale-(re)making practice, but it is a site in which there is a general assumption that diverse if not scattered voices are brought together into virtual conversation.

In this vein, Goffman (1981)'s notion of footing combined with recent research on scales and scale-making (Blommaert, 2007; Carr & Lempert, 2016b; Collins & Slembrouck, 2009; Dong & Blommaert, 2009) are useful analytical tools that analysts can use in the digital world. Linguistic anthropologists and sociolinguists have observed how certain languages are ideologically perceived to have different scales associated with them, with some being seen as "local" and provincial (such as the local "dialects" within Italy versus Standard Italian [De Mauro, 1969]), while others seem capable of moving transnationally and having a global reach – such as American English or British English (Blommaert, 2007; Collins, 2012; Collins and Slembrouck, 2009; Collins, Slembrouck, and Baynham, 2009; Vigouroux, 2009). Scalar distinctions are not ideologically neutral (Carr and Lempert, 2016a), especially given the politics of migration and the movements that this process entails. Drawing partly upon Wallerstein's (1974) world-system theory, Dong and

Blommaert emphasize the significance of scaling processes in migration studies; in their words: "[t]heories of spatial analysis, identity construction, scaling processes and the centre-periphery models play key roles in understanding how migrants organize their linguistic repertoires …" (Dong and Blommaert, 2009, p. 45). Working in the context of Beijing, which has attracted millions of migrants within and outside China, Dong and Blommaert show how migrants' shift of accents enacts various and changing identities. In particular, by using the more prestigious and recognized Putonghua accent at the marketplace, speakers seek social mobility, respect, and credibility while they sell their products. Thus, this recent research considers the various ways in which discourse can be mobilized by speakers to navigate and help reproduce scalar distinctions (Blommaert, 2010; Carr and Lempert, 2016b).

One way to see scales in the making is in the digital realm in which commenters use posts with recontextualized images, memes, videos, and hyperlinks. Recontextualization processes have become very popular in the digital realm, and YouTube has been particularly active in this respect. Drawing on Bauman and Brigg's (1990) classic work featuring the high recontextualizability of rhythmic poetic and parallelistic structures, Rymes argues that these phenomena become even more recontextualizable over the Internet "when they have salient features that are recognized when reproduced in a new context" (Rymes, 2012, p. 216). As she demonstrates in her research, YouTube is a site in which this incessant recontextualization of semiotic elements can assume different meanings along the way and across the globe, and can entail various pragmatic effects. Rymes cites the example of an Obama video in which his famous phrase "Yes we can" is posted and then recontextualized through a rapid global circulation, whereby the phrase "comes to function differently to different people, [and is] easily recontextualized in an enormous range of repertoires, and incorporated into those repertoires through repeated viewing, commenting, and recirculation" (Rymes, 2012, p. 216).

Similarly, through an analysis of YouTube's comments and sub-comment replies, in which Calderoli's racialized remark was variously recontextualized, I show how YouTube commenters negotiate and re-orient racialized discourse and its sociocultural meanings. Their conversations do not just have a "denotational text," or the content of their comments and stories; they also have an "interactional text" (Silverstein, 1998) that refers to the perceived forms of action among the commenters, actions that can change the digital dialogue and affect the understanding of the racial dimensions of the story.

Research on oral narratives by linguistic anthropologists and sociolinguists (De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2012, 2015; Schiffrin, 1996; Schiffrin, De Fina, and Nylund, 2010; Wortham, 2000, 2001) has stressed that stories cannot be studied as decontextualized, denotational texts, because they are dynamically and

continuously (re)configured by the interactional moves of speech participants. Stories are responsive to the interactional matrix – the storytelling event – in which they occur, as has been demonstrated in various sites, such as interviews (De Fina and Perrino, 2011; Perrino, 2011; Wortham, 2001; Wortham et al., 2011), classrooms (Rymes, 2008; Wortham, 2001, 2006), and medical and therapy contexts (Ainsworth-Vaughn, 1998; Wortham, 2001). Only recently have analysts turned their attention from offline narratives to online ones that feature virtual forms of interaction, such as through on-line comments where viewers respond to the poster and to each other.

YouTube provides an ideal space for investigating how racialized language gets negotiated and contested in practice. Goffman's (1959, 1981) notion of "footing" or what has often been referred to as interactional "stance" – that is, types of alignment and disalignment among speakers – can be explored in digital environments as well as offline ones. This notion of stance has been classically defined by Du Bois (2007) as

> a public act by a social actor, achieved dialogically through overt communicative means (language, gesture, and other symbolic forms), through which social actors simultaneously evaluate objects, position subjects (themselves and others), and align with other subjects, with respect to any salient dimension of the sociocultural field.
> (Du Bois, 2007, p. 163)

The fact that stance is achieved "dialogically" through alignments and disalignments has made it a useful analytical tool for linguistic anthropologists and sociolinguists in the last decade (e.g., Du Bois, 2007; Jaffe, 2009, 2015; Lempert, 2008; Kiesling, 2011). A few scholars have recently extended the study of stance to the digital world such as the blogosphere (Jaffe and Walton, 2011) and YouTube (Chun 2013, 2016; Chun and Walters, 2011; Rymes, 2012). Through the dialogic stancetaking of commenters on sites such as YouTube, this venue becomes a place where critical discussion can take place, a sort of Web 2.0 version of Habermas's (1989) public sphere. In their analysis of commenters' stancetaking on racialized discourse, Jaffe and Walton show how participants negotiate the meaning of racialized language. Since blog commentaries belong to a genre that "puts stancetaking at the center of the activity," commenters take clear positions vis-à-vis a thread or other comments (Jaffe and Walton, 2011, p. 201). Through the stance that certain commenters take while using humor, for example, Jaffe and Walton unveil patterns of "covert racism" in Jane Hill's terms (1995, 2008) and classism (Jaffe and Walton, 2011, p. 204). Unlike covert racism, I examine how racialized remarks made by YouTube commenters become a kind of overt, barefaced discussion. Instead of being "covert," "veiled," or "concealed" (Perrino, 2015), these remarks create a deliberately racialized participatory environment, one that has potentially global reach. While

racialized language and "raciolinguistics" (Alim, Rickford and Ball, 2016) have recently been new key research topics in offline contexts (Alim, 2016; Chun and Lo, 2016; Dick and Wirtz, 2011; García-Sánchez, 2016; Lo, 2016; Perrino, 2015; Reyes, 2011, 2016; Rosa, 2015, 2016a, 2016b; just to mention a few), only a few linguistic anthropologists and sociolinguists working in this emergent subfield have applied this research to the digital world (Chun, 2013, 2016; Chun and Walters, 2011; Jaffe and Walton, 2011; Mendoza-Denton, 2016). In this respect, this article makes a further step in this direction by looking at how racialized language is enacted in relation to the discursive projection of temporal and spatial scales in the digital realm. In the data considered here, scale is one parameter through which actors negotiate racialized language. When commenters align or disalign vis-à-vis racialized language, speech participants not only adopt a certain stance in favor of, or against, a statement or an issue of a video, a thread, or of a previous comment, but they also frequently appear to zoom in or zoom out, so to speak, such that they express their stance from a scaled vantage point. Before presenting the analysis of how this virtual participatory community is reconfigured by the various stances that YouTube commenters take first vis-à-vis Calderoli's racialized joking remark, and then vis-à-vis other commenters' racialized stories, I will briefly describe the political climate in Northern Italy, and in Italy more generally.

Italy's *Lega Nord* ('Northern League'): Politics and migration

Calderoli's political party, the *Lega Nord* ('Northern League') has had an unprecedented number of followers, especially after they proposed, and later issued, some very strong anti-immigrant laws. The Italian political landscape has been changing rapidly in recent years, especially since new comers have landed to Italy. As anthropologist Maurizio Albahari (2015a) reminds us, Italy has recently become a key entry point for migrants and refugees in a historical moment in which migration crises and "emergencies" (Allievi, 2014; Clini, 2015) have solicited a wide international attention. While Italian reactions to the new waves of migrants to Italy have often been defensive and inhospitable, Italians have been migrating for a longtime, especially if we consider the voluminous Italian migratory flows from the end of the nineteenth century until the 1960s when many Italian nationals migrated across Europe, to South America (mainly to Argentina and Brazil) and to the United States (Bonifazi, Heins, Strozza, and Vitiello, 2009; Sciortino, 2010). However, starting in the 1970s, and continuing through the 1980s, Italy has become a receiver of migrants, especially from Northern and Western Africa, South Asia, Eastern Europe, China, Russia, and, more recently, Syria and Eritrea as well, given the number of the refugees landing to Italy through the Mediterranean Sea

(Albahari, 2015a, 2015b). These flows of migrants have triggered strong reactions by Italians, such as nativist discourses about national culture and identity and the aggressive, exclusionary, anti-immigration politics advanced and developed by the *Lega Nord* (the 'Northern League') political party, which is the political party of Senator Calderoli. These political tendencies have increased across Italy, especially after the more recent arrival of refugees and migrants, all of whom are referred to with the derogatory term "*extracomunitari*."[1] Led originally by Umberto Bossi, the former leader of the *Lega Nord*, this political party grew from "a small movement stressing the ethnic and linguistic distinctiveness of the regions of northern Italy to a national, mass political party" (Giordano, 2004, p. 64). The *Lega Nord* partly owes its great popularity, especially in Northern Italy, to its strong, anti-immigration efforts, through which this political party wishes to defend Northern Italians against "foreign" migrants while also drawing a boundary around their region, folk traditions, and language. In this respect, beginning with the 2001 election, the *Lega Nord* began to shift from its original focus on the cultural and economic threat of southern Italians migrating to Northern Italy towards an emphasis on foreign migrants. During a journalist's interview in June 2003, for example, the leader of the *Lega Nord* at that time, Umberto Bossi, said the following referring to the fact that numerous women and children are often present in overcrowded ships seeking to reach the European continent:

> Clandestine immigrants are to be kicked out. Only those with a job contract can enter the country. Others should be kicked out. There comes a moment when the use of force is necessary. The navy and finance guard must line up to defend our shores and use their cannons.   (cited in Albahari, 2015a, p. 76)

This strong anti-immigrant political agenda and the xenophobic stances of the *Lega Nord* have had significant effects on the Italian political scene in recent years, with extreme repercussions on migrants across Italy (Albahari, 2015a, 2015b; Allievi, 2014; Storni, 2011). While until recently Italy has had a progressive government that has stressed a policy of integration of migrants, nativist political parties such as the *Lega Nord* have been countering this approach. However, even some other political parties which traditionally had a more progressive agenda, such as the

---

1.   The Italian term *extracomunitario* (masculine, singular) was first used in Italy in the 1980s to indicate the legal status of migrants in Italy, as people who are not citizens of the European Union (once called *Comunità Europea*, 'European Community', hence *extra-**comunitario***, 'from outside the European Community'). However, more recently, it has been used derogatorily to indicate undocumented migrants across Italy. While its negative connotations are today evident, this term is still commonly used to indicate migrants coming from developing countries, especially Africa, South Asia, Eastern Europe, and, more recently, the Middle East.

Movimento Cinque Stelle ('Five Stars Movement'), have been lately advocating an anti-immigrant stance as well.

Despite all this, many ordinary people have been strong supporters of the *Lega Nord* and have been voting for it in Italy's frequent political elections. For some of my collaborators, the *Lega Nord* is the only political party they can vote for since this is said to be the only party with a clear anti-immigrant agenda aiming at expelling all "undocumented" migrants from Italy. In the Veneto region, for example, a man said the following to me while we were discussing about politics during an interview: 'The Lega, see, is useful, because people are tired of seeing *extracomunitari* everywhere' ("*La Lega, vedi, serve, perché la gente è stufa di vedere extracomunitari dappertutto*"). These and other similar remarks have been circulating widely in the digital environment as well, as the one made by Calderoli on July 13th, 2013, to which I turn next.

Racializing joking remarks on YouTube

This article focuses on one video[2] that was originally broadcast on the main Italian TV channels soon after Calderoli's problematic remark was uttered. The news reporter featured in this video summarized Calderoli's remark and gave some background on similar behavior he had exhibited in the past. She also talked about former Minister Kyenge's initial reactions, as detailed in the following transcript:

Transcript of YouTube video entitled
"*Razzismo: Calderoli insulta il ministro Kyenge, 'sembra un orango'*"
('Racism: Calderoli insults Minister Kyenge, "she looks like an orangutan"')[3]

Italian original version	English translation[4]
1. [TV News Reporter] "quando vedo la Kyenge non posso non pensare a un orango"	[TV News Reporter] "When [I] see Kyenge, [I] can't help but think about an orangutan"
2. le parole sono del leghista Roberto Calderoli	these words were [uttered] by the Northern League's member Roberto Calderoli
3. un ex-ministro della Repubblica	a former minister of the [Italian] Republic

---

2.   While this article is centered on the recontextualization of Calderoli's racist remark by exploring one YouTube video and all its commentaries and sub-commentaries (replies to comments), the total corpus of my data for this project consists of 9 recontextualizations of this remark in similar YouTube videos that I fully analyzed.

3.   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A33jlKm2IPA (last accessed 08/22/2016).

4.   All translations from Italian to English are mine unless otherwise stated.

Italian original version	English translation[4]
4. che dal palco della festa della Lega a Treviglio nel Bergamasco	who from the stage of the Northern League's celebratory rally in Treviglio, in the Bergamo area [Northern Italy]
5. ha insultato il ministro per l'integrazione Cécile Kyenge	insulted the Minister for Integration Cécile Kyenge
6. rispolverando un vecchio frasario leghista	by reviving old Northern League terminology
7. Calderoli che già una volta si era dovuto dimettere dall'incarico di ministro	Calderoli, who once had to quit his ministerial post
8. per aver indossato una maglietta anti-islam	because [he] wore an anti-Islam T-shirt
9. è subito stato sommerso dalle critiche	was immediately criticized
10. ha provato a liquidare il tutto come una battuta	he tried to justify everything as a joke
11. escludendo l'ipotesi di dimissioni dalla carica di Vicepresidente del Senato	by dismissing the hypothesis that [he] should quit his role as Vice-president of the Senate
12. "non vorrei" ha aggiunto	"[I] would not want," [he] added,
13. "che il polverone su di me serva a coprire altro	"that this uproar around me should serve to cover up something else
14. non sarò un capro espiatorio"	[I] won't be a scapegoat"
15. ferma la risposta del ministro Kyenge che è apparsa rammaricata	Kyenge, who seemed saddened by this [i.e., by Calderoli's remark], responded firmly:
16. "non prendo le parole di Calderoli come un'offesa personale	"[I] won't take Calderoli's words as a personal offense
17. ma mi rattristano per l'immagine che diamo dell'Italia	but [they] sadden me for the image that [we] give about Italy
18. credo che tutte le forze politiche debbano riflettere sull'uso che fanno della comunicazione" […]	[I] believe that all the political forces need to reflect on how [they] make use of communication" […]

The news reporter featured in this YouTube video recontextualized (Bauman and Briggs, 1990; Rymes, 2012) Calderoli's racist remark by reporting it in line 1, 'when [I] see Kyenge, [I] can't help but think about an orangutan', and by adding her comments to it. She stated that this senator 'insulted' the former Minister Cécile Kyenge in line 5 and briefly summarized his well-known xenophobic stances in the following lines when she claimed that it was not the first time that Calderoli had made anti-immigrant moves, since once he even had to resign as Government Minister for wearing an anti-Islam t-shirt (line 8). The news reporter continued by commenting on former Minister Kyenge's 'firm' reply to Calderoli's insult in lines 16–18: Ms. Kyenge wouldn't take Calderoli's words as a personal offense, said the news reporter, but she was extremely saddened by the impression Calderoli gave of Italy to the world and she cautioned about the fair use of language in politics. By

characterizing Ms. Kyenge as confident and not personally offended by Calderoli's racist remark, but only saddened for the way Italy as a nation is seen by the entire globe, Ms. Kyenge zooms out, or scales-up, from the 'personal' realm to a seemingly global perspective. She appears to put Italy, her country, before herself, as if to say that what she cares about is not herself as an individual but the country as a whole before a world community. She simultaneously scales-up Calderoli's 'insult' as an insult to Italy. She speaks as if other nations were able to witness Italian racism and she worries that they will attach a negative image to Italy as a consequence. In this way, Ms. Kyenge recontextualizes this racialized language by shifting the scale of the original insult against her, adopting a global perspective in which being racist and xenophobic makes Italy look backward. By doing so, she also elevates herself with respect to Calderoli's unjust behavior, and thus offers a significant moral lesson of how to talk within a world community.

In this respect, the news reporter supports Ms. Kyenge's scalar recontextualization. By framing Calderoli's remark as an 'insult' (line 5) – insult perhaps being scaled as small and 'personal' by default – she helps Kyenge shift scale and elevate her stance, as it were, by making herself, and Calderoli, responsible to the entire globe. However, the scalar work that the news reporter and former Minister Kyenge perform in this digital narrative took a different, unexpected turn when one looks at the uptake online: two-thirds of the 400 comments that I analyzed for this YouTube video are against Ms. Kyenge and migrants more generally and in favor of Senator Calderoli's remark, and only one-third is in defense of Ms. Kyenge (and migrant groups) and against the racialized language used, as I show in the six examples that are featured in this article. Only a few comments overtly condemned the racist remarks made by Senator Calderoli against Italian former Minister Kyenge.

Focusing on the various ways racialized remarks can be recontextualized in digital stories and online commentary, this article explores how Senator Calderoli's original racist joking remark is first recontextualized by Ms. Kyenge when she adds her perspective about it (lines 16–18), by the TV news reporter, and then how it is reshaped and manipulated for different ends by the various YouTube comments and sub-comments (replies to comments). Even the virtual participant who originally posted this video on YouTube recontextualized it by adding "*Razzismo*" ('Racism') in the first part of the title. This YouTube video, which is transcribed in its entirety above as a way to better contextualize Calderoli's remark as per the TV reporter's words, received 315 comments from the date it was posted, July 15th 2013 (two days after Calderoli made his problematic remark), until September 2015. Some of the comments have 15 or more embedded replies totaling around 400 comments (for all comments and embedded replies counted together).

In response to Calderoli's racialized remark, which was recontextualized by the news reporter with her reported speech saying that when Calderoli sees Ms.

Kyenge he can't help but associating her to an orangutan in line 1, many commenters recontextualized the term "orangutan" or even expanded it by including other ape-related terms in several ways. Instances such as the following ones were written across the commentaries of this YouTube video in reference to Former Minister Kyenge: "*orango*" ('orangutan') was used 20 times, "*scimmia*" ('monkey') was written twice, "*scimmiona*" ('big monkey') was used once, and "*scimpanzè*" ('chimpanzee') was mentioned twice. Commenters of this video used Calderoli's association between the former Minister of Integration Kyenge and ape-related terms 25 times. Simply by referring to Ms. Kyenge with these tropes of bestiality, commenters took a critical stance against her and aligned with Calderoli's original remark. Besides these ape-related terms, commenters also used other offensive and off-color remarks against the Italian-Congolese Minister freely and openly online. By recontextualizing these tropes, commenters aligned with Senator Calderoli and against Minister Kyenge, thus creating a virtual, participatory solidarity with him. In this online, anonymous venue, racialized language is used relatively openly and unapologetically, unlike what typically happens in face-to-face interaction when Italian speakers converse about and around topics of migration and migrants. As Pagliai (2011, 2012) demonstrates in her research on Italian reactions to immigrants in the small town of Prato, in Tuscany, Italians sometimes take an anti-immigrant stance to save face, but they do so less explicitly and more subtly. In the cases she examined, speakers align with racialized discourse by avoiding certain topics, or simply by laughing at racialized jokes (Perrino, 2015), although they might not share the anti-immigrant ideologies supporting the jokes. Thus, for Pagliai, face-work plays a crucial role in the participation framework in Italian interactions, especially when the topic of conversations is centered on migration, migrants, or refugees. Perhaps expectedly, the anonymity of YouTube commentaries seems to enable a more explicit endorsement of anti-immigrant ideologies. Here, racialized language is poorly concealed, and saving face is not an issue commenters engage in, as I demonstrate in the following six examples extracted from the 400 comments of the YouTube video analyzed in this article.[5] These examples were selected for their thematic similarities and for the digital attention that they received (as measured by the high number of their embedded replies).

---

5.   In the Italian original version of these transcripts, I maintained all the commenters' formatting choices, spelling errors, typos, capitalization formats, choice of direction of Italian accents, use of quotes and dots, and so forth, as they appear in the original YouTube posts. However, I divided the comments in lines and added line numbers for analysis purposes.

(1)   *The Saix Channel*

Italian original version	English translation
1. Non sembra, É UN ORANGO	'[She] doesn't look like [an orangutan], [SHE] IS AN ORANGUTAN'

As is the case with many YouTube comments, Example (1) is a short line commenting on this video. Brief and incisive, commenter The Saix Channel formats the comment as if it were a disagreement with Calderoli, while it is an even more antagonistic stance against Kyenge. The use of capitalization in the second clause, which suggests increased volume (which could be interpreted as screaming) and pitch, shows a strong affective stance (Chun and Walters, 2011), which is used to emphasize their belief that Italian former Minister Kyenge doesn't look like an orangutan, as Calderoli's original remark assumed, "she is an orangutan." Example (2) shows similar tropes of bestiality.

(2)   *Shark 88*

Italian original version	English translation
1. ma che torni sull'albero	'[This big monkey] should go back to her tree ….
2. 'sta scimmiona ….	'this big monkey ….
3. viene nel nosro paese	[she] comes to our country
4. e vuole dettare leggi a favore degli immigrati!??	and wants to dictate laws in favor of immigrants!??
5. ma che vada a drizzare banane col culo!!!!	[She] should straighten bananas with [her] butt instead!!!!'

In Example (2), commenter Shark 88 refers to former Minister Kyenge by using the trope "*scimmiona*" ('big monkey'), agreed in the feminine gender, in line 2. By using the subjunctive mood with an imperative meaning, a typical construction in Standard Italian, "*che torni*" ('[she should] go back'), this commenter expresses the wish that Kyenge go back to her 'tree' instead of staying in Italy (line 1). Shark 88 creates even more boundaries between Kyenge and Italians with the Italian deictic inclusive possessive adjective "*nostro*" that is 'our' (which is misspelled in the original post [*nosro*, SIC]). This is used in line 3, pointing out that former Minister Kyenge arrived in Italy, in "our" country, to make laws in favor of migrants instead of working for "us," Italians (line 4). As The Saix Channel did in Example (1), Shark 88 constructs a participation framework in these few lines: the commenter draws a boundary between "us," Italian citizens, who are entitled to have a legal system working in "our" favor and not helping migrants, and foreign migrant groups who are unfairly privileged by Ms. Kyenge. The TV reporter discussed earlier had

discursively helped Ms. Kyenge scale up the racial offense leveled at her, so that Kyenge could express concern that Italy's image may be judged racist by the entire globe. In contrast, this commenter scales things down to the level of the nation state without the watchful eye of the world. This commenter charges that Ms. Kyenge is concerned with assisting migrants rather than with prioritizing internal, *national* well-being. In short, Ms. Kyenge supposedly doesn't care about Italians. In a sense, for this commenter, she is not operating at the correct scale that her office demands as national "Minister of Integration." That racialized remarks are made openly and unapologetically is even more evident in the remaining examples I analyze next.

(3)   *Alecs Panfilo*

Italian original version	English translation
1. piu' scimpanze' che orango ….	'[She looks like] more [a] chimpanzee than [an] orangutan ….
2. con un paio di occhiali buoni da vista	with a good pair of eyeglasses
3. si nota la differenza!	one notices the difference!'

In Example (3), commenter Alecs Panfilo adds another ape-related term to the list of recontextualizations of the original term used by Calderoli. This commenter – again, ostensibly disagreeing with Calderoli – writes that former Minister Kyenge looks more like a 'chimpanzee' ("*scimpanzè*") than an orangutan in line 1. By adding another explicit trope related to apes, commenter Alecs Panfilo takes a stance in defense of Calderoli's remark and thus sides with the other racialized comments and threads of this YouTube video. This commenter not only reinforces Calderoli's stance against former Minister Kyenge and migrants more generally, but he also contributes to what begins to feel like a virtual community unified around discussion of issues of public concern, a digital public sphere, as Habermas (1989) would have it. In orienting toward, and building on, what other commenters have said, Alecs Panfilo acts not as an individual but instead helps create the sense of a larger, "participatory stance" among strangers who agree with Senator Calderoli. There is the sense of a virtual community of like-minded commenters. In this way, they foster and promote an "accepted" overtly racialized language in this digital space, a racialized language that no longer needs to be indirect or tacit (Pagliai, 2011). From the perspective of scale making, while these commenters create a virtual space that collapses distance, at the same time, they scale down and focus on Italy's national needs which, in their perspective, are not supported by former Minister Kyenge. Example (4) is another instance of this:

(4)   *Glisente81*

Italian original version	English translation
1. se avessi davanti Calderoli	'If [I had Calderoli facing me] I
2. gli urlerei in faccia:	would yell in his face:
3. MA COSA TI HANNO FATTO DI MALE GLI ORANGO?!!!!!!	BUT WHAT HAVE ORANGUTANS DONE TO YOU THAT IS SO NEGATIVE?!!!!!!'

Once again, the comment is formatted to appear as if it were a disagreement with Calderoli. Commenter glisente81 seems to take a stance in favor of former Minister Kyenge and against Senator Calderoli at first. However, it becomes immediately clear that it is not the case. The reply starts with a hypothetical construction in line 1 by stating that if he or she faced Calderoli, the commenter would yell in his face. The choice to capitalize the purported challenge to Calderoli's view in line 3 (see Chun and Walters, 2011), coupled with a question mark followed by six exclamation points, both indicate this commenter's affective outrage. The increase in "volume" parallels the increase in offensiveness, since the commenter comes to the defense of orangutans and leaves unchallenged the idea that former Minister Kyenge looks like or is an 'orangutan'. There is obvious sarcasm here, where the commenter pretends to speak out against Calderoli – perhaps as anti-racist people "ought" to respond – only to reaffirm Calderoli's position. While this racist sarcasm is arguably less direct than the earlier commenters' explicitness, the fact that the second clause is written with capital letters (followed by a question mark and six exclamation points) makes the stancetaking anything but subtle.

As Example (5) below demonstrates, racialized stancetaking and scale-making are at times enacted through the use of deictics, such as personal pronouns, possessive and demonstrative adjectives, past and present tenses, temporal aspect, and by making reference to the general immigration context in Italy and in Europe more generally.

(5)   *Mau pa*

Italian original version	English translation
1. ministro l'hanno fatta **loro**..	'**they** made her minister …
2. **io** non la riconosco come rappresentante anzi,	**I** don't recognize her as a representative, quite the contrary,
3. **questa** congolese sta lavorando per la **sua** gente	**this** Congolese [woman] is working for her people
4. preparando **loro** il terreno	[she is] preparing a path **for them**
5. per invader**ci** ulteriormente	to invade **us** even more
6. dunque sta proponendo leggi di parte..	so [she] is proposing her own laws …

Italian original version	English translation
7. con tutto il rispetto desidero che chi con l'italiano	with all respect [I] wish that who with the Italian person
8. e specialmente l'italiano che morì	and especially with the Italian person who died
9. per costruire questa italia ormai calpestata	to build this Italy [which] is by now crushed
10. se ne ritorni a gambe levate nella **sua** terra d'origine..	[she, i.e., Ms. Kyenge] should run like hell back to **her own** original country …
11. semmai volessi condividere **la mia** nazione con altri popoli preferisco quelli civili..	if I ever want to share **my** nation with other people, [I] prefer the civilized ones …'

In this example, commenter mau pa uses various deictic pronouns throughout their comment. In line 1, mau pau uses the third personal plural pronoun "*loro*" ('they') to index Italian politicians who decided to nominate Kyenge as Minister of Integration. Scaling up by becoming an evaluator of Italian politics, commenter mau pa emphasizes that Italian politicians ('they'), almost in a conspiracy, 'made' her Italian minister of Integration. The commenter then continues in line 2 by using another personal pronoun, which in Italian is optional, "io" ('I'), through which s/he rejects 'this Congolese' (line 3) minister as a true representative of the government and of the Italian people. This commenter creates a sharp divide between the "non-Italian" Minister Kyenge and "us," Italians. In terms of scale, the unit stressed is that of the nation-state, with commenter mau pa charging that Ms. Kyenge isn't Italian and doesn't belong in Italy, by reminding readers of her birth country, the Congo. The racializing stance vis-à-vis Ms. Kyenge is accomplished in part by locating her outside the nation, and by defending co-nationals from her foreign politics and from other migrants' "invasion" as well. By adding that she is working for 'her own people' ("*la sua gente*"), this commenter drives home that she doesn't represent the interests of Italians. Commenter mau pau then continues in lines 5 and 6, by saying that former Minister Kyenge 'is preparing their path for them [i.e., for migrants] to invade us even more'. This time, by using the third person indirect object plural pronoun "*loro*,"[6] meaning 'for them', commenter mau pa seems to refer not only to possible migrants from the Congo, where Kyenge was born, and who might take advantage from her being Minister of Integration in Italy, but to all the other migrant groups that have been landing to Italy in recent years, including refugees from Syria and Eritrea. Furthermore, commenter mau pau's use of the verb "*invadere*" ('to invade') followed by the inclusive second person

---

6. The Italian third person plural pronoun "*loro*" can be both subject pronoun and object pronoun depending on the context.

direct object pronoun "*ci*" ('us'), which in Italian is fused with the verb in the infinitive ("*invaderci*"), in line 5, creates, again, a participatory stance among Italians whose unwelcoming attitude towards migrants is made explicit and unapologetic, an attitude that has been shared by many Italians in recent years (Albahari, 2015a; Pagliai, 2011; Perrino, 2015). In commenter mau pau's final line (11), s/he reaches a climax by elevating starker boundaries between Italians and migrants, represented by former Minister Kyenge. Commenter mau pau's use of the first person possessive adjective "*mia*" in "*mia nazione*" ('my nation') emphasizes, again, the fact that Italy is for Italians, not for migrants. In this way, commenter mau pau shares comments against Ms. Kyenge and in favor of their own nation, Italy, which has been under attack by migrants and needs to be defended. The nation is presented as the only relevant unit and scale. This commenter also encourages a more generalized unwillingness to share Italian territory with migrant groups, who are, for this commenter, 'not civilized' (line 11). Commenter mau pau's alignment with Italy and Italians and against migrants and former Minister Kyenge is thus accentuated intertextually by the use of capitalization, punctuation, and deictics (such as personal pronouns, possessive adjectives and demonstrative adjectives as used pejoratively).

The following example (Example (6)) is another case in which a racialized stance is made openly and with a similar scaling that insists on the primacy of the nation. In response to a previous comment in defense of Ms. Kyenge, in which a ban to racism was advocated, commenter The Giant772 writes:

(6) *TheGiant772*

Italian original version	English translation
1. no al razzismo!	'no to racism!
2. ma scusate **questa tipa** viene da tanto lontano	but excuse me **this girl** [i.e., Ms. Kyenge] comes from so far away
3. per imporre **le sue** leggi e **noi** zitti?	to impose **her** laws and **we** [are] silent?
4. non vuole il crocifisso nelle scuole,	[she] doesn't want the crucifix in schools,
5. non vuole feste natalizie a scuola per rispetto delle religioni,	[she] doesn't want Christmas festivities to respect other religions,
6. vuole appartamenti [per] gli extracomunitari ecc …	[she] wants apartments [for] the extracomunitari ['immigrants from outside Europe'], etc …
7. l'italiano sta morendo di fame	Italians are dying of hunger
8. e ci sono tanti nostri concittadini sotto i ponti,	and there are many of our citizens under the bridges [i.e., poor'],
9. quindi le case ai nostri fratelli.	so the house [should go] to our brothers and sisters.
10. noi degli extracomunitari non ce ne facciamo niente,	We don't find any use of the extracomunitari,
11. sono solo un pericolo …	[they] are just a danger …'

In response to a comment, and seemingly in defense of Ms. Kyenge, TheGiant772 states "*no al razzismo!*" ('no to racism!'). That this is sarcastic becomes immediately clear, as the commenter addresses their virtual imagined community[7] with "*ma scusate*" ('but excuse me') and describes former Minister Kyenge as "*questa tipa*" ('this girl'). Like the prior example, TheGiant772 continues in line 3 by saying that former Minister Kyenge does not belong; she comes from far away to impose her laws on Italians. Again, this commenter excludes Ms. Kyenge, by pushing her beyond the boundary of the nation. The following lines 4–6, which are highly parallelistic, note some of the policies allegedly promoted by Ms. Kyenge, which are not beneficial for Italians in this commenter's view. She doesn't want any crucifixes or Christmas celebrations in Italian schools so as to respect all religions (lines 4–5), and she wants to give apartments to migrants, the *extracomunitari*.[8] These parallelistic structures seem designed to give emphasis to, and to make rhetorically effective, what this commenter is trying to convey to his online community. The repetition of the semi-modal verb "*vuole*" ('[she] wants') in the beginning of each clause in lines 4–6, for example, creates a solemn tone that could be "heard" through these virtual lines as well.[9] The intertextual effects of commenter TheGiant772 's parallelistic structures align him even more against Ms. Kyenge in defense of his co-nationals, all Italians, who are penalized by the choice that she had made to assist migrants and refugees. After these parallelistic lines, there is indeed an escalation in this commenter's tone and claims when s/he says that Italians are actually dying of hunger (line 7), since many of them are living under the bridges (as a sign of not having a home and being poor, line 8), so Ms. Kyenge should assign homes to 'our brother and sisters' first (line 9) before giving them to migrants and refugees. The idea of Italians dying of hunger under bridges creates an unrealistic image which allows this commenter to write the final two lines 10–11, in which s/he wishes to kick out all migrants from Italy since 'we don't find any use of extracomunitari, [they] are just a danger …'. These final lines reach a climax in which commenter

---

7.   As Marwick and boyd (2011) aptly indicate, online participants, such as the YouTube commenters described in this article, always address a virtual audience that is "often imagined and constructed by an individual in order to present themselves appropriately, based on technological affordances and immediate social context" (Marwick and boyd, 2011, p. 2).

8.   See footnote 1 for more details on the use of this derogatory term across Italy.

9.   Parallelism, that is, repetition with variation (Silverstein and Urban, 1996; Urban, 1991) has been variously studied by linguistic anthropologists and sociolinguists (Caton, 1986, 1987; Fleming and Lempert, 2014; Glick, 2007, 2016; Perrino, 2002; Silverstein, 1998; Wilce, 1998) being inspired by Jakobson (1957)'s work on the poetics of language. The highly parallelistic structures within these lines creates a repetitive and intense effect that is typical of political oratory (Lempert and Silverstein, 2012) or religious sermons (Wilce, 1998).

TheGiant772 foments other Italians' rage against the arrival of new migrants to Italy. Furthermore, the fact that this commenter refers to "*l'italiano*" in the singular form, but with a plural meaning (hence my translation as 'Italians') in line 7, is indexical of a widely established ideology which portrays Italians as being a homogenous community in which migrants are typically excluded.[10] These lines, and the entire comment, reinforce, again, imaginary boundaries between Italians and these new comers, and the divide between "we," Italians who are in disadvantage because we are not even protected by our own Minister of Integration who doesn't assign work and houses to us, and "they," the newcomers, who have been unfairly given attention and assistance by the Italian government to Italians' disadvantage. However, Italians do not make any use of migrants, they should then be removed from Italy. Again, this divide is digitally co-constructed among YouTube commenters' racialized stories with no shame and with the creation of exclusionary stances against migrants and refugees.

Conclusion

What is the significance of these exclusionary discourses in the online and offline world at this particular and political moment in Italy and in Europe? As Italy has become one of several important European entry points for migrants and refugees, and as restrictions and practices against these newcomers have been emerging at a higher rate across Italy, it is important to focus our attention to some of the discursive practices that may help trigger the injustices and "crimes of peace" (Albahari, 2015a) committed on a daily basis on and around the Italian soil.

Through an analysis of the interactional dynamics between commenters of a YouTube video in which a politician's racist remark has been recontextualized and taken up, this article has demonstrated how racialized stancetaking is more explicit in this anonymous digital environment than in face-to-face interaction. Racialized stancetaking here involves a refusal to accept the scalar move initiated by Kyenge and reinforced by the sympathetic TV reporter. While Kyenge had invited Italians to view their nation as part of a larger global community that respects diversity and guards against the scourge of racism, the YouTube commenters sympathetic with Calderoli scaled down the relevant unit to that of the nation-state and set up a sharp divide between "us" and "them" (Gumperz, 1982), Italians and foreign "invaders." They tended to charge that Kyenge simply didn't belong and, worse, that she cared more about migrants than about Italians – mainly because she was not born in

---

10. I wish to thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out after a careful reading of my transcript.

Italy in the first place. The commenters who partake in overtly racialized stances – at times reacting to each other – created a virtual "participatory" solidarity with Calderoli and against former Minister Kyenge. More specifically, by aligning with, rather than against, Calderoli's recontextualized initial remark, and by scaling up and down throughout their comments, YouTube commenters variously aligned against Ms. Kyenge and did not contain any off-color and racist remarks against her and her work as a mandated government minister. These commenters did even more than just insult Italian former Minister Kyenge in their racialized stories. By assigning blame to Ms. Kyenge for creating and supporting laws in favor of migrants and refugees and against Italian interests, some commenters went so far as to include all migrant groups and population in their racialized narratives, migrants who should not be living and working in Italy, migrants who do not belong to the Italian nation, and who are not, and will never be, Italian citizens (although, of course, former Minister Kyenge is an Italian citizen, as many other migrants have been). In this respect, Goffman (1981)'s notion of footing combined with recent research on scales (Blommaert, 2007; Carr and Lempert, 2016b; Collins and Slembrouck, 2009; Dong and Blommaert, 2009) have proved to be key theoretical and analytical tools in the digital world as well. Through an analysis of the participation structure in these digital settings, I showed how certain commenters take stances against migrants while creating intimate spaces of solidarity for Italians who supposedly suffered from everything former Minister Kyenge had done "against" them and in favor of migrant groups. Stancetaking here was enacted with the help of certain discursive strategies, such as the use of tropes of bestiality, capitalization, punctuation, deictics (personal pronouns, possessive adjectives, demonstrative pronouns and adjectives), hypothetical constructions, and parallelistic structures. By co-constructing their digital stories against Ms. Kyenge, YouTube commenters align with, and thus encourage participation in, a widely circulating ideology in which identities are reinforced by excluding new comers and therefore by creating various spatial boundaries to exclude them. By negotiating their positioning and stance discursively, YouTube commenters create exclusionary intimacies that promote separation and ethnonationalism in a newly reconfigured European continent.

In this light, as a site in which digital stories develop rapidly and liberally, YouTube can help amplify racialized stances against migrants, and can thus foster hegemonic ideologies that are reproduced not only nationally, in Italy, but perhaps transnationally as well, given the translocal reach of YouTube and the spread of anti-immigrant politics. The six examples examined in this article, together with the original racist remark by Calderoli, demonstrate that growing boundaries have been emerging between the "we" of Italians – that is to say, insiders, "locals," who have deep roots in their national history, traditions and language – and the foreign migrant "others," outsiders, who have been targets of anti-immigrant policy and

prejudice. In terms of participation, the divide between the insider "we" and the outsider "they" seems to mirror an image of who is considered Italian and who is not. Using racialized stories and profane language in YouTube commentaries thus sharpens the ideological boundary between "us" and "them," serving as one more explicit defense against people constructed as neither Italian, nor citizens.

By focusing on how racialized stories around migrants are enacted by YouTube commenters, this article has demonstrated that it is perhaps possible to better understand and identify the nature of this emerging racialized language in the digital world so that researchers and political experts could address these issues in more meaningful ways before it is too late. As Albahari reminds us in his poignant book *Crimes of Peace: Mediterranean Migrations at the World's Deadliest Border* (Albahari, 2015a), Italy holds a focal position for migrants and refugees who have been landing in Europe. Thus, by taking a closer look at how racialized language is performed by Italians on YouTube, and, consequently, how certain circulating ideologies are reinforced and reshaped, one could start thinking, and thus (re)acting, differently about these many crimes of peace.

Acknowledgments

References

Ainsworth-Vaughn, N. (1998). *Claiming power in doctor-patient talk*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Albahari, M. (2015a). *Crimes of peace: Mediterranean migrations at the world's deadliest border*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. https://doi.org/10.9783/9780812291728

Albahari, M. (2015b). Europe's refugee crisis. *Anthropology Today*, *31*(5), 1–2. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8322.12196

Alim, H. S. (2016). Who's afraid of the transracial subject?: Raciolinguistics and the political project of transracialization. In H. S. Alim, J. R. Rickford, & A. F. Ball (Eds.), *Raciolinguistics: how language shapes our ideas about race* (pp. 33–50). New York: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190625696.003.0002

Alim, H. S., Rickford, J. R., & Ball, A. F. (2016). *Raciolinguistics: How language shapes our ideas about race*. New York: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190625696.001.0001

Allievi, S. (2014). Immigration, religious diversity and recognition of differences: The Italian way to multiculturalism. *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, *21*(6), 724–737. https://doi.org/10.1080/1070289X.2013.828623

Bauman, R., & Briggs, C. (1990). Poetics and performance as critical perspectives on language and social life. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, *19*, 59–88. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.an.19.100190.000423

Blommaert, J. (2007). Sociolinguistic scales. *Intercultural Pragmatics*, *4*(1), 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1515/IP.2007.001

Blommaert, J. (2010). *The sociolinguistics of globalization*. New York: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511845307

Bonifazi, C., Heins, S., Strozza, M., & Vitiello, M. (2009). Italy: The Italian transition from an emigration to an immigration country. *IDEA Working Papers*, *5*, 1–92.

Carr, E. S., & Lempert, M. (2016a). Introduction: Pragmatics of scale. In E. S. Carr & M. Lempert (Eds.), *Scale: Discourse and dimensions of social life* (pp. 1–24). Oakland, CA: University of California Press. https://doi.org/10.1525/luminos.15

Carr, E. S., & Lempert, M. (2016b). *Scale: Discourse and dimensions of social life*. Oakland, California: University of California Press. https://doi.org/10.1525/luminos.15

Caton, S. C. (1986). Salām Tahīyah": Greetings from the highlands of Yemen. *American Ethnologist*, *13*(2), 290–308. https://doi.org/10.1525/ae.1986.13.2.02a00060

Caton, S. C. (1987). Contributions of Roman Jakobson. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 16, 223–260. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.an.16.100187.001255

Chun, E. W. (2013). "Ironic blackness as masculine cool: Asian American language and authenticity on YouTube." *Applied Linguistics*, *345*(October): 592–612. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amt023

Chun, E. W. (2016). "The meaning of *Ching-Chong*: Language, racism, and response in new media." In H. S. Alim, J. R. Rickford, & A. F. Ball (Eds.), *Raciolinguistics: How language shapes our ideas about race* (pp. 81–96). New York: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190625696.003.0005

Chun, E. W., & Lo, A. (2016). "Language and racialization." In N. Bonvillain (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of linguistic anthropology* (pp. 220–233). New York: Routledge.

Chun, E., & Walters, K. (2011). Orienting to Arab orientalisms: Language, race, and humor in a YouTube video. In C. Thurlow & K. Mroczek (pp. 251–272). New York: Oxford University Press.

Clini, C. (2015). Migration and multiculturalism in Italy: Conflicting narratives of cultural identity. *Synergy*, *11*(2), 251–262.

Collins, J. (2012). Migration, sociolinguistic scale, and educational reproduction. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, *43*(2), 192–213. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1492.2012.01169.x

Collins, J., & Slembrouck, S. (2009). Goffman and globalization: Frame, footing and scale in migration-connected multilingualism. In J. Collins, S. Slembrouck, & M. Baynham (Eds.), *Globalization and language in contact: Scale, migration and communicative practices* (pp. 19–41). New York: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Collins, J., Slembrouck, S., & Baynham, M. (2009). Introduction: Scale, Migration and communicative practice. In J. Collins, S. Slembrouck, & M. Baynham (Eds.), *Globalization and language in contact: Scale, migration and communicative practices* (pp. 1–16). New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Dayter, D. (2014). Self-praise in microblogging. *Journal of Pragmatics*, *61*, 91–102. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2013.11.021

Dayter, D. (2016). *Discursive self in microblogging: Speech acts, stories and self-praise*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company. https://doi.org/10.1075/pbns.260

De Fina, A., & Georgakopoulou, A. (2012). *Analyzing narrative: Discourse and sociolinguistic perspectives*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

De Fina, A., & Georgakopoulou, A. (2015). *The handbook of narrative analysis*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118458204

De Fina, A., & Perrino, S. (2011). Introduction: Interviews vs. 'natural' contexts: A false dilemma. *Language in Society*, *40*(1), 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404510000849

De Mauro, T. (1969). *La Lingua Italiana e i Dialetti*. Firenze: La Nuova Italia.

Dick, H., & Wirtz, K. (2011). "Racializing discourses." *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, *21*, 2–10. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1395.2011.01094.x

Dong, J., & Blommaert, J. (2009). Space, scale and accents: Constructing migrant identity in Beijing. In J. Collins, S. Slembrouck, & M. Baynham (Eds.), *Globalization and language in contact: Scale, migration and communicative practices* (pp. 42–61). New York: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Du Bois, J. W. (2007). "The stance triangle." In R. Englebretson (Eds.), *Stancetaking in discourse: Subjectivity, evaluation, interaction* (pp. 140–182). Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company. https://doi.org/10.1075/pbns.164.07du

Fleming, L., & Lempert, M. (2014). Poetics and performativity. In N. J. Enfield, P. Kockelman, & J. Sidnell (Eds.), *Cambridge handbook of linguistic anthropology* (pp. 485–515). New York: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139342872.023

García-Sánchez, I. M. (2016). "Multiculturalism and its discontents: Essentializing ethnic Moroccan and Roma identities in classroom discourse in Spain." In H. S. Alim, J. R. Rickford, & A. F. Ball (Eds.), *Raciolinguistics: How language shapes our ideas about race* (pp. 291–308). New York: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190625696.003.0017

Gershon, I. (2010). Breaking up is hard to do: Media. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, *20*(2), 389–405. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1395.2010.01076.x

Giordano, B. (2004). The politics of the northern league and Italy's changing attitude towards Europe. *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, *5*(1), 61–79. https://doi.org/10.1080/15705850408438879

Glick, D. J. (2007). Some performative techniques of stand-up comedy: An exercise in the textuality of temporalization. *Language and Communication*, *27*(3), 291–306. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langcom.2007.01.003

Glick, D. J. (2016). The late-night infomercial as an electronic site of ritual self-transformation: The case of "personal power". *Signs and Society*, *4*(1), 109–134.

Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. New York: Doubleday.

Goffman, E. (1981). *Forms of talk*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Gumperz, J. J. (1968). The speech community. In D. L. Sills (Ed.), *International encyclopedia of the social sciences* (pp. 381–386). New York: Macmillan.

Gumperz, J. J. (1982). *Discourse strategies*. New York: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511611834

Habermas, J. (1989). The structural transformation of the public sphere. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Hill, J. (1995). Junk Spanish, covert racism, and the (leaky) boundary between public and private spheres. *Pragmatics*, *5*(2), 197–212. https://doi.org/10.1075/prag.5.2.07hil

Hill, J. (2008). *The everyday language of white racism*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444304732

Jaffe, A. (2009). *Stance: Sociolinguistic perspectives*. New York: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195331646.001.0001

Jaffe, A. (2015). Staging language on Corsica: Stance, improvisation, play, and heteroglossia. *Language in Society*, *44*(02), 161–186. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404515000032

Jaffe, A., & Walton, S. (2011). "Stuff white people like": Stance, class, race, and internet commentary. In C. Thurlow & K. Mroczek (Eds), *Digital discourse: Language in the new media* (pp. 199–211). New York: Oxford University Press.

Jakobson, R. (1957). Shifters and verbal categories. In L. R. Waugh & M. Monville-Burston (Eds.), *On language* (pp. 386–392). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Kiesling, S. F. (2011). Stance in context: Affect, alignment and investment in the analysis of stancetaking. *iMean conference*, April, 1–11.

Lee, C. K. M. (2011). Microblogging and status updates on Facebook: Texts and practices. In C. Thurlow & K. Mroczek (Eds.), *Digital discourse: Language in the new media* (pp. 110–130). New York: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199795437.003.0006

Lo, A. (2016). "Suddenly faced with a Chinese village": The linguistic racialization of Asian Americans. In H. S. Alim, J. R. Rickford, & A. F. Ball (Eds.), *Raciolinguistics: How language shapes our ideas about race* (pp. 97–112). New York: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190625696.003.0006

Lempert, M. (2008). The poetics of stance: Text-metricality, epistemicity, interaction. *Language in Society*, *37*(04), 569–592. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404508080779

Lempert, M., & Silverstein, M. (2012). *Creatures of politics: Media, message, and the American presidency*. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press.

Marwick, A. E., & boyd, d. (2011). I tweet honestly, i tweet passionately: Twitter users, context collapse, and the imagined audience. *New Media & Society*, *13*(1), 114–133. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444810365313

Mendoza-Denton, N. (2016). Norteño and Sureño gangs, Hip hop, and ethnicity on YouTube: Localism in California through Spanish accent variation. In H. S. Alim, J. R. Rickford, & A. F. Ball (Eds.), *Raciolinguistics: How language shapes our ideas about race* (pp. 135–150). New York: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190625696.003.0008

Myers, G. (2010). *Discourse of blogs and wikis*. New York: Continuum.

Page, R. (2011). *New narratives: Stories and storytelling in the digital age*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Page, R. (2015). The narrative dimensions of social media storytelling: Options for linearity and tellership. In A. De Fina, & A. Georgakopoulou (Eds.), *The handbook of narrative analysis* (pp. 329–348). Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Pagliai, V. (2011). Facework, and identity in talk about immigrants in Italy. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, *21*, 94–112. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1395.2011.01099.x

Pagliai, V. (2012). Non-alignment in footing, intentionality and dissent in talk about immigrants in Italy. *Language and Communication*, *32*(4), 277–292. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langcom.2012.06.002

Perrino, S. (2002). Intimate hierarchies and Qur'anic Saliva (Tëfli): Textuality in a Senegalese ethnomedical encounter. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, *12*(2), 225–259. https://doi.org/10.1525/jlin.2002.12.2.225

Perrino, S. (2011). Chronotopes of story and storytelling event in interviews. *Language in Society*, *40*(1), 91–103. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404510000916

Perrino, S. (2015). Performing extracomunitari: Mocking migrants in Veneto Barzellette. *Language in Society*, *44*(2), 141–160. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404515000020

Reyes, A. (2011). 'Racist!': Metapragmatic regimentation of racist discourse by Asian American youth. *Discourse & Society*, *22*(4), 458–473. https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926510395836

Reyes, A. (2016). The voicing of Asian American figures: Korean linguistic styles at an Asian American cram school. In H. S. Alim, J. R. Rickford, & A. F. Ball (Eds.), *Raciolinguistics: How language shapes our ideas about race* (pp. 309–326). New York: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190625696.003.0018

Rosa, J. (2015). "Racializing language, regimenting Latinas/os: Chronotope, social tense, and American raciolinguistic futures." *Language and Communication*, *46*(October 2015), 106–117. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langcom.2015.10.007

Rosa, J. (2016a). "Standardization, racialization, languagelessness: Raciolinguistic ideologies across communicative contexts." *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, *26*(2), 162–183. https://doi.org/10.1111/jola.12116

Rosa, J. (2016b). "From mock Spanish to inverted Spanglish: Language ideologies and the racialization of Mexican and Puerto Rican youth in the United States." In H. S. Alim, J. R. Rickford, & A. F. Ball (Eds.), *Raciolinguistics: How language shapes our ideas about race* (pp. 65–80). New York: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190625696.003.0004

Rymes, B. (2008). *Classroom discourse analysis: A tool for critical reflection (Discourse and Social Processes)*. New York: Hampton Press.

Rymes, B. (2012). Recontextualizing YouTube: From macro – micro to mass-mediated communicative repertoires. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, *43*(2), 214–227. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1492.2012.01170.x

Schiffrin, D. (1996). Narrative as self-portrait: Sociolinguistic constructions of identity. *Language in Society*, *25*(2), 167–203. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404500020601

Schiffrin, D., De Fina, A., & Nylund, A. (Eds.) (2010). *Telling stories: Language narrative and social life*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

Sciortino, A. (2010). *Anche Voi Foste Stranieri: l'Immigrazione, la Chiesa e la Società Italiana* (1). Roma: Laterza.

Silverstein, M. (1998). Improvisational performance of culture in realtime discursive practice. In K. Sawyer (Eds.), *Creativity in performance* (pp. 265–312). Greenwich, CT: Ablex Publishing Corp.

Silverstein, M., & Urban, G. (1996). *Natural histories of discourse*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Storni, J. (2011). *Sparategli! Nuovi Schiavi d'Italia*. Roma, Italy: Editori Internazionali Riuniti.

Urban, G. (1991). *A discourse-centered approach to culture: Native South American myths and rituals*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Vigouroux, C. B. (2009). A relational understanding of language practice: Interacting time-spaces in a single ethnographic site. In J. Collins, S. Slembrouck, & M. Baynham (Eds.), *Globalization and language in contact: Scale, migration and communicative practices* (pp. 62–84). New York: Continuum.

Wallerstein, I. M. (1974). *The modern world-system*. New York: Academic Press.

Wilce, J. M. (1998). *Eloquence in trouble: The poetics and politics of complaint in rural Bangladesh*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Wortham, S. (2000). Interactional positioning and narrative self-construction. *Narrative Inquiry*, *10*(1), 157–184. https://doi.org/10.1075/ni.10.1.11wor

Wortham, S. (2001). *Narratives in action: A strategy for research analysis*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Wortham, S. (2006). *Learning identity: The joint emergence of social identification and academic learning*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Wortham, S., Mortimer, K., Lee, K., Allard, E., & White, K. D. (2011). Interviews as interactional data. *Language in Society*, *40*(01), 39–50. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404510000874

Transcription conventions

::::	syllable lengthening
-	syllable cut-off
.	stopping fall in tone
,	continuing intonation
?	rising intonation
[…]	omitted material
[ ]	transcriber's comments
Regular Font	Standard Italian
Bold	highlighted portions of the transcript discussed in the analysis

"We are going to our Portuguese homeland!"

French Luso-descendants' diasporic Facebook conarrations of vacation return trips to Portugal

Isabelle Simões Marques and Michèle Koven
Universidade Aberta & CLUNL-FCSH-Universidade Nova de Lisboa /
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

This article combines the study of online narratives as social practices and the linguistic anthropological study of imagined communities, to examine a set of non-canonical narrative practices in a Facebook group for the Portuguese diaspora in France. Instead of *reports* of *individual* members' *past* experiences, these narratives function as *invitations* to other group members to co-tell *typical*, *shared* experiences. Specifically, we investigate how group members share vacation trips to Portugal with each other in ways that produce a sense of collective and simultaneous experience. They accomplish this through deictically-based narrative strategies that shift the social, spatial, and temporal perspectives of narrating and narrated frames in ways that link the following: individual *I's* with collective *we's*, one-time events with timeless event types, and co-presence online with co-presence on vacation. Through these strategies, participants connect Facebook narrations of vacations to the larger social project of diasporic longing for and return to Portugal.

Keywords: narrative, Facebook, heritage tourism, diaspora, Portuguese descent, France, roots tourism, imagined community, nationalism, deictics

This article combines the study of online narratives as social practices and the linguistic anthropological study of imagined communities, to examine a set of non-canonical narrative practices in a Facebook group for the Portuguese diaspora in France. We examine how group members use a set of online narrative practices, not so much to *report* individuals' past experiences, but instead to *invite* one another to collaboratively construct jointly recognizable types of collective experience. In particular, we discuss the complex social work involved when young people of Portuguese descent living in France share their vacation trips to Portugal with each other on Facebook. Specifically, we investigate what these multimodal Facebook

© 2019 John Benjamins Publishing Company

posts can contribute to understandings of narrative as social practice. We examine a case where narratives serve less as reports of *individual* members' *past* experiences, and more as *invitations* to *collective* social projects, such as that of Portuguese diasporic nationalism.

In our work on online communicative practices of the Portuguese diaspora in France,[1] we noticed that participants in a Facebook group for the diaspora in France regularly share the following type of post of vacation travel from France to Portugal and back again, accompanied by a photo of the Portuguese border.

(1)   "*Parce que quand <u>on voit</u> ce panneau, <u>on a les yeux</u> <u>qui petillent</u> on est heureux, joyeux. Et <u>on dit</u>, "Graças a Deus" <u>on est bien arriver!</u>"* [sic]
      "Because when <u>we see</u> this sign, <u>our eyes sparkle</u>, <u>we are</u> happy, joyous. And <u>we say</u>, 'Thank God,' '<u>we have arrived</u>!'
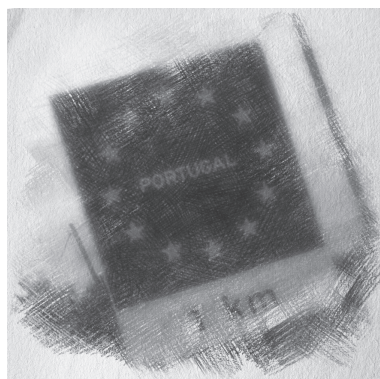
Figure 1.

We were intrigued about how to characterize this type of communicative practice. On the one hand, such posts have a narrative-like quality, presenting a series of there-and-then actions: of seeing the sign, crossing the border, and quoting narrated reactions. On the other hand, these posts do not conform to canonical Labovian approaches to narrative that have privileged first-person singular (I) accounts of one-time past events (Labov, 1972). Instead, these posts are presented as a general experience, in a habitual or timeless present tense (*on voit*/we see, *on est*/we are, *on dit*/we say), that "we/*on*" collectively share, where "we/*on*" appears to index like-minded Facebook group members, and more generally, members of the Portuguese diaspora residing in French-speaking countries, who long for the family's homeland. We decided to look further into what communicative practices such as these

---

1.   See Koven & Marques (2015) for a discussion of similar issues on YouTube.

Facebook posts can reveal about narrative, and what narrative analysis can reveal about communicative practices such as these Facebook posts.

Despite the turn to treating narrative as social practice (De Fina, 2012; De Fina & Georgakapoulou, 2015; Ochs & Capps, 2000), narrative scholarship still often privileges single speakers' accounts of their individual experiences. Furthermore, sociolinguistically oriented narrative scholars have tended to focus on how social actors use storytelling to accomplish more micro-interactionally, and interpersonally scaled social practices (Goodwin 1990; Mandelbaum 2013).[2] This article discusses how participants use particular types of narrative and narrative-like practices not so much to report individual experiences, or negotiate interpersonal relationships. Instead, we examine how participants narrate experience on Facebook in order to invite one another to enact particular forms of collective identity, in this case – a convivial form of diasporic nationalism.

Insofar as narrative allows participants to experience the there-and-then of the storyworld from the here-and-now of the storytelling interaction, narrative practices involve forms of space-time travel (Lempert & Perrino, 2007). We will show how participants' multimodal narrative-like practices on Facebook allow them particular forms of transnational space-time travel and simultaneity. That is, participants use visual and verbal narrative strategies in their Facebook interactions with each other that produce not only a sense of sharing identity as part of the same "we", but also a sense of being together in two spatiotemporal contexts at the same time, i.e., being together online *and* being together offline on the road to Portugal. In this way, instead of treating narrative as only involving the sharing of individuals' previously lived there-and-then experiences, we examine an underexplored type of practice, where group members do not so much report, but invite each other to experience particular "theres" and "thens" with each other in the "here-and-now", and in so doing to recognize each other as part of a larger collective "we."

We do this by analyzing how people use co-occurring combinations of multimodal indexical and visual strategies to achieve a form of collective mobilization. Participants use these strategies in ways that produce two interlinked types of simultaneity:

1. The linking of individual with collective perspectives and the fusion of the online context of interaction on Facebook and the offline narrated context of the road trip. Participants accomplish the first type of simultaneity with deictic forms that link individual *I's* to collective *we's* and link one-time events with habitual or typical event types.

---

2. See De Fina (2012) for a discussion of micro and macro perspectives on narrative.

2. They accomplish the second type of simultaneity by making the online narration appear to unfold at the same time as the road trip. In this way, participants produce a sense of a diasporic "we" that gives participants the sense of being online with each other in France and with each other on the road to Portugal.

Through these strategies, participants use narrative not only at the interactional scale of mundane interpersonal conviviality but also at a broader social scale, by enacting more widely recognized forms of Portuguese diasporic nationalism. By sharing their vacations, participants orient to widespread Portuguese ideology of return (Brettell, 2003), that presents Portugal as the "real" home for which those abroad should always nostalgically long. This is often described as *saudade* (Leal, 2000), and is considered emblematic of Portugal and diasporic Portuguese nationalism.

This analysis thus connects and expands two scholarly conversations: on the one hand the interactionally oriented study of narratives as social practices (De Fina 2012; De Fina & Georgakapoulou, 2015), particularly in online contexts (Page, 2012); on the other hand, the linguistic anthropological study of *imagined communities* (Anderson, 1991; Billig, 1995; Gal & Woolard, 2001; Silverstein, 2000; Urban, 2000). We briefly review these two conversations and how this analysis work intervenes in them.

Interactional approaches to narrative as social practice

In relation to the sociolinguistic scholarship on narrative, our work draws from and adds to scholarship that challenges canonical sociolinguistic approaches to narrative as necessarily involving first-person singular (I) accounts of one-time events that have occurred in the past. Earlier scholarship in the Labovian tradition defined narrative – as "recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events which … actually occurred" (Labov, 1972, pp. 359–360). These were usually narratives told by single tellers about past-one time experiences in the context of sociolinguistic interviews. The Labovian approach to narrative has been critiqued for paying minimal attention to the interactions in which stories are told and the social work storytelling may accomplish (Bamberg, 1997; Goodwin, 1990; Ochs & Capps 2000; Koven, 2002; Mandelbaum, 2013; Polanyi 1979).

Indeed, there is now a robust counter tradition that has examined narratives in terms of the social work that people use them to do with each other. For example, one need not assume that narratives are told by individual social actors about individual experiences that occurred at a time prior to the telling. Indeed, a number of scholars have, for example, examined non-dyadic participant frameworks, such as

multiparty co-narrations (Duranti, 1986; Ochs & Capps, 2000; Page, 2012), where several participants jointly tell a story.

Scholars have also expanded the Labovian model by discussing narratives in temporal frames other than the past, such as stories projected into the future, or unfolding in the present, whether that is the historical present, habitual present, the timeless present, or even the unfolding present (Goodwin, 1997; Koven, 2016; Ochs, 1994; Ochs & Capps, 2000; Georgakapoulou, 2007). These more flexible approaches to narrative that include multiple tellers and time frames have been particularly well suited for analyzing how people co-narrate experiences on social media (Georgakapoulou, 2007, 2015), and more specifically on Facebook (Page, 2012).

However despite these more elastic, expansive approaches to narrative, narrative scholarship has still often privileged stories by and about individual social actors, and privileged understandings of the social practices that narratives help to accomplish in micro-analytic terms. For example, when discourse-oriented scholars discuss what storytellers "do" with each other, the focus often remains on interpersonally scaled activities, such as gossiping, teasing, and so forth. (Goodwin, 1990; Mandelbaum, 2013).[3]

We thus make two interventions into narrative scholarship: first a fuller consideration of the ways people can narrate outside the first person singular, past tense accounts of one-time events. This requires systematically considering how storytellers may collaboratively narrate not only individual experiences, often signaled by first-person singular I,[4] but also pay systematic attention to how people narrate collective experiences and identities, often signaled by first-person plural we (see Badequano-López, 2000; De Fina, 2003; Goffman, 1979/1981; Van De Mieroop, 2014, 2015). Second, we demonstrate the importance of a fuller consideration of how people use narrative to signal larger scaled social projects, beyond the level of the interpersonal, such as diasporic nationalism.

We begin with our operational definition of narrative, drawing from work in linguistic anthropology, to define narrative as an analytic perspective for understanding how social actors interrelate the spaces and times of two types of events or contexts: those of the immediate interaction and those "talked about." We thus broadly define narrative as discourse that involves a relationship between a here-and-now narrating event and a there-and-then narrated event, that need not be in the past (Agha, 2005; Bakhtin, 1981; Bauman, 1986; Jakobson, 1957; Koven, 2002, 2004, 2007, 2016; O'Connor, 1994; Perrino, 2007; Silverstein, 1993, 2005; Wortham,

---

3. See De Fina (2012) for a discussion of micro and macro approaches to narrative analysis.

4. See Benveniste (1971) for a discussion of the discourse indexicality of personal pronouns, in particular, "I" and "we."

2001).[5] From this perspective, deictics such as pronouns and verb tenses are key discourse forms through which participants reflect, produce, or interpret relevant narrating and narrated contexts (Benveniste, 1971; Hanks, 1990; Jakobson, 1957; Silverstein, 1976; Wortham, 1996). Participants use deictics to signal to one another a "here-and-now" interactional event relative to the "there-and-then" narrated event that they talk about. To make this more specific, for the materials analyzed here, deictics in Facebook posts direct and invite other participants to recognize both the here-and-now perspectives or origos *from which* people post and to recognize the there-and-then entities *about which* they post.

We will thus see how people use deictics to signal intersubjective alignments toward narrating places linked to diaspora in France and narrated places linked to images of homeland in Portugal. We can then examine how participants use deictics to link narrating and narrated events in ways that may make them feel more or less discontinuous or simultaneous (Eisenlohr, 2004; Koven, 2007; Perrino, 2007; Silverstein, 1993; Wortham, 2001). Using this elastic perspective, it will be easier to examine how participants inhabit narrating online interactions in francophone cyberspace, in relation to narrated vacations in Portugal.

Narrating nationalism

So how to integrate attention to narrative practices understood at the more microsocial level while also examining how narrative may contribute to something as broad as diaspora and nationalism? How does the discussion of narrative deixis connect to diasporic nationalism? Indeed, going beyond the interpersonal scale, we also draw from linguistic anthropological scholarship on the enactment of collective, specifically ethnonational identities.

Although this other literature has not always been framed in explicitly narrative terms, it has examined how social actors use deictic resources, such as first-person plural "we" to reflect and produce a sense of transient and more perduring collective identifications,[6] such as that of nationalism.[7] Scholars have discussed how the use of *we* and associated first-person plural deictic forms may provide key resources

---

5.   See Silverstein's (1993) discussion of reportive calibration.

6.   See Benveniste (1971) for a groundbreaking discussion of "we."

7.   Although not focused on narrative, there is an extensive literature on the use of first-person plural pronouns and related forms and their flexible capacity to signal speakers' alignments with different, flexible and sometimes ambiguous collectivities (Muhlhauser & Harre, 1990; Helmbrecht, 2002; Pavlidou, 2014).

which reflect, create, mobilize, and recirculate national identifications in mundane and more ceremonial contexts (Billig, 1995; Derrida, 1986; Dori-Hacohen, 2014; Gal & Woolard, 2001; Lee, 1995; Silverstein, 2000; Urban, 2000). For example, much has been written about the "we" in "We the people …" of the US Declaration of Independence. This "we" both assumes and establishes the very collectivity to which it refers. However, a one-time written utterance of "we the people" was not sufficient to establish the national collectivity once and for all (Lee, 1995; Silverstein, 2000, 2003; Urban, 2000). Accordingly, scholars have argued for attention to the *ongoing communicative practices* through which social actors imagine, experience, enact, and re-entextualize a "we" of national community (Anderson, 1991). For the purposes of this article, we consider online interactions to be one site for such communicative practices.

Further, these linguistic anthropological scholars have also advocated a narrative-like perspective to reinterpret Benedict Anderson's famous discussion of nationalism as "imagined community." To briefly restate Anderson's argument, nations are strange types of communities among large groups of people, most of whom will never meet, yet still experience themselves as sharing a collective, social, spatial, and temporal position.

> An American will never meet or even know the names of more than a handful of his 240,000,000 odd fellow Americans. He has no idea of what they are up to at any one time. But he has complete confidence in their steady, anonymous, simultaneous activity.
>   (Anderson, 1991, p. 26)

As the above cited linguistic anthropologists have noted, what was noteworthy in Anderson's work was his attention to the role of communicative practices in constructing and imagining community, specifically shared *reading* practices. For Anderson's historical perspective, when large numbers of otherwise unacquainted people consumed newly and widely available products of print capitalism, specifically books and newspapers, they could come to experience a sense of shared, simultaneous identity positioning in space and time. This simultaneity emerges both in relation to each other, and in relation to a particular narrated text, such as the front page of the daily newspaper. These simultaneous reading practices, and more specifically, participants' *sense* of reading the same texts simultaneously function to produce a narrating national "we". That is, members of a population fashion themselves into a collective narrating *we* who imagine themselves to be sharing the same social space and time in relation to each other, and in relation to narrated figures in the printed texts. Indeed Silverstein (2000) used this perspective to re-analyze Anderson's (1991) discussion of nationally imagined communities constructed around unacquainted conationals' simultaneous reading of the same newspapers and books.

> …nationalism is an imaginative sense of Bakhtinian 'we voicing' that pragmatically frames whatever is narrated in its presupposition of unity of outlook, in a common, essentially spatiotemporalized envelope of inhabitable mutual positionings.
>
> (Silverstein, 2000, p. 115)

However, Silverstein critiqued Anderson's assumption that nationalist projects could be understood as *faits accomplis*, because social actors must continually engage in communicative practices that renew a sense of an ethnonational "we," belonging to an imagined national collectivity (Silverstein, 2000, 2003).

Narrating the ethnonational *we*'s on Facebook

We then apply this linguistic anthropologically inflected, Andersonian perspective applies to diasporic Facebook groups, to understand how online media allow people to produce a narrating *we* of national, transnational or diasporic community. As others have argued, the interactive format of Web 2.0 (Jenkins, 2006), and Facebook specifically (Page, 2012), allows new kinds of collaborative narrative practices, connecting people who are otherwise geographically dispersed. Social media enable participants to interactively produce a digital narrating *we*, through which they jointly construct particular narrated, deterritorialized images of homeland (Appadurai, 1996; Axel, 2004; Bernal, 2005, 2006; Dick 2010; Eisenlohr, 2004).

To recapitulate, we extend a social practice view of multi-teller narrative practices and combine it with a linguistic anthropological view of imagined communities, in order to analyze the actual online communicative practices through which Facebook participants produce a particular type of diasporic *we* on Facebook. This combined perspective will help to illuminate interactionally and ethnographically what is at stake in the particular diasporic Facebook group where participants often say, "*We* are going to *our* Portuguese homeland."

We briefly present the background of the Portuguese diaspora in France, along with that of the diasporic Facebook group of interest. We then turn to our analyses of Facebook participants' co-narrations of vacation trips to Portugal. Specifically, we show how participants use a recurrent set of strategies to invite each other to present and interpret vacation travel to Portugal as collective, even simultaneous experience of the Portuguese diaspora in France. These practices produce two interconnected types of simultaneity: that of being together as an online collectivity, and that of being in two places at once: online and on the road. We conclude by reflecting on what these materials reveal about narrative, and more specifically about digital narrations of collective identities.

The Portuguese diaspora in France, offline and online

Participants in the Facebook group under study appear to be mostly descendants of the largest wave of Portuguese migration to France, which occurred in the 1960s and 1970s. There are estimates of more than a million people with Portuguese nationality living in France, even more who identify as having Portuguese descent, regardless of nationality. The Portuguese in France engage in a range of transnationally mobile practices (Appadurai, 1996; Basch et al., 1994; Dos Santos, 2010; Koven, 2004; Pereira, 2016; Tsuda, 2009).

One such recurrent practice is actual travel between France and Portugal. In particular, summer vacation from France to Portugal is an established institution among families of Portuguese descent in France (De Villanova, 1988; Charbit, Hily & Poinard, 1997; Wagner, 2011; Dos Santos, 2010). These summer trips are one main way that French descendants of Portuguese migrants have cultivated connections with Portugal, constituting a type of diasporic or roots tourism (Basu, 2007; Wagner, 2011).

That said, it is not only the actual summer trips to Portugal that are transnational, but also participants' talk to others about these trips. Before the advent of social media, participants mostly narrated these trips orally in face-to-face interactions with friends and family (Koven, 2007, 2013). However, with the emergence and spread of social media, participants can now share their summer returns to Portugal with thousands of others online. *Cyberspace* thus provides participants a new type of simultaneous presence or *community* with unknown others. They may share with one another online the experience of residing in French-speaking Northern Europe, while simultaneously longing for and traveling to Portugal (see also Koven & Simões Marques, 2015). We will see how they connect their actual travel and their discourse about this travel.

Diasporic Facebook group: *Tu sais que tu viens du Portugal Quand* / You know you come from Portugal when

We have conducted close analysis of interactions in the closed Facebook group *Tu sais que tu viens du Portugal Quand*/"You know you come from Portugal when". The group is comprised of approximately 40,000 members, largely French-speaking descendants of Portuguese migrants in France (but also in Switzerland and in Belgium), who come together through shared interests (Fono & Raynes-Goldie, 2006; Rosen, 2007). In this case, the common interest is Portuguese origins and identity for those living in French-speaking countries, as indicated by the very name of the group. Through its formulation in French, mention of Portuguese

origin, and use of a second-person pronominal and verb forms, the very name of the group addresses and invites a generic diasporic addressee to share textual and visual posts that invite recognition of self and other as both Portuguese (at least by descent) and French-speaking. This online group thus allows unacquainted, geographically dispersed, "second generation" Portuguese migrants to connect with each other, around a combination of shared constructions of Portugal as homeland and French language use.[8]

Posting about vacation trips to Portugal

The page largely consists of participants' sharing what De Fina and Georgakapoulou call small stories (Georgakapoulou, 2007; De Fina, 2016), that is, brief episodic, multimodal posts with the presence of text, pictures or videos, often followed by likes and/or comments from other members. Common posts include co-occurring written text and visual images of French and Portuguese popular or folk culture, such as soccer, music, food, and politics.

In particular, sharing one's vacation travel from France to Portugal and back again is an extremely frequent and "liked" type of post. Extending from June 2014 to April 2015, we have a corpus of vacation-sharing posts, including 247 original posts, 1530 comments, and 25,602 likes. These posts concern several commonly recognized phases of the trip: the anticipated departure from France, the actual road trip by car, the crossing of the border, activities undertaken in Portugal, and the road trip back to France.

Participants evoke these trips for each other by assuming shared perspectives as likeminded members of the Portuguese diaspora in French-speaking countries. That is, they post and comment about these trips from a shared narrating origo of the francophone diaspora about the narrated event of the trip itself, which they presuppose all share. We thus can examine precisely how participants communicate with each other in the space-time of Facebook, about the narrated space-time of road to the Portuguese homeland. So, in addition to *doing being Portuguese* through actual return trips, they also *do being Portuguese* through narrations of such trips in this online context, laminating the narrated realm of the road, and the narrating realm of their online interactions. We will discuss recurrent strategies which participants use to invite their Facebook group members to accompany them virtually

---

8.   Beyond the French-language name of the group, the multilingualism of the posts and the comments is also very present. Members very often use a translingual language or code-switching marks (Androutsopoulos, 2010), regardless of their level of knowledge of the Portuguese language. See also Koven & Simões Marques (2015) for a discussion of heteroglossia in YouTube comments from this population.

on their actual trips to Portugal. These strategies involve linking individual and collective perspectives and creating a simultaneity of narrating and narrated events.

Creating collectivities and simultaneities

Indeed, participants use deictic strategies that link individual posters' one-time trips to images of such vacation trips as collective and typical for all those in the group, and for the Portuguese diaspora more generally. We saw this in Example (1), where the poster used *on*/we, the present tense, the directional verb "arrive" (implicitly from diaspora to homeland), and the image posted from the perspective of passengers looking at the road. Again, such posts do not merely report individual experience, but invite others to collaboratively enact a shared orientation toward the general significance of the trip to Portugal for those in France.

We list the recurrent strategies in these posts that invite others to recognize and insert themselves into the simultaneous diasporic collectivity, across narrating and narrated frames:

– Use of or shifts to first-person plural and generalized second-person forms that present actors as collective and generic; such as "we/our" or associated verb forms (Benveniste, 1971; Pavlidou, 2014) or generic "you/your" (O'Connor, 1994; Myers & Lamproproulou, 2012; Stirling & Manderson, 2011).
– Present tense verbs that present experiences and actions as either typical or simultaneous with the event of narration:
  – timeless, nomic present-tense (Silverstein, 1993; Agha, 2006; Koven, 2016) (to highlight typicality)
  – present tense verbs that make the narrated event seem as if it were unfolding in real-time, similar to the historical present (Wolfson, 1979; Schiffrin, 1981; Georgakapoulou, 2007; Perrino, 2007)
– directional verbs and adverbial expressions, such as "return", "go", "home", that indicate movement from France to Portugal and back again (Haviland, 2005)
– co-occurring visual images or videos posted from particular points of view (e.g., of the driver or passenger from inside a car, looking out at the road).

By using combinations of these strategies, members invite one another to inhabit a joint, affectively-laden narrating interaction in relation to the narrated space-time of the trip to and from the otherwise distant Portuguese source. In the next section, we examine more examples that illustrate these trends.

Anticipating departure

We see a co-occurring combination of the above listed strategies in Example (2) below. In posts that announce an upcoming, imminent, or unfolding departure for Portugal, these visual and verbal forms work together to invite other members to collectively recognize and virtually insert themselves into a shared space-time of the diasporic road trip.

(2)   Quand <u>tu</u> sais qu'à la fin du mois <u>tu</u> prendra[9] la route vers <u>notre beau pays</u> avec **uma boa ranchada nas orelhas.**[10]
*(When you know that at the end of the month <u>you</u>'ll get on the road to <u>our beautiful country</u> **with a good folklore music in the ears**)*

Figure 2.

The visual image (actually a video still) displays the embodied perspective of a passenger looking from inside the car at the road ahead. The image co-occurs with the verbal forms that reinforce the invitation to other group members to share and insert themselves into the narrating and narrated perspectives: generalized second person (*tu*/you*)* first-person plural (*notre*/our), and expressions of directional movement (*prendre la route vers*/take the road toward). In this instance, the first person plural *notre*/our appears to indexically refer to the poster and others, implicitly including and conflating Facebook group members with all diasporic Portuguese.[11] These visual and verbal strategies work together to present the trip as

---

9.   We preserve the orthography of the posts, even if nonstandard.

10.   Bold indicates Portuguese.

11.   For a discussion of the different types of intersubjective, and more specifically invitational work "We-inclusive" can do, see Muhlhauser & Harrre (1990); Bazzanella (2014); Bateman (2014); Whitt (2014).

a typical event into which likeminded others can imaginatively insert themselves. Indeed, insofar as likes and follow up comments are an indication of the overall effectiveness of the post's invitational appeal, this was very successful, with 200 likes and 90 comments. We argue that such posts are effective through the ways they allow the entire Facebook group to virtually share the emblematic experience of vacation travel to Portugal.

Indeed, one can see how follow up comments respond to the post's collective invitation, often also adopting similar generic, collective forms. In Example (3), we see a follow up comment that also treats the trip as a collective experience, apprehended from a shared perspective on Portuguese ethnonational and diasporic identity.

(3) **Boa viagem** Il n'y a que les portugais qui peuvent savoir & ressentir l'attachement et **l'alegria de regressar ao nosso** pais ^^
*(**Have a good trip** Only Portuguese people can understand and feel the attachment and the **joy of returning to our country** ^^)*

Note how the comment directly addresses other group members (*Boa viagem*/Have a good trip), followed by explicit reference to the distinctiveness of Portuguese identity (*Il n'y a que les portugais*/Only Portuguese people), emblematic code switches to Portuguese, and use of the first-person plural possessive *nosso*/our, linking and collapsing participants in the immediate participant framework with all Portuguese.

Even when commenters write as individuals who narrate their singular journeys, they still often link first-person singular to first person plural forms. We see this in Examples (4), (5) and (6). Individual commenters connect individual experiences of affect (eager anticipation) and nostalgia to *our* land.

(4) K … passe le bonjour **à nossa terra de Ponte de Lima**, dis lui que je serai bientôt la **se deus quiser**
*(K … say hello **to our land of Ponte de Lima [specific city]**, tell it I'll be there soon, **God willing**)*

(5) trop hate d'etre retour a la maison (**nosso minho**)
*(I want to go back home so bad (**our Minho**))[specific region of Portugal]*

(6) **Saudades** …. Hâte d'y retourner très prochainement!!
PortugalNoCoraçaoNazaré
*(**Saudades**… Looking forward to returning very soon
#PortugalIntheHeart#Nazaré) [specific city]*

Figure 3.

Each post includes a first-person singular form (*je serai*/I will be, *trop hâte*/too eager) often followed by plural forms, as in "our land." Each example also contains expressions of directional movement that both position the poster as writing from outside, but headed to Portugal, often mentioning specific regions or cities in Portugal. These examples again show movement from France to Portugal in ways that signal a diasporic ideology (Brettell, 2003), that presents Portugal as an authentic home and source toward which those in France all seek to return.

Those individual members, who are not yet actually on the road themselves at the same moment as the poster, can participate virtually, by displaying recognition of the evoked trip as emblematic of the event type. Indeed, many report specific dates for their individual, upcoming trips. Accompanied by Portuguese interjections, such posts then display affectively-laden anticipatory excitement.

(7) **Aiie nao se deus quiser** <u>30 juillet au soir</u> je décolle.
     (oh no, God willing <u>July 30th in the evening</u> I take off)

(8) Vivement le <u>2 Août</u> que je trace <u>direction Ponte de Lima</u> **caralho** !!!
     (I can't wait, <u>August 2nd</u> I'm headed <u>towards Ponte de Lima</u> [specific city], fuck!!!)

In Examples (7) and (8), the poster uses a first-person singular present-tense verb form for a near-future trip (*je décolle*/ I take off, *je trace*/ I'm headed), with expressions of directional movement from an implicit origo of France to the Portuguese destination. Although these posters narrate these as individual departures, they implicitly treat their own trips as tokens of a collectively recognized type.

Even those who cannot make their own individual trip may still link to the collective, virtual experience, by sharing their desire-filled longings towards trips to Portugal. They do this by presenting trips (taken and not taken) as both specific/individual and general/collective experiences.

(9)   Aouf !! Les frissons … c'est trop bon ça mais <u>malheureusement je pars pas cette année</u>! Bonnes vacances à ts ceux et celles qui partent, amusez vs bien et bonne route, biz.
(Ouch!! Chills … that's so good but <u>unfortunately I'm not going this year</u>! Have a good vacation to all those who are going, have fun, and have a nice trip, kisses)

In Example (9), the commenter first responds to a previous poster's trip, with affective interjections and a positive assessment (*Aouf !! Les frissons … c'est trop bon ça*/Ouch !! Chills … that's so good)*,* followed immediately by an indication that the individual poster will not leave this year (*je pars pas*/I'm not leaving). With the use of *cette année*/this year, the poster suggests that the non-departure may be unusual. He or she then shifts from the sad non-trip to address all those who will travel. Through these combinations and alternations of footings, the commenter presents specific trips and the general fact of making the trip as desirable and affect inducing. Whether or not an individual poster actually travels, he or she then can still signal recognition of and stance toward return trips to Portugal as central, emotionally laden components of the diasporic experience of Portugueseness. Moreover, those who will travel may display compassion for those who cannot.

(10)   Ça y est. Avec qq heures de retard, l'heure H est arrivée. Manque plus que le chauffeur, moi hihi, et c'est parti pour une quinzaine voire vingtaine d'heures de vroum ! <u>Grosse pensée à ceux et celles qui n'auront pas la possibilité d'aller embrasser notre terre!</u> **Viva Portugal**!!!!!
*(That's it. With a few hours delay, the hour H has arrived. All that's missing is the driver, me hihi, and I'm off for around fifteen or even twenty hours of Vroum Vroum! <u>Thinking tons about those who will not have the opportunity to go and kiss our land!</u> **Viva Portugal**!!!!!)*

Figure 4.

This poster of Example (10) and Figure 4 begins the comment by recounting an imminent individual road trip. The poster then shifts to directly addressing any non-travelers, offering compassion for their missing out on this "opportunity." (Note again the directional verb *aller*/go in the first-person, plural possessive form (*notre terre*/our land)).

Simultaneity

These narrative-like practices can also let people share experiences as if they were unfolding in the immediate present. Although participants in our corpus do not usually live stream their trips,[12] images and deictic strategies often make it appear as if the commenter is narrating in real-time.

(11)   C'eeeest parti pour le Portugaaaaal **caralho** Sur tout le chemin avec des musiques comme ça
*(We're off to Portugaaaaal **fuck**, all the trip with music like that)*

The poster of Example (11) and Figure 5 establishes a sense of simultaneous, immediate experience of the road with others in the group through combined use of the present tense, orthographically repeated vowels, and the deictic expression *comme ça*/like that, referring to the music on the accompanying video (from which a still image is shown). This post garnered much appreciation, eliciting 619 likes and 202 comments.

Through strategies that fuse narrating and narrated events (Perrino, 2007), commenters invite other Facebookers to virtually join the trip. We see similar
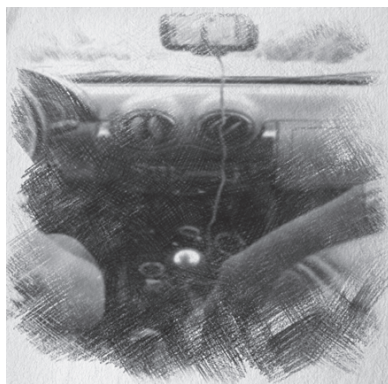
Figure 5.

---

12. Live streaming became a widely used option on Facebook after we had assembled our corpus.

creation of real-time simultaneity among posters and traveler in the following posts, shown in Examples (12) and (13) and their accompanying images.

(12)   **Portugal Vamos Nos**, Bonne Vacances à Tous!
       (***Portugal here we go***, *A Great Vacation to all!*)

Figure 6.

(13)   Enfin <u>on passe la frontière</u> après 17h de route et tout sa avec le soleilOklm#Portugal
       (*Finally <u>we cross the border</u> after 17h on the road and all that with the sun#Calmly#Portugal*)

Figure 7.

The present tense (*vamos*/we go, *on passe*/we cross) conveys a sense of simultaneity between the post and the trip. The first-person plural forms nós ([nos, sic] *nos/we*, *on*/we) show a strategic flexibility (Pavlidou, 2014), referring potentially not only to the poster and his/her immediate travel party's experience, but also to the experience of all diasporic Portuguese headed to the homeland. As in earlier examples, the visual and verbal forms cross-modally create and meld a sharedness and simultaneity of perspective for all potential travelers.

In these ways, rather than only report any single poster's individual trip, these verbal forms and the accompanying perspectively oriented images present and invite shared narration of widely recognized, shared experiences.

Narrating shared Return to France

Many of the above strategies also appear in posts about the return trip to France. Posters also narrate these events with generic and/or collective pronominal forms and non-past verb tenses that show and invite shared recognition, relative to other group members and the images shown. However, the visual and deictic origos, affective keys, and directional expressions in such posts are somewhat different from those on the way to Portugal. Instead of images of the passengers' view of the road, posts about the return trip to France typically feature images taken from the outside of an overloaded vehicle, before the trip even commences, as shown in Figure 8. As opposed to images of the trip *to* Portugal, what is highlighted is not the trip itself, so much as the challenges of transporting chunks of Portugal back to France. Whereas the affect surrounding the trip to Portugal was one of joy and anticipation, the trip to France evokes sadness.

(14)   Tu quite ton village. ….mdr et les larmes aux yeux
        (*You leave your village. …. lol and tears in the eyes*)

Figure 8.

(15) C'est tellement ça ! Je pense <u>qu'on ressent tous la même chose</u> a ce moment
      là.. <u>On se dit qu'on a attendu 1 an</u> pour vivre de superbes vacances dans <u>notre
      si beau pays</u> et à peine arrivée il est déjà temps de repartir et à présent il nous
      reste plus qu'à attendre le retour avec impatience …
      *(It's so true! I think <u>we all feel the same thing</u> at that moment. <u>We say we waited
      1 year</u> to have a fabulous holiday in <u>our so beautiful country</u> and the minute we
      arrive, it's time to leave and now all we have to do is to wait with impatience
      for the return …)*

With their use of generic or collective subjects (we/*on/nous/notre*/our, you/*tu*),
these posts highlight and call forth others to participate in the simultaneous and
shared narrating and narrated experiences of all diasporic Portuguese who at the
end of the summer must leave for France.

Conclusion

We have discussed how diasporic Portuguese in French-speaking Northern Europe
use Facebook to narrate with each other their trips to Portugal as collective and
potentially simultaneous experiences. And yet they participate in these narrating

interactions with others who also reside abroad, and who may continue to post to the group while either still in France and/or while also on vacation in Portugal.[13]

By combining verbal and visual forms that invite others to recognize and join these return trips as a mutually recognized event type, participants produce a sense of being together with each other, online and on the road, yielding a collectivity and simultaneity of diasporic Portugueseness. These are particular types of jointly shared virtual vacations that construct a shared diasporic position that narrates in a French-speaking time-space about longed for types and tokens of narrated Portuguese time-space. These practices thus involve several interconnected types of simultaneity: an experience of being together as a group with each other on-line (where the "we" of the Facebook is often conflated with all members of the Portuguese diaspora), and an experience of being both online and on the road, on a virtual and "real" vacation at the same time. These co-occurring forms of simul-taneity allow posters to narrate individual trips as part of a collective "we" (of both the group and the diaspora) and to produce a sense of being online while also being on the road. Both forms of simultaneity then coalesce, discursively producing for each other moments of interactional togetherness and moments of being in two places at once.

This discursive experience of interactional simultaneity parallels and inter-twines with actual travel across and between borders in complex ways. Facebook narratives of travel to Portugal are therefore not easily separable from "real" travel. Facebook narratives analyzed here then provide one discursive medium through which participants jointly enact particular versions of diasporic personhood, as they post from a time-space of *here* in France, about longed for communion with *there* in Portugal, while being with each other in both at once.

From this discussion, we summarize what communicative practices like these Facebook posts can reveal about narrative, and what narrative analysis can add to an understanding of such online communicative practices. These social actors use non-canonical narrative strategies in ways that are not about reporting individual experiences, so much as about collaboratively inviting others in the group to collec-tively share multiple spaces and times. Through such invitations, participants may solicit unknown others to recognize, highlight, and produce collective dimensions of social and affective life. In embracing the notion of narratives as social practice,

---

13. We note that outside this group and offline, nonmigrant Portuguese in Portugal often com-plain about vacationing diasporic Portuguese (Gonçalves, 1996), criticizing them for spending too much time with other vacationing emigrants. Indeed, this Facebook group does mostly appear to connect French-speaking Luso-descendants living outside of Portugal with each other, not with nonmigrant Portuguese. While reinforcing a sense of a diasporic Portuguese public, these Facebook practices may not lessen divisions between diasporic and resident Portuguese.

scholarship on narrative should consider more broadly the ways that narrators may speak beyond their capacities as single individuals (Goffman, 1979/1981). Although narrative scholarship has discussed the heteroglossic ways storytellers link to broader "macro" social contexts (De Fina, 2012; Hill, 1995), by focusing on individual speakers or relatively small, face-to-face participant frameworks, a certain methodological individualism and micro-analytic focus have often remained in narrative scholarship. The idea implicitly remains that individuals own and contain the experiences they narrate inside themselves.[14] Rather than privilege individuals' reporting of past lived experiences, we have instead shown how participants can use narrative practices as invitations to others to co-construct the spaces and times of shared experiences. We then also considered the larger scale, collective agents and projects to which narration-as-social practice may contribute.

That said, beyond the strictly narrative literature, we have also shown in fine-grained detail the narrative strategies in mundane, online interactions through which social actors produce and imagine larger-scaled collectivities of nationalism and diaspora. Facebook participants used multimodal narrative forms that combined and linked individual to collective, specific to generic perspectives, and online to offline. In so doing, participants could invite each other to recognize, inhabit, and circulate particular forms of shared identification. These practices become a new site where people's communicative practices can be used to narratively enact imagined communities.

Acknowledgements

References

Agha, A. (2005). Voicing, footing, enregisterment. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, *15*(1), 38–59. https://doi.org/10.1525/jlin.2005.15.1.38
Agha, A. (2006). *Language and social relations*. New York: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511618284

---

14. See Bauman & Briggs (2003) for the Lockean language ideology of individuals' minds as containers that their discourse then merely reflects.

Anderson, B. (1991). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Appadurai, A. (1996). *Modernity at large.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Androutsopoulos, J. (2010). The study of language and space in media discourse. In P. Auer & J. E. Schmidt (Eds.), *Language and space: An International handbook of linguistic variation. Volume I: Theory and methods* (pp. 740–758). Berlin/New York: de Gruyter.

Axel, B. (2004). The context of diaspora. *Cultural Anthropology*, *19*(1), 26–60. https://doi.org/10.1525/can.2004.19.1.26

Baquedano-López, P. (2000). Narrating community in doctrina classes. *Narrative Inquiry*, *10*(2), 1–24. https://doi.org/10.1075/ni.10.2.07baq

Bakhtin, M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination.* Austin: University of Texas Press.

Bamberg, M. (1997). Positioning between structure and performance. *Journal of Narrative and Life History*, *7*(1–4), 335–342. https://doi.org/10.1075/jnlh.7.42pos

Basch, L., Glick-Schiller, N., & Szanton-Blanc, C. (1994). *Nations unbound. Transnational projects, postcolonial predicaments and deterritorialised nation-states.* Amsterdam: Gordon & Breach Science Publishers.

Basu, P. (2007). *Highland homecomings: Genealogy and heritage tourism in the Scottish diaspora.* New York: Routledge.

Bateman, A. (2014). Children's use of English 'we' in a primary school in Wales. In S. Pavlidou (Ed.), *Constructing collectivity: 'We' across languages and contexts* (pp. 227–246). Amsterdam: John Benjamins. https://doi.org/10.1075/pbns.239.15bat

Bauman, R. (1986). *Story, performance, and event: Contextual studies of oral narrative.* New York: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511620935

Bauman, R., & Briggs, C. (2003). *Voices of modernity.* New York: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511486647

Bazzanella, C. (2014). Grammar, interaction, and context: Unmarked and marked uses of the first-person plural in Italian. In S. Pavlidou (Ed.), *Constructing collectivity: 'We' across languages and contexts* (pp. 83–104). Amsterdam: John Benjamins. https://doi.org/10.1075/pbns.239.08baz

Benveniste, E. (1971). *Problems in general linguistics.* Miami: University of Miami Press.

Bernal, V. (2005). Eritrea on-line: Diaspora, cyberspace, and the public sphere. *American Ethnologist*, *32*(4), 660–675. https://doi.org/10.1525/ae.2005.32.4.660

Bernal, V. (2006). Diaspora, cyberspace, and political imagination: The Eritrean diaspora online. *Global Networks*, *6*(2), 161–179. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-0374.2006.00139.x

Billig, M. (1995). *Banal nationalism.* London: Sage.

Brettell, C. (2003). *Anthropology and migration: Essays on transnationalism, ethnicity, and identity.* Walnut Creek, California: Altamira.

Charbit, Y., Hily, M. A., & Poinard, M. (1997). *Le va-et-vient identitaire. Migrants Portugais et villages d'origine.* Paris: Persée.

De Fina, A. (2003). *Identity in narrative: A study of immigrant discourse.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins. https://doi.org/10.1075/sin.3

De Fina, A. (2012). *Analyzing narrative: Discourse and sociolinguistic perspectives.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

De Fina, A. (2016). Storytelling and audience reactions in social media. *Language in Society*, *45*, 473–498. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404516000051

De Fina, A., & Georgakopoulou, A. (2015). *Handbook of narrative analysis.* Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118458204

Derrida, J. (1986). Declarations of Independence. *New Political Science*, *15*, 7–15. https://doi.org/10.1080/07393148608429608

De Villanova, R. (1988). Le portugais: une langue qui se ressource en circulant. In G. Vermès (Ed.), *Vingt-cinq communautés linguistiques de la France* (pp. 283–300). Paris: L'Harmattan.

Dick, H. (2010). Imagined lives and modernist chronotopes in Mexican nonmigrant discourse. *American Ethnologist*, *37*(2), 275–290. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1425.2010.01255.x

Dori-Hacohen, G. (2014). Establishing social groups in Hebrew: 'We' in political radio phone-in programs. In S. Pavlidou (Ed.), *Constructing collectivity: 'We' across languages and contexts* (pp. 187–206). Amsterdam: John Benjamins. https://doi.org/10.1075/pbns.239.13dor

Dos Santos, I. (2010). *Les brumes de la mémoire. Expérience migratoire et quête identitaire de descendants de Portugais de France* (Doctoral thesis). Paris: École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales.

Duranti, A. (1986). The audience as co-author: An introduction. *Text*, *6*(3), 239–247. https://doi.org/10.1515/text.1.1986.6.3.239

Eisenlohr, P. (2004). Temporalities of community: Ancestral language, pilgrimage, and diasporic belonging in Mauritius. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, *14*(1), 81–98. https://doi.org/10.1525/jlin.2004.14.1.81

Fono, D., & Raynes-Goldie, K. (2006). Hyperfriends and beyond: Friends and social norms on LiveJournal. In M. Consalvo & C. Haythornthwaite (Eds.), *Internet research annual Volume 4: Selected papers from the Association of Internet Researchers Conference* (pp. 91–103). New York: Peter Lang.

Gal, S., & Woolard, K. (2001). *Languages and publics*. Manchester: St. Jerome's.

Georgakapoulou, A. (2007). *Small stories, interaction, and identities*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. https://doi.org/10.1075/sin.8

Georgakapoulou, A. (2015). Introduction: Communicating time and place on digital media-multi-layered temporalities and (re)localizations. *Discourse, Context, and Media*, *9*, 1–4. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2015.08.002

Goffman, E. (1981) [1979]. Footing. In E. Goffman, *Forms of talk* (pp. 124–159). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Gonçalves, A. (1996). *Imagens e Clivagens: Os residentes face aos emigrantes*. Porto: Edições Afrontamento.

Goodwin, M. H. (1990). *He-said-she-said: Talk as social organization among Black children*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Goodwin, M. H. (1997). Toward families of stories in context. *Journal of Narrative and Life History*, *7*(1–4), 107–112. https://doi.org/10.1075/jnlh.7.12tow

Hanks, W. (1990). *Referential practice: Language and lived space among the Maya*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Haviland, J. (2005). Dreams of blood: Zincantecs in Oregon. In M. Baynham & A. De Fina (Eds.), *Dislocations/relocations* (pp. 91–127). Manchester, UK: Saint Jerome's.

Helmbrecht, J. (2002). Grammar and function of 'we.' In A. Dusckak (Ed.), *Us and others: Social identities across languages* (pp. 31–49). Amsterdam: John Benjamins. https://doi.org/10.1075/pbns.98.03hel

Heyd, T., & Honkanen, M. (2015). From Naija to Chitown: The new African diaspora and digital representations of place. *Discourse, Context, and Media*, *9*, 14–23. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2015.06.001

Hill, J. (1995). The voices of Don Gabriel: Responsibility and self in a modern Mexicano narrative. In D. Tedlock and B. Mannheim (Eds.), *The dialogic emergence of culture* (pp. 97–147). Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Jakobson, R. (1957). *Shifters, verbal categories, and the Russian verb*. Cambridge: Harvard University.

Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence culture*. New York: New York University Press.

Koven, M. (2002). An analysis of speaker role inhabitance in narratives of personal experience. *Journal of Pragmatics*, *34*(2), 167–217. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166(02)80010-8

Koven, M. (2004). Transnational perspectives on sociolinguistic capital among Luso-descendants in France and Portugal. *American Ethnologist*, *31*(2), 270–290. https://doi.org/10.1525/ae.2004.31.2.270

Koven, M. (2007). *Selves in two languages*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. https://doi.org/10.1075/sibil.34

Koven, M. (2013). Speaking French in Portugal: An analysis of contested models of emigrant personhood in narratives about return migration and language use. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, *17*(3), 324–354. https://doi.org/10.1111/josl.12036

Koven, M. (2016). Essentialization strategies in the storytellings of young Luso-descendant women in France: Narrative, calibration, voicing, and scale. *Language and Communication*, *46*, 19–29. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langcom.2015.10.005

Koven, M., & Simões Marques, I. (2015). Performing and evaluating (non)modernities of Portuguese migrant figures on YouTube: The case of Antonio de Carglouch. *Language in Society*, *44*, 213–242. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404515000056

Labov, W. (1972). *Language in the inner city*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Leal, J. (2000). *Etnografias Portuguesas (1870–1970). Cultura popular e Identidade Nacional*. Lisboa: Dom Quixote.

Lee, B. (1995). Performing the people. *Pragmatics*, *5*(2), 263–280. https://doi.org/10.1075/prag.5.2.10lee

Lempert, M., & Perrino, S. (2007). Entextualization and the ends of temporality. *Language and Communication*, *27*(3), 205–211. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langcom.2007.01.005

Mandelbaum, J. (2013). Storytelling in conversation. In Sidnell, J. & Stivers, T. (Eds.), *Handbook of conversation analysis* (pp. 492–508). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Muhlhauser, P., & Harre, R. (1990). *Pronouns and people: The linguistic construction of social and personal identity*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Myers, G. & Lampropoulou, S. (2012). Impersonal you and stance-taking in social research interviews. *Journal of Pragmatics*, *44*/10, 1206–1218. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2012.05.005

Ochs, E. (1994). Stories that etep into the future. In D. Biber & E. Finnegan (Eds.), *Sociolinguistic perspectives on register* (pp. 106–135). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ochs, E., & Capps, L. (2000). *Living narrative*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

O'Connor, P. (1994). "You could feel it through your skin": Agency and positioning in prisoners' stabbing stories. *Text*, *14*(1), 45–75. https://doi.org/10.1515/text.1.1994.14.1.45

Page, R. (2012). *Stories and social media*. New York: Routledge.

Pavlidou, T. S. (2014). *Constructing collectivity: 'We' across languages and contexts*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. https://doi.org/10.1075/pbns.239

Pereira, V. (2016). Portuguese migrants and Portugal: Elite discourses and transnational practices. In N. Green & R. Waldinger (Eds.), *A century of transnationalism: Immigrants and their homeland connections*. Urbana: University of Illinois. https://doi.org/10.5406/illinois/9780252040443.003.0003

Perrino, S. (2007). Cross-chronotope alignment in Senegalese oral narrative. *Language and Communication*, *27*(3), 227–244. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langcom.2007.01.007

Polanyi, L. (1979). So what's the point? *Semiotica 25*(3–4).

Rosen, C. (2007). Virtual friendship and the new narcissism. *The New Atlantis*, *17*, 15–31.

Schiffrin, D. (1981). Tense variation in narrative. *Language*, 57(1), 45–62. https://doi.org/10.1353/lan.1981.0011

Silverstein, M. (1976). Shifters, linguistic categories, and cultural description. In In K. Basso & H. Selby (Eds.), *Meaning in anthropology* (pp. 11–55). Albuquerque, NM: University of new Mexico Press.

Silverstein, M. (1993). Metapragmatic discourse and function. In J. Lucy (Ed.), *Reflexive language* (pp. 33–57). New York: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511621031.004

Silverstein, M. (2000). Whorfianism and the linguistic imagination of nationality. In P. Kroskrity (Ed.), *Regimes of language* (pp. 85–138). Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.

Silverstein, M. (2003). The whens and wheres – as well as hows – of ethnolinguistic recognition. *Public Culture*, *15*(3), 531–557. https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-15-3-531

Silverstein, M. (2005). Axes of evals. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, *15*(1), 6–22. https://doi.org/10.1525/jlin.2005.15.1.6

Stirling, L., & Manderson, L. (2011). About you: Empathy, objectivity, and authority. *Journal of Pragmatics*, *43*/6, 1581–1602. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2010.12.002

Tsuda, T. (2009). *Diasporic homecomings: Ethnic return migration in comparative perspective*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press.

Urban, G. (2000). *Metaculture: How culture moves through the world*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Van De Mieroop, D. (2014). On the use of 'we' in Flemish World War II interviews. In S. Pavlidou (Ed.), *Constructing collectivity: 'We' across languages and contexts* (pp. 309–330). Amsterdam: John Benjamins. https://doi.org/10.1075/pbns.239.20mie

Van De Mieroop, D. (2015). Social identity theory and the discursive analysis of collective identities in narratives. In A. De Fina & A. Georgakapoulou (Eds.), *Handbook of narrative analysis* (pp. 408–428). Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell.

Wagner, L. B. (2011). *Negotiating diasporic mobilities and becomings: interactions and practices of Europeans of Moroccan descent on holiday in Morocco* (Doctoral thesis). London: University College London.

Whitt, R. J. (2014). Singular perception, multiple perspectives through 'we': Constructing intersubjective meaning in English and German. In S. Pavlidou (Ed.), *Constructing collectivity: 'We' across languages and contexts* (pp. 45–64). Amsterdam: John Benjamins. https://doi.org/10.1075/pbns.239.06whi

Wolfson, N. (1979). The conversational historical present alternation. *Language*, *55*(1), 168–182. https://doi.org/10.2307/412521

Wortham, S. (1996). Mapping participant deictics: A technique for discovering speakers' footing. *Journal of Pragmatics*, *25*(3), 331–348. https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166(94)00100-6

Wortham, S. (2001). *Narratives in action*. New York: Teachers' College Press.

Sharing the moment as small stories

The interplay between practices & affordances in the social media-curation of lives

Alexandra Georgakopoulou
King's College London

Sharing the moment live, a built-in logic of many social networking sites, is, I claim, an invitation for creating plots, which has led to systematic practices. I single out taking a narrative stance on Facebook as such a practice and show the interplay between key-norms and evolving media affordances for pre-selection of story ingredients, localization, visualization of the experience, and audience selection. These contribute to showing the moment as opposed to telling it, with selected friends serving as knowing co-narrators and with story-linking allowing for allusive, transmedia links. I review these practices in the context of increased story facilities that notably bring together several social media apps. I argue that although this curation promises a move beyond the moment, it ultimately serves to consolidate sharing-lives-in-the-moment. I reflect on the implications of this for the direction of travel in relation to stories on many social media platforms.

Keywords: narrative stancetaking, story-linking, Facebook statuses, selfies, algorithms, showing the moment, knowing participation, Snapchat Stories

Introduction

Social media[1] research has amply demonstrated that the ways in which platforms are designed and the algorithms that are produced in them, often in oblivion of their users, impact on how relations are formed and how users present themselves. Van Dijck's argument that "a platform is not a thing; it makes things happen" (2013, p. 180) is resonant with the burgeoning field of software and platform studies (e.g.

---

1. Although there are (subtle) differences and distinctions, for the purposes of this article, the terms social media and social networking sites are used interchangeably. The terms 'platforms' and 'apps' are employed alongside, when focusing on the environments and facilities of social media.

© 2019 John Benjamins Publishing Company

Berry, 2011; Chun Hui Kyong, 2009; Kitchin and Dodge, 2011). Such studies attend to the ways in which the engineering of platforms, including filtering and sorting algorithms, functions as a sociotechnical actor, capable of influencing users' experiences and communication online (Beer, 2009). In addition, the mediation of communication by platform design is recognized as economically motivated and shaped by strong links with advertising (Gerlitz & Helmond, 2013). At the same time, this mediation is increasingly understood as a complex and dialectical process: the built-in logic of a platform creates possibilities for action and constraints, often referred to as *affordances* (Barton & Lee 2013, p. 27ff, citing Gibson, 1977) but it rests upon users to comply or resist and selectively engage with it. Affordances are *perceived* possibilities and so they are by no means deterministic. They exist in every situation but it can be expected that the persistence of the user-generated content, its retrievability and replication, as well as the ability to distribute it widely, will shape communication choices online (boyd, 2010). That said, establishing links between affordances, algorithms and users' either awareness of them or communication as influenced by them is not a straightforward project. Many of the algorithmic processes are opaque to analysts and users alike and the algorithmic context is not easily definable or reducible to specific parameters.

While there are extensive 'cultural and theoretical critiques of how the world itself is captured within code in terms of algorithmic potential' (Dodge, 2010, p. 15, cited in Bucher, 2012, p. 1165), what is still lagging behind is micro-analytical attention to how users' practices take up, harness or counter-act algorithmically-shaped media affordances; put differently, how perceived affordances are tweaked by users (cf. Jones, 2016). This is even more under-represented in the case of the role of affordances in story-making practices: the scarce discourse and sociolinguistic analyses of the forms and functions of stories on social media (for details see Georgakopoulou, 2013a; Page, 2012) has hardly engaged with how the affordances and algorithms of specific platforms may be shaping the communicative *how* of stories or the users' participation in them. In a similar vein, although it is recognized that changes and developments in a platform reveal a lineage and progress regarding what works best or not, the *remediation* (Bolter & Grusin, 1998, p. 14–15) of design choices for stories has not been sufficiently addressed. The need to look into the interplay between evolving affordances and story-making choices is even more apparent in the context of the main drive of sharing the moment that typifies many social networking sites. As I will claim below, this is essentially a directive to users for *sharing stories out of the moment*.

To address these gaps, in this article, I follow on from my work on small stories for the analysis of social media communication (Georgakopoulou 2013a, b; 2014; 2015). My starting point is the built-in logic and economy of breaking news in many social networking sites (Georgakopoulou, 2013a). This is intimately linked with the

algorithmically shaped preference for recency of posts: recency is notably one of three weighing factors in Facebook's algorithm Edgerank (cf. Bucher, 2012). My contention has been that this essentially encourages the sharing of everyday life as stories, as a branded directive of living and telling, of *sharing-life-in-the moment*. My analysis of data from Facebook (and YouTube) has so far brought to the fore two systematic[2] interactional practices for creating stories out of the moment: taking a narrative stance and story-linking. They both depart from a sustained, lengthy, detailed sharing of stories but this departure makes them no less systematic in terms of their semiotic design, location, and type of audience participation they project and are dependent upon. In the present discussion, I single out the practice of taking a narrative stance on Facebook statuses and selfie-posts. I show that the systematicity of this practice need to be understood in the context of evolving media affordances that have increasingly provided pre-selection facilities and curation for sharing stories. In particular, I argue that taking a narrative stance has become increasingly visual and localized: shared selfies with friends and check-ins have allowed users to counter-act affordances of context collapse (Wesch, 2008)[3] by doing *audience selection* (Bell, 2001) and by providing opportunities for their selected friends to serve as co-narrators of the moment. Finally, I argue that taking a narrative stance increasingly benefits from and connects with story-linking. The two result in a prevalent mode of storying the moment, which in classic narrative terms can be described as *showing the moment* as opposed to *telling the moment*. They also afford numerous links, often allusive and only to be 'understood' by knowing recipients, between transmedia (i.e. online-offline, across media) worlds.

  Having presented the above findings, I will critically review them in the context of a recent story-designing spree: this involves offering story facilities that purport to allow users to go beyond the moment. This story curation notably brings together many social media apps and so, in the light of the present findings, it begs the question of the extent to which it builds on or, indeed departs from established practices of sharing the moment as stories. My review shows that the explicit designing of stories as an accumulation of moments comes with certain mismatches between the rhetoric of the design, the features and established practices and, ultimately, it only serves to further consolidate sharing lives-in-the-moment. I will conclude with the implications of this increasingly close link between social media curation and

---

2. I use the term systematic in its conversation-analytic meaning of a methodic organization of a sequence that involves a structurally linked relationship between parts. Below, I will show such a sequential organization in the case of taking a narrative stance on Facebook statuses.

3. Context collapse refers to the indeterminacy that arises from the potentially infinite audience that is possible online as opposed to the limited and well-defined groups a person interacts with face-to-face.

stories-in-the-moment for the kinds of lives and subjectivities that it is premised on and that it renders prominent.

Small stories for a narrative analysis of sharing the moment

My definition of small stories includes a range of activities that conventional narrative analysts have been reluctant to include in their analytical remit: from literally small to fragmented and open-ended tellings that exceed the confines of a single speech event. Small stories are invariably co-constructed, rendering the sole teller's story ownership problematic. They often revolve around mundane events rather than disruptions and recent, ongoing or even hypothetical, events, rather than memories from one's past. In previous work (Georgakopoulou, 2007), I made the case for the significance of such activities in everyday life, as part of the fabric of social practices that ordinary people engage in, with consequence for how they present themselves and relate with others. More recently, I have argued that small stories research prefigured the current situation when social media affordances have made stories with such features more widely available and visible in (semi)-public arenas of communication (Georgakopoulou, 2013a). Stories on social media are routinely mobile, multi-authored and multi-semiotic: widely distributed across media platforms and audiences (cf. Page, 2012). Small stories methods and modes of analysis are thus well-placed to play a key-role in their exploration. In particular, they can help with shedding light on how users respond to the drive of sharing life-in-the-moment. This consists in a continuum of revelatory sharing about one's everyday life to sharing others' posts. At the heart of this logic of breaking news, which typifies many social media apps,[4] seems to be a drive toward creating plots out of the moment. It is an ingenious bringing together of immersing ourselves in the immediacy of the here-and-now daily experience at the same time as being able to share it. The moment, a metaphor for the present, is not easily quantifiable, but there is evidence for how instantaneous to the user's experience it is viewed as: Facebook's initial prompt to users for updating their status was tellingly "what are you doing right now?".

To share the experience of the moment whilst being in the moment, inevitably requires some sort of stepping out, however momentary, from the flow of experience. The experiencer can then begin to take a perspective on it and create a,

---

4.   There are also algorithmic pressures for this live sharing of the moment: for instance, if you share a lot, the Edgerank algorithm of Facebook will ensure that your pages will be more visible amongst (potential) users. Algorithms still prioritize recency and older posts tend to drop from visibility, so to remain visible and in turn, popular, users need to keep on sharing (cf. Bucher, 2012).

however incipient, plot. A plot involves locating experience in time and place and making tentative, meaningful connections between people, actions/interactions and emotions. To view sharing the moment in these terms, that is, as a drive toward *emplotting* (Ricoeur, 1991) the ongoing present, is also justified by the fact that platform-designing has explicitly been evolving with the aim of providing us with more and enhanced facilities for sharing our "stories" (see Section 4). When Facebook, for instance, allowed users to add a place for their posts, it claimed that this was so that they could pin their stories to a physical location (https://media.fb.com/blog/).

Data and methods: Sharing the moment on social media

The data for this article are part of a larger project entitled "Life-Writing of the Moment: The Sharing and Updating Self on Social Media".[5] My aim has been to explore the dialectic between media affordances, algorithms and communication practices for the aforementioned directive of sharing life-in-the moment. And to ask: What are the main multi-semiotic forms (linguistic/textual, visual, auditory) for sharing life-in-the-moment on a range of social media (e.g., YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) and genres (e.g. selfies, retweets, spoof videos, and remixes) and, where applicable, on the basis of specific incidents and issues (e.g., the Eurozone crisis)? How do facilities for sharing the moment evolve and are remediated?

My analysis employs a heuristic, originally developed for small stories in face-to-face contexts, as a flexible way of studying stories-in-context (Georgakopoulou, 2007). The heuristic explores the connections of three separable but interrelated layers of analysis: (1) *ways of telling*, (2) *sites* (of the stories' tellings and tales), which in this case includes media affordances and (3) *tellers* (in the broad sense of communicators). It dictates a combined focus on online postings and various types of engagement with them, including transposition across media and sites, without, however, pre-determining what from each of the multi-layered ways of telling, sites and tellers will be of analytical importance and how their relations will be configured in different stories and media environments. Building on a view of stories as contextualized, social practices (see Chapter 4 in De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2012), the heuristic accepts that algorithms and affordances form an integral part of the context of a social media app (cf. *site*), where a story occurs, and so their connections with how a story is produced need to be identified and accounted for. As no contextualized analysis of stories can be exhaustive, there is an acceptance

---

that different analyses will have different priorities and that certain questions may require more focus on any one of the three analytical levels.

My project is open-minded about what platforms to investigate, often by following phases of sharing. For instance, I ended up focusing on YouTube videos as a prime circulation phase for news stories. Similarly, Facebook was selected as a prime platform for self-presentation and I have lately studied it in its close association with the inception of selfies as a salient genre for self-presentation.[6] This open-mindedness and real-time tracking of changes on platforms are an integral part of the methodological use of adaptive digital ethnography (Hine, Kendall, & boyd, 2009): this involves applying flexible routes to fieldwork over time to suit the mobile, ever-shifting landscape of social media. It also licenses the use of *remix* methods (see Markham, 2013), that is, of bringing together unlikely resources in imaginative, reflexive and even playful ways, in the spirit of social media practices of remixing. For instance, I have employed media engagements, such as acting as a "lurking" participant in a specific site, observing activities and postings, so as to identify key participants. I have also reflected on my own position, stakes, interests and political and ethical concerns vis-à-vis social media engagements. I have examined my position as a "newbie", somebody who finds it difficult to share and go beyond clicking on Like. I have also drawn on observations and developed analytical lines based on my identity as mother to a media-saturated teenage daughter. In fact, I involved her and her friends in the study of selfies (see below), from identifying top selfie-posters from their groups of friends, to formulating distinctions amongst selfie-types that corresponded to their reality.

Facebook data: Status updates & selfies

I have specifically employed the above methods in two datasets on Facebook and YouTube, which incidentally remain the two most popular social networking sites. Key-findings from the analysis of YouTube videos and comments on them[7] will be brought into the discussion below selectively, for gleaning additional insights into how the moment is storied. The study of Facebook involved two distinct phases. In the first phase (2010–2013), I investigated (i.e. systematically observed and analysed) the statuses, and comments on them, of a female prolific Facebook friend of mine, then in her '30s. This study led me to identify the increasing importance

---

6.   In 2014, when I embarked on studying selfies, 48% of all selfies were posted on Facebook, leaving other platforms far behind.

7.   These data are part of my study of how key-news stories about the Greek crisis are circulated and discussed on social media (e.g. Georgakopoulou, 2013b, 2014).

and frequency of visual posts, especially selfies, from 2014 onwards. I thus decided to move to this emergent salient practice of selfies-posting, by collecting data from female teenagers (16–17 years old). These had emerged, in numerous published surveys, as part of the age-group of primary selfie-posters. The selection was done in March 2015, on the basis of who were the top 5 selfie-posters after a systematic observation of one year (see Table 1 for more details). In both cases, consent has been obtained from the primary users under investigation and any of their friends whose data have been employed in any form of exemplification. Principles of heavy disguise have been followed and there has been no reproduction of any identifying visual material. Finally, I have had no access to any private messages. A detailed discussion of the data-set collection and coding procedures is beyond the scope of this article (see Georgakopoulou, 2016a for details) but it is notable that I created a network profile for each of the 5 users, regarding friends who engaged most with their posts (see averages of Likes and Comments per poster in Table 1). I also ended up with data from users in 4 languages, 7 locations, and 30 nationalities but any out-of-Facebook ethnographic observations were done with the London-based group of 4 young women (two of whom were part of the 5 analyzed selfie-posters): I spent time hanging out and having off-the-record chats about their media engagements, I had access to screenshots from their favourite posts, and I tracked the migration practices of their selfies to Instagram and Snapchat, as well as observing their posts on both these apps. This material directed me to delving into other posts on Facebook from the selected selfie-posters, so as to gauge the relative importance of selfies as part of statuses. It also led me back to Gertie's wall for systematic observations of her Facebook use in the period 2010–2015, to get a sense of what, if any, transition she made toward selfies and other visual or video posts.

Finally, I have employed the method of what I call *zooming-in*: this involves the selective mining of data that may have been collected for different purposes and for different questions, to investigate further issues of analytical importance. Zooming-in has been employed for targeted, comparative analyses between Facebook and YouTube (Georgakopoulou, 2016b). For instance, I went back to the comments of the analyzed Facebook statuses and of YouTube spoof videos and coded any references to the knowledge of the commenters about a post that went beyond the current communication: e.g. knowledge of offline, pre-posting activities, shared interactional history between a poster and a commenter, etc.

Paratexts

To complement the micro-analysis of the above data-sets, I have looked into published surveys, platform blogs, including any publicity about new features for stories, and reviews of such new features in the 10 top online tech magazines, e.g. wired,

tech crunch, mashable, cnet, techjuice, venturebeat, The verge, Digiday. Using advanced google search facilities, I have so far pulled 131 articles in such magazines related to the introduction of key-features, such as "On This Day" (Facebook 2015), Snapchat stories (2014) and Instagram Stories (2016). I will discuss these features in Section 4 below. My analysis of these articles in relation to how stories are viewed and defined and how they connect with the imperative of sharing the moment has been assisted by NVivo. Overall, I treat this material as a sort of paratext (Genette, 1980), an important part of the complex mediation between algorithms, affordances, discourses of media platforms and users' practices, which allows me to undertake a critical approach to social media affordances, in connection with the micro-analysis of the communicative how of stories.

Analysis: Taking a narrative stance as a systematic practice for sharing the moment

My analysis shows that a common and systematic practice of sharing the moment is that of taking a narrative stance. To postulate taking a narrative stance (or narrative stancetaking), I drew on the well-developed, within sociolinguistics, concept of stance (e.g. see chapters in Jaffe, 2009). This refers to moments when speakers, more or less agentively and reflexively, position themselves in relation to the ongoing interaction (for details, see Georgakopoulou, 2013b). In taking a narrative stance, a poster *mobilizes conventionalized communicative means to signal that what is being shared is or can become a story.* This is a common practice that, I found, cuts across the sharing of personal and news stories (Georgakopoulou, 2013b). Below, I will show its systematicity on Facebook statuses in terms of its design and the audience engagement. I will also argue that certain norms for taking a narrative stance have consolidated since the 1st phase of my data-collection, as affordances have evolved.

In face-to-face conversations, the use of the so-called story-openers or story-prefacing devices, for instance, a reference to a time and place other than the current one that the interlocutors share, to an event, and to how that event needs to be understood (e.g. *funny, sad*) have been found to seek permission from the audience, for the teller to be granted the floor to tell a story (e.g. Jefferson, 1978). In the case of my data, taking a narrative stance with such story-openers appears to have been remediated for sharing the moment and it presents a few differences. Obviously, co-presence affordances do not apply here: for instance, a recipient cannot change their body position, look at the potential teller of a story, after they have signaled a story telling, and indicate that they are ready for the story. There is also a time-lag, even by couple of minutes, between taking a narrative stance on a status and audience interest being expressed in it, and different 'friends' may tune into a post

at different times. So, sometimes interest needs to be expressed from quite a few users before a story is told. The main difference, however, is that story-openers tend to refer to very recent happenings, often, in fact, to the here-and-now of the poster, making experiencing and posting almost concurrent. This – often hasty-configuration of the moment in some sort of an incipient plot may be all that a poster has, for the moment, which may lead to a story, dependent on whether there is enough interest or not. Finally, the actual story, when it emerges, is invariably a small story, literally too.

Below, I will illustrate a common pattern of taking a narrative stance, particularly before the increasing prevalence of visual posts on Facebook. This example comes from Gertie, whose posts I looked at in the 1st phase of my data collection, as suggested above. At that point, statuses on Facebook responded to the question: "what are you doing right now?". They were also in 3rd person.

(1)   1.   Gertie Brown is recovering from an unexpected operation as a result of a trip to A&E
      2.   on monday night -(
           August 25 at 7.45pm
      3.   Charlotte Harris Oh my God! Are you ok?? Not the ideal end to what I hope was
      4.   otherwise a fabulous weekend and a lovely christening … xxx
           August 25 at 8.01pm ((Another 14 comments))

A few conventional story-signals can be found in Gertie's status (lines 1–2): a reference to a happening, a time, antecedent to the here and now, a place, and a proposal to how the event needs to be understood ("unexpected", followed by a sad face emoji). Charlotte's comment is typical in this respect and in fact 'are you ok?' or 'what happened?' with question and/or exclamation marks commonly occur in the data as responses to a status that announces or implies some disruption in the poster's life. Such comments ultimately serve as requests for elaboration on what has happened. As we can see in the example above, Gertie provides a small story of sequenced events and their evaluation, as a collective response to friends that have shown interest:

> Gertie Brown: Thanks everyone. Not much to worry about. It was a painful abscess which I thought would go away with some basic home treatment but by Monday it was unbearable and huge so had to go to A&E to have it removed – cross & painful but on the mend! Apparently they are quite normal?!
> August 26 at 9.03 am

Statuses such as the above that report disruptive or sad events in the poster's life were more likely to receive comments from their friends than a simple Like.[8] In turn, they led to a small story that elaborated on the status. There were other conventional associations too, regarding what sort of a moment carries the potential for further storying. A negative affective stance is such a signal, as we can see below:

(2)   1.   Gertie is not happy with her mac :-(6 Like
      2.   Dan: sacrilege, how could someone say such thing!
           February 10 at 12:19 pm · Like
      3.   Gertie: Grrrrrrrrrr i have been on the phone to mac support, technical help you name
      4.   it and they still can't work it out!! I'm tempted to cross the fence to pc!! Sorry but i'm
      5.   at my wits end :-(
           February 10 at 12:24 pm · Like
      6.   Gertie: panic over, just sorted it out! Having been in a phone queue for 50 minutes –
      7.   problem now resolved so I won't be going to the world of pc just yet!!
           February 10 at 12:29 pm · Like
      8.   Dan: that's lucky don't think I could have been friends with a mac deserter!
           February 10 at 12:31 pm · Like

The initial negative proclamation of the status (line 1) is elaborated, after Dan's indirect request for elaboration (line 2). The elaboration takes the form of a small story of breaking news (lines 3–5), which is further updated within 5 minutes (lines 6–7). The update renders Gertie's initial unhappiness as "resolved". This is taken up by Dan, who provides the appropriate story-relevant response (Jefferson, 1978) that assists in closing the story (line 8). This then enables Gertie to move on to another topic, i.e. making arrangements to see Dan (not cited above). We can then pose the sequential systematicity of taking a narrative stance in such cases as follows:

> Negative affective stance in status
> Request for elaboration in comment
> Small story (breaking news & update) by poster as tied-reply to comment
> Story-relevant response by commenter

---

8. 'Like' only was the case for routine everyday events at the time of this status and before 6 reactions (i.e. love, haha, yay, wow, sad, anger) were added with corresponding emojis, in 2015.

Overall, as the above examples show, narrative stancetaking in the data presents sequential[9] systematicity and interactional implications: it projects the relevance of engagement from the audience that may allow the poster to "tell more". In addition, conventional associations seem to have emerged, regarding what sort of a moment carries the potential for (further) storying. To be specific, announcements of disruptions and negative affective stances, such as the ones exemplified above, are more likely to lead to a small story. It is notable that from the 600 statuses of Gertie analyzed for the period 2010–2013, all 176 statuses of this sort led to a small story, while only one fifth of the statuses that reported mundane moments[10] led to further engagement and comments rather than a simple Like. This finding is corroborated by big data. In a corpus examination of 1.000.000 words from the statuses of American users, Zhang (2010) reported that status updates with negative emotional words received fewer Likes but more comments than positive emotional updates. Zhang found this result counter-intuitive, but in light of this study's micro-analytical findings, the explanation can be sought in the conventional role of unhappy statuses as story-signals.

The relative evaluation of moments, as some being more *story-able* than others, should please the sceptics, the many commentators who were deploring at the time of Gertie's statuses, the trivia that people posted on their Facebook (e.g. Thompson, 2008). However, evolving affordances for sharing the moment have somehow redeemed the banality and the mundane, the sharing of ordinary everyday life, as I will show below.

Evolving affordances for taking a narrative stance

Pre-selection for story "ingredients"

My study since 2010 has allowed me to see the connections of taking a narrative stance with the changing, in some ways enhanced, facilities that Facebook has been rolling out for sharing the moment. These affordances include check-ins, feelings, individual replies to comments, tagging (i.e. creating a link to a friend's profile) and last, but not least, the platform's push for visual and video elements. Such facilities

---

9.   Although the spatial architecture of Facebook does not allow us to talk about a turn-by-turn sequence, as we would in face-to-face conversations, it is still the case that a communicative act presupposes another and may be methodically tied to what follows. It is also the case that dyadic 'interactions' between poster and a commenter often develop as part of the relational emergence of a story after a status.

10.   E.g. Gertie has just had a delicious curry & watched the x factor.

readily contain elements of narrative stancetaking, as they encourage the inclusion of time, place, events, and assessments of the experience. Put differently, they are biased toward story ingredients rather than, say, toward users putting forward views or exposés.

My analysis shows that the addition of such affordances has resulted in certain changes in terms of the design of taking a narrative stance and the engagement with it. The first is that explicit time-references (e.g. temporal adverbials such as "just now"), that stress recency or immediacy and that were prevalent in Gertie's statuses,[11] seem to have been reduced in favour of adding location and feelings. The second change can be described as a standardization of stancetaking choices: the affordances of adding place, feelings and shared check-ins serve as templates,[12] a ready-made pre-selection, a menu of story ingredients which users are encouraged to select. It is almost unexceptional in the 2nd phase of my data to see statuses that contain these pre-selections in some combination, even in creative or playful statuses. We can see in the example below that creativity combines with the poster embracing the affordances of sharing the moment: she produces a shared check in with named friends, a type of activity (*drinking whisky*) and a location (*remember*, the name of the club), enhanced by the map of the place that automatically comes on when a place is added (not reproduced below). In lieu perhaps of adding feelings, she uses a paraphrase of a song[13] by inserting the name of the club from where she is posting the shared status: *me gusta remember, me gustas tu*.

> (3) Mary B. drinking whisky with Ellie D. and eight others at remember
> 'me gusta remember, me gustas tu'

This creative variation is still done within the pre-allocated facilities of how Facebook directs users to share the moment. This has implications for how stories emerge and develop, as I will suggest below.

Visual narrative stancetaking

Evolving affordances have led to a more visual and localized narrative stancetaking in my data. Of course, posts on social media are multi-modal and they have always been part of multi-modal environments. However, the wide use of smart phones and the push of photo postings from 2013 onwards, and, increasingly live videos, is leading to what I see as a conventional division of labour amongst different modes

---

11. Also in Page's corpus analysis of statuses (2012).

12. These features were added in 2013.

13. Me gustas tu by Manu Chao.

on Facebook posts, with the photos (and the videos) *showing the moment* and the "text" (i.e. language) being confined to brief affective captions. Sometimes, these captions are only done by emojis. It is worth pointing out that photos and videos weigh more than text on Facebook, as they are seen as priority posts by algorithms. In addition, as I will show below, the current designing spree of stories on apps is specifically directing users to producing audio-visual posts. We can see this transition from more text-based to more visual narrative stancetaking in two statuses from Gertie, one from 2012, the other from 2015. The statuses are typical of the progression that Gertie has made from *telling the moment*, i.e. describing it with language, mentioning other people she is with, as team 'Brant', rather than tagging them (see Example (4) below), to *showing the moment* (Example (5) below). This involves posting visual statuses (i.e. selfies, pictures) and using language only as a caption, normally as a brief description or assessment of what is shown. We can see this in Example (5), where Gertie posts a picture of her partner and their dog just with the word *bliss*.

(4) June 20, 2012
Gertie is enjoying Cornwall with team Brant. Beach in the rain is interesting … sun please just for tomorrow would be a lovely bday pressie

(5) Picture[14] of Gertie's partner slouching into an armchair with their dog on his lap and part of their fireplace showing behind them. The caption above the picture is: "Bliss" followed by exclamation marks.

Shared selfies, knowing friends and co-narration

The affordance of uploading shared selfies (group selfies or 'significant other' selfies, Georgakopoulou, 2016a) from activities with friends has also implicated a strong connection of narrative stancetaking not just with place, but also with references to characters and relationships (routinely accompanied by heart-shaped emojis): e.g.

España with these beautiful chicas
me and my gorgeous girl in her messy room
getting ready with the bae

Selecting certain friends as ratified and primary recipients of a post with their named inclusion or tagging has increased possibilities for taking a narrative stance to lead not to "what happened?" replies but to a subsequent co-production of a story. In a similar vein, Page, Harper & Frobenius (2013) have reported that tagging affordances are conducive to the development of shared stories on statuses.

---

14. For ethical reasons, the photograph cannot be reproduced here.

In my data, there is an overwhelming preference for tagged or otherwise named and signaled individuals not just to produce a Like, but also to contribute a comment which displays their knowing status. References to shared events, even in the absence of any visual or tagging material, also introduce a preference for certain individuals to display their knowing status. This provides opportunities for the addressees to serve as co-narrators: i.e. to produce, expand on a story or bring in the back-story. This often results in a private chat on a semi-public forum (i.e. somebody's Wall) with certain friends appearing as being in the know and in the loop and others not.

(6)   Maria: [next to selfie of her and her best friend Anna, which is not reproduced here].
        Waaaay up I feel blessed. With Hannah Bates.

Hannah: Awh luv u. xx

May 7 at 9 pm

Maria: Luv u too 💗. We're gonna have so many more great times esp. now that we've got Mike. 😉

May 7 at 10.47 pm

Hannah: Ha ha very tru 💗💗 let's hope we don't run into bryan again tho

May 7 at 10.58pm

As we can see in the example above, the private chat which develops between the two friends elaborates on the caption of their selfie,[15] in ways which allude to their closeness. In particular, with the reference to 'Mike' and 'Brian,' a back-story of shared interactional history is referred to allusively.

Knowing participation has thus become an increasingly conventional response to taking a narrative stance on statuses, as a result of visual posts, shared statuses, and of tagging, which have offered facilities for audience selection. The fact that close friends can serve as knowing co-narrators has, in turn, made the sharing of the moment highly allusive with plenty of online-offline, and more generally, transmedia, connections. This works well to strengthen bonds with friends with whom one interacts a lot outside of Facebook. It also suits the pressure for sharing the moment quickly and with a certain brevity, as users can rely on selected friends for amplification and co-authoring of their posts. This is in line with the relational algorithmic recipe of Facebook for a participatory subject that goes beyond the defaults of Like (and, the recently added, reactions). The ideal user is one who spends

---

15. The line ('Way up I feel blessed) is from the hip-hop song 'Blessings' by Big Sean, feat. Drake and Kanye West.

considerable time on Facebook and gets "hooked" on it (Eyar, 2014): popularity and scoring highly on affinity with friends is a major motivation for doing so. Popularity and affinity are themselves premised on participating, not just by posting, but also by engaging consistently with certain friends' posts (cf. Bucher, 2012). Knowing participation thus proves to be a key-participation mode for generating such tied-engagement (i.e. post-comment-reply to comment, etc.) and frequency of Facebook interactions.

It is clear that not-knowing is a dis-preferred participation identity and I have cross-checked this with data from YouTube too (Georgakopoulou, 2016b). This is beyond the scope of this article but it suffices to note that there is also a difference in participation between more staged, permanent and viewable moments on Facebook, for instance when posting *me-selfies* as a profile picture, and when posting *group selfies* or *significant other selfies*: the latter share the moment as fleeting, fun, enjoyed with friends, and it is in these cases that knowing participation has become important (idem). The increasing co-narration of the moment with one's friends is perhaps a factor in conceptualizations of Facebook amongst the millennials as the happy, glossy, positive platform of "perfect sharing" (Constine, 2016).

Taking a narrative stance and story-linking

Taking a narrative stance has increasingly been connected in my data with trans-media connections, as I began to show above. These include cross-domain connections. My observations of posts in the data-set of adolescent Facebook users show an increasing tendency to story-link in their statuses, that is, to import share-ables, ready-made, circulated, popular scenarios from other sites: for example, memes from sites with popular memes, heavily re-tweeted tweets, and so on. This story-linking is made possible by increasing media convergence which allows users to link their Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat feeds. They tend to have these apps open at the same time, anyway. The wide distribution of portable quotes is another affordance for creating readily available share-ables. With story-linking, users "borrow" and appropriate other stories, so as to suit their moment, and they often create analogies with their experience:

(7) Saachi shared a tweet
     This was me an' my uber driver last night
     Sober in a taxi: Please. Stop talking to me.
     Drunk in a taxi: … And that, Mick, is why I'm emotionally unavailable I suppose.
     Retweets: 1,482 Likes 2,660

Story-linking in its association with taking a narrative stance to share "my" moment, seems to have been remediated from video-sharing sites, primarily YouTube. In my study of the circulation of key-news stories about the Greek crisis (2014), I showed how story-linking was important for sharing political life on social media, not as facts or points of view but as affective, emotive, personalizing reactions. [16]

For the purposes of the present discussion, the developing links of taking a narrative stance with story-linking on Facebook statuses is suggestive of how, across platforms, norms for sharing the moment may be converging. It is especially notable that media-afforded story-ingredients and scenarios can be readily retrieved and adapted, so that users can share their moment on different apps. This is revealing of a level of ready-made story templates and story-curation that, potentially, cannot be resisted even by the most creative and individual users. This is due to the tension that storying-the-moment creates, between managing audience selection and reach, live (instant) sharing and likeability and popularity. Story-linking suits the need for quick and brief sharing that also has the potential to address different audiences, as my study of YouTube has shown (2015).

Discussion: Taking a narrative stance in the context of designing 'Stories'

I have shown so far that taking a narrative stance on Facebook statuses and selfie-posts is a systematic practice for sharing the moment in ways that allow a co-creation of plots. I specifically teased out key-aspects of its interrelation with evolving media affordances (since 2010, start of my data-set). These involve pre-selection facilities that have afforded an increasingly visual and localized stancetaking. Shared selfies with friends and check-ins have also afforded opportunities for audience selection and for selected friends to serve as knowing (co)-narrators of the moment. In all these cases, small stories emerge and develop relationally and as a sequential implication of taking a narrative stance. Similarly, what moment will become emplotted is contingent on engagement with posts, as posters often do not (yet) have a story to report, upon initial sharing. This co-constructed, cumulative and intertextual storying of the moment, assisted by story-linking with (audio)-visual portables and quotables, has implications for any further attempts for story-curation on social media apps, as I will show below. Specifically, I will interrogate my findings in the context of the recent move to an explicit introduction of *story facilities*. This story-designing spree currently brings many apps together, particularly in their

---

16. By creating chains of story-linking, and by inserting key-actors from the circulated incidents, into for example, memes, I claimed that a circulated moment became *rescripted*: its plot changed as it was being linked with popular culture templates (Georgakopoulou, 2014; 2015).

eagerness to offer facilities to users for sharing not just one moment, but all moments of their day. I am listing below the main such facilities:

– Snapchat[17] Stories (2014)
– Instagram[18] Stories (2016)
– WhatsApp Status (2016)
– Twitter moments (2016)

How do these facilities work with the logic of sharing the moment and the norms that have been developing for creating plots out of the moment, which I showed above? And how can we further such norms in the context of story-facilities? The critical analysis of the branding and rhetoric of "stories" as an app feature makes apparent notable convergences apparent in terms of how stories are conceptualized and what kinds of affordances are offered for them. Stories are launched as chronologically ordered multi-modal collections with a beginning-middle-end and some continuity and permanence, relative to the single feed and the moment. For instance, Snapchat Stories, "a game changer for the app" (Cooper, 2016), are a way of going beyond the app's pure ephemerality, by allowing users to post photos and/or videos that last for 24 hours, as opposed to being erased after viewed.[19] Perhaps more importantly, stories come with a high level of curation: many tools for drawing, including filters, bespoke graphics and emojis, template stories and style guidelines.

It is instructive to place this curation in the context of previous attempts, especially by Facebook, to go beyond the logic of the feed and to allow users to create a more continuous sharing of their everyday moments. The Timeline is such an early attempt followed by the video "A Look Back," which was launched for the 10th anniversary of the platform in 2014, and "On this day" in 2015, which allows users to revisit posts and share them as memories. In the same vein as stories on Snapchat and Instagram, the discourses underpinning Timeline and Memories on Facebook are readily connectable with conventional conceptualisations of a story as a more permanent, temporalized and ordered activity. We note then an association of stories with the ideas of chronicling both today and "your past life" but in close association with the unit of moment on the one hand and with posts, either previous or current, within a given platform. Memories on Facebook, for instance,

17. Snapchat is the 3rd most popular social app amongst the 'millennials' after Facebook & Instagram. You send pics & videos & they self-destruct a few seconds after being viewed.

18. Instagram: photo- & video-sharing social app acquired by Facebook in 2012.

19. Even though stories are just 10 seconds long, relatively speaking, they are more sustained activities than individual snaps.

are retrospectively put together by Facebook to include previous moments within Facebook: *your posts and others' posts you're tagged in, major life events and when you became friends with someone on Facebook*. In this way, memories are designed as a retrievable archive of experiences, evoking a lay metaphor of memories with wide currency (Brockmeier, 2015). We also note the increasing offering of pre-selection facilities for stories which provide users with choices from a menu. For instance, adding life-events, defined as collections of moments, to your Timeline on Facebook, effectively means that you choose from available categories: e.g. home and living, family and relationship, health and wellness. Control for the users is normally confined to adjusting privacy settings, turning notifications on or off, adding filters, and other optional features. This applies to all story facilities on apps, including Snapchat and Instagram stories.

The selection and ready-made facilities for stories certainly tally with and build on what I have discussed in this article, that is, on evolving affordances for sharing the moment as stories. The explicit move, however, beyond the moment, on the face of it creates a mismatch, within the technological affordances of platforms, between fluidity, live sharing of the here-and-now and some sort of continuity and archiving. This mismatch extends to the actual features with which stories come. Putting together stories to go beyond the moment is still done in ways that allow for aggregative compilations of moments rather than for reflective and highly selective re-constructions. Put differently, sharing beyond the moment is done on the basis of the moment and it still is about live sharing, *sharing-in-the-moment*. This has implications for how features that promise more sustained story-activities are, or indeed, can be taken up by users. Kaun & Stiernstedt (2014) show that prioritizing recent posts and inviting users to constantly upload new materials is not conducive to collective remembering on Facebook. Flow, immediacy and liveness are found to be major elements, not only in terms of how users are asked to participate in making memories, but also in how they experience time.

To add to this, we can observe that a cumulative view of stories that sees every moment as the same is at odds with what users actually do in the data-set at hand. In particular, two practices reported in this article are at odds with attempts to introduce stories as 'solutions' for going beyond the moment. The first is the increasing importance and development of norms for sharing stories that create allusive, trans-media connections that go beyond the moment: sharing beyond the moment is thus done by users within the moment. The second practice is the relative evaluation of what moment is more story-able than others: as I showed, sustained storying can apply to the single moment, with audience engagement and chains of story-linking.

In view of the above, what do Facebook and other social platforms gain specifically from introducing stories as more sustained activities than a single feed and as sharing that goes beyond the moment? Van Dijck (2013) observes that the increased

monetisation of Facebook (and in the case of her study, LinkedIn too) benefits from one identity. Platform owners have a vested interest in pushing the need for a uniform online identity to attain maximum transparency, not only because they want to know who their users are, but also because advertisers want users' "truthful" data. This monetary agenda is surely not to be under-estimated. At the same time, posing one-to-one links between monetary motivations and design-choices runs the risk of overlooking mediating factors such as the need for platforms to provide relationally rich environments to keep users hooked, in the first place. Users' bio-data and what they click on has been shown to provide ample information for advertising purposes, so a straightforward association of the extra-investment in creating story-facilities with monetary goals seems over-simplifying. The findings in this article allow us to suggest that there are more story-specific reasons for this close link of curation with stories. Stories, as I hope I have shown, however small, are an algorithmically preferred participation mode in terms of the hallmarks of the participatory subject and so we can expect any further curation on social media apps for a meaningful, personalized presentation to cater to stories. Ultimately, stories can provide a more personalized route to advertising too: bringing advertising brands as stories, making story ads as part of users' experience can be a powerful device (cf. Constine, 2016).

Concluding reflections: *The normativity of sharing lives-in-the-moment*

In the light of the above discussion, social media apps cannot seem to be able to forgo the logic of instant, live sharing. In fact, story-curation, even when setting out to go beyond the moment, seems to be building on the moment. We can, therefore, expect sharing-lives-in-the-moment to become further consolidated as the autobiographical mode of choice and availability particularly for the "millennials",[20] which form the main targeted group, especially of Instagram and Snapchat. This can be assumed to result in further systematicity of practices, such as taking a narrative stance and associated features of engagement with it, as discussed above. The increasing availability of practices for sharing-lives-in-the-moment can, in turn, be expected to render certain kinds of lives and subjectivities more available and perhaps more sought-after. Below, I will summarize what the findings of this study allow us to postulate as increasingly available story-practices for sharing the moment:

---

20. Variously called Generation Y and the 'me generation'. There seems to be a convergence that the term applies to those born around the mid-90s.

–   Stories come into existence through sharing the moment and they develop relationally. Audience engagement, vital for any story-signalling to develop, can take a range of forms, from interest and requests for elaboration to knowing co-authoring. Although co-construction is commonly found in stories in face-to-face contexts too, the brand of relational becoming of stories found on sharing the moment presents two distinctive features: it licenses a tentative signalling of stories, of testing the waters, as the events are still ongoing, and it relies on an, often concurrent, development of storying and happenings. Related to this, the close link of a teller's ownership with their experience, routinely found in personal experience stories, is often disrupted.

–   Showing the moment seems to be prevailing over telling the moment, with text and written language becoming more and more confined to brief assessments and "stories" as app facilities increasingly being identified with photographing and filming one's life, as it is happening. This places premium on specific narratorial positions, in particular, the narrator-experiencer as opposed to the narrator that can step back and reflect on the goings-on.

–   There is pre-selection and iterativity of ready-made scenarios and templates, ideally brief and portable, for easy distribution. As we saw, this level of centralized curation is convenient for a quick sharing of the moment but it potentially renders individual story creativity and uniqueness more difficult, especially in terms of audience reach.

–   Affordances for audience selection allow for knowing participation and densely allusive, transmedia connections. Although this is conducive to stronger bonds amongst users, it also has the potential to increase echo-chambers phenomena, with users being exposed to and engaging with a limited set of stories that re-affirm their worldview and perspective. It may also privilege specific lives and subjectivities, associated with the main targeted groups of story-facilities, as described above: in particular, goofy stories about having fun with friends and being out and about.

These practices are bound to present contextual variation in how different users may take them up. Their further exploration, however, would benefit from taking into account the evolving norms presented above and the communicative how of small stories that users in the data at hand seem to have been socialized into. In addition, the scrutiny of the interplay of small story-practices with media-affordances for sharing the moment is necessary for a critical assessment of the role of stories in the social-media curation of lives and selves.

References

Barton, D., & Lee, C. (2013). *Language online*. London, UK: Routledge.

boyd, d. (2010). Social Network sites as networked publics: Affordances, dynamics, and implications. In Z. Papacharissi (Ed.), *Networked self: Identity, community, and culture on social network sites* (pp. 39–58). New York: Routledge.

Beer, D. (2009). Power through the algorithm? Participatory web cultures and the technological unconscious. *New Media & Society*, *11*, 985–1002. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444809336551

Bell, A. (2001). "Back in style: Reworking audience design". In Eckert, P. & Rickford, J. R. (Eds.), *Style and sociolinguistic variation* (pp. 139–168). Cambridge: CUP.

Berry, D. M. (2011). *The philosophy of software: code and mediation in the digital age*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230306479

Bolter, D. J., & Grusin, R. (1998). *Remediation: Understanding new media*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Brockmeier, J. (2015). *Beyond the archive*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199861569.001.0001

Bucher, T. (2012). Want to be on the top? Algorithmic power and the threat of invisibility on Facebook. *New Media & Society*, *14*, 1164–1180. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444812440159

Chun Hui Kyong, W. (2009). *Programmed visions: Software and memory*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Constine, J. (2016). Instagram launches 'stories', a snapchatty feature for imperfect sharing. https://techcrucnh.com/2016/08/02

Cooper, S. (2016). Snapchat versus Instagram: The war of the stories. www.thedrum.com/opinion/2016/08/25

De Fina, A., & Georgakopoulou, A. (2012). *Analyzing narrative: Discourse and sociolinguistic perspectives*. Cambridge: CUP.

Dodge, M. (2010). Code/space. *Urbis Research Forum Review*, *1*, 15–25.

Eyar, N. (2014). *Hooked*. New York: Penguin Portfolio.

Genette, G. (1980). *Narrative discourse*. New York: Cornell University Press.

Georgakopoulou, A. (2007). *Small stories, interaction and identities*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins. https://doi.org/10.1075/sin.8

Georgakopoulou, A. (2013a). Storytelling on the go: Breaking news stories as a travelling narrative genre. In Hatavara, M., Hydén, L.-C. & Hyvärinen, Matti (Eds.), *The travelling concepts of narrative* (pp. 201–224). Amsterdam/Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins. https://doi.org/10.1075/sin.18.13geo

Georgakopoulou, A. (2013b). Small stories research as a framework for the study of social media practices: Narrative stancetaking and circulation in a Greek news story. *Sociolinguistica*, *27*, 19–36.

Georgakopoulou, A. (2014). Small stories transposition & social media: A micro-perspective on the 'Greek crisis'. *Discourse & Society*, *25*, 519–539. https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926514536963

Georgakopoulou, A. (2015). Sharing as rescripting. Place manipulations on YouTube between narrative and social media affordances. *Discourse, Context & Media*, *9*, 64–72. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2015.07.002

Georgakopoulou, A. (2016a). From writing the self to posting self(ies): A small stories approach to selfies. *Open Linguistics*, *2*, 300–317. https://doi.org/10.1515/opli-2016-0014

Georgakopoulou, A. (2016b). Friendly comments: Interactional displays of alignment on Facebook and YouTube. In Leppänen, S., Kytölä, S. & Westinen, E. (Eds.), *Discourse and identification: Diversity and heterogeneity in social media practices* (pp. 178–207). London: Routledge.

Gerlitz, C., & Helmond, A. (2013). The Like economy: Social buttons and the data-intensive web. *New Media & Society*, *15*, 1348–13645. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444812472322

Gibson, J. (1977). The theory of affordances. In Shaw, R. & Bransford, J. (Eds.), *Perceiving, acting, and knowing* (pp. 127–143). Hillsdale, NJ: Elrbaum.

Hine, C., Kendall, L., & boyd, d. (2009). Question one: How can qualitative internet researchers define the boundaries of their projects? In Markham, A. N. & Baym, N. K. (Eds.), *Internet inquiry: Conversations about method* (pp. 1–20). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483329086.n1

Jaffe, A. (2009). (Ed.) *Sociolinguistic perspectives on stance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195331646.001.0001

Jefferson, G. (1978). Sequential aspects of storytelling in conversation. In Schenkein, J. (Ed.), *Studies in the organisation of conversational interaction* (pp. 219–249). New York: Academic Press. https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-623550-0.50016-1

Jones, R. H. (2016). Surveillance. In Georgakopoulou, A. & Spilloti, T. (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of language and digital communication* (pp. 408–411). London: Routledge.

Kaun, A., & Stiernstedt, F. (2014). Facebook time: Technological and institutional affordances for media memories. *New Media & Society*, *16*, 1154–1168. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444814544001

Kitchin, R., & Dodge, M. (2011). *Code/space: Software and everyday life*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/9780262042482.001.0001

Markham, A. N. (2013). Remix culture, remix methods: Reframing qualitative inquiry for social media contexts. In Denzin, N. & Giardina, M. (Eds.), *Global dimensions of qualitative inquiry* (pp. 63–81). Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Page, R. (2012). *Stories and social media*. London: Routledge.

Page, R., Harper, R., & Frobenius, M. (2013). From small stories to networked narrative. The evolution of personal narratives in Facebook status updates. *Narrative Inquiry*, *23*, 192–213. https://doi.org/10.1075/ni.23.1.10pag

Ricoeur, P. (1991). *From text to action*. London: Continuum.

Van Dijck, J. (2013). You have one identity: Performing the self on Facebook and LinkedIn. *Media, Culture and Society*, *35*, 199–215. https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443712468605

Wesch, M. (2008). *Context collapse*. http://mediatedcultures.net/youtube/context-collapse. Last accessed 1/4/2017.

Zhang, L. (2010). What's on your mind? https://www.facebook.com/notes/facebook-data-science/whats-on-your-mind/477517358858/

FACEBOOK PHASE 1: Status updates (2010–2013; _600 posts analyzed_)
PHASE 2: Statuses & selfie-posts (03/2014–03/2015; _189 selfies & 1,713 comments analyzed_

	Kate (882 friends)	Maria (1316 friends)	Saachi (790 friends)	Luke (1814 friends)	Aris (1416 friends)
No. of selfies	44	58	87	39	27
'Me' selfies	28	5	7	5	3
Selfies as profile pics	13	5	5	8	2
Average comments per selfie	25	53	29	11	15
Average likes per selfie	161	388	264	135	153
Total comments analyzed: 3000					

Index

Storytelling in the Digital World explores new, emerging narrative practices as they are enacted on digital platforms such as Amazon, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Contributors' online ethnographies investigate a wide range of themes including the nature of processes of transformation and recontextualization of offline events into digital narratives; the effects of digital anonymity and pseudonymity on narrative practices; the strategies through which virtual communities discursively work together to solidify and negotiate their sociocultural identities; the tensions between the affordances that characterize different online media and the communicative needs of users; the structures and modes in which virtual users construct and enact participatory practices in these environments; and the significance of different spatiotemporal dimensions in the encoding, sharing and appreciation of stories. More generally, the volume engages with some of the theoretical and methodological challenges that the growing presence of digital technologies and media poses to narrative analysis.

Originally published as special issue of *Narrative Inquiry* 27:2 (2017).

John Benjamins Publishing Company